

**The Metaphor of Home and Belonging: A Reading of Select
Post- Colonial Nepali Novels**

A Thesis Submitted

To

Sikkim University



**In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

By

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This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**The Metaphor of Home and Belonging: A Reading of Select Post-Colonial Nepali Novels**” submitted to the Sikkim University for partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English, embodies the result of bonafide research work carried out by Binita Sunar under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other Degree, Diploma, Association and Fellowship. All the assistance and help received during the course of investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

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**“The Metaphor of Home and Belonging: A Reading of Select Post-Colonial
Nepali Novels”**

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Binita Sunar

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SUMMARY

The dearth of academic engagement taking Nepali literature in Departments of English had always been witnessed over the years, making it an under researched terrain. What could be the reasons for such apathy to have existed over prolonged period of time is a thought provoking question? The thesis probes into exploring the reasons for it and foremost that comes to one's mind is the problem of translation as very few scholars would be enthused to undertake such a task.

Therefore, this research is an earnest attempt to venture into this exercise to write a thesis in English taking thirteen untranslated Nepali novels and three short stories. The earnest motive behind it was to expose the subtle literary nuances of a rich body of literature and offer a window to the English reading public to understand it, as it is not written in a language that is accessible to the larger masses. Nepali/Gorkha, the language of the brave warriors whose exploits in the battlefields have been well documented worldwide, also have a rich literature which till date has failed to find an audience in the outside world. Nepali maybe a regional language but it has a flavour and essence of its own. Therefore, this thesis was not written as a comparative work with any writer of the English literary canon, like as if it were to serve as a measuring yardstick to bring out the beauty of this literature, hitherto unheard of.

This lack of academic exercise of Nepali literature in other languages and particularly in English has also stemmed the flow of complex matrix of the warrior community – ranging from hope to exploitation in the famed tea gardens of Darjeeling to be perceived as a community with lack of identity to the outside mind.

The brave Gorkhas despite having fought “others war” and engaged in “others issues.” suffers from an ‘identity crisis’ known to all.

This thesis provides the rich and diverse flavour of Nepali literature and also highlights the core issues of the community. The Indian Nepalis or Gorkha community and language is diverse, with sub-communities tracing its roots from Tibeto-Burman to Indo-Aryan languages, but Nepali/Gorkha language is the lingua franca with its script in Devnagari and thus has an influence of Sanskrit. This ethnic diversity is well reflected in Nepali works further enriching is literature. The language is spoken and read not just in Nepal but also in India and the Indian Nepali authors have brought about a new dimension in their writings, bringing out the issues of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ which is a matter for concern for all Gorkhas.

The research traces its path through the following six chapters:

Chapter I, which is the introduction, foregrounds the need for engaging in Nepali literature which had so far been limited to the confines of a regional language, attempted by the scholars from Nepali Departments of various universities. It further explores the reasons which prompted the writing of this thesis in the statement of the problem; which is regarding the social oppression endured by the people of Darjeeling and the adjoining areas. This has been very aptly delineated in the novels and needs to be made widespread and vocal.

A review of works written by other scholars so far within the ambit of this research area was given which helped in tracing the research gap. The lack of surplus narratives and documentation about the conditions of the Indian Nepalis or Gorkhas as portrayed in the novels, unfortunately restricted to the boundary of a regional language required to be disseminated to the readers of the English language to reach

out to the larger masses. It highlights the methodology by which such matters have been portrayed in the thesis and is viewed through the post-colonial lens.

Chapter 2, titled as “Nepali Diaspora: History context and literary Representation”, dwells on the history migration from Nepal to India, as well as to other parts of the globe as Nepali Diaspora. Their recruitment as labourers in the construction of roads and cleaning of forests especially in the North East needs special attention. After having lived for two, three generations they are still treated as ‘second class’ citizens and labelled as ‘foreigners’. They suffer from the identity crisis due to the interstitial spaces they occupy which is a matter of concern. It also deals with the issues of displacement and dislocation, as many of them were sent to Burma by the Imperial Government to work in the oil refineries. Many youths who were recruited in the army were sent to the United Kingdom, Malaya, Hong Kong, Burma and many more places to strengthen the power of the British Army who were on their expansionist drive.

Chapter 3, titled “Gender sensitivity and Feminism in select Nepali Diaspora fiction” explicates how patriarchal ideologies have kept women in the subordinate position. Gender inequalities have also been portrayed in some of the novels. Though the Nepali society is quite liberal as far as the treatment of women are concerned especially in their attitude towards widows who are looked upon with compassionate eyes. Like the women of North East they are respected a lot. Crimes against women are minimal. Yet, women in the novels are exploited by the predatory men during the British colonial period, which shows the “double colonization” of women. It shows the helplessness of women of a marginalized society, when viewed through the prism of the feminist lens in all the novels taken up for study.

Chapter 4, titled “The Novel as History: A Reading of *Balivedi (Sacrifice, 1970)*” delineates the contribution of the Gorkhas in the freedom struggle with the accurate happenings of history overlapping with the plot of the novel *Balivedi (Sacrifice, 1970)*. The sacrifices made by the countless Gorkha youths and the martyrs of this race known for valour has been documented very accurately in the novel.

Chapter 5 titled “The politics of Subversion: a reading of Select Nepali Novels” analyses and evinces the reasons for subversion in the tea gardens. The lack of basic individual rights to which they are entitled to, such as medical facilities, housing quarters, lack of bonus, deprived of schools to give them higher education for employment later, brings them to a consciousness of being oppressed. This thereby makes them compelled to get united and rebel against the ruling authority and finally topple the hegemonic centre.

Chapter 6 is the **Conclusion** which winds up the contents of the individual chapters and aptly shows the longing for ‘home’ and a sense of ‘belonging’ to some place by all the Indian Nepalis or Gorkhas whose identity is always a matter of concern.

CHAPTER-1

1 Introduction

The latter years of the 20th century witnessed a change in the world order with new independent nations taking shape and colonies under the control of imperial powers becoming sovereign nations. According to many eminent writers and critics, postcolonial effect encompasses the total period, under the impact of imperialism beginning from the takeover of colonies extending to the present (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1989a, p. 194; Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1989b, p. 186). Imperialism has shaped to a great extent the development of social structures and events in world history. The development of important human issues like ethnicity, gender equality, culture, and identity are all linked to imperialism. The significance of literary works composed during the postcolonial period in the larger picture of world literature has been reaffirmed by the incorporation of such works in the curriculum of prestigious literature courses in universities such as Cambridge, Oxford, among others. It is indeed true that a clear picture of any time in history can be described in literature; authors have the power to give voice to oppressed subjects under colonial rule, or their plight and struggle related to daily existence, all of which have been well recorded and beautifully expressed in written works, serving to change our views of colonialism worldwide (Ashcroft et al. 1989, p. 1).

Literary works dealing with the postcolonial era and criticism came to the fore when the struggle for independence began in many nations or colonies in their quest to become sovereign nations. Imperialism has shaped to a great extent the development of social structures and events in world history. The development of

important human issues like ethnicity, gender equality, culture, and identity are all linked to imperialism.

According to Habib (2012) the criticism of the work composed after the colonial era served many purposes: in their most basic function they presented a picture of the colonial era from the eyes of the subjects ruled, studying the effect of colonial rule on both rulers and the subjects of the colonies with regard to changes in culture, political, and financial issues, understanding the end of colonization and, most importantly, becoming important players in the struggle for sovereignty, which focused on demand for equal availability of resources, revolt against foreign authority, and expression of indigenous cultural and political existences (p. 739).

Critics, including M.A.R in *A History of Literary Criticism and theory: From Plato to the Present*.(2012) and Ashcroft note the remarkable finding that after the 1950s a shift in the power centre of literature occurred: instead of American or British writers, eminent writers and scholars heralding from countries previously ruled by the British took centre stage, for example, Homi Bhabha, Derek Walcott, Salman Rushdie, Sam Selvon, Wole Soyinka, V. S. Naipaul, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, and Chinua Achebe, among many others.

Homi Bhabha, also an eminent postcolonial figure, wrote *The Location of Culture* (1994) to put forward a concept different from Said's views that focused on Foucault's knowledge and power concept: Bhabha instead used the idea of hybridity (Dar 2013, pp. 131-151). He observed that such a picture develops when cultural traits of a colonial power and its colony intermingle together, leading to a new identity that conforms to no specific or stereotypical cultural description (Meredith 1998, p. 2). Bhabha goes on to create the concept of a "third space" that lies somewhere in

between two separate cultures. This space allows the intermixing of different cultural traits without any prejudice, coercion, or imposition (Bhabha 1994, p. 4).

Gayatri Spivak, in “Can Subaltern Speak?” (1988), attempts to defy the heritage of colonialism and challenges the idea of the Western superiority over the developing nations. She contends that the position of marginalised subalterns, particularly women, in spite of overriding the colonial authority, has not surpassed its systematic impact. She confirms that the female colonized voice is regarded as inferior and not listened to;

“As object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (p 287)

Bill Ashcroft has stated that almost three quarters of the total world population has been affected by the imperialism (1989, p. 1) The literature dealing with the postcolonial era is not only important in context of historical evolution or cultural analysis of specific nations but also, according to C. L. Innes(*Cambridge History of Postcolonial Studies*, 2007)analysis, has caught the fancy of scholars and readers worldwide, particularly in the last fifty years (Innes, 2007, p. 1); until now this continual exploration of identity has caused differences and discussions among various cultures and nations.

In the recent years there has been a proliferation of writings on the meaning of ‘home’ within the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, philosophy etc. Many researchers now understand home as a multidimensional concept and acknowledge the presence of and need for a multidisciplinary research in the field. Many authors

have discussed the notions of being at 'home', 'homelessness', 'creating or making home' and the 'ideal home'.

When one is born in a country but moves to another, where is one's home then? This question is difficult to answer because migration is always a process which implies a struggle of identities. When the second generation is born in the host country where do they belong to, if the host country does not accept them as its members? Thus the term 'home' becomes a highly complicated in a complex and multicultural world. In the English language, the term 'home' is derived from the Anglo Saxon word 'ham' meaning village, estate or town. Home may be defined as a dwelling, a homeland or even a constellation of relationships. For Ginsberg, home is less about where 'one is going from' and more about 'where one is going to' as advocated by him in "Mediations on Homelessness and being at Home..." in *The Ethics of Homelessness*, 1999. This sentiment is also expressed by Tucker who stresses that 'home' searching is a basic trait of human nature; one which arises out of the propensity of humans to migrate as a means of ensuring their survival. The history of Nepalese migration is a known fact to all. The ancestors of the Indian Nepalese left Nepal some 100 to 190 years ago, to seek a better life for themselves. After the Eastern hills of Nepal were conquered by the Shah kings (during the 18th Century), they imposed new taxes on them. The growing debt of the farmers gave an opportunity to district governors to forcefully take away their lands. As a result many people left their native land for *Muglan*, (land of the Mughals) migrating eastward into British India.

With the introduction of the tea plantations and the Darjeeling Himalayan railways, the real migration started. The British Government encouraged it for its own

Imperialistic and politico-economic interests. The migration was economically advantageous too, for it ensured cheap labour for the projects undertaken, particularly in respect to the tea and cinchona plantations.

1.2 Statement of problem

The question of 'Home' remains unresolved in the Gorkha socio, economic and cultural life. The identity crisis has not been addressed adequately so far. An Indian Nepali has to prove his identity time and again; their aspiration for a distinct identity status has been always looked upon as a 'separatist' stance. This misunderstanding is due to several unexplored dimensions of their 'roots' or place of origin of Indian Nepalese which can be addressed by a re-look into the history of Darjeeling, Sikkim and Nepal as portrayed in some of the novels undertaken here for study.

Darjeeling originally a part of Sikkim was taken over by Nepal on their expansionist drive. On a request of the Rajah of Sikkim to East India Company to come to their aid in getting back Darjeeling, the Anglo-Nepal War was fought in 1814. The aftermath of the war led Nepal to cede Darjeeling to the British. However, seeing the topography of the land instead of returning Darjeeling to Sikkim it was taken in lease by British from the monarch of Sikkim. Also the contribution of the Indian Nepalis preferably referred to as Gorkhas in the freedom struggle (as portrayed in the various novels) remains one of the facets that can remove the ambiguity of their identity.

1.3 Review of literature

Bidan Golay writes in “Rethinking Gorkha Identity: Outside the Imperium of Discourse, Hegemony and History” (*South Asia*, Vol. II, Numbers 1 & 2, 2006),

“The crisis in the identity of the Gorkhas has always remained in the fore. Lack of narratives regarding their history and appropriation of any traces of their origin has been a perpetual feature about them. There was a continuation of the epistemological colonization of them even in the neo-colonial and postcolonial phase. “There is a need to reconstitute the Gorkhas as a historical character, rehabilitate their consciousness and agency in history. This can be done by engaging with the canonical texts, reading them against their grain and unsettling the discourse. This will eventually liberate the Gorkha identity from the hegemony of discourse and the totalizing tendencies of Western history.” (87)

There is no denial of the fact that the world of the Gorkhas is situated both literally and metaphorically on the margins of the imagined nation. The marginality in question is often taken as the keyword for the oppressed and disposed. It has further layers of domination out of which dispassion of narratives occupy a peripheral location in relation to the metropolitan academic research. This as we know has not been explored adequately which makes it an under researched terrain. The standard of scholarship emerging from these locations find it hard to match up with the standards set by the ‘mainstream academia’, which pushes it towards a peripheral location vis-à-vis the metropolitan academia. The Gorkhas who have continually been under the orientalist gaze of colonial anthropology has remained a subject of discourse. On examining from such a vantage point it is evident that the problem of Gorkha identity which has emerged from both within and without have been skewed and stifled by the

traditional method of enquiry. The narratives framed by them make the Gorkha appear as an exclusive ethnic group completely at poles vis-à-vis the liberal nationalist imagination of the Indian nation. An array of work does not exist on identity formation which gave given importance on the collective memory of home, their saga of migration etc. yet, an all-encompassing study of the contributions of the social and cultural movements in Darjeeling and elsewhere evades us. These scholarship especially the ones that have come from within brings to light the fissures that have been created on the interstices of the subjectivity of the Gorkha. Identities are constructed by the self as well as the others.

Attempts to contextualize the emergence and formation of the Gorkha or Nepali identity in India which spanned for over 200 years has been undertaken by some scholars lately. The identity crisis of the Indian Nepali or Gorkhas is a much debated and contested issue, which cannot be understood in isolation. It requires to be situated within the matrices of nation, space, territory, culture, race and history. The problem of Gorkha identity operates at two levels. Firstly the notion of Gorkha identity is shaped by the colonial discourse. Secondly the lived experience of the Gorkha has made him a subject who is fractured between a constructed notion of Gorkha 'jati' and the demands of a modern nation – state.

There seems to be an underlying differences in the way the Gorkha identity or Gorkha jati is imagined by the 'self and the way the Gorkha identity is adumbrated to the metropolis and as well as presented in academia. There is a rudimentary gap in the meaning of the word *Jati*. Gorkha *jati* – in the culturally specific sense signifies a cultural identity expressed through imageries and symbols derived from its composite cultures¹. Since the mainstream academia looks at the peripheral lenses, it takes a derivate form².

In a paper titled “Where is Home for an Indian Nepali writer?” by Michael Hutt (*Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspective* by Subba, Sinha, Concept Publishing, 2009) the author gives an overview of the history of the Indian Nepalis tracing their ancestry back to Nepal. He begins by stating the desire of the Indian Nepalis or Gorkhas to be accepted as mainstream Indian. In this context Antony Smith has spoken of the importance of history in creation of one’s identity ‘Those whose identities are rarely questioned and who have never known exile or subjugation of land or culture, have little need to trace their “roots”... Yet theirs is only an implicit and unarticulated form of what elsewhere must be shouted from the roof tops: ‘We belong, we have a unique identity, we know it by our ancestry and history’¹ Proceeding further, in this paper he has given a long history of their migration till the annexation of Sikkim to India in 1975. When delving into Nepali literature the writer takes few works showing migration from Eastern Nepal and life thereafter in India.

One such novel is *Basai (Inhabitation, 1950)*. The title itself means residency or place of stay which is different from the original. Set in the village of Eastern Nepal the novel revolves around the lives of a peasant called Dhanay, his wife Maina and sister Jhuma. He is duped by big money lenders and compelled to dispose his house which is his only means of sustenance to pay off the debt, they finally sell the house and move to a different location in search of a new home. The novel ends in the following note:

‘As the radiance of the sun begins to illuminate the earth, Dhanay and Maina will embark upon a new voyage in life, it cannot be said with conviction that it will be better or worse than before. Yet, one thing is certain as they see the mesmerizing sunrise at dawn, the family will have gone far away from the house, garden and yard which they shall cherish only in memory, far, far away’

In *Muluk Bahira (Outside the country, 1948)* the novel is set in Ghoom Darjeeling. It revolves around the life of the protagonist Mahila Bhujel, Dal Bhaadur, Sherba Buro, Ranay, Myauchi and many more. It shows the plight of the migrants during early phase who start their lives as wood sawyers above the Teesta River. It portrays the life of the Nepali diasporic citizens spread across various locations whether in the Army in the Second World War or in diary business in the North East. There is a comparison of their economic conditions while living in Nepal and India. In *Muglan* (land of Mughals) though they were bereft of land, they did not have to pay taxes. Yet, what they earned was sufficient to take care of their hunger.

In this country they need at least not go to *Bhot* (or Tibet) to get salt walking for several days. Their lives were pretty comfortable in India. Reading it further, this paper also debates on the usage of the old term *pravasi*, which means to reside in another country as a foreigner. This was disliked by majority of the Indian Nepalis because it hinted at the chances of being labelled as foreigners. The intellectuals of Darjeeling and elsewhere began to use the title *Bharatiya Nepali*, but the majority of the people during the Gorkhaland agitation conjured that the movement cannot be spearheaded unless all ties with Nepal was severed. Thus nomenclature to address Indian Nepalis became Gorkhas or Gorkhali.

The Nepali poet Bhanu Bhakta who had been highly venerated by many generations of Indian Nepalis (as the first poet to have translated Ramayan from Sanskrit to Nepali) was disregarded thereafter. It is very evident in the way the name of Bhanu Bhavan was changed to Gorkha Rangamanch Bhavan. The aftermath of this movement turned the attention to the Nepali poet Agam Singh Giri. Through Giri's poem they hold a conviction that they will carve a niche for themselves by fulfilling their aspirations of getting their identity in India.

In “Nepalese Diaspora and its Literature” by Dr. Ramji Timsilina (Lambert Academics Publishing, 2020) writes this is a literary creation of the Nepalese Diasporic society. It discusses how the growth in the Nepali transnational migration has created the Nepalese Diaspora. Being dislocated from one’s own country it brings the emotions and imaginations of the people to the fore. It is expressed in different genres out of which ‘poetry’ is the most important. The ancient theory of the ‘rasas’ or the essence in poetry of the Himalayan civilizations and its connection with modern theories of human emotions has been the theoretical base of this analysis.

In the article “Choosing the Gorkha: at the Crossroads of class and ethnicity in the Darjeeling Hills” (*Asian Ethnicity-journal* Vol.14 No.3) Mona Chettri has written at a time when the demand for Gorkhaland had resurfaced. The writer opines that the reasons for agitation was more to raise their voice for being lowly paid, underdeveloped and unemployed, as stated in the abstract:

“Although the Gorkha identity is deemed as representative of the Nepali community residing in India, it acquires special meaning and importance in the Darjeeling hills, where majority of the people suffer low wages, unemployment, underdevelopment and poverty.” Nowhere does this article state that the agitation is to make claims by which we can assert our identity and consider ourselves to be bonafide citizens, having a right to live with dignity in any part of India and not be labelled as ‘foreigners’. Thousands of Gorkhas have given blood for ‘Mother India’; at a time when it was needed the most to free her from the yoke of the British rule. Our sons have become martyrs who never regretted when going to the gallows.

In “Between two worlds: A re-reading of Brahmaputraka Cheauchau” (Close to river Brahmaputra), Utpala Sewa Ghalay in (*Nepali Diaspora in a Globalised Era* by

Subba and Sinha: New Delhi. 2016) has written that the novel deals with the life of the Nepalis in Assam who are treated as second class citizens despite all efforts to be assimilated in the Assamese society. Initially the Nepalis were peasants and graziers. As the city developed, most of them further migrated deeper into the forests with their herds, laying no claims to the land: “They cannot think of Assam as home, and so, will not assert their rights, who balk at Gumane’s attempts to establish an identity with the Assamese society. This ambiguity is what defines the Nepali diaspora in Assam” (Sewa 198). Subba and Sinha say that there are no statistical data available to see how many of these groups are spread in India’s ports, cities, roads, agricultural farmlands, mines, factories, studios, movies and technology hubs. Their physical appearances and language seems so strikingly different with the mainstream Indian populace that the Nepali diasporic citizens have always felt alienated from the mainstream society. As rightly pointed out by Utpala Gahley Sewa in her article “Between two Worlds”, the phrase ‘cheuchau’ denotes ‘alongside’ or ‘by the side of’, which in some way characterises a marginalised society (189). The Nepali diasporic community after several years of stay in Assam have desired to long for assimilation within the mainstream Assamese society. This is poignantly brought out through the character of Gumane, son of Man Bir, who makes repeated attempts to be accepted as a part of the Assamese world. In many ways Ghaley points out, the narrative is autobiographical because like Gumane, the author Lil Bahadur Chhetri too was born in India after his parents had migrated from Nepal. Like Gumane, ‘home’ for Lil Bahadur Chhetri has been only Assam and there is no nostalgia for Nepal. Real life historical account of the contribution of Assamese Nepali nationalists like Chhabi Lal Upadhyaya and Dal Bir Lohar have been brought in by the author to show how the contribution of these Assamese-Nepali to the larger Nationalist struggle of India is an

indication of their homely affiliation to the Indian soil. In the novel too, for Gumane: “Home for him will always be Kachugaon and he may not even know or remember the name of the one his parents came from. Thus, Gumane has to learn to negotiate his relationship with the keepers of the community in Assam in his attempt to accept and be accepted as a significant member of Assamese-Nepali community. Hence, the evolution of his relationship with Khalal becomes the yardstick of his empowerment and acceptance by the host society” (Sewa 196).

In “Identity in Nepali Historical Novels from Northeast India” in (*Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspectives*, 2009) Teknarayan Upadhyaya writes about some of the the historical novels from Northeast India. He opines that the contribution of a community cannot get any credibility unless its history is documented. Unfortunately for the Indian Nepalis or Gorkhas very little documentation finds a place in the annals of history. This has led to the identity crisis of the Indian Nepalis or Gorkhas. However, some historical novels do exist to give us an idea about the sacrifices made by the Gorkhas for the country. The novel of Bir Bikram Thapa called *Teesta Dekhi Sutlej Samma (From river teesta till Sutlej, 1986)* raises the important issue of the loss of identity for the Indian Nepalis. Prakash, the protagonist is an epitome of hundreds of Gorkha youths serving in the Indian Army. Placing it within the historical context, the novelist talks about the contribution of the Nepalis who worked as labourers in the construction of the Burma road (p26). In the context of the Nepalis being ousted in the 1980’s labelling them as foreigners the novelist writes, ‘The Nepalis had never imagined that such a day would come in their life...During the Second World War, Nepali soldiers steadfastly held their posts putting up a brave fight in preventing the Japanese from running over the forests and hills of Northeast India. For this reason alone the present generation should salute their forefathers.(p48) The novelist carries

on further saying ‘... when the Nepalis were clearing forests no one labelled them as “foreigners”, the government did not ask for their land deeds.’ (p 54)

1.4 Research Gap

After providing a review of literature written by different scholars, the researcher found it imperative to give a serious thought to work on some of the pertinent facets of the lives of the Nepalis and their literature. On finding a dearth of critical engagements taking Nepali literature in the academe the Nepali Researchers have been enthused these days in writing about their own history, culture, socio-economic conditions as portrayed through literature and other fine arts, after reading the original works written in Nepali. Therefore, this research is an earnest attempt undertaken by the researcher to bring out the subtle literary nuances of a regional literature (written in the native language called Nepali, a family of Indo-Aryan language) which has remained unexplored over a century. It offers a window to the English speaking readers to understand the richness of this body of literature hitherto unheard of. Along with it the sacrifices of Indian Gorkhas in the freedom struggle have not been projected satisfactorily by scholars so far. History has not given an adequate coverage to the sacrifices of the soldiers from pre-Independence period till today. They have left aside the study of the contribution of the Indian Gorkhas, in the freedom struggle as depicted in these Nepali novels. Some of these novels portray the sacrifices done by the Gorkhas and the hardships they, along with their families undergo till the soldiers breathe their last. Most of them are written by Gorkha ex-Army service men which provides a realistic portrayal via oral history shaped by their lived experiences hitherto unrecorded in the annals of history. There has been a gap in research done so far. Hence, this research intends to take up from that part which has been left by others.

1.5 Objectives

1. The aim of this research is to explore the identity crisis faced by the Indian Nepalese vis-à-vis the longing for 'home' and 'belonging' as portrayed in novels like *Muluk Bahira (Outside the Country, 1948)* and *Naya Khhitij ko Khoj (In Search of a New Horizon, 1979)*
2. The aim of this research is to show the contribution of the Indian Nepalese or the 'Gorkhas' (as they are often referred to) in the freedom movement. The sacrifices made by the Gorkha soldiers who lost their lives when fighting against the British, as portrayed in the novels like *Balivedi (Sacrifice, 1970)* by Samiran Chettri shall be discussed. History written by foreigners or other non Gorkha historians has been very biased towards this section of people who have always been marginalised. Literature is a mirror of life and these novels written by the novelists against the backdrop of actual history written by the sons of the soil, the Gorkha historians like Dr. Kumar Pradhan and Dr. Puroshottam Lal Bhandari opens up many avenues to claim ourselves as mainstream Indians. The Gorkhas come from a lineage where our forefather like Aribahadur Gurung was one of the signatories in the Indian Constitution. This requires attention especially in current times and needs to be made widespread vocal.
3. The aim of this research is also to give a realistic picture of the social oppression, endured by the tea garden labourers under the British, as portrayed in the novels like *Juneli Rekha (Lines of Moonlight, 1979)*, *Naya Khitij ko khoj (In Search of the New Horizon, 1957)* and *Tara Kahilay (But When?, 1993)*, *Sahara (Support, 1990)*

1.6 Scope of the study

The present study shall be placed under the framework of Post-colonial literary theory. Issues such as migration, displacement, diaspora, location, re-location, homelessness, sense of alienation, nostalgia shall be explored through the reading of novels like ‘*Muluk Bahira*’ (*Outside the Country*,1948) by Lain Singh Bangdel, ‘*Naya Khhitij ko Khoj*’ (*In Search for a New Horizon*, 1979) by Asit Rai, *Basai* (*Inhabitation*, 1950) and *Brahmaputra ko Cheu Chauma* (*Close to river Brahmaputra*, 1986) by Lil Bahadur Chettri, *Juneli Rekha* (*Lines of Moonlight*, 1979) by Indra Sundas, *Tara Kahilay* (*But When?*,1993) by Prakash Kovid, *Balivedi* (*Sacrifice*, 1970) by Samiran Chettri, *Yantrana* (*Agony*,1980) by Asit Rai and *Sahara* (*Support*,1995) by Indra Sundas and a short story *Kancha Mizar Ko Nepal Yatra* (*Kancha Mizar’s Journey to Nepal*,1950) by Ramlal Adhikari

Along with it the double colonisation of women placed under the ambit of Post-Colonial Feminism shall be studied through novels like *Maita Ghar* (*Parents’ Home*, 1950) by Lain Singh Bangdel, *Bholiko Pratikshama* (*In Anticipation of Tomorrow*, 1990) and *Madhyantar* (*Interval*,2007) by Pushpa Rai, *Nirgaman* (*Abandonment* ,2006) by Bindya Subba. It shall also be studied through two short stories like *Lakshman Rekha* (*Boundary Line*, 2019) by Indu Prabha Devi and *Lognay Manchay* (*A Man*.2010) by Sanjay Bista.

1.7 Methodology of the research

This study is mainly descriptive and analytical. An analysis has been made on the basis of the reading of both Primary and Secondary Sources. Arguments made on important issues have been authenticated by archival documentation and data. For

those issues which have not found a place in the archival records, it has been supplemented by oral history, myths, literature and folklore.

The methodology applied in this research is based on the theoretical paradigm put forward by major Postcolonial theorists like Homi K Bhabha, Edward Said, Franz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, Benedict Anderson, Robert Young, Henry Louis Gates, Bill Ashcroft, Aijez Ahmed, Benita Parry and Leela Gandhi. Various theoretical approaches were applied to the select Nepali novels, which at times was sharply contested and debated due to difference in the theoretical propositions as posited by individual theorists and intellectual thinkers. Finally a logical premise has been drawn on the basis of the postulation of post-colonial theorists.

Apart from this a host of South Asians historians like Ranajit Guha, Gyanendra Pandey, Dipesh Chakraborty and others were applied to some of the novels to expose the subaltern politics operative within the discourse of post colonialism, thereby leading to the subjugation of the marginalized classes which they were unaware of. The modality that followed thereafter in this research has been a reading of select Nepali novels through the prism of feminist lens. The leitmotif in all the feminist novels taken up for study has gender bias portrayed in most of them. Besides, stringent strictures that were imposed only upon women to make them 'muted' or 'silenced' which has been delineated very aptly by the novelists. Hence in this context the 'double colonization' of women which made the third world women 'voiceless' has been exposed through the theoretical premise of Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Leela Gandhi and a host of Western feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Virginia Woolfe, Judith Butler, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Cixous inter-alia.

PRIMARY SOURCES: which includes all thirteen original novels in Nepali has been read in detail and analysed. Besides novels three short Stories were read also.

Nepali novels taken up for study in the research

1. *Muluk Bahira (Outside the Country, 1948)* by Lain Singh Bangdel
2. *Naya Khitij ko khoj (In Search of a New Horizon, 1979)* by Asit Rai.
3. *Basai (Inhabitation, 1950)* by Lil Bahadur Chettri
4. *Juneli Rekha (Lines of Moonlight, 1979)* by Indra Sundas
5. *Tara Kahilay (But When?, 1993)* by Prakash Kovid
6. *Balivedi (Sacrifice, 1970)* by Samiran Chettri
7. *Yantrana (Agony, 1979)* by Asit Rai
8. *Sahara (Support, 1995)* by Indra Sundas
9. *Bramhaputra ko Cheu Chauma (Close to river Brahmaputra, 1986)* by Lil Bahadur Chettri.
10. *Bholiko Pratikshama (In Anticipation of Tomorrow, 1990)* by Puspha Rai.
11. *Madhyantar (Interval, 2007)* by Pushpa Rai.
12. *Maitaghar (Parents' Home, 1950)* by Lain Singh Bangdel.
13. *Nirgaman (Abandonment, 2006)* by Bindya Subba

Short stories

- 1) *Lakshman Rekha (Boundary Line, 2019)* by Indu Prabha Devi
- 2) *Lognaya Manchay (A Man, 2010)* by Sanjay Bista
- 3) *Kancha Mizar Ko Nepal Yatra (Kancha Mizar's Journey to Nepal, 1950)* by Ramlal Adhikari.

Secondary sources:

Information has been collected from reference books, journals, newspapers, internet, encyclopaedia, interviews with writers or their families and archival records to supplement the claims made in this research.

1.8 Briefing the chapters and critical frameworks

Chapter 1 is the “**Introduction**” which briefly discusses the historical context and implications of the word “postcolonial”. It also highlights a few significant issues related to the postcolonial era and linked to the crisis of identity, vis-a-vis multiculturalism, diaspora, displacement, and mimicry. It also explains the literary works developed in the postcolonial period, their specific features and characters. The focus of the chapter is on scholarly views of identity crisis in the postcolonial era and their particular arguments regarding the development of identities and crisis, shedding light on the problem of immigrants who deal with living in the diaspora and their daily struggle to carve out a niche for themselves. It also gives an overview of the Statement of the problem, literature review of the work done in this area to focus on the gap in the research. It also states the Objectives of the study.

It gives a comprehensive picture the Methodology applied in this research. Finally it adumbrates the contents that shall be explicated in the different chapters following it.

Chapter 2, titled “**Nepali Diaspora: History, Context and Literary Representation**”, is a study of the diasporic sensibility as portrayed in some of the novels like ‘*Muluk Bahira*’ (*Out of Country*, 1948). The term ‘diaspora’ seems to have originated from an ancient Greek word meaning ‘to scatter about’. It is believed to have originated with the search of the Jews for their historical/mythical homeland and their desire to return home. The idea of homeland and hence of diaspora is wrapped up in the imaginations and mythologies of the people who have moved from their place of origin. Yet, to consider that human beings moved out only in search of resources for survival or due to certain natural calamities is however, too restrictive of facts. Human beings are endowed with a sense of curiosity to explore what lies

beyond a territory, a sense of adventure, a sense of experimentation and also a sense of aesthetic appreciation. Every society is a rich storehouse of myths and stories about their origin and migration. . It gives an overview of the history of the Indian Nepalis along with the geographical and topographical space inhabited by them which makes them completely separated from the neighbouring countries. The Indian Nepalis may share the same linguistic and cultural commonality with the Nepalese of Nepal; yet their past history of being a part of Sikkim makes them a totally different entity.

The novel '*Muluk Bahira*' (*Out of Country*, 1948) begins with the history of Nepalese migration to India and Burma. Crossing the hills, streams, and walking for 3 days, characters like Ranay, Myauchi, Mahila Bhujel finally reach Darjeeling with a hope for better life. In Darjeeling they were employed as 'coolies' or 'labourers' in the construction of roads, railways tracks, schools and other buildings by the British. They were instrumental in the transformation of Darjeeling. The characters projected in the novel maybe regarded as migrant Nepalis but at the same time a point has been raised by this thesis regarding the ownership of this land called Darjeeling to which they were encouraged to migrate into. History is a witness to the fact that Darjeeling was a part of Sikkim and the majority of the population inhabiting this geographical space then were the Lepcha tribes, with a considerable number of Nepalis of Sikkim. When Darjeeling was taken by the British on lease, these people became a part of Indian sub-continent.

Though diaspora involves movement of people it cannot be equated with travel which is merely for a short period. However, as James Clifford has said in 'Diaspora' in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (Ashcroft et al, 2006)

“It involves dwelling, maintaining communities, having collective homes away from home.... Diaspora discourse articulates, or bends together, both roots and routes to construct what Gilroy (1987) describes an alternate public spheres, forms of community consciousness, and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national time/space in order to live inside, with a difference.” (p.453)

Some Indian Nepali soldiers were also employed outside the country in the British army in places like Queta, Mesopotamia, Galilopi, Baghdad as the First World War was going on. This brings to mind the statement made by Bill Ashcroft et al, in (*Key Concepts in Post-Colonial literature, 1998*) that ‘Colonialism itself was a radically diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world’ (1998:69). The dispersion and settlement of people all over the world does not apply to the Europeans alone; instead it can be posited that Europeans compelled people of other races to migrate or be dislocated from various colonized countries to serve their interest. One such example can be discerned in the serving of the Gurkhas in the British army to consolidate Britain’s position in its expansionist drive.

Similarly a character called Mahila Bhujel shifts from Darjeeling to Assam, to work in the coal mines. From a short stay in Assam he shifts further to Burma. In Burma he works in Oil Company as a ‘security guard’ often referred to as a ‘Darban’. However, history is a witness to the fact that after the fall of Rangoon in 1942, on being taken over by the Japanese there was a large exodus of people of different races from Burma. They were mostly Indians, Gurkhas, Burmese and British; a large population of civilians most of whom were women and children in the group who

died enroute. As stated by Hugh Tinker (*The Forgotten long March: The Indian Exodus from Burma*, 1942). 'There was a large exodus of Indian refugees, which began in February 1942Only a small percentage was evacuated by sea and air, most of the exoduses taking place via the Arakan to Chittagong...' (p-2). Thus this novel extensively portrays the Nepali 'Diaspora' spread across many cultures and continents.

Chapter 3, titled "**Gender Sensitivity and Feminism in Select Nepali Diasporic Fiction**", begins with a study of women as portrayed in the novels. From times immemorial gender inequality has been a conspicuous phenomenon in people's lives. According to the radical feminists gender inequalities are due to patriarchal ideologies. Several attempts have been made to define patriarchy. According to Kamala Bhasin, "Patriarchy, literally means the rule of the father or 'patriarch', and originally it was used to describe a specific type of 'male dominated family'-Now it is used more generally to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways..."(*What is Patrarchy?*, 1993) It is a major contention of women writers that the histories of both colonizer and colonized are written from the male point of view. The lived experiences of women especially of the 'third world' have been silenced or erased, or may have existed in the periphery.

Initially women were seen as a meek and docile lot, who simply resigned to their fate. However, over a period of time due to continuous oppression, they too become as fearless as their male counterpart and showed active colonial resistance as we see in some novels. In the novel '*Naya Khitij ko khoj*' (*The Search for a New*

Horizon, 1979) there was a widow called Subbayni, who earned her living by plucking tea leaves in the garden. She owned a small house and land which was the only property left behind by her late husband. The British officials decide to take her land as they required it for making some office. One day a 'chowkidar' or (guard) comes with an order that her land would be taken by Government. As expressed by Ashish Nandy in *The Intimate Enemy*, (1983) the colonial masters had 'a world view which believes in the absolute superiority of the human over the nonhuman and the subhuman, the masculine over the feminine....., and the modern or progressive over the traditional or the savage'(Nandy 1983:x).

Subbayni could not bring herself into terms of being 'uprooted' from the land of her forefathers. She refuses to give it by saying that at no cost would she vacate it. Soon the junior engineer called Michel Sir comes to threaten her and make her aware of the consequences if she was adamant. He gives orders to his guards to throw out her belongings. Surbir Gurung the guard moves forward at the Saheb's command. She attacks in rage with her tribal weapon called '*Khurpi*', (a sharp bent sickle).Immediately he falls down to the ground. With a mad rage she moves forward to get hold of the Engineer. He runs in fear shouting '*Bachao! Bachao*' (Save me! save me!)

Subbayni was arrested and orders were given to be hanged. There was a mass movement to protest against the punishment given to her. She was released later and at the same time there was no forceful acquisition of her land. Slowly people start realizing that anti-colonial resistance was possible if there was co-operation amongst the tea garden labourers. This brings to mind what Audre Lorde (*This Bridge called My Back*, 1981) has cautioned regarding 'speaking' and 'silence' to the third world

women. Survival 'is not an academic skill...It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to us to bring about genuine change' (Lorde, 1981; 99)

Besides this there is an exploitation of the tea garden workers. In *Juneli Rekha*, (*Lines of the Moonlight*, 1979) Malini worked as a gardener in the Manager's bungalow. The Manager used to pass strange comments regarding her beauty and youth. After the death of Bela Chokri (who is actually the mistress of the Manager), Malini was asked to take her place. Incidentally there was this system of keeping mistresses by the Tea Garden Managers. Most of them had left their families back in England and often exploited the women of the gardens to satisfy their carnal pleasures. She was called a 'Chokri' (which means a young girl who was given the status of his mistress, with a separate quarter and a servant. She had to go to the Manager's bungalow, when she was called.).

This is what the post-colonial feminists' meant by the 'double colonization' of women. As it is to be born as a woman kept her in a subjugated position because of her 'lack' as some feminist's opined. Beyond that in the case of Malini she was expected to give into the whims of the white master, in a country that was colonized and people were oppressed by the British. These marginalized women had no say in any atrocities meted out to them. This brings to mind what Bell Hooks has mentioned in *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, 'Dare I speak to the oppressed and the oppressor in the same voice? Dare I speak to you in a language that will take us away from the boundaries of domination, a language that will not

fence you in, bind you or hold you? Language is also a place of struggle.’(hooks, 1989: 28)

Malini was asked to be a chokri but she refuses and with the help of another labourer flees from ‘Meki’ tea estate in the darkness of the night. Such was the plight of women during the colonial rule.

Likewise women in *Bholi ko Pratikshama* or (*In Anticipation of Tomorrow*, 1990) fight against society and live a life according to their choice. Shanti the protagonist is in anticipation of a new tomorrow ready to give birth to an illegitimate child and take the stigma that goes along with it. The decision of the protagonist who refuses to make herself a ‘docile woman’ invokes Foucault’s comment where the female body becomes a ‘machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it’ as expressed in *Discipline and Punish* (1979, p138)

Similarly there are women like Purnasha in *Madhyantar* or (*Interval*, 2007) who have taken a rebirth after an interval of time and refuse to live a life dictated by patriarchal ideologies. She refuses to be equated as a commodity by a husband who abandoned her for a certain period but seeks reconciliation after seven years. She rejects his offer stating reasons for it by writing a long letter. This transformation of women from traditional to modern is exemplary of ‘a reversal of the political axis of individualization’ as opined by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1979, p44)

Similarly in the novel *Maita Ghar* or (*Parents’ Home*, 1950), Sani refuses to compromise with her husband and live with his ‘second wife’. The patriarchal ideologies that lead to the subordination of women are one of the reasons that have

added misery to a woman's life. Though it operates implicitly such ideas have been expressed by Kate Millet also in *Sexual Politics* (1969) when she says,

‘..the family not only encourages its own members to adjust and conform, but acts as a unit in the government of the patriarchal state which rules its citizens through its family heads. Even in the patriarchal societies where they are granted legal citizenship, women tend to be ruled through the family alone and have little or no formal relation to the state.’ *Sexual Politics*, (1969, p33)

Finally Sani leaves the secure nest of her parents' home as well as her husband's, to fend her own ways in life.

In the novel *Nirgaman (Abandonment, 2006)* written by Bindya Subba, the heroine Trishna is an epitome of contemporary woman. She was a highly educated lady who besides being a Professor of a reputed College was a creative writer as well. She could not stop herself from harbouring big dreams in life. Being dissatisfied with the patriarchal norms made by society she deserts her husband Akshay, a Govt Officer of repute and a five year old son Parag. She gave free wings to herself in the pursuit of her goals.

Traditional Indian women or for that matter third women of any cultures received little or no education. This compelled them to be subservient as they had no say in the household. However, women like Trishna who was educated and independent, need not acquiesce to the norms made by patriarchy as mentioned in *The Sexual Politics* by Kate Millet (1969),

‘If knowledge is power, power is also knowledge’ and a large factor in their subordinate position is the systematic ignorance patriarchy imposes upon women’.
(1969, p42)

Chapter 4, titled “**The Novel as History: A Historical Reading of *Balivedi (Sacrifice, 1970)***”, begins with a reading of the novel *Balivedi (Sacrifice, 1970)* by Samiran Chettri. Written against the background of the freedom movement, it is a historical novel. The novelist has taken a slice of history and subsumed it within the sphere of literature. It highlights the contribution of the freedom fighters from Darjeeling and also portrays the active participation of the Gorkhas in the freedom movement. The first Nationalist among the Indian Nepalese usually referred to as Gorkhas is Dal Bahadur Giri of Kalimpong. He laid the foundation of the Indian National congress in 1921. When he was attending the Nagpur session, he got a chance to meet Mahatma Gandhi which was a historic moment in his life. The meeting transformed him into an ardent follower of the leader and he never wavered in his commitment to the cause of the nation.

As portrayed in the novel *Balivedi (Sacrifice, 1970)* there were women freedom fighters also from Darjeeling. Savitri Devi was the first Nepali freedom fighter from Kurseong (born in 1902). Her original name was Helen Lepcha but she was renamed as Savitri Devi by Mahatma Gandhi, when she went to Sabarmati ashram at his invitation. She helped Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose to escape from imprisonment in Kurseong and flee to Germany through Kabul. Being an active social and political activist she was awarded the Tamra Patra by Mrs Indira Gandhi in 1972.

The novel *Balivedi (Sacrifice, 1970)* also deals with the active participation of the Gorkha soldiers in the struggle for Indian Independence. Initially some of the

characters in the novel like Mohan Thapa, Phoolram Rai, Madan Singh, Chandra Bahadur Chhetri were fighting in The Gurkha Regiment, as soldiers of the British army and were taken as Prisoners of war by the Japanese. When Subash Chandra Bose met them at Pearl Hill, he found most of them to be Gorkhas and Sikhs. He admired their valour but at the same time reminded them that they were sons of mother India. If they could give up their lives for the British Imperialist Government, then why could they not fight against the British and get Independence for India? It was a turning point in the lives of the soldiers as it was a clarion ‘call’ from the leaders for the formation of the Azad Hind Fauj. Mohan Thapa responds to the call of Subhash Chandra Bose and joins Azad Hind Fauj. Many other POWs followed and there was an active participation of the *Gorkhas* in the freedom movement. Some Gorkha soldiers were hanged. Major Durga Malla and Major Dal Bahadur Thapa were captured, court martialled and hanged for their participation in the war against the British under Subhash Chandra Bose. Thus *Balivedi* or (*Sacrifice, 1970*) by Samiran Chettri is a truly historical novel.

Chapter 5, titled “**The Politics of Subversion: A Reading of select Nepali Novels**”, studies the politics of subversion as reflected in some of the novels. It was often found during the colonial period that there were certain ideological, political, social, economic and psychological forces that inhibited resistance from the native subjects. Foremost amongst them was the economic fear-the fear of losing one’s job in raising a voice against the colonial masters. The labourers working in the tea gardens initially endured in silent acquiescence, looking up to the white masters as their benefactors. In the Prison Notebook Antonio Gramsci has defined the ‘subaltern classes’ to contrast them to ‘the historical unity of the ruling classes [which] is realized in the state. The subaltern classes by definition are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to

become a state'; their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society and therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society and thereby with the history of states and groups of states.

But over the years when the colonial oppression was unbearable the Indian Nepalese did not hesitate to retaliate against the Colonial rulers. The most inhuman treatment meted out to the tea garden labourers was the system of the '*hatta bahar*' or (eviction from tea garden, even for a small mistake. When such an order was given by the Manager, the labourer and his family had to vacate the garden within twenty four hours even if they had been living there since many generations. The labourer was not only barred from coming back to the garden but he did not have the right to cross that garden and go anywhere. This system of 'Hatta Bahar' is portrayed in the novels *Juneli Rekha (Lines of the Moonlight, 1979)* where Jassey is given the order of Hatta Bahar by the Chotta Saheb.

However, the most realistic picture of the anti-colonial resistance is given in the novel *Tara Kahilay (But When?, 1993)*, when a labourer shoots at the Chota Saheb. In this novel a character called 'Mrigay', who was head 'chowkidar' (or clerk) shoots at the Chota Saheb or the Manager because he tries to molest a labourer's daughter called Seema. Unable to endure the injustice anymore, he seizes the gun of the sahib and shoots at him. The Manager is severely injured. Everybody feared that Mrigay would be hanged or atleast evicted from the garden but the labourers unanimously supported his act. The British Masters were helpless and Mrigay could not be arrested. This act was a clarion call to the common people to raise their voices against oppression. If that incident was not considered to be the beginning of colonial resistance, then when would people gain consciousness? Perhaps that was why the

novel was called *Tara Kahilay (But When?* 1993) if they did not raise their voices now.

Slowly with coming of political parties the Darjeeling Trade Union Act was established in 1942, which brought an end to such systems of eviction. The 'Subaltern studies' historians attempted to recover their political leanings and consciousness of different social groups taking the help of documentation like criminal records, newspapers and above all authentic historical archives documents. Other Subaltern studies historians like Gayatri Spivak differed with them as stated in 'Deconstructing Historiography' (1987) arguing that it is not possible.

The next important novel showing anti-colonial resistance in the tea gardens is *Yantrana (Agony, 1979)* by Asit Rai. It portrays the attainment of consciousness of the tea garden labourers that they were oppressed by the White Colonial masters. This in turn slowly led to the formation of the Trade Union which made them fight for their individual rights like getting a holiday in 'Chaitay Dasai' which was a rightful leave which they had been getting every year. They also fought for other rights like maternity leave, medical facilities, opening of high schools in tea gardens, annual leave etc.

Gramsci emphasized on this aspect that 'It is [...] important and useful for the proletariat that one or more intellectuals, individually adhere to its programme and its doctrine; merge themselves with the proletariat and become and feel themselves an integral part of it (1957:50). In this novel hinting at anti-colonial resistance the responsibility of making the marginalized tea garden workers consciousness of their rights and the strength that they could if there was solidarity amongst them was taken over singularly by Chandra Bahadur who had to lead a very tough life. Ultimately the

tea garden workers could live as normal people and not be oppressed forever by the British.

Chapter 6 is the **conclusion**. Darjeeling, with its natural beauty and the enigmatic charm of the surrounding, never fail to impress the heart of the tourists and leave them spell bound. The mesmerizing scenes of the tea gardens amidst which can be seen women tea pluckers with baskets on their backs have often captivated the hearts of the onlookers. Yet, not much is known about the pathetic life of these tea garden labourers.

People admire this small hill town with its natural beauty and colonial structures. But they are not aware of the colonial oppression endured by the people for many years. It is because the readership of these authentic texts has been accessible to local readers only because it is confined to the regional language. Therefore, this thesis is an earnest attempt in this direction. It is a path breaking work undertaken with this humble motive to offer a wide readership to all.

NOTES

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CHAPTER- 2

Nepali Diaspora: History, Context and Literary Representation

Just as life experiences, imaginative inclinations, and psychic investments lie outside observed geographical boundaries, they are expressed through word and text in a variety of forms. Imaginaries, in social life or fictional narrative, are a central fact of diasporas through time and (...) are explored as taking shape not only in anthropology but across other fields of study as well

~Sandhya Shukla, 552.

This chapter maps the multiple ways in which Nepali diaspora has found a voice for itself. The literature that now emerges from this community is not only promising in terms of its literariness but also with respect to the unique way in which it articulates the politics and history of a collective self. An analysis of this emerging literature is done with a close study of the following major novels: *Muluk Bahira* (*Outside One's Country*, 1948), *Naya Khitij Ko Khoj* (*In Search of a New Horizon*, 1979), *Brahmaputra Ko Chheu Chhau* (*Close to river Brahmaputra*, 1979) and *Sahara* (*Support*, 1995).

The idea of diasporic identity is a major trope in the postcolonial theoretic paradigm. Including doyens such as Homi K Bhabha, a host of theorists have looked at how the metaphors of border, hybridity and assimilation defy easy explanations. The diasporic communities occupy a liminal space in between the native and the target communities: their cultural interventions also consequently form a bridge or buffer between the two spaces. It is not that all diasporic communities across the world share the same kind of political or cultural predicament; the general argument,

even when there are specificities that cannot be and need not be standardized, is that there are broad tangents through which every diaspora at one point in history or the other will move through. It is based on this general spectrum that the postcolonial theorization of world 'diasporas' is done.

The roots of etymology evinces that the term "diaspora" has been derived from the Greek Verb (diaspeiro) meaning "I scatter" or "I spread about" which in turn is made up of (dia), "between, through, across" and the verb (sperio), "I sow, I scatter". As per record, the first known use of the word diaspora in the English language was in 1876 and the Oxford English Dictionary refers to it as "extensive diaspora work (as it is termed) of the evangelizing among the National Protestant Churches on the Continent". Many eminent scholars have attempted to unveil issues pertaining to diaspora and arrive at the closest possible definition of the term. Walker Conner defined Diaspora as "that segment of a people living outside the homeland" (Conner 16). William Safran in 'Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return' describes 'diaspora' in contrast with other related but distinct categories such as expatriates, immigrants, refugees, aliens, as characterized by six distinguishing features.

The first category of diaspora occurs according to Safran when people have been dispersed from a specific original 'center' to two or more 'peripheral' or foreign regions; the second happens when those dispersed communities 'retain' a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland, its physical location, history and achievements; in the third category, diasporic communities are marked by a firm belief that 'they are not –and perhaps cannot be –fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated, isolated from it'; the fourth category examines that, diasporas overwhelmingly 'regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home

and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return –when conditions are appropriate’; in the fifth category, Diaspora communities is seen to firmly ‘belief that they should collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity’; and in the last category, Diaspora and diasporic communities typically ‘relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another and their ethno–communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such relationship.’ (24-25)

The scope of diaspora studies became more extensive after the inception of the journal *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* in 1991. In the editorial preface to the first issue of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* Khachig Tölölyan wrote, “The term that once described Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrants, expatriate, refugee, guest- worker, exile-community, overseas community, ethnic community” (Tölölyan 3). This should mean that as communities, diasporas have occupied different anthropological strata. That they build a buffer in between the native and the target communities cannot be true for all these categories. There are also choices that the diaspora makes. For instance, when mixed race politicians gain more recognition in the erstwhile colonizing countries, it is only obvious that more than being an in-between group diasporic community are choosing to occupy roles that are far from the margins. Apart from anthropology, displacement discourses also are interested in the way diasporas evolve. According to their functional placement in the target community, Robin Cohen in *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (1997) categorizes diaspora into 5 broad groups:

Victim Diaspora: This group name denotes those who have fallen victim to the forceful eviction of one group by another as seen in the case of Jewish experience, Africans, Armenians, Palestinians, etc. Victim diaspora is the original diasporic group: the people who seek shelter and keep wavering between the Promised Land and the land that they were forced to leave behind.

Trade Diaspora: Trade diaspora denotes a group that willingly chooses to serve two or more places because the trade prospects are better that way. They are a group that proactively disperses as Phoenicians, Vietnamese, and Chinese do.

Labour Diaspora: These are the travellers travelling voluntarily or under constrictions in search of job opportunities for example, Indians, Chinese and Nepali diaspora.

Imperial Diaspora: The Imperial diaspora are the ruling class of colonial paradigm. They migrate to the colonized country to serve the colonial homeland as Britain, Canada etc.

Cultural Diaspora: Groups with shared cultural traits which brings communities together in a de-territorialized land and identity as Indians and Caribbean etc. (qtd. Robinson 84).

Diaspora theorists are also of the opinion that categorizes diasporic people as first generation, second or third generation etc. This distinction is primarily based on the period of shift and the number of generations through which the subject had been a citizen of the host country or the present land of stay. Other than these divisions made by Cohen, diaspora can also be demarcated on the nature of their migration.

Diaspora's eclecticism owes much to the scholarly applications which have been concurrent with the media's repeated use of it as the signifier for any type of dispersal. It has evolved from the restricted Jewish concept of uprooting and trauma

into a pervasive field of studies focusing more on the forms of identification. In other words, the evolution of diaspora conforms with what Edward Said (1983) purports about theory as travelling and getting new semantic magnitudes: “Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel – from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another” (p. 226). Anand (2003) complements this idea in more general terms:

It [diaspora] has travelled beyond the confines of its Jewish- centered definition to charted and uncharted, familiar as well as strange territories. ... As a trace of titanium in an iron alloy can transform its properties, so also the contacts between the concept ‘diaspora’ and specific historical and cultural contexts have had constitutive influence on its present-day meaning (p. 212).

Some theorists advocate the need of both observance to and transcendence from the classical origins and connotations of the term even though “it’s changed meanings offer a new and exciting way of understanding cultural differences and identity politics” (Cohen, 1997, p. 6). Others speak for re-conceptualizing it in new contexts of dispersals. (Reis 2004), for instance, calls for the shift from the “classical” notion of diaspora to a “broader conceptualization” that allows the “inclusion of immigrant communities that would be otherwise sidelined in the conventional literature of diaspora” (p. 42). She asserts that “contemporary diasporas” are formed in the context of globalization where new cases like the opportunity seeking people are accommodated, and in such case displacement “arises due to situations that are neither traumatic nor associated with disaster.” Reis further demands for the inclusion of cases like “pursuit of work and the seizing of opportunities to study and travel abroad, facilitated by the globalizing process,” as they also count as “sufficient

reasons to stimulate the diasporic process in the contemporary context” (p. 49).

Indeed, Reis expands Sheffer’s notion of diasporas that includes:

ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands. It is evident that as a result of recent waves of labour migration to Europe, the Persian Gulf, and north America, new diasporas are constantly being formed. (Sheffer, 1986, p. 3)

Sheffer here approves of the fact that new types of diasporas are emerging through labour migrations. Besides, he underscores three basic requirements for a people to qualify as diaspora. First, they must be of “migrant origins,” not necessarily the victims of forced expulsion. Second, they must be “residing and acting” in the host lands, which means having power to show presence to speak. Third, they must retain “sentimental relations” with the homelands, which means retaining a connection to the roots but not necessarily in physical terms.

But the emergence of new theorists who explore new dimensions in the meaning of diaspora cannot be ruled out. Interesting to note, most of the observations on diaspora happen to take a three-dimensional framework. Surrounding the aforesaid three elements – dislocation to two and more countries, relationship within the diasporic groups and reorientation to a homeland – there have been several attempts at amplifying the concept. These new attempts deserve mention here in that they help reveal extent of the semantic eclecticism diaspora enjoys in the recent years. To begin with, Vertovec (1997) explores three dimensions in the contemporary use of diaspora:

Within a variety of academic disciplines, recent writings on the subject convey at least three discernible meanings of the concept ‘diaspora.’ These meanings refer to

what we might call 'diaspora' as social form, 'diaspora' as type of consciousness, and 'diaspora' as mode of cultural production. (pp. 277-278)

In Vertovec's terms diaspora as a social form refers to three factors; the process of becoming scattered, the community living in foreign parts, and the place or geographic space in which the dispersed groups live (p.278). Diaspora as a type of consciousness refers to "variety of experiences, a state of mind and a sense of identity" (p. 281); and "awareness of decentred attachments, of being simultaneously 'home away from home' or 'here and there' or awareness of multi-locality" (p. 282). Finally, as a mode of cultural production diaspora is known to be born out of the "worldwide flow of cultural objects, images and meanings" and is usually "conveyed in discussions of globalisation" (p. 289).

Anand (2003) classifies existing diaspora theories within what he calls "three common conceptualizations of diaspora" (p. 215). The first conceptualisation is the "most accommodating and less sophisticated version" in which diasporas are taken as actors in the international politics as delineated in the ideas of Sheffer. This category emphasizes the need to look at the "triadic networks of homeland (or trans-state organisations), host country and ethnic diaspora" (p. 215). The second category draws upon complementary as well as contradictory elements within the definitions offered by Cohen, Safran and Tölölyan (p. 216). Anand's third dimension entails an entire stock of serious theorization on diaspora. It concerns "less with description and prescription and more with critical reflection and reflexive theorization" (p. 218). Tölölyan's analysis of the evolution of diaspora both as a social, political, cultural entity and a field of scholarship comes under this category.

Veena Noble Dass categorises expatriate writers into two. The first one is those writers who are born in India and settled outside India. The second one is those who are born outside India and settled in India. The common factor that one can find between them is they select themes relating to Indian culture and tradition and loss of identity. She says, “when an Indian English writer comes in contact with an alien culture, he becomes aware of his rootlessness, and thereby the inadequacy of his mission. He feels that he is a stranger, a foreigner and an expatriate. Confrontation with the west leads him to a discovery of his own country, of his own self. The concept of Indianness forms an identity for these Indian expatriate writers.” (39)

As per George Steiner, the word “expatriate” itself has acquired much importance in the modern times. He says, “An Expatriate focuses on the native country that has been left behind. The expatriate dwells on the “ex” status of the past, while the immigrant celebrates his presence in the new country. Expatriate sensibility is a widespread phenomenon in this century” and he describes the expatriate writer as “the unctemporary every man” (10-11). Jasbir Jain opines on diasporic writing as “Diasporic writing too is double- faced: there is the preoccupation with home for a variety of different reasons, but there is also the cultural representation of a society...But the major tasks which are incomplete are the attainment of equality, the inability to do away with ghettoisation, and to ensure the presence of a dynamic culture of origin....The other extreme is the minority which is denied the privilege of belonging. Acceptability – both emotionally and politically- by the culture and country of adoption is an important aspect of all migrations.” (31-33)

Jasbir Jain, in her paper entitled, “The Indian Diasporic Experience”, says that Diasporic experience, in literature, has both ‘plus and minus points’. The ‘positive aspect’, she says, is that “diasporic experience reflects the several tributaries of our

history which come together to constitute a whole and allows us to see not merely an imagined pristine glory but also the compulsions of our past... histories of diaspora act like myriad mirrors which reflect on our notions of Indianness, Indian history and identity...Location and connectivity both are important. ... a fact that both post colonialism and postmodernism are the direct products of diasporic interventions in the cultures of the host countries as well as the countries of origin.” (78).The negative aspect is that “the diaspora acts like buffer; its greater visibility renders us invisible. It obstructs our view and silences our voice. And in the creative act we need to be wary as to how it uses our experience, our reality, our history.” (78)

Sometimes it is quite difficult and nevertheless hazardous for the diasporic communities in countering cultural dichotomies, and adjusting to attitudes and behaviour patterns of the new land. They are expected to be loyal towards their places of origin as well as their present land of residing. At such a situation the diasporic subjects suffer from guilt of disloyalty— seeming a traitor to both the land of origin which they had discarded in search of a better opportunity and a more comfortable life; and the land of stay, whose goodness and benevolence he accepts, yet fails to return in terms of loyalty and genuine dedication, love, etc. As mentioned earlier, they are also considered disloyal by both the homeland and hostland. Due to this the immigrants mostly remain confined to their dens or ghettos where people of the same community live in a confined environment giving them the impression of something like the homeland. However, as these ghettos have become sites of racist attacks, a group of people who have felt the need to move out of these confined suburbs, have journeyed to new freedom in the cities. Jenny Robinson’s (2002) comment aptly delineates the diasporic sensibility as the critic observes, “Diasporas are fragile transnational communities which often have to negotiate harsh

new environments and frequently choose to connect with, and seek security from, people identified, in some way, as ‘the same’” (79).

Now if the diasporic subjects are not acknowledged by either of the countries resulting in a sense of not belongingness pervading their existence, it must be recognized that this is not a phenomenon which taints every diasporic individual alike. Class plays a major role in altering the nature of experience. While the uneducated, illiterate downtrodden face the maximum crisis, the upper strata or the higher income groups, that is, the elites do not share the same lot. They are a success story for both the nations. According to Edward Said, the postcolonial intellectual is the type of the modern intellectual, existing simultaneously inside and outside the dominant regime (Said, *Culture...*). The post-colonial subjects, whose experience matches the diasporic experience, “reinvade and reclaim what imperialism has taken for its own” (ibid 22). However, Said also believes of himself a diasporic subject, that as the very type of political intellectual...a resilient and critical humanist in exile, ...he was always ‘out of place’ (Said, *Out of Place* 54). To bring in Gayatri C. Spivak’s experience, these dislocated people whether, named postcolonial or diasporic, are looked at from different perspectives. As she cites her case, she is approached diversely— “Sometimes ‘an anomaly’, sometimes regarded as a ‘Third World’ man/woman, and thus a convenient marginal or awkward special guest, the eminent but ‘Visiting Professor, sometimes a Bengali middle-class exile, sometimes as a success story in the star system of American academic life” (Selden, et al. 233). This problem becomes even more acute for those who have settled in more than one land at different points of time. These dual or multiple migrations have been as a result of multiple shifts due to convenience or as a result of forceful eviction. For example, diasporic existence had proved much crucial for Indians who had migrated

to East Africa in the 19th and early 20th centuries. During Idi Amin's reign they were pushed out of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania in the 1980s in the name of ethnic cleansing. These people had been forced to further migrate to England and America in their quest for new land and fresh opportunities. Now while most critics project the diasporic angst and take these rootless people as exilic, the critic and academician Jasbir Jain (2006), comes up with just the opposite interpretation where she finds expatriation as a state of exile, but finds the diasporic state as profitable. She feels, "Somewhere the journey of expatriation has turned into a diasporic one— from exile, anguish and suffering to one of pride, glorification and entrenchment in national literatures" (p. 23). She looks into its "multiple strands, its divided loyalties and its usurpation of space...in this age of globalization, dual citizenship and outsourcing" (ibid). For some, this passion for homeland remains in dormant form and never seems to cause much stirring until they face racism or a similar crisis. When it comes to third or fourth generation people, it is certain that they have no past related to the homeland and most of them had never been to the same. But still a consciousness of the homeland comes in snatches.

The term diaspora during the contemporary times refers to any dispersion leading to dislocation, rootlessness and alienation. Recent studies evince that Diasporic theorists and researchers do not consider 'locale' as a benchmark while referring to the nationality of a person. The diasporic people are held together by a strong sense of nationalism which surpasses any such boundaries of state and territory. In the absence of a particular locale or a space to consider that it rightfully belongs to them only, the diasporas are even more firm in their nationalistic ideals. This shows their cravings for an identity and ways to seek it also. A nation is not only a state within borders/boundaries but a local community, a group of people with a

shared feeling, family or even a ‘condition of belonging’ (Brennan 45), which the diaspora subjects explore.

According to Kim Butler (1998), the word “diaspora” is defined, at its simplest, as the dispersal of a people from its original homeland. This literature reflects change in social, political, and cultural realities while retaining a connection to a common cultural heritage. The characters and the events which are shown in this literature represent the people who struggle to assimilate into the new land and new culture. Serious concern for theorizing diaspora came to exist from the past one century. Many theorists came forward to opine their ideas on diaspora and even they categorized different types of diaspora on the basis of the reasons behind the migration.

Currently world diasporas are known by the country they ethnically hail from. One of the largest diasporas of modern times is that of the Africans, which dates back to several centuries. During the Atlantic slave trade a vast majority of people of Central Africa were enslaved and sold by some West Africans to Western European slave traders, after which they were transported to America. They were sold as cheap labourers to work on coffee, tobacco, cocoa, sugar and cotton plantations, construction industry, cutting timber for ships etc. (Indentured servants as they were classified then in English colonies). In ‘Tota's Tale’, a poem by Satendra Nandan, the pitiable situation of workers or labourers in India is thus referred to:

An empty line of twenty-four rooms:

Eight feet by twelve feet

Once it housed native workers

Eight died:

Others fled

Who would live among the dead?

Homeless I had come in search of paradise

This house of hell was now a mine. (Nandan, *Lines Across Black Waters*, 11-12)

Another Fijian-Indian writer Totaram Sanadhya, referred to those dark, monotonous and menacing lines where the laborers lived as *bhut len* (lines of ghosts/devils) and titled his book of poems, *Bhut lenki Katha* (The Story of Devil Lanes). Though Europe has been a major colonizer in the past centuries, history has seen large communities of European diasporas through the centuries. Technically the most significant diaspora of the Continent was instrumental in creating the United States of America. But the US is now not counted as a diaspora in general. James Axtell estimates that about 2, 40,000 people left Europe for America in the 16th century. Emigration continued. In the 19th century alone over 15 million Europeans migrated to North and South America. Other Europeans moved to Siberia, Australia etc. A specific example is the Irish diaspora which began in the mid-nineteenth century. It was brought about by the “The Great Hunger” caused by Irish Famine. An estimated 45% to 85% of Ireland’s populations migrated to different areas like Britain, US, Canada, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand.

The largest of the Asian diaspora is surely of Indian origin. The overseas community estimated at over 17.5 million is spread across many regions of the world, on every continent. It constitutes a diverse, heterogeneous, and eclectic global community representing different regions, languages, cultures and religions. However, Asian diaspora contains anomalies and unaccounted refugee populations such as the

Nepali diaspora. The Nepali communities generally addressed as Gorkhas have spawned a cultural episode that is unique and largely unaddressed by academic scholarship. Thus, one could say that the Indian Gorkhas are a group of people sharing same linguistic and cultural commonality with people of India and Nepal. Apart from Gorkhas, they are also addressed as Paharis or simply Nepalis.

Though the novels taken up for studies are not diasporic in the strict sense of the term as have been written by writers born in India but moved to other locations like Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh or by expatriate writers living in self-imposed exile. Yet, they can be categorized as diaspora fiction in lieu of the fact that most of the characters are dislocated from the 'centre' or their original home to new homes in other locations or countries, after migration. All of them deal with the saga of displacement, or forceful uprootedness, homelessness, memory, nostalgia, alienation, quest for identity, sense of loss, exile etc.

Nepali diaspora in India was not visible even to Nepal at the beginning because of the general silence that pervaded them. As VS Naipaul says in *Finding the Centre* (1984) homeland for them was a dream. This is true not only of the descendants of the unregimented British soldiers of Nepali ethnicity and other sects of Gorkhas but also all the major wandering communities that came from Nepal to India, where they had gone towards the end of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century to work as indentured or otherwise paid labourers.

British regimental expansion in the late 19th century with its new expansion-based ventures, especially in plantations, created the initial milieu for the exile. Outside the Nepal borders, from the heartland of India, more batches were made ready to go abroad and work in faraway plantations. In most cases, the colonial

governments and planters working in tandem did not consider it economically or politically correct to recruit the indigenous people who, with a life of gratis and freedom and never accustomed to hard work as required and basically carrying out subsistence farming for their livelihood, were itinerant in their approach towards their life and settlement, hence making the colonial government look not forward to the aborigines as a source for mitigating the demand. With the progressive prohibition of African slavery in the first half of the nineteenth century, India had become the main alternative source of labour. India had a huge population, millions living close to destitution; most of the sub-continent was under British control, which facilitated negotiations with foreign governments; India's climate was not unlike that of the islands where the British set up plantations, and most of her people were accustomed to agricultural work. The officers or labour recruiters went to remote villages in the heartland affected by drought and famine (often artificially created, as the colonisers shipped out food grains from India to their own armies fighting in different parts of the globe) or during a season when those working as tenant farmers or agricultural labourers were unemployed.

On the other end of the spectrum, the administrative reorganization that the British colonists introduced were greatly responsible for impoverishment in India and this induced many to leave the country despite the traditional aversion to crossing the dark seas or *kala pani*. This was the 'push' factor. The migration from India, mainly as unskilled labourers to provide a stable and manageable labour force on plantations in Mauritius, the Caribbean and Fiji, began in the 1830s.

The records show that the first wave of Nepali diaspora starts almost at this period of time. In *Nepali diaspora in a Globalised Era*, (2006) Subba and Sinha say:

There is a long history of their connection with the British, beginning in 1814, when the British fought against the expansionist Gurkhas and discovered their courage and fighting skills. The Nepalese rulers were initially reluctant to permit the British to recruit the Gurkhas, as they saw the British as their adversaries. But once the Ranas came to power in Nepal, a new phase of friendship emerged between them and the British. They also formally permitted the British to recruit their men, which led to the opening of recruitment depots at Dehradun, Gorakhpur, Laheriasari, Darjeeling and Shillong. (4)

Recruitment was basically a contract by which the conscripted soldier agreed to work for the British army for a period of five years distributed across the North East borders, and at the end of five years, the soldier was free to renew or choose to work as indentured labourer elsewhere in India. There were non-military diasporas too. These were purely indentured workers. They were wandering sets of labourers whose only qualification for unskilled work was physical fitness and the experience of agricultural work. There were men and women in this set though the majority at first was men.

Subba and Sinha observe what happened to both these groups by the end of the 1940s.

By the end of the British Rule in India, there were 10 regiments of the Gurkhas serving in the British Army. When India became independent, 6 Gurkha regiments opted to remain in India and four opted to go to Britain, who were required for their service in far-flung imperial outposts such as Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, Latin America, Caribbean Islands and the Falkland Islands. (5)

To weave the story of the unskilled labourers one needs to decipher through a totally different lens. They were facilitated by the Indo-Nepalese friendship Treaty of 1950. They started living either in the most isolated frontier posts or India's crowded cities with no jobs or terribly underpaid jobs. In due course, as their families grew some chose to remain in India. Those who had families back in Nepal like the seasonal porters went home once a year. After earning money for some period went back to Nepal to die in their own country. Therefore it would be a misnomer to say that all Indian Nepalis are migrants. Subba and Sinha say that there are no statistical data available to see how many of these groups are spread in India's ports, cities, roads, agricultural farmlands, mines, factories, studios, movies and technology hubs. They have always lived like transient labourers, not a permanent addition to the population, their languages, physical appearances, religions and culture were so strikingly different that the Nepali diaspora was regarded as an exotic group, marginal to the Indian society, insufficiently integrated to be considered a part of it. Life for the Nepali diaspora was really hard in India. The diaspora lived an isolated and insulated life in general and any contact with the outside world was mediated by the labour contractors, the magistrate, the police or other bureaucracies. Their freedom was highly limited and their confusing citizenry made them little better than slaves. They were coolies of Indian cities who were treated as second line members even among the coolies.

In countries like Mauritius and Caribbean too the paraphernalia of slavery still survived and the Indian workers who went there as plantation workers were treated as slaves. Slave-like labor life was a world of its own, with its own rules and customs, many of which were derived from the days of slavery. In Fiji, the ghettos were wretched habitations; each barrack had wooden partitions to create rooms with mud

floors that measured loft by 7 ft. Each cabin was allotted to three single men or a married couple and their children.

The lives of the women in relation to the Nepali diasporic people were particularly hard and troublesome. They worked in the fields, looked after the housework, and also protected themselves from the sexual advances of the powerful, predatory men, especially the British who wielded power over these helpless people. There was no concept of maternity leave, and women were back on the fields with their nursing babies as soon as they were able to move about after giving birth. Even in such difficult working and living conditions in the workplaces where normal life was disrupted, the communities tried to recreate and maintain some customs. During their free time, the workers organized wrestling matches, put together groups for singing songs (or narratives) and listened to readings from the scriptures.

The disproportion in the sex ratio, non-recognition and non-acceptance of Gurkha customary marriages, corrosion of conventional manacles and matrimonial mores made things worse in the advanced years of diasporic life. Consequences and tribulations in the Nepali diaspora facilitated disconcerted habits and practices, lowered the standard moral and ethical values, fashioned unwholesome antagonism and competition, fostered a feeling of jealousy and hatred which made the lives of these labourers very disturbed and unsettled, preparing the breeding ground for a life of resentment and anomaly.

On the other end of the spectrum, this yielded some of the positive (initially confusing) gains; the purities of the candid caste and religious identities were crumbling down, paving a way towards an 'Indian' identity and the shortage of women also made the men look towards other communities for matrimonial ties.

Robin Cohen (1997) in *Global Discourse* considers Diaspora consciousness as “recognition of the positive virtues of retaining a diaspora identity that is often a creative, enriching one”. He further opines that “members of diaspora characteristically sense not only a collective identity in a place of settlement, not again only relationship with an imagined, putative or real homeland, but also some common identity with co-ethnic members in other countries.” (25) In the case of Nepali diaspora these claims largely do not withhold. There are only loose ties to what they deem as their real past. At times, it is such that entire blocks of faith and rituals have been supplanted by adaptation and assimilation into Indian Hindu ways of life. The term ‘ethnic’ gains further layers here. The Indian Nepalis are not ‘ethnic’ in the sense that they are the sub group of the population belonging to ‘Nepal’ though residing in India. A historian like Dr. Kumar Pradhan has shown his resentment on being asked the question: “are the Indian Nepalis ‘ethnic’?”

Narrowing down our focus on the Nepali diaspora, we can say that it is complex and variegated and cannot be bracketed under any exclusive or conventional discipline. The cause and condition for migration may be broadly categorized as the push and pull forces, voluntary or involuntary, due to prevalent economic, political and social conditions. On turning the pages of history, we find that the Nepalese emigrants be it from Nepal or India or any other part of the globe have been a heterogeneous lot, varied in linguistic, caste, religious and cultural background. The most interesting aspect is the socio-cultural baggage carried by the first-generation emigrants such as language, music, religious tradition, cultural values etc. Over the years and prolonged stay out of one’s own land may cause some of these to disappear while some survive. Sometimes may it may be assimilated, syncretized, changed or at times revived.

In the midst of a multi –ethnic population where the Indian Nepalis have been a minority, the question of image and identity has been crucial. In the colonial and neo-colonial phase, the image of the Nepalis or Gorkhas was that of a “Coolie”, as has been detailed above. The militant history of the few however has earned them the title ‘bahadur’, the valiant one. Even today anybody who is employed as a watchman in different cities in India are called ‘bahadurs’ rather than by name. The same goes for representation in literature and Bollywood movies.

One could cite *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) by Kiran Desai as a literary text that uses the trope. In the words of Paul Jay, Kiran Desai’s novel “The Inheritance of Loss” deals with “intersecting and sometimes conflicting identities (personal, cultural, political) grounded in forms of displacement endemic to the long history of globalization” (Jay 2010: 91). Retired to his isolated house in Kalimpong after being a judge with the Indian Civil Service (ICS), Jemubhai is an alienated and resentful Anglophile, displaced from his sense of belonging to Indianness. Once away from India, he undergoes an educational and cultural transformation in England that has a profound impact on his identity:

He confines himself to his room, lets his landlady call him James, and becomes embarrassed by his unpronounceable name, his pronunciation of English, and the colour and smell of his skin: For entire days nobody spoke to him at all, his throat jammed with words unuttered, his heart and mind turned into blunt aching things, and elderly ladies, even the hapless—blue-haired, spotted, faces like collapsing pumpkins—moved over when he sat next to them in the bus, so he knew that whatever they had, they were secure in their conviction that it wasn’t even remotely as bad as what he had. The young and beautiful were no kinder; girls held their noses and giggled, “Phew, he stinks

of curry!” Thus, Jemubhai’s mind had begun to warp; he grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him, found his own skin odd-colour, his own accent peculiar (Desai 2006: 46–47).

The portrayal of this protagonist’s devastating solitude, his sense of dislocation and anguish is a result of the diasporic sensibility which had a direct effect on his identity formation.

The first-generation immigrants are usually keen to avoid conflicts with the host society. This group is not a homogenous social and cultural group. Their system of adjustment is that of ‘accommodationists’ or ‘integrationists’. It is expected that there should be ‘an eventual unification of discourse’ for a better understanding between the two cultures. Diaspora in the modern world may have a different context. Vijay Mishra refers to two kinds of diaspora, “The Old Diaspora comprising of slave and indentured labourers, the product of ‘classic capitalism’ and the new diaspora made up of economic migrants and refugees, the product of late capitalism” (26). It is quite likely and natural for the old diasporas to have broken contact with their homeland over the years. Yet, it surfaces sometimes. However, on the other hand the new Diaspora is economically more secure which gives them easy access to their homeland. Mishra further goes on to say that the new Diaspora has greater mobility and sees one’s exile as negotiable, semi-permanent or mere temporary. The concepts of migration, transnationalism, ethnicity, identity, religion, politics, citizenship, gender, sexuality, hybridity etc. fall into the domain of diaspora studies.

Diaspora sensibility refers to a sort of consciousness experienced by the transnational communities. Diaspora does not merely refer to the dispersion of people but it is an experience made up of collective and multiple journeys. It is an experience

gone through by the one who travels – where, how and under what circumstances. One's own 'homeland' and the new country of adoption oscillate between the 'real' and 'imaginary'. Self is constituted through the multiple pasts, co-existing in the present. The inner 'self' is constituted through cognitive process i.e. reflection, memory, education and others. 'Self' is affected by and affects identity, which is the external layer related to colour, race, class, society, status and nationality.

Diaspora people are grouped under different categories depending on their relationship with the host country. When the immigrants do not assimilate but adopt only some aspects of the host country, they develop a dual identity and their culture becomes a 'Sandwich culture'. A society where people with different social and cultural backgrounds do not mix with each other, it is called a 'Plural Society'. Likewise, those immigrants who after coming to the host country do not mix with other people and try to maintain their separate identity are called 'Sojourners'. One noticeable feature of diaspora societies is that caste identities get blurred and national identities take over. Diaspora belongs to everywhere and nowhere at the same time, just like an 'Unanchored soul'.

Today diaspora society refers to any sizeable community of a particular nation or region living outside its own country and sharing some common bonds that give them an ethnic identity and consequent bonding. However, what constitutes ethnic identity is fluid and changes over time, place and circumstances. The first-generation migrants are those who have moved out from their country of birth to another. Second generation migrants are the children of migrants, who were either very young at the time of migration or were born in the country of arrival. The perspectives across the generations can differ enormously. If the 'third generation migrants' are still culturally distinct, they may be considered as an ethnic minority.

For the first-generation people of any diaspora, ethnic identity means having strong feelings about the country of their origin. From the second generation onwards ties with the homeland get gradually lessened because of their bonding with the new land. This new land does not remain alien forever for them. It becomes their country though not fully. A group of immigrants from a particular country are not a monolithic block. It is impacted both by the cultural variation among themselves and by the culture of the adopted country. In every society there are certain elements which are considered as markers of identity- i.e. food, clothes, language retention, religion, music, dance, myths, legends, customs of individual community etc. These are retained, discarded or adopted differently at different times and places but a feeling of oneness, a tug of roots persists even after several years and sometimes centuries. Regarding the immigrant's feelings, Salman Rushdie, in 'Imaginary Homeland' (1982) says:

“Exiles or emigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back. We will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost” (10)

Literature does not deal with the economic and political diasporic conditions. It deals with the experiences of individuals in specific times and situation. The characters portrayed in the novel depend upon the nature of the immigrants. The ones who harbor nostalgia for their homeland and possess a negative attitude to the host country are portrayed accordingly. Similarly, emigrants are portrayed according to the reasons of migration which in most cases are for the improvement of their economic conditions. In the present social and political scenario, the history and literature of a country remains incomplete if the country's culture and heritage remains ignored in its writings. A country's literary history would further miss its core, if the voices of its regional, marginalized writers remain unheard. It is an important dimension within a

multilingual and multicultural society. To serve this purpose the Nepali novelists have broken their silence by writing from the periphery – voices which had been subdued for centuries. Diaspora writing reviews history for its lost identities and missing links and dwells heavily on the ‘Presence of the Past’ in order to create a space for the marginalized and fractured de-centered self. Such opinions are shared by Amitav Ghosh when he admits ‘History is profound in my thoughts and in my novels’. This holds true for some writers of Post-Colonial Nepali novels. Historical and political events which find a place in most of the novels coincide with the actual happenings of the time and are interpreted and re-interpreted by different characters in different ways to project their multiple perspectives. These characters are poverty stricken yet stoically endure economic hardships. The novels though replete with social realism in their portrayal of the pathetic lives of the Indian Nepalis, deal with other aspects also. What is most striking in them is their sense of ‘home’ and ‘belongingness’ which this thesis tries to explore.

Different diaspora theorists and critics have explained the meaning of diaspora from various yet equally important perspectives such as identity, locations, imagination and place of origin. KachigTölölyan, Stuart Hall, Robert Cohen, Vijay Mishra, Avtar Brah, William Safran are some of the theorists who have attempted to give shape to the theoretical constructs of this recently emerged discipline.

According to Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur in *Theorizing Diaspora*:

Most recent theorizations of diaspora have been marked by the ambiguities of the term diaspora itself, a term which literally denotes communities of people dislocated from their native homelands through migration, immigration, or exile as a consequence of colonial expansion. ... recent theorizations of the diaspora also seek

to represent (and problematize) the lived experiences (...) of people whose lives have unfolded in myriad diaspora communities across the globe. Diasporic subjects are marked by hybridity and heterogeneity –cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national-and these subjects are defined by a traversal of the boundaries demarcating nation and boundaries (4-5)

In the host country on finding themselves in a social milieu which is very different from their own country these diasporic subjects are bound together by the commonalities of culture, language, nation, gender and other such identity defining notions which also set them apart as being different from the mainstream population. At the beginning the ‘diasporas’ being a minority in the host nation often remain distinct, marginal and alienated from the majority groups that exert greater power and influence. Such is the predicament of the Nepalis who migrated to the North–East due to demand for labour by the British during the Colonial period. Similar instances have been portrayed by the novelist Lil Bhahadur Chhetri, in *Brahmaputra ko Cheu Chau* (*Close to river Brahmaputra*, 1986) Avtar Brah in *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (1996) says that the distributed spaces inhabited by diasporas suggest how migration and settlement transform localities and nation, which in turn go into the making of separate and distinct neighborhoods’ for diasporically marked communities. She says that ‘diaspora space’ (209) is an intersection of borders, the crossroads where all subjects and identities become...juxtaposed, contested, disavowed... (208)

A number of prominent Indian writers have apprehended the various challenges of their tradition and contemporary situation in relation to diasporic literature. A substantial group of them, as Prabhat K. Singh identifies, authored what he dubs “the Diaspora novels that deal in realistic fashion with cultural clashes, identity crisis,

alienation and search for a substitute living which are but the outposts of immigrant odyssey” (Singh 2013: 24).

At the very beginning of his book “Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary”, Mishra offers his definition of diasporas:

All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way. Diasporas refer to people who do not feel comfortable with their non hyphenated identities as indicated on their passport. Diasporas are people who would want to explore the meaning of the hyphen, but perhaps not press the hyphen too far for fear that this would lead to massive communal schizophrenia. They are precariously lodged within an episteme of real or imagined displacements, self-imposed sense of exile; they are haunted by spectres, by ghosts arising from within that encourage irredentist or separatist movements. Diasporas are both celebrated (by late/post modernity) and maligned (by early modernity). But we need to be a little cautious, a little wary of either position (Mishra 2007: 1).

Mishra’s argument emphasizes the separated sense of self diasporic experience as a result of a dislocated and distraught condition, displaced in territory and thought, and hinging on their particular circumstances and narratives. In order to study the latter, he makes a case for approaching the Indian diaspora “as two relatively autonomous archives” (Mishra 2007: 2), one belonging to the “old” Indian diaspora of nineteenth-century indenture and early capitalism, and the other “new” one shaped by the transnational capital of the late twentieth century. They mirror “the very different historical conditions that produced them” (Mishra 2007: 3), where the latter, “new” diaspora stems from globalization and hyper mobility, it comes with modern means of communication already fully formed or in the making (airplanes, telephone, e-mail,

the internet, videocassettes, DVD, video-link, webcam) and it comes, since 2003, with the gift of dual citizenship from India (the Indian Citizenship Act 1955 has been amended to allow the Indian diaspora in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands and Italy to retain dual citizenship). In a thoroughly global world, the act of displacement now makes diasporic subjects travellers on the move, their homeland contained in the simulacral world of visual media where the “net” constitutes the “self” and quite unlike the earlier diaspora where imagination was triggered by the contents in gunny sacks... (Mishra 2007: 3–4)

Mishra argues that an all-inclusive understanding of the Indian diaspora can only be reached if the particular locations of both diasporas are considered. He perceives the core of Indian diasporic literature in its place of origin as intimation, and a location to which diasporas seek to return despite its unattainability. The diasporic imaginary according to him gets constituted by: “any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself consciously, unconsciously or through self-evident or implied coercion, as a group that lives in displacement” (Mishra 2007: 14).

Vijay Mishra in his essay “The Diaspora Imaginary” divides Indian diaspora into old and new. In the case of ‘old diaspora’ (Textual Practice 421), the certain break with the motherland was enforced by distances, slower modes of travel and lack of economic means to make frequent journeys. On the other hand, according to Vijay Mishra, the ‘new diaspora’, is characterized by greater mobility and voluntary nature of immigration which might not be permanent. The new diaspora is motivated by professional considerations and this type of Diaspora usually finds place in recent South Asian literature.

Another trope that is involved in the discussion of diasporic predicament is multiculturalism. Movement and migration which are the pre-requisites of a diaspora often leads to an interface between the cultures of homeland and the adopted land. This interface gives rise to various terminologies such as hybridity, heterogeneity and multiculturalism to describe its various nuances and has become a vital part of diaspora theory. For theorists such as Makarand Paranjape in his essay 'Writing Across Boundaries' opines that the importance of all diaspora lay in its potentiality for creating a new kind of culture which arises out of the crossing of boundaries. It involves a cross-cultural passage. It is only through such a crossing that a unique consciousness of the diasporic subject can be created.

The unique consciousness referred to by Paranjape here is the consciousness of multiple cultures that goes into the creation and being of the diaspora. The diaspora by virtue of (or as result of) migration is placed uniquely as straddling civilizations, boundaries and cultures out of which it tries to carve a common space for itself.

In another of his article "Interrogating Diasporic Creativity: The Patan Initiative--A Valedictory Address" Paranjape says:

What I've been suggesting is that diasporic literature and experience need to be subjected to some rigorous class analyses. We will discover that the diasporans themselves form a stratified society. Those on the top, the creamy layer, get all the accolades and laurels; those at the bottom end up in the dustbins of history. The inequalities of the home and of the host country are more often than not reproduced, not negated, in the diaspora. So the word diasporas actually includes two types of people. One who are doubly under privileged and the other who are under privileged. This is where we have to be able to make our own critical distinctions. The

doubly under privileged are those who have lost both homeland, and as illegal immigrants abroad have lost izzat. They can't come back without having earned the money which they lost when they left. When you come across them, they do not look you in the eye because they know that you are from India. They see themselves doing low status jobs. You, on the other hand, are a tourist. So they don't want to say 'hello' to you. They also know that you will not buy their products, so they target the "rich" white people instead. (As quoted in <http://www.makarand.com/acad/InterrogatingDiasporicCreativity.htm>)

Stuart Hall in his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" also explains the concept of multiculturalism in the diaspora. He expresses his views through the concept of identity formation rather than that of culture and civilizations "The diaspora experience...through transformation and difference." (235)

As seen above Stuart Hall explains clearly that diaspora is comprised of multiples, be it in terms of cultures, origins or identities. The identity Hall speaks here is a 'cultural identity' which in itself can be further explained in two different ways. The first defines it in terms of a shared culture, a collective 'one true self' (223). This collective self is common to people with a shared history and ancestry and is a stable, unchanging frame of reference. The second view is that along with the shared culture and points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant "difference" (225). It is in these respects that cultural identity does hold significance for diaspora communities who do not let go of their attachment to their motherland which gives them a sense of who they are. Stuart Hall says that it is these differences:

‘which constitute what we really are’ or rather since history intervened. Hence, cultural identity, especially in diasporic context, is thus not static. Instead they transcend time, place and history to take on multicultural hues. They undergo constant transformations as subjects of the present time and place but under the influence of the past. It is only from the other perspective of cultural identity as being dynamic and ever changing that we can understand the diaspora experience as being an essentially multicultural one.

It is a well-accepted fact that the diasporic people suffer a hyphenated existence. Life is crucial and complicated as they fail to do away with either of the Nationality tags. Identity takes a curious shape in the midst of such gaps. The hyphenated existence of the diaspora draws attention to the fluid identities which are reconfigured from time to time due to the ongoing change in political environment. According to Stuart Hall, the diaspora experience “is defined, not by essence or purity, but by recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity, by a concept of identity which lives with and through, not despite, difference: by hybridity” and diaspora identity is constantly producing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (Hall 1992:235)

The hyphen also draws attention towards the suppressed histories of cross-cultural and cross- racial relations. This self-reflexive hybridity in Bhabha’s words, is an “insurgent act of cultural translations” (Bhabha 1994:7) It is rife with subversive potential to unsettle hegemonic relation as it focuses on processes of negotiations and contestation between cultures. Bhabha considers that the in-betweenness (third) space occupied by the diasporic subject is filled /replete with creative possibilities: “.....[I]t

is the space of intervention emerging in the cultural interstices that introduces creative intervention into existence.” (Bhabha 1994:7).

Bhabha’s theory which states “the in-betweenness” (third) space occupied by the diasporic subject is replete with creative possibilities’ holds true for some Nepali Diaspora writers. Here a mention must be made of Shri Lil Bahadur Chhetri, a Nepali novelist of Assam. He has been recently honoured with the prestigious Padma Shree title on February 2020, the 4th highest Civilian Honour in India. Having being born and brought up in Assam, all throughout his life he has witnessed the problems of the Nepalis. Some of them who were migrants from Nepal had to go through the hard phase of assimilation and acculturation. At times they were not accepted by the host country for the fear of being a minority in their own land. These migrants occupied the interstitial spaces, whose saga Lil Bahadur has delineated very aptly in his novels. Likewise, writers like Salman Rushdie along with Edward Said opined that there are creative potentialities in the exilic condition. However, such ideological belief has evoked a sharp reaction from some post-colonial writers. These writers feel that by eliding the pain and sufferings of the exile in their celebration of cultural hybridity and the ‘third space’ Aijaz Ahmed, Benita Parry and Lawrence Phillips have critiqued Bhabha, Rushdie and Said. Diasporic discourse is replete with yearning for home- there is no place like the home- the mother, the originary home, the homeland haunts the diasporic consciousness.

‘The concept of diaspora’ suggests Avtar Brah, ‘places a discourse of home and ‘dispersion’ in creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins’. The homing desire is not the same as the desire for a ‘homeland’ the homing desire is a desire to create the home where one is, that is in the host culture. Though these migrants harbor a strong desire to return to their

country of origin, the old paradigmatic diasporas cannot be treated as models for contemporary diaspora. Taking into account the contemporary global socio-economic realities, the old Diasporas can only be treated as points of departure. Such is the dream of the Nepali diaspora. To understand this aspiration at the global level we may refer to Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), where Biju epitomizes the Nepalis who harbor a dream of making it big in America. He lives with the false hopes of assimilation and being successful in life. Unfortunately, the gruelling reality is that he is an illegal resident, eking out of bare existence waiting tables and sleeping in basement (even as his father imagines his son to be amassing wealth and prestige, while in actuality he is living in abject condition. He can endure no more and longs for 'home').

It is a known fact that the Diaspora subjects are constantly haunted by the fear of being uprooted from their homes, as is clear from the Nepali literature. In the rest of the chapter a few specimens of the literature from Nepali diaspora are taken for analysis. The close readings of these novels shall show how representations of the past and present have been carried out in cultural specimens.

Diasporic Sensibility in Nepali Novels: -

The novel *Naya Khittij ko Khoj (In Search of a New Horizon, 1979)* written by Asit Rai, a Nepali novelist from Darjeeling. He received the Sahitya Akademi award in 1981 for this novel. As stated in the Preface, the writer has mentioned that he has tried his best to narrate the true history of Darjeeling with the help of fictional characters. The novel opens in the 19th century when characters like Lamichannay Gurung a cattle grazier, migrated from Nepal with his livestock comprising of sheep

which was the only means of sustenance. People like Sahila Gurung, Dalay Mangar and many more walked in a group resting at places. As they sit on a huge boulder to take rest, they hear a loud noise. All were alert trying to figure out the sound they heard. Lamichanay Buro (buro, meaning an old man) asks them to keep silent as the sound could be made by the Rongs who could be moving deftly on a hunting spree. They could be mistaken for animals and targeted from far. He carries on further narrating a history of their life and land, where initially there were just ten twelve families of them. They did not know how to cultivate land and make it a source of subsistence. This was later taught by other migrants who were familiarized with terrace farming. All they knew was to hunt and survive with the prey.

Another character Sahila Gurung asks an important question ‘whose land is this?’ Making Lamichannay delve deep into the annals of history, he replies that the land was first won over by their King Prithivi Narayan Shah. The land was called Gorkha ‘*thum*’ (thum, meaning a small principality or a hilly district). This showed that the migrants were on the India/Nepal border, in fact just about to enter India.

Walking further another question arises on the minds of migrants-

“Whose land is this? Is it of the *Rongs* (meaning *Lepchas*) or is it ours? There is a *Gumba* (monastery) on top and one *kazi* (*Minster*) stays there” (p4) muses Balbir Gurung. Lamichannay replies, that the land was won over by king Prithvi Narayan Shah. The individual comments made by these Nepalese migrants served to coalesce into the history of Darjeeling and Sikkim. The very mention of the *Rongs* as the original inhabitants shows that Darjeeling was initially a part of Sikkim but later taken over by Nepal.

With the coming of British in India, the king of Sikkim popularly referred to as Chogyal, made a request to assist them in getting back their lost territory. This caused the Anglo-Nepal war (1814) in which Nepal was defeated. It led to the signing of the Treaty of Segauli in 1815. Nepal had to cede Darjeeling to the East India Company. Darjeeling once again belonged to Sikkim and was to be returned to the monarch of that country. However, the British on finding the topography of Darjeeling very productive and its climatic condition highly suitable to make a sanatorium, they refused to return it to Sikkim. Instead they took Darjeeling on lease and the Gorkhas were made to live under British. That is why the Gorkhas make a claim that we came 'with the land'. Going by it if this claim is authentic ours is a case of 'migration of borders over people' and not people crossing the border and living as illegal immigrants. So, ours is a case of border moving over people as Roger Brubaker has said. The Treaty established the boundary line between India and Nepal. After coming to India or *Muglan*, (often regarded as the land of the Mughals) these migrants start working in full gusto to make temporary shanties for accommodation. Though Darjeeling was still a jungle then they did not face the problem of assimilation as most of the original inhabitants of this place were Indian Nepalese with the lesser population of Beharis and Bengalis. All of them were ruled over by the British. After the procurement of Darjeeling from Nepal, the British assessed it and found that it would also serve as a summer resort to escape the scorching heat of the Indian summer.

After the East India Company became the Protectorate of the kingdom of Sikkim. History is a witness of the fact that the British took advantage of this prerogative. On 1st February 1835 the Deed of grant was signed between the East India Company and the Raja of Sikkim after which Darjeeling was given on Lease.

The novel apart from discussing the history of Darjeeling, it is replete with themes of colonial subjugation, oppression, coerciveness, insecurity, memory, nostalgia, alienation etc. Being under the harsh governance of the Imperial rule the people of Darjeeling and surrounding hills began to suffer from a sense of insecurity. Time and again they give out expressions of despair when they say:

“Hamro Göth Uthaunay Bhayo” meaning ‘now they will destroy our cowsheds’ (p12)

One night all the migrants sit around fire and discuss the fate that awaits them. Their minds are saturated with the fear of being uprooted from the country to which they did not belong. Some feel that it is better to return to Nepal. Years had rolled by since their migration to India. Some like Sahila Gurung had adjusted in the host country as ties with the homeland had lessened due to economic reason as well as physical inability to traverse over long distances. Such characters’ refused to be uprooted forcefully from his land and says, ‘I shall die here as I have planted my feet only on this soil.’ (p12)

M.L.Raina, in his article “Home, Homelessness and the Artifice of Memory”, says, “Dislocation can occur as a physical movement from home into alien territory forced by war ... Displacement and exile have enjoyed a special privilege in literature. Bereft of the soul, estranged from the familiar, banished from the community, expelled from the home country, lost in the Diaspora – such tropes have formed a constant axle of poetry and novels for centuries” (18). He also quotes Boym who opines on diaspora thus:

“Diasporic intimacy does not promise a comforting recovery of identity through shared nostalgia for the lost home and the homeland... Just as one learns to live with alienation and reconciles oneself to the uncanniness of the surrounding world and to

the strangeness of the human touch, there comes a surprise, a pang of intimate recognition, a hope that sneaks in through the back door in the midst of the habitual estrangement of everybody's life abroad." (19).

The above holds true for characters like Sahila Gurung who are caught in-between these thoughts. After the employment of General Lyod as an agent of East India Company in 1837 the first agenda was urbanization of Darjeeling. The foremost task was to build a road from Siliguri to Darjeeling. For this first the forest had to be cleared the trees had to be cut, so as to provide a vacant space for the work. Till then a large part of Darjeeling was fully forested tract of land. The two ways in which the British Ecological Imperialism manifests itself is in the way the forests were marred and the natural habitat was destroyed, mainly due to their passion in hunting, which shall give a realistic picture of ecological Imperialism in India.

During the process of clearing forests to make road sometimes there were huge boulders in this rough hilly terrain, which had to be broken. For this job the Nepalis were asked to climb to the top of the cliff, tying themselves with a thick rope on their stomachs. It was a dangerous task and their lives were at stake. When one or two of them tried they fell off the cliff and died. After that nobody volunteered to show their skill. Yet, when someone like Thakthungba Lunga showed interest and came forward, the Sahib clapped and said 'Shabhash Lunga, Hum Tumko Bakshish Dega' (p31) meaning (Good Lunga... go ahead I shall give you bakshish which means some extra money for it). On the other hand, his well-wishers discouraged him saying,

"Why are you playing with your life? Think of your family back at home in Nepal. Why do you want to lose your life in a country where you have come with hopes of a better future? ... not to die here." (p31). [This hints at the fact that the migrant Nepalis

had come to India only for employment reasons and not to reside permanently in a country to which they did not belong.]

On hearing this Sahib is furious and turns around saying “Badmash log, bahut bakbak kartahai. Hum tum saabko *hatta bahar (or evict) Kargega*” (all of you are rascals who survive with the money of the Company but will not obey the orders given to you. I shall immediately evict you out from this garden). The helpless workers huddled in a corner praying seriously that the sahib forgive them and not throw them out to make them ‘homeless’ in a country where they had nowhere to go. This is an act of coercion by the Colonial governance that is implicit in the novel. One is reminded of the Indo-Fijian poet and critic Sudesh Mishra who has cited various definitions of diaspora and the diverse stances taken by different critics. He differentiates between the “old” and “new” diaspora as the “sugar” and the “masala” diaspora and explains the binary and the different ideas of “home”. According to him, the movement from Seepersad Naipaul to Meera Syal suggests an important rethinking of the concept of ‘home’ within the diaspora, especially as this occurs against the backdrop of the global shift from the centring or centripetal logic or monopoly capitalism to the decentering or centrifugal logic of transnational capitalism. Whereas for the sugar diaspora ‘home’ signifies an end to itinerant wandering, in putting down the roots, ‘home’ for the masala diaspora is linked to the strategic espousal of rootlessness, to the constant mantling and dismantling of the self in makeshift landscapes (Mishra 294).

An important aspect that is usually found in Post-Colonial novels is that of the hybrid identity of the characters. There are important theoretical concepts of Homi Bhabha-like hybridity, which leads to an in-betweenness, also known as the interstitial spaces, (third space), mimicry, the stereotypical representations which can be seen in some of the characters of this novel.

When the small gauge tracks were laid till Ghoom station in Darjeeling, it made the working conditions extremely unbearable for the people. It was biting cold at night under the shanties with no proper bedding, clothing to provide warmth to them. Many fell ill due to the chill. People started dying due to fever. There was no hospital in the tea gardens which shows lack of medical facilities then and also hints at the callousness of the British, when it comes to the lives of the natives. When Lunga's wife had fever, she asks for leave as it was beyond the enduring capacity of her health. The leave was refused. The Imperial Order was such that nobody could take leave during that period under any circumstances. Yet, nobody could defy it also. This was an act of colonial 'hegemony'. Lunga's wife died and was cremated in a country to which she did not 'belong' with very few people known to her. Such was the ending of many Nepalis like her who had no friends and family to sit beside and mourn the loss for.

Kharga Sardar's elder son had the largest number of 'coolies'. His airs were like a 'sahib'. He wore coat and breeches, rode on a white horse to supervise the work. This is an act of 'mimicry'. According to Huddart 'Mimicry' is no doubt 'an exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners.' It is 'repetition with a difference' which in turn 'mocks and undermines the ongoing pretensions of colonialism and empire' (Huddart, 39)

When he came to the garden all the coolies saluted him as they would do to a white man. One day Dalay Mangar (one of the coolies) was carrying a coat and walking behind him. The coat slips from his hand and drops into swampy mud. He was beaten mercilessly for this small mistake. Dalay begs for mercy but all pleas fall on deaf ears. He becomes unconscious. When he gains consciousness, he recalls the ghastly incident. His thoughts wander to the ingratitude of the Sardar because earlier at one

time 'Dalay' had saved that same sardar's father 'Kharga', from the clutches of a bear.

This Nepali sardar, Kharga's son is a perfect example of a stereotype that Bhabha (1994) has talked about. The creation of stereotype is important in the discourse of colonialism. Bhabha suggest that stereotypical knowledge is recognized as a means of practical control:

Stereotypes function to enable colonial authority, providing the justification that the colonizers rule the colonized due to innate superiority (67). He mimics a white master in his dress code and lordly airs, when riding a horse and moving around. He not only physically supervised the gardens but also had reporters to given him information regarding any negligence of duty or breach of rules of the Imperial government. This can be viewed as an act of surveillance, the gaze that is over all the workers in absentia. Any such matter coming over to him would further be reported to the manager of the garden, who in a sense seamlessly wielded power through the concept of the Panoptican gaze, as propounded by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*:

“The Panopticon is a marvelous machine which, whatever use one may wish it to, produces homogenous effects of power.” The ‘Panopticon’ which is a fantastic structure build by Jeremy Bentham becomes a symbol of Foucault's argument. Here Garden Manager's power of governance becomes the center of the Panopticon. Every worker in the garden may deem himself to be an individual employee. Yet, he is unaware of the gaze of the white colonial master observing him from a distance. It is a well-accepted fact that the diasporic people suffer a hyphenated existence. Life is crucial and complicated as the fail to do away with either of the nationality tags. Identity takes a curious shape in the midst of such gaps. He is a migrant Nepali in reality but tries to

mimic the white man, the colour and status which he can never attain. As put forward by Ashcroft et al:

“When colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to ‘mimic’ the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather, the result is a ‘blurred copy’ of the colonizer that can be quite threatening (p124-125)

The novel *Brahmaputra ko Cheu Chau* (*Close the River Brahmaputra, 1986*) was written by the first Padmashree awardee Nepali writer Shri Lil Bahadur Chhetri. Nepalis have always been known for being migratory in nature. An important precipitating factor which was the cause of migration was due to internal strife among the power-hungry clans. According to A.C. Sinha, the initial Nepali settlement in Assam began as early as 1824 when Jaichand Thakur, a retired Subedar from the English Gorkha Platoon, Sylhet, settled down at Shillong. (42) Sinha opines that the reasons for migration to Assam was because “the life in the hills [of Nepal] was so difficult because there was very limited arable land in the forested and snow-bound mountain” (14) Therefore, other than spontaneous out-migration, Nepali settlement of the North East was a result of “sponsored immigration and settlement by the colonial administration” (Nag 192). Despite a prolonged stay in the host country amounting too many generations over the years, they still suffer from the “twin issue of ‘foreigners’ and ‘displacement’” and lived through “underdevelopment, deprivation, insecurity and lack of proper facilities” (Nath 225-6).

The writer himself clarifies, “The novel, as the title suggest, mostly revolves around the Brahmaputra” (in ‘*Lekhak Ka Kehi Sabdha*’ or *Preface*) published in 1986, Brahmaputra... covers a period of 25 years from early 1940s to late 1960s.

Based on the events related to the lives of the Nepalis in Assam during the period of 24 years from 1943 to 1969-70, the book systematically covers a story of a relationship of Nepalis with the Assamese society... Being an attempt to render a realistic picture of the Nepalis in Assam, the book contains more elements of history than of a novel, and probably lacks the usual flavour of a novel (*'Lekhak Ka Kehi Sabdha'* or *Preface*).

Identity formation in a host culture is also an important issue portrayed in this novel.

Manuel Castles defines identity as “people’s source of meaning and experience,” and indicates that its formation stems from the need to construct meaning “on the basis of a cultural attribute or a set of cultural attributes...” (6).

This concept brings home the idea that identity depends more on people’s cultural heritage and in being able to preserve it, than on the geographical space they occupy. Man Bir, (an important character, the father of the hero Gumane) leaves Nepal as he discovers that he was very badly entrapped into a net of exploitation and powerlessness caused by the feudal lords.

The first generation tries to retain their identity of being a Nepali in Assam by following their traditional rites and rituals. It is true that the migrants always carry their ‘cultural baggage’ with them, wherever they go to. This is portrayed through the lives of the Nepalis of Bage Chhapadi, a typical old settlement of farmers and graziers on the banks of Brahmaputra, through the preservation of their cultural heritage when celebrating the Hindu festivals like Dasai and Tihar. (49). The second type of identity formation is seen through the effort of some Nepalis to modernize Nepali settlements in the light of education. Nepalis in Pahumara and Mahakuti have established schools and have encouraged the children of peasants and graziers to join them. The library

that Gumane establishes in Kakati Babu's land in order to help the youths of these places to be educated is another landmark in this direction. (166). Despite all efforts the Nepalis failed to attempt the identity of respectable citizens in Assam. There are some external as well as internal factors that have contributed to this. Purushattam Lal Bhandari, (a Senior Lecturer of Jagiroad College, Assam) aptly delineates that the main cause of this is that the Nepalis of Assam are "treated like second class citizen" (122). A constant fear of being uprooted from their land of stay haunts their psyche, despite acculturation. The foremost 'predicament' in the words of T.B. Subba, a Prof. of NEHU, 'is the constant fear of eviction' because cases of eviction and atrocities are 'a possibility no one can deny' (205)

The novel focusses on the lives of peasant and graziers and less on their political aspiration. Instead he portrays the natural calamities like Brahmaputra flood (46-47) as the main cause of displacement and instability. There are other internal causes that hinder the identity formation in Assam. Exploitation of poor Nepalis by Mahajans (or money lender) is a theme that runs throughout the novel. [Some mention needs to be made about the Dairy Business. When the Nepalese migrated from Nepal, many of them came with their livestock (mainly cows and sheep) as that was the only source of income generating means for them. The reasons for rearing these animals were because the Nepalis prospered fairly well in 'dairy' Farming. This profession was carried on in India also as is seen in the novel *Brahmaputrako Cheu Chau*, (1986). It is shown in another novel *Muluk Bahira (Out of One's Countr, 1948)* also, where Mahila Bhujel (an important character) after being displaced from his land, goes to different places and does many types of works but ultimately settles down in Dairy business. The reason for rearing sheep is that sheep wool fetched high price.]

In the novel, the life of Gumane, the hero, symbolizes the struggle of new generation Nepalis to resist and end exploitation. But Gumane cannot end the exploitation of Dairy Mahajan. He only manages to evade from the clutches of the Mahajan and his trap to get him married to the speech –impaired daughter Muna. (101). Man Bir, Gumane’s father the first-generation immigrant is reluctant to rebel. Living under Dairy Mahajan appears to him to be far better, than his condition of being homeless, after his emigration from Nepal. He compromises with the oppression and submits his identity before the hegemony of the Mahajan. Another character Bam Bahadur Subba chooses to escape from the tyranny of the Mahajan without taking his salary of 2 years. The first-generation emigrants like Man Bir and Bam Bahadur appear helpless against the subjugation and failed to claim an independent identity. The Nepalis in the novel are shown to be lacking in zeal to modernize. Majority of them live in the farms and cattle- sheds. They are hardworking no doubt but unwilling to take any challenges for a change in life. For example, when Gumane arrives in Guwahati in search of work, the owner informs him that Nepalis who initially lived in that part of the city moved to the villages for cattle farming. The man promptly replies – ‘Why would my race leave the tails of cows and buffaloes and live in the city?’ (77) This shows that they are content with a complacent life.

A strong racial consciousness has developed in the Nepali community, a spirit of difference from the indigenous people. This difference has deprived them of the chance of co-existence and affinity with the latter. However racial prejudice of the Assamese community is equally responsible for the disintegration.

Lil Bahadur Chhetri’s novel truly revolves around the identity crisis of the Nepalis of Assam. Contemporary scholars and academicians like TB Subba and Purushottam

Bhandari attribute such identity crisis to the external causes such as extortion, eviction and deprivation of civil rights. However, the novelist deems the reasons for identity crisis to be internal such as disunity, backwardness, exploitation of the poor by the powerful moneyed businessmen, self-imposed exile. Nevertheless, the novel is not an exhortation to the Nepalis to overthrow the hegemony of those in power, in the neo-colonial as well as post-colonial period. It is only an urge to the Nepali to work and to redefine their position as respectable citizens and human beings.

Scholars like Atul Saklani (1987), Guha (1989), Rangarajan and many more have delineated about the forest policies all over India and the concomitant aftermath. A surge of protest and agitation has always been rife in such contested spaces along the Himalayas. From 1817-1940 many peasant rebellions seem to have taken place in the western Himalayas. Some more followed suit which culminated into the Santhal Rebellion of Chhotanagpur in Orissa in 1845, the Garhwal Hill protest from 1900-1924. However, such subaltern Rebellion or subversion was conspicuously absent in the Darjeeling Hills, during the colonial period.

Darjeeling which is a part of the Eastern Himalayan forest has a distinctive climate, rainfall, soil and topography, and habitat factors. Yet, this has remained an unexplored terrain in the academe. A study of the impact of colonization along with the nature and extent of the resistance (if any) shown by the indigenous forest dwellers remains a treasure trove which shall be explored later. It is characterized by an ecological fragility but also by a deep-rooted sense of history along with demography and geographical sensitivity. The indigenous native was so far complacent in their own traditional way of life and rituals. Their lives were inextricably woven in and around 'Nature'. To the indigenous people of Darjeeling Hills, respect for Nature was reflected in 'their attitude to land'⁷. For them land was

not a commodity but a gift of nature and they owed their allegiance to the Raja of Sikkim. The proprietary rights over land and forest were beyond the ambit of understanding of these simplistic folks. The traditional economy was run through the barter system. Taxes were paid to the Raja of Sikkim either in kind or through labour. Hope Namgyal informs us that the land did not exist and the subject was only obliged to give a small share of his labour to the state. This system of Government through labour was prevalent in the entire Himalayan kingdom throughout the 19th century.

The British occupation of Darjeeling which gave them a sense of aggrandizement intervened with the lifestyle and modality of subsistence of the indigenous people. Till the time Darjeeling was brought within the fold of colonial control the indigenous people carried on with their traditional rules, rituals and practices. The British occupation of Darjeeling led to an intervention in forest lands which in turn altered the vision of life and methods of subsistence of the natives. Their introduction to monetary economy by the British brought fundamental changes in their patterns of livelihood. These indigenous people who had hitherto led a complacent life were accustomed only to the barter system of economy. The interception of the British in matters regarding the imposition on the political boundary, along with the altered system of economy prevented the indigenous people from inner transmigration which was imperative both for shifting cultivation as well as cattle grazing. The colonial notion of rights over forest indoctrinated to the natives slowly became the site for ideological contestation. Slowly the colonial state with its temporal powers became the self-proclaimed guardian of Darjeeling and of forest. Col. Llyod's proclamation on 12th October 1838 is apt to take note of –

“The people settled in the Darjeeling tract were now subjects of the company and the laws of Sikkim would not apply to them....”¹⁰

This was soon followed by the appointment of Dr. Campbell as a superintendent of Darjeeling in 1839 which gave a scope to the British to assert their political rights over Darjeeling which ushered in a new phase of colonial state making. Strangely in such a contestation in the form of resistance never took place in Darjeeling hills. Besides they were slowly outnumbered by the migrants from Eastern Nepal who were lured to work as labourers in changing the shape of Darjeeling.

Modern technology of guns gave the British the fire power which provided the colonial masters' an edge over the others. Therefore, often portrayed as an intrepid white hunter who had control and restraint against the savage emotion of the animals and hunters alike, (who were nothing less than animals for them. This mentality shall be proved by an incident from the novel *Sahara (Support, 1995)* later. The right to hunt was a prerogative imparted to the white colonial masters only. It created a gap between the two races. Needless to say, the Indian Wild Life became a symbolic display of legitimate power.

Every Britain working for the Imperial Government tried to project himself in the garb of the 'Sahib'. The interactions with natives in the countryside were often conflict-ridden. It was sometimes due to the killing of animals held sacred by the natives. The British colonials often gave justifications for being hunter officers. According to their rationale 'exploration deeper into the countryside provided them knowledge about the country yet they constructed the myth of a real India.'²⁰ The politics of hunting includes the shooting of villagers though in most cases it was not intentionally. Most hunters claimed that it was accidental. With the rise in the number of such deaths, the govt. of India took notice and in 1879, following the case of *Emperors Vs Mayers* in 1879 directed that instructions and guidelines for shooting should be extended to all sportsmen, including civil officers. Such cases highlight the

fact that GOI was more concerned with rising cases of “disturbance and affrays” than with the death of the natives which was belittled as a matter of unimportance. In the late 19th century, the number of Europeans rose in India. The jury comprised mostly of the White people. The court took a lenient view of the crimes and offences committed by the Europeans and at times they even tampered with the evidences, changed the charge sheets and the accused was soon acquitted.

Hunting gave a scope to explore the complicated relationship between ‘recreation’ and ‘power’, the ‘colonizer and the colonized’, in the hierarchal system within the multi-layer social structure. Hunting is a sport no doubt but also an ‘important site whereby it justifies the legitimization of Imperialism in India’. One important trait of the Britishers in India was their passion for hunting along with other issues associated with it. It provides a lens through which we get an idea about the Imperial governance in Darjeeling. This is mentioned in the novel *Sahara (Support, 1995)* by Indra Sundas. One day there is a hunting competition between the DHR General Manager, Resident Engineer and Resident Traffic Superintendent. Even a sardar who was initially in the army but later owned a tea stall is asked to be a part of it. Similarly, ‘Howday’, a local Nepali man who had earlier served in the army is asked to join. Initially the hunting troop cannot find a quarry. Later a giraffe surfaced and one of the officers fires a shot but it escapes. The sound of the shot made the other animals alert and ready to attack anybody for self-defense. After a while the white officers take rest on a grassy meadow. It was natural for the non-whites to sit on a boulder and relax. While the others were doing so, Howday wanted to relieve himself and goes further into the jungle. A bear pounced on him and he screams for life. At that moment all hunters come rushing to the spot. One of them forbade all in the group to shoot directly at the animal but instead give a blank shot in the air, only

to frighten it. Ignoring all suggestions, 'Henley Sahib' was so enamoured seeing the quarry that he was completely oblivious of other things around him, as his mind was solely occupied with thoughts of pulling the trigger. He fires a shot which unfortunately misses the bear but hits on the temple of Howday. Howday collapses on the ground and succumbs to the injury.

The Manager was shaken by the incident as all blame would be thrust upon him for murdering a 'native' in their hunting spree. They stay over in the forest bungalow till the matter is sorted out. The news is rife in the garden. Howday's wife collapses on hearing it. The Manager calls the Superintendent of Police to come over to the site of the incident. He also requests the Police officer to save him from the charge of murder. A secret Committee meeting is called where four whites sit down with two, three pegs of foreign drinks, while Howday's family, including the villagers are mourning for the sudden loss of life. Usually post-mortems are done when people die an unusual death but, in this case, it was not done. The whites were in a hurry to get over with Howday and his body. So instead of taking it to his house (as bullet marks was clearly visible) they decided to cremate the body in the jungle. An instruction was given that a deep hollow space should be dug for the bear to be buried. A little further from this spot, Howday's body should be burned. So, oil and grease were brought over. On one side the animal was cremated and on the other nearby spot the dead body of a 'native' was seen to be burning, with flames rising up towards the sky amidst the trees who were unable to speak the truth, as nature was the only 'mute' witness of all that had happened. The next day the Doronga was in a dilemma regarding the submission of the report (because he had visited the actual spot of the incident). Yet, he submitted a correct report which he thought was his foremost duty. It is true that the natives donot remain the same forever which is what was meant by Michel Foucault said in *The*

History of Sexuality, (vol 1, 1978) “Where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978)

On reading it the Police Superintendent was angry and said:

“Sub- Inspector, are you not aware of the fact that Mr Henley is a tea planter. Your investigation report is not in accordance with the guidelines that I had given to you. So, please re-submit it” (p46)

The whites had thought they could do away with a fabricated story of Howday being devoured by a bear and had asked him to make a report in their favour. The Doraga could not argue with the Police Officer far superior to him. However, the officer seemed to be shaken by what was written in it. Finally, the case was dismissed on the grounds of lack of evidence. The tea stall Sardar was no doubt ‘present’ when the incident took place and could have given an actual picture of what had happened but he was not allowed to open his mouth. Such happenings could have perhaps made Edward Said remark that:

The nexus of knowledge and power creating ‘the Oriental’ and in a sense obliterating him as a human being is therefore not for me and exclusive academic matter. Yet it is some intellectual matter of some obvious importance.

(Orientalism, 1976)

This is a true portrayal of the ‘Colonial Hegemony’ by which poor and helpless were victimized. Hunting is a sport no doubt but also an ‘important site whereby it justifies the legitimization of Imperialism in India’.

Yet, in spite of such a big incident the psychology of the innocent rural folk was such to consider the British as their benefactors, which made Howday’s mother join hands

and beg in front of him to give some idea about the cause and nature of her son's death.

Another major trope in diasporic literature is the elements of nostalgia. Nostalgia can refer to any general interest in the past, its personalities and events, especially the 'good old days' from one's earlier life. The scientific literature on nostalgia usually refers to nostalgia regarding the personal life and has mainly studied the effects of nostalgia induced during the studies. Smell and touch are strong evokers of nostalgia due to the processing of these stimuli first passing through the amygdale, the emotional seat of the brain. These recollections of one's past are usually important events, people one cares about, and places where one has spent time. Music and weather can also be strong triggers of nostalgia. Nostalgic preferences (the belief that the past was better than present) in some cases, can lead to biases in memory.

As nostalgia is culturally acquired feeling, it can conceptually be linked to some basic emotion-most notable those of grief and depression. This is particularly so in Freud's discussion of these emotion in his *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957) where melancholia may be represented in its current usage by the term depression. Grief and depression are reactions to the loss of a loved object, though in depression the sufferer may not be able to perceive what the actual lost object was; because it may be masked by repression. There is some similarity between the depression reaction and the nostalgic reaction; since both are responses to loss. It would be possible to see the nostalgic feeling as a stage of healing process of grief. The symptoms of both involve feelings of misery focused on the lost object. This pain is accompanied by withdrawal of interest in the world and loss of the capacity and the desire to form or sustain relationship with other people.

As mentioned above some Nepali migrants are nostalgic about the homeland. This can be seen in *Muluk Bahira (Out of Country, 1948)*. Characters like Ranay, who is the hero along with Myauchi the central female character of sit around fire reminiscing about their life in Nepal. They had been staying in shed and working as woods sawyers, carrying planks uphill every day in a village above Teesta. Against the silence of a chilly wintry night one day all sit together to enjoy. They talk of the ‘Arun Khola’, ‘Suna Kosi’ (which are names of the rivers of Nepal) and are sad to think about their past life, where they had spent more than half of their lives. To cheer them up Ranay sings a ‘Lai Bari geet’, (a folk song) which gets echoed by the mountains at night. The others too, join in. Their songs strike a chord with the music, rhythm of the river Teesta flowing by, resonant to the soul. Sometimes they watched the glittering display of the fireflies playfully dancing in the lustrous moonlight under the dark canopy of night sky.

Conclusion

There is no denying the fact that enormous corpus of work is there on diasporic writings. The underlying parameters in such framework normally include the conditions of diasporization, diasporic experience and diasporic identity politics. The following basic “categories of analysis” presented by Butler (2001) can be taken as a representative research paradigm for all types of dispersals:

1. Reasons for, and conditions of, the dispersal
2. Relationship with the homeland
3. Relationship with the hostlands
4. Interrelationships within communities of the diaspora
5. Comparative studies of different diasporas. (p.195)

The first four points of the list are sufficient to become a new framework of analysis. The first point encompasses the roots and processes of diasporisation, while the remaining three constitute the facets of diasporic identity politics. What makes this framework worth consideration is its applicability. As Butler states, “If information about single diasporas can be grouped into the first four categories of inquiry, it will then be possible to engage in comparative diasporan study.” He further suggests “concentrating on shared and essential aspects of diasporas rather than on the idiosyncrasies of specific groups” in order for such a framework to “have the advantage of applicability to all diasporas” (pp. 195-196).

A more contemporary approach to diaspora studies expands on Cohen’s (1996) postulation: “in the age of cyberspace, a diaspora . . . can be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination” (p. 516). The recent take underlines the need to reconsider the earlier paradigms through redefinition of the role of time and place. This means, in cyberspace representation and identification can transcend the physical elements such as the places of origin and relocation. Anyanwu (2004) considers the internet as a “new habitat of modern sojourners” that “abolishes geographical boundaries and creates room for more migrants to inhabit” (p. 7). This is to say that as a new habitat, and with abolition of geography, internet incorporates both diasporas and natives and concurrently brings them in a common interactive frame. Such inclusiveness further questions the elements of the history of migration and relocation. In Tsagarousianou’s terms, this is the condition of “temporal convergence” of its sojourners stemming from “a sense of contemporaneity and synchronicity” (2004, p. 62).

Furthermore, diaspora scholars redefine diasporas as imagined communities deriving what Anderson (1997) calls for a nation. For example, Sökefeld (2006) suggests

defining diaspora “as imaginations of community that unite segments of people that live in territorially separated places” (p. 267). In this sense, segments of dispersed communities are bound together by sharing the imagination of a similar origin, identity and fate beyond geographical distance. Tsagarousianou maintains that emergence of diasporic identity stems from dispersed population’s “ability to imagine themselves as such, to imagine and construct the relevant transnational linkages and appropriate discourses” (2004, p. 63). Sökefeld’s idea of diaspora as a unity of “territorially separated” people, and Tsagarousianou’s view of their ability to “construct transnational linkages” and “discourses” highlight the role of internet. Without internet neither is achievable to the extent of being recognized.

Butler’s categories of studying diaspora are based on what he calls three sites in which diasporas take form: the homeland, the hostland and the diasporan group itself (2001, p.195). Diasporic identity politics is the construct of the third site – the diasporan group. It is the set of strategies that dispersed communities employ in constructing and affirming diasporic identity in at least two forms. First, they try to maintain originality through what Safran and Cohen call retention of “a collective memory, vision, or myth about their homeland.” In other words, they construct and idealize an imagined homeland as a symbol for identification.

Second, identity politics very often takes the form a strategy for asserting power to create, mobilize and control resources. Diasporic identity in this sense becomes “an issue of movement and mobilisation” (Sökefeld, 2006, p. 267), or “an occasion for the celebration of multiplicity and mobility” (Tölölyan, 1996, p. 28). The strategies that diasporas apply to affirm their identity are varied. According to Cohen (1996), they manifest in the activism of migrants to “retain dual citizenship, agitate for special trade deals with their homeland, demand aid in exchange for electoral

support, influence foreign policy and seek to protect family immigration quota” (p. 519). Such activism and exertion of power makes diaspora “a dynamic process in constant search for autonomy and identity” not necessarily estranged by destiny in a geographically fixed host land (Anyanwu, 2004, p. 4).

A more inclusive approach to diaspora studies should focus on Butler’s third site, the “diasporan group.” Homeland and hostland are entrenched in the migrants’ recognition of who and where they are. For instance, in calling Nepali migrants as “Nepali/Nepalese Diaspora,” the signifier “Nepalis” or “Nepalese” naturally entails the existence of Nepal as a nation and an identifier. Similarly diaspora which inherently signifies dispersion (movement and distance), implies the existence of a destination, a hostland.

The future of diasporic literature Makarand Paranjape reckons and cautions is what needs to be addressed by the diasporic theorists at large for such literature to flourish and accomplish greater heights than before. In his article “Interrogating Diasporic Creativity: The Patan Initiative--A Valedictory Address” he says:

That is why I would say that we have to theorize various kinds of hybridities. There is, you see, a towards-India hybridity and an away from Indian hybridity. That is, a hybridity that shows sensitivity towards India and a hybridity that does not. We have to be able to distinguish between these two kinds of hybridity because otherwise we are losing our sense of distinction. We must very respectfully ask what is inside the Trojan horse of hybridity... there is a very big stake for the diaspora in the homeland for until the homeland is strong the diaspora can’t hold their heads high. India is a brand name. Let’s not

forget that both the diasporic and the natives are stakeholders in this brand. If you agree that globalisation, ... is not just the discourse of homogenisation but also the discourse of difference, then the synergy between the diaspora and the homeland can indeed produce not just new opportunities for collaboration and criticism, for sharing and difference. This way we can ensure that those who have left home are always welcome back and those who remained are not left behind. (as quoted in <http://www.makarand.com/acad> /Interrogating Diasporic Creativity.htm)

Since all the contingent factors discussed above hardly appear in any existing frameworks, it demands for an alternative framework, which should balance the emphasis on “abolition” of time and place by cyberspace with the need to consider them as fundamental sites of constructing diasporic identity.

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CHAPTER-3

Gender Sensitivity and Feminism in Select Nepali Diaspora Fiction

“It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do ... It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex.”

(*Jane Eyre*, Chapter 12)

This chapter recapitulates and tries to understand the idea of feminism, gender and patriarchy as reflected in the select Nepali novels and short stories namely *Basai* (*Inhabitation*,1950), *Juneli Rekha* (*Lines of Moonlight*,1979), *Maitaghar*,(*Parents’ Home*,1950), *Bholi Ko Pratiksha* (*In Anticipation of Tomorrow*,1990) *Madyantar* (*Interval*,2007) and *Nirgaman*, (*Abandonment*,2006) At the beginning it tries to analyse the existing body of literature already done in the field and then tries to situate and examines the same in concordance with the emerging Nepali literature available in the field.

From times immemorial women have always been in defined in terms of their relations with men- whether it is similar, different or complimentary to each other. Their identity is constructed explicitly from gendered familial relations such as

mothers, wives or daughters. Dominant patriarchal structures have always constructed history and controlled the forms of social consciousness. It is a known fact that in the 18th century English common law gave men the permission to discipline their wives and children with a whip or a stick no wider than their thumb. From the 20th century onwards, many feminists claimed that violence against women was due to the deeply entrenched patriarchal culture that encouraged male domination. While society claims to abhor violence, patriarchal structure often makes heroes of male who are aggressive and Indian society is no exception when it comes to patriarchal norms. It has attempted to diminish feminism by labelling it as a Western import. Yet, Indian feminist groups have politically engaged themselves with problems of dowry deaths, of harassment of women, rape of women in custody. Many voices have been raised against any type of violence whether domestic or external by feminists' reformers and writers over the years, sometimes aggressively but most often timidly and covertly.

Feminism as a term has largely been used to define a political, cultural or economic movement that emphasizes on equal rights and legal protection for women. Feminism, in general, comprises of political, sociological and philosophical theories dealing with issues of gender difference. It also advocates gender equality for women and campaigns for women's rights and interests. The terms "feminism" and "feminist" came to the forefront only during the 1970s, although the term was already being used widely much before. The history of feminism may be divided into three waves according to Maggie Humm and Rebecca Walker. According to them as well as most of the scholars and feminists the first feminist wave could be traced during the nineteenth and early twentieth century's, the second wave was in force during the 1960s and 1970s, and the third or the final wave of feminism traces from the 1990s to

the present. Theories related to feminism are a result of all the three waves of feminism or movements.

First wave of Feminism

This phase is said to have started in the United Kingdom and the United States in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Initially it paid attention to equality of contract and property rights for women. This was in opposition to chattel marriage and ownership of married women (and their children) by their husbands. However, towards the culmination of the nineteenth century the focus shifted on achieving political power and most importantly having the right of women to vote. We also find that during this time feminists such as Margaret Sanger and Voltairine de Cleyre actively engaged themselves for the cause of women's sexual, economic and reproductive rights as well. There were also female nurses who were adjuncts to the military during this period. In the year 1918 some selected women over the age of 30 who owned houses through the Representation of the People Act 1918 was passed in Britain and these women were allowed to cast their vote. Finally the act got amended and all the women over the age of twenty-one could cast their vote from the year 1928. The Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1919), granted women the right to vote in all states.

Second wave

The term first wave was coined retrospectively after the term second-wave feminism began to be used to describe a newer feminist movement that Second-wave feminism existed from the early 1960s and till the late 1980s. The second wave was an extension of the first phase of feminism in the UK and USA. It focused on social and

cultural inequalities as well as political inequalities. This phase is said to coexist with the third-wave feminism. Various scholars and feminists were of the view that the first wave feminism was mainly concerned with rights to vote while on the other hand the second wave focussed on issues like equality, discrimination etc. The slogan “The Personal is Political” by Carol Hanisch became identical with the second wave and, therefore, the feminists encouraged women to understand their personal and private lives as result of power structures already embedded in the society as a result of politics.

Third wave

It started in the early 1990s as a result of some problems and failures and also as a reaction to the backlash against activities and movements shaped by the second wave feminism. It also tries to redefine femininity as conceived during the second phase on the experiences of upper middle-class white women. The third wave also tries to understand the post-structuralist interpretation and concept of gender and sexuality. Many feminists like Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua, Chela Sandoval, Bell Hooks, Maxine Hong Kingston, Cherrie Moraga, and a number of black feminists looked into issues related to race. However, there are differences in terms of gender and while some feminists believe that there are differences between the sexes other feminists believe that there are not much of a difference between the sexes and that gender roles are a result of social conditioning.

Post-feminism

It reacts to feminism in a number of ways. They are not “anti-feminist,” in the strict sense of the term and think that women have accomplished second wave goals but at

the same time they also criticize the feminist goals within the third wave. The term post-feminism was for the first time used in the 1980s to elucidate a backlash against second-wave feminism. The term at present encapsulates a varied take and critical approaches to earlier feminist treatises and also embraces challenges embedded within the second wave's concepts and ideas. Some prominent post-feminists like Amelia Jones believes that feminism is almost irrelevant in today's society while others like Katha Pollitt, Nadine Strossen, hold the opinion that "women are people". These writers are also of the opinion that those who isolate the sexes instead of uniting them are actually sexist and not feminists in the real sense of the term. Susan Faludi in her book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, (1991) feels that a large number of problems related to feminism are illusive in nature which is actually a construct hyped by the media without any proof and that these kinds of things has been happening through the ages. According to Angela Mc Robbie adding post to feminism as the prefix in reality gives a negative impression of whatever feminism as a movement has done through the different phases like equality for everyone, including women. It also gives an impression that the goal of equality has been accomplished and therefore the feminists can think of something else. Mc Robbie also argues that post-feminism is clearly evident and confined in feminist media products, like Bridget Jones's Diary, Ally Mc Beal and Sex and the City.

Thus, to sum up it is evident that feminist activists during all the different phases of feminism has always championed the cause for women's legal rights including property rights, rights of contract, voting rights etc. They have also fought for women's right to its body, rights for abortion, and for reproductive rights. It has also sought for protection of girls and women from sexual harassment, domestic violence, and rape. Moreover, it also seeks for workplace rights, which includes maternity leave

and equal pay and also stands against misogyny and other forms of gender-bias discrimination against women. This leads us to unravel the term gender and patriarchy within the feminist framework.

Etymologically the modern English word gender comes from the Middle English 'gender', 'gendre', a loan word from Anglo Norman and Middle French *gendre*. This in turn came from Latin *genus*. Both words meant 'kind', 'type' or 'sort'. Gender is the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between masculinity and femininity. Depending on the context these characteristics may include biological sex (i.e. the state of being male, female or an intersex variation), sex based social structures (i.e. gender roles), or gender identity. The term 'gender' was first used by Ann Oakley in 1970's to delineate contrast between men and women, other than biological differences. Oakley, a British sociologist was the first to offer a clear definition of sex as biological and gender as cultural. According to Oakley, gender is socially constructed and it refers to the norms, values, customs and practices of a society which transform the biological male into a man and a biological female into a woman.

Within feminist theory, terminology for gender issues developed over the 1970's. By 1980's most feminist writings had agreed on using gender on socio-culturally adapted traits. According to Simone de Beauvoir 'One is not born a woman, one becomes one' while for Judith Butler gender role is a practice, which is often referred to as 'performative':

"To compel the body to perform to conform to an historical idea of 'woman', to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an

historically delimited possibility and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal”
(Butler: 1997, 421)

These performative acts according to Butler are most of the times performed under a compulsion, or in pressure.

The term ‘gender’ does not simply construe the binary differences between man and woman but it creates a hierarchy. Gender stratification is a form of social stratification in which people are hierarchically ranked in a society based on gender. This in turn creates a system of oppression in which men are socially dominant and women are socially subordinate. In a system of gender stratification, women experience institutional inequality and a lack of access to privileges and resources. Men and women stand in a power relationship in which men as a class are powerful and women subordinates. Christine Delphy’s (1984) concept of sex class was part of a materialist analysis of women’s oppression. In what Delphy calls the domestic ‘mode of production’, male household heads exploit and profit from women’s domestic labour (housework and childcare) and their work as unpaid family labour in family enterprises. Delphy’s main example was the dependence of French family farms on the housewife’s labour, but her formulation has also been seen to be particularly applicable to the roles of factory workers’ wives. By arguing that biological explanations are inadequate to explain gender differentiation, feminists are able to challenge the view that women are “naturally” inferior to men.

Margaret Mead, an influential American Anthropologist in her study found that despite the diversity and variation, what is deemed masculine is always universally accepted. According to her:

“...Men may cook or weave or dress dolls or hunt humming birds, but if such activities are the appropriate activities of men, then the whole society, men and women alike, votes them important. When the same occupations are performed by women, they are regarded as less important. In a great number of human society’s men’s sureness of their sex roles is tied up with their right, or ability, to practice some activity that women are not allowed to practice...” (Mead, 1950/62:157:58)

Bina Aggarwal argues, “Indeed the state, the community and the household could be seen as interacting structures embodying pulls and pressures which may, at specific junctures and in different country contexts, converge or move in contradictory directions - in the latter case providing spaces for the building up of countervailing resistances... They are structures dominated by patriarchal interests and typically, the contradictions, as they have played themselves out, have tended to work to the detriment of women... These structures are separately and interactively affecting the hold of patriarchy, and the economic and social position of women in present day Asian Societies.”(p40)

Several attempts have been made to explain the cause of their hierarchical and unequal relation between men and women. To radical feminists’ gender inequalities are due to Patriarchy, which is a system of male dominance. According to Gerda Lerner, “Patriarchy in its wider definition means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of that male domination over society in general.” Similarly, there are many others like Sylvia Walby who has defined patriarchy as “...a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women...” (Walby, 1990). It is known by different nomenclatures in the Indian society. “it is

called pitrasatta in Hindi, pidarshahi in Urdu and pitrontra in Bengali” (Bhasin,1993). It is called *pitrisatta* in Nepali. Much discussions on ‘patriarchy’, and ‘gender’ finds place in Nepali literature also. However, unfortunately its readership so far is not available to the English reading public because none of the texts have been translated and exist in the regional language only.

Suppression of women due to patriarchal norms is even more evident in literature written in regional languages. This is applicable to some novels which form the corpus of Nepali literature. The status of women in this male dominated society can be raised only through the empowerment of women. Women empowerment generally has three components :1) firstly, women’s sense of self-worth; 2) secondly, their right to have the power of control over their lives, both within and outside home; and lastly, 3) their ability to influence the direction of a just social and economic change. These points need to be historicized with reference to the development of Nepali women’s literature in India.

Modern feminist science challenges the biological essentialist view of gender; however, it is increasingly interested in the study of biological sex differences and their effect on human behaviour. For example, Anne Fausto-Sterling’s book *Myths of Gender* (1992) explores the assumptions embodied in scientific research that purports to support a biologically essentialist view of gender. Her second book, *Sexing the Body* (2000) discussed the alleged possibility of more than two true biological sexes. This possibility only exists in yet-unknown extra-terrestrial biospheres, as no ratios of true gametes to polar cells other than 4:0 and 1:3 (male and female, respectively) are produced on Earth. However, in *The Female Brain* (2006) Louann Brizendine argues that brain differences between the sexes are a biological reality with significant

implications for sex-specific functional differences. Steven Rhoads' book *Taking Sex Differences Seriously* (2005) illustrates sex-dependent differences across a wide scope.

Carol Tavris, in *The Mismeasure of Woman* (1992), uses psychology and sociology to critique theories that use biological reductionism to explain differences between men and women. She argues rather than using evidence of innate gender difference there is an over-changing hypothesis to justify inequality and perpetuate stereotypes.

Sarah Kember - drawing from numerous areas such as evolutionary biology, socio-biology, artificial intelligence, and cybernetics in development with a new evolutionism - discusses the biologization of technology. She notes how feminists and sociologists have become suspect of evolutionary psychology, particularly inasmuch as socio-biology is subjected to complexity in order to strengthen sexual difference as immutable through pre-existing cultural value judgments about human nature and natural selection. Where feminist theory is criticized for its "false beliefs about human nature," Kember then argues in conclusion that "feminism is in the interesting position of needing to do more biology and evolutionary theory in order not to simply oppose their renewed hegemony, but in order to understand the conditions that make this possible, and to have a say in the construction of new ideas and artefacts."

Many post-structural feminists maintain that difference is one of the most powerful tools that females possess in their struggle with patriarchal domination, and that to equate the feminist movement only with equality is to deny women a plethora of options because equality is still defined from the masculine or patriarchal perspective.

Male reaction

The relationship between men and feminism has been complex. Men have taken part in significant responses to feminism in each 'wave' of the movement. There have been positive and negative reactions and responses, depending on the individual man and the social context of the time. These responses have varied from pro-feminism to masculism to anti-feminism. In the twenty-first century new reactions to feminist ideologies have emerged including a generation of male scholars involved in gender studies, and also men's rights activists who promote male equality (including equal treatment in family, divorce and anti-discrimination law). Historically a number of men have engaged with feminism. Philosopher Jeremy Bentham demanded equal rights for women in the eighteenth century. In 1866, philosopher John Stuart Mill (author of "*The Subjection of Women*", 1869) presented a women's petition to the British parliament; and supported an amendment to the 1867 Reform Bill. Others have lobbied and campaigned against feminism. Today, academics like Michael Flood, Michael Messner and Michael Kimmel are involved with men's studies and pro-feminism.

A number of feminist writers maintain that identifying as a feminist is the strongest stand men can take in the struggle against sexism. They have argued that men should be allowed, or even be encouraged, to participate in the feminist movement. Other female feminists argue that men cannot be feminists simply because they are not women. They maintain that men are granted inherent privileges that prevent them from identifying with feminist struggles, thus making it impossible for them to identify with feminists. Fidelma Ashe has approached the issue of male feminism by arguing that traditional feminist views of male experience and of "men

doing feminism” have been monolithic. She explores the multiple political discourses and practices of pro-feminist politics, and evaluates each strand through an interrogation based upon its effect on feminist politics.

A more recent examination of the subject is presented by author and academic Shira Tarrant. In *Men and Feminism* (Seal Press, May 2009), the California State University, Long Beach professor highlights critical debates about masculinity and gender, the history of men in feminism, and men’s roles in preventing violence and sexual assault. Through critical analysis and first-person stories by feminist men, Tarrant addresses the question of why men should care about feminism in the first place and lays the foundation for a larger discussion about feminism as an all-encompassing, human issue.

A Brief History of Nepali Feminist Literature

Beginnings of prose writings by women in Nepali literature

Like all other literatures early prose writings by Nepali women writers began in the short story form. The initial Nepali short stories started in journals. In 1918, a journal came out by the name of *Chandrika* from Kurseong under the editorship of Parasmani Pradhan. These literary journals provided a platform for early writings. This was much needed for the then writers of Nepal also who oppressed by the Rana Dictatorship were barred from writing literature. A spurt of writing came from Darjeeling and other parts of India.

Early wrings by women writers

Early short stories in Nepali were oral in tradition. After *Chandrika* few more appeared in a journal called *Sarada* (1934) from Nepal. The decades following that period is demarcated as Modern Period in Nepali literature spanning from 1934 onwards. In 1936 a collection of short stories called ‘*Kathakusum*’ was written under the editorship of Surya Vikram Gyawali.

Early women’s writings as discussed by Dipak Tiwari in *Nepali Sahityama Narilekhan* (2014) (*Feminism in Nepali literature*) seem to have begun in journals. In 1937 there appeared a journal from Banaras called *Uday* under the editorship of Krishna Bahadur Shrestha. In these, two short stories were compiled with Rukmani Dewan writing *Parichai* or (*Introduction*) and Sushree Chandra kumari writing *Nauka* or (*Boat*) in 1941.

In 1945 a journal called *Gorkha* was published from Darjeeling where women writers like Deo Kumari Thapa and many more started writing for it. Prominent among them were Hiramaya Thapa who wrote *Kahaniko Plot* (*Plot of the story*) and *Sunko Bala* (*Golden Bangle*) in it. Continuing in this line there appeared another handwritten magazine called *Kamala* in 1946 where Amrita Chettri has published *Choro Bannaychu* (*I will become a son*) and another prominent writer called Lucky Devi Sundas seem to have contributed a story called *BalidanYinko* – meaning (*His sacrifice*) in it.

In 1949, a new journal called *Bharati* appeared from Darjeeling under the editorship of Rup Narayan Sinha where many Nepali women writers have contributed to the collection of stories. A mention must be made of Krishna Gurung’s *Aagraha* or (*request*) and Sanumati Rai *Sani kata Gayi?* (*Where has Sani gone?*) who have contributed to it.

In this same decade another journal called *Prabhat* (1950's) came under Lain Singh Bangdel where women like Deo Kumari Sinha have written *Santosh* (*Satisfaction*) and *Mrityupachi* (*After death*) in it.

Thereafter, in 1969 a journal called *Sangam* was published from Darjeeling which has a story of much prominence by Krishna Kumari Subba called *Malai Chahindaina* (*I don't need, 1969*). Mention also must be made of a much-discussed work by Harkamani Thapa called *Maun Swar* (*muted voice*). Coming to the 80's a mention must be made of an eminent writer who has made a mark for herself as far as feminist writings in Nepali literature is concerned. She is none other than Bindiya Subba with her short story collections such as *Hospice* (2003) (*a temporary home for terminally ill patients to die in peace*) and *Seetlahar* (*cold waves*), 2013. Another collection was written by Indramani Darnal called *Madam ra Anya Kathharu* (*Madam and other stories*).

Another name which figures in this direction is that Dr Lucky Devi Sundas whose collection came out in (1978) called *Aahat Anubhuti* (*Hurtful experiences*).

A considerable body of literacy works in the genre of fiction has been contributed from the North-East. The earliest writings from North-East seem to have been begun with a publication on the journal *Gorkha* published from Darjeeling, where short stories of Kohima's Bhanumati Rai was published in (1950-60). Similarly, from Assam initial writings emerged in the journals like *Himalaya* and *Suman* by writers like: Dhanmaya Chettri and Ratna Kharga. Likewise, some interesting stories have been written by Shanti Thapa who has written a collection called *Awarta* (*rotation*) in 2007. Riju Devi from Assam has written *Awsi ko Chandrama* (*Full moon in the dark night*). Another writer who is one of the initial writers of short stories is Raj Kumari Sinha (Thapa). In the journal called *Gorkha Patrika*, she wrote a single story called

Patan (Downfall) in 1948. She also seems to have written a collection of stories called *Ekadashi (Next day after full moon day)* in 1953.

Emergence of women novelsits in Nepali literature

Writing of short stories in journals slowly paved the way for women writers to try their hand in the genre of Novel writing. Writings centered on the lives of women, their problems often leading to the emergence of new women are found in abundance in Nepali literature. Though it is generally taken by common consensus that Ambalika Devi whose work *Rajput Ramani* (1932) (based on Indian history) is the first work in India to have been written by a woman writer in Nepali literature. Unfortunately, this work has never been given its due so far.

Instead much consideration has been given to Shubhadra Subba's translation of *Mahabharata* in (1956). However, the credit for having written the first original novel by a female writer has been given to Santi Pradhan for *Karuna (Love)* written in 1956. It centers around the Christian philosophy of peace, love, humanitarianism. It also adheres to the importance of women in this world.

Next in line is Krisha Kumari who has written *Samarpitako Astitva (Existence through Dedication)* in 1972. Here the title itself connotes that after a woman goes through the social institution such as marriage her existence is created and counted in terms of her dedication to her husband and the family. Another woman writer is Puspa Subba who has written *Adrisya Byath (Unseen agony)* published in 1974. Followed by her is Lalita Dewan whose work *Aasu (Tears)* 1977, is an example of woman's problem in life. Here she clearly states that True love can be attained only through sacrifice in life. She propagated a strong stand on widow re-marriage.

The next women novelist is Usha Sundas who wrote a novel named *Bindu (Dot)* published in 1978. Here the writer has written again force marriage. Another writer of prominence is Sarita Dewsa who has written *Choitiyaeko Upasna (Fragmented Worship)* in 1981. Here the novelist has brought to light that women are made to internalize a lot of values in life. Unfortunately, the same woman is never given any value for her sacrifices by the family and society. It exemplifies a sense of Self-dignity exhibited by some self-conscious women.

Followed by her is another writer called Radha Rasaily who has written some interesting novels like *Badlando Samaj (Changing society)*.

1. *Ganga Saga (River Ganges)* in 1990.
2. *Aadhi (Storm)* in 1996.
3. *Tyag (Sacrifice)* after that.

According to her to fall in love with the opposite sex is a natural experience. Gender difference, caste difference and hierarchical differences are seen in them.

Another writer who has made a carved a niche for herself in feminist writings is Bindya Subba. She has written: -

1. *Phoolharu, Paharharu, Dharsaharu (Flowers and Mountains)*.
2. *Atah (Agony, 1998)*.
3. *Nirgaman (Abandonement, 2006)*.

a) The first novel is a psychological analysis of the experiences of people. It is filled with sentiments and woe. b) The second novel *Atah (Agony, 1998)* is a psychological analysis of a woman in distress. c) The third novel *Nirgaman (Abandonement, 2006)* is a novel of challenge. Written in the 21st Century in the era when talks of women empowerment are amidst us, unfortunately some women are considered only for

sexual gratification. The heroine has protested against this injustice. As expressed by Leela Luitel in *Nari Aava* (2014), the novel emphasizes on the views that the educated and self –consciousness women need to be seen by the family and, society with a different perspective. She should be given a congenial atmosphere to channelize her potentialities towards creativity.

A writer who has carved out a niche for herself in the arena of feminist writings in Nepali literature is none other than Pushpa Rai. Two of her important novels centered on women’s issues are *Bholiko Pratiksha (In Anticipation of Tomorrow, 1990)* and *Madhyantar (Interval, 2007)*. Both have been taken up for study in this chapter.

Next important writer after her is Kamala Sanskritayan who has written *Divyamani* or (*Divine Gem*). It was written against the backdrop of the British colonial India. It is the story of a lady who harboured dreams of accomplishing something great in life. There is also a blend of cultural values in it.

Another name in this line is that of Sharada Chettri who initially wrote under the pseudonym of Saroja Devi. She has written a novel called *Sesh Parwa (End of the Festival)* in 1970. Through written as a detective novel it has very less of criminal aspects in it. It has more of diasporic dimensions in it. Another person of importance is Srijana Dilpani who wrote *Kinara Samma (Till the Margin)* in 2013.

Thus, all these accounts on feminist writings clearly vindicates the fact that feminist Nepali writers were very active to project issues related to gender, patriarchy and other feminist problems during the different phases of Nepali history on feminism.

Apart from a discussion of these literary novels written in the past, there has been a spurt of writings on Contemporary feminism in Indian Nepali literature in the recent years. However, being written in the vernacular its readership is confined to a small section of readers. Therefore, this thesis is an earnest attempt to explore the rich body of Nepali feminist writings in the form of novels, short stories or poems to offer a window for a wide readership to English reading public.

Lil Bahadur Chhetri, (b. A.D. 1932/33), a descendant of emigrants from the hills of Nepal was born in Nepal but lives in Assam in the Northeast part of India. He started his literary career by writing poems but later moved on to writing stories, plays, novel and essay. *Basai (Inhabitation, 1950)*, which is Chhetri's first novel –*Atripta (The Unfulfilled)* in 1969, and *Brahmaputra ko Cheuchauma (Close to river Brahmaputra)* in 1986. Due to his contribution to Nepali language and literature, he has received the Diyalo Puraskar (1982, Bhanu Puraskar (1985) and Sahitya Akademy award (1987) and the recent conferment of the Padma Shri award in Feb 2020.

Lil Bahadur Chhetri is a successful novelist in Nepali language, who has been popular for his lucid language, clarity in thoughts and coherence in ideas and presentation. Chhetri is recognized as a socio-realist. He speaks through words, writes through social impressions and paints through the uprising discrimination, castes and racism. His novel *Basai (Inhabitation, 1950)* is one of the most popular novels in Nepali literature. The novel is about Nepali social phenomena during 1950s which depicts the characteristics of Nepali patriarchal and semi-feudal society. The novelist has sought to expose the male politics operating behind the stereotypical delineation of women in Chhetri's novel *Basai (Inhabitation, 1950)*. Through the lens of the novelist

characters like Maina and Jhuma, have been projected to expose the subjugation of women.

The novel '*Basai*' set in the hills of far eastern Nepal depicts in subtle detail the stark realities of village life of 1950s – the joys and sorrows as well as sufferings of a poor family of peasants. The novel offers the readers a window into the lives of the people who have been rendered helpless due to the feudal socio-economic condition of the country. The novel is a portrayal of the suffering and sorrows endured by ordinary peasants; the exploitation of the poor by the rich and powerful; and the social conventions that twists a community into punishing a woman for being the victim of a crime.

Dhane, a peasant farmer (which ironically means a wealthy one), who struggles throughout the year to provide for his wife and son has a sister called Jhuma. Dhane has to fend his family against the condemnation of the society to his sister Jhuma. Jhuma had been in love with a soldier called Rikute or (recruit) who had deserted her after violating her chastity. Unfortunately, she had brought a disgrace to an already trouble laden family. Dhane wants to break free from the shackles of his financial problems and place his small family under the shade of peace of happiness but he is unsuccessful. Unable to cope up with the financial demands of the “big-men” who control his village, Dhane and his family suffer one calamity after another. Finally, on being compelled to dispose the last means of sustenance- the house and land, heads towards an unknown horizon.

The novel exposes the bitter reality behind the migration of the Nepalese peasants in the feudalistic socio-economic structure of the society. It seeks to establish the point that it is painful to leave one's native land, identity, inheritance, culture and kinsfolk. The condition of women is even more pathetic under the patriarchal society.

Women have always lived under the protection of their fathers, husbands or sons. This pattern of life outwardly makes women's lives safe and smooth but actually it is a slavish dependence on men. This situation may be compared to what Partha Chatterjee in *Postcolonial Discourse: An Anthology* said:

“Now apply the inner/outer distinction to the matter of concrete day to day living. The world is the external, the domain of the material; home represents our inner spiritual self, our true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests where practical consideration is supreme. It is also the typical domain of the male” (156)

In this way, the society has confined the position of the women as being limited to domestic activities only. Slowly with the beginning of modernism; rise of feminism and the new education system have created awareness in women. They have started thinking about their independence and self-reliance. Yet, in Lil Bahadur Chhetri's *Basai (Inhabitation, 1950)* the female characters seem to be totally disempowered on the lines of Partha Chatterjee.

The social milieu as portrayed in the novel is basically a patriarchal-feudal one. The mindset of these innocent women imbued with the patriarchal ideologies contributes to the subjugation of women. The voices of these women have been muted and women are spoken for instead by others. This has probably made Gayatri Spivak remark as “Can the Subaltern Speak?” It is because the women are spoken for instead. So, beneath the depiction of woman as inherently “poor, feeble, and submissive” there lies the male politics to further subjugate woman in the society. The man-oriented traditional society has always discriminated women on the basis of their gender and they are regarded as dependent. Thus, we find women as the subject of men. They have a passive and subordinate role in the society. That is why they have never lived a

dignified human life. Even in the name of women emancipation, British colonizers were strengthening their colonial interest. Women were never emancipated in reality. On the surface the colonizers were working for the women's betterment. The traditional society has always discriminated women on the basis of gender and made them dependent on men. The bitter reality is that women have been relegated to the stature of commodity in the society. That is why; they have never lived a dignified human life. Even in the name of women emancipation, the British colonizers were strengthening their colonial interest. In reality, women were manipulated according to their interest. They were never emancipated in the real sense.

According to Margrit Shildrick and Janet Pric:

“The manipulation of cultural code, the remapping of British concern into the Indian body, could in any case hardly result in any authentic freedom for women. Rather women remained silent throughout simply due to the grounds on which the colonial discourses were imposed. They were the currency of the discursive exchanges but never the subjects. And whether they were involved in purdha practices or not, women's space was, always confined and manipulated by others.” (394).

In the contemporary world, formation of women's groups has challenged people's views about male and female roles. Geraldine Forbes in *Women in Modern India* cites: “The women's movement continued to focus on traditional practices, beliefs, and institutions as the source of oppression. It also attends to violence against women, the institutional framework for the maintenance of gender differences, and the impact of the economic situation on the day to day lives of women.” (244)

Similarly, Kumari Jayawardena in *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* opines, “Even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority

over women which they do not observe and act out to have” (95). Thus patriarchal society is inherently male-friendly that always creates a dichotomy between male and female where the former is always empowered and the latter is always disempowered.

So far as one of the objectives of this chapter is concerned, it seeks to expose the male politics operating behind the stereotypical delineation of women in Chhetri's *Basai (Inhabitation, 1950)*. Through the critical analysis of the projection of female characters like Maina and Jhuma, this research aims at exposing the hidden motif of subjugating female with the help of the sympathetic response for their suffering. Moreover, the study aims at establishing the significance of the female characters in Chhetri's novel in a more inclusive way.

This novel has been analyzed from various perspectives by various critics. Krishna Chandra Singh Pradhan in *Nepali Upanyas Ra Upanyaskar (Nepali novels and novelists, 1980-81)* along the line of social realism argues that the novel is primarily a portrayal of village society and that for this reason “the social circumstances of a person's outer life take the foreground rather than his inner life. Although Dhane is the hero, the society depicted in the novel is its central reality, and the author is conscientious in his description of it” (255). Pradhan further goes on to say that Dhane's dispossession is the “economic aspects” of the novel, while the flight of Jhuma and Mote Karki is its “social aspects” (257). In the same line Donald Richie in “Social Realism Enhanced by the Pastoral” interprets the novel as “a real craft product, using pattern and skills honed by history, celebrating our common vision . . . engrossing, instructive and moving” (11).

By going slightly ahead of Pradhan and Richie, Rajendra Subedi in *Nepali Upanyas Parampara Ra Pravritti (Nepali novel: It's style and features, 1996)* describes *Basai* as “an example of idealized reality” (91). He further argues that, though being an honest portrayal, the novel proposes no solutions for the problems it identifies. Unable to swim in a sea of debt, Dhan Bahadur goes abroad. The soldier makes Jhuma pregnant and satisfies his selfish ends and goes abroad, Mote Karki takes Jhuma and goes abroad because he fears that his reputation will be tarnished by his acceptance of a wife who has been made unchaste by another man. Both kinds of disorder are the realities of the society of that time. But when Dhan Bahadur departs he leaves the oppression of a feudal and exploitive character like Nande Dhakal unaltered, and when Mote Karki departs he leaves an immoral philanderer like the soldier to his own devices. Both Nande Dhakal and the soldier are criminals, in both economic and moral terms, and they are spared the punishment for their crimes. (92)

Subedi shows the clear picture of the society in which many kinds of problems are interwoven. People go to abroad due to poverty and women are sexually exploited by males. Even some bad people play the role of villain and some others laugh at the difficulties of others. But the author provides no solution for the difficulties. Like Subedi, Tim Kinseth deals with the novel from the realistic point of view. He thinks that it gives a picture of the villages in the hills of Nepal. He writes:

A well-captured docudrama-it is not plot that propels the novella, but rather the intimate, unfolding portrait of village life in eastern Nepal that Chhetri sketches in masterfully stark out occasionally lyrical prose-like a brisk, cold brook dapped with sun. Chhetri vividly conjures the social and natural landscapes in which Dhane's miserable story takes place, from trade councils lorded by ruthless landowners, to

placid livestock pastures and swollen rice paddies planting the hills and Jhuma's acquiescence.

The female characters like Maina and Jhuma are both stereotypically presented and hegemonically exploited by patriarchal norms and values. They are regarded inferior to their male counterparts like Dhane and Mote Karki respectively. Patriarchy always creates binaries so as to sustain its dominance over women in society. Such binaries include the pairs like self and other, rational and emotional, active and passive, aggressive and submissive etc. In such a dichotomy a male is always assigned the former place and woman the latter. Regarding the patriarchal construction of binaries, Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex*(1949) argues that patriarchy has constructed notions about women 'essence' stereotypically and for her such notions are myths created to dominate women. As Beauvoir writes, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (295). Gender is not something biological or natural or innate but a social construct, a learned behaviour; and a product of language, culture and institutions.

In the contemporary world, formation of women's groups has challenged people's views about male and female roles. Geraldine Forbes in *Women in Modern India* cites: The women's movement continued to focus on traditional practices, beliefs, and institutions as the source of oppression. It also attends to violence against women, the institutional framework for the maintenance of gender differences, and the impact of the economic situation on the day to day activities. The Hindu woman adjusts herself to the life of her husband and does not think of her own rights and choices. Her submissiveness and lack of full personal development are closely related to family and social system in which a woman is mere a member of a group, rather than an independent individual. Ranjana Kumari, in *Religions and Status of Women*,

argues that people's notions about the proper role of woman in the society and social restrictions on woman are all rooted in religious conceptions regarding women. She writes:

A woman's husband is her lord and it is her religious duty to see that he is happy and comfortable by yielding to every wish. The woman is defined primarily in relation to her husband and her household, and her interest and active participation in domestic matters is expected to her. The role of wife and mother is the optimal, singular and essential role through which a woman fulfils herself. (9)

Chhetri writes: "Maina hurried to give him some water to wash himself with, so that he could eat. When he had eaten, Dhane lay down on his bed. Maina finished her chores and then filled a wooden pot with oil and sat down at his feet. Jhuma was already asleep on her own bed. Gently, Maina began to massage Dhane's feet; this was virtually a daily task for her. Ray and Subramanian present their opinions regarding the relationship between husband and wife as, "To the conventional Hindu women, the husband was not just a person; he was an ideal living God on earth whom the scriptures enjoined her to serve and worship for her own spiritual fulfilment. The subservience inherent in the relationship need not necessarily impair her personality" This is how women are supposed to be at the feet of their husbands who are given the position of God and women are taken to be devotees. Thus, female devotion in patriarchy is coloured with religious zeal. After some time Dhane tells her that the massage is enough and should sleep as she may be tired. In such pathetic condition of subordination, subjugation and dependency too women seem to be quite content in being a figure of sympathy. It is because of the hegemonic influence of patriarchal ideology.

In her pamphlet *Feminism and Marxism* (1977) Smith, Smith explicitly links her feminism with Marxism and explains how “objective social, economic and political relations . . . shape and determine women’s oppression” (12). She also describes how “the inner experiences which also involved our exercise of oppression against ourselves were ones that had their location in the society outside and originated there” (10). According to her “the relations between patriarchy and class” is due to “the capitalist mode of production” (Smith 1983:1).

In her another work, *The Everyday World as Problematic* (1987), Smith states:

“we can never escape the circles of our own heads if we accept that as our territory. . . . We aim not at a reiteration of what we already (tacitly) know, but at an exploration of what passes beyond that knowledge and is deeply implicated in how it is” (ibid.).

Maina replies, “Am I doing because you order me to? Shall I stop because you say it’s enough or carry out until you do? No, I do this because it pleases me” (23).

Though it apparently seems that Maina has a sense of independence in certain respects yet, it is also a projection of the social norms which Maina had internalized due to patriarchy. It is because of her upbringing. According to Collins (1990) the term matrix of domination is used to underscore that one’s position in society is made up of multiple contiguous standpoints rather than just one essentialist standpoint. Collins (1990/2000:226) asserts that,

“Depending on the context, an individual may be an oppressor, a member of an oppressed group, or simultaneously oppressor and oppressed. . . . Each individual derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression which frame everyone’s lives.”

In the novel, we find that Maina has been completely swept by the spell of patriarchal ideology and as a moral guide tries to inflict the same upon Jhuma too.

A man always dreams to have a wife similar to Maina. In the context of the novel Dhane feels proud of Maina's devotion and her submissiveness and considers himself to be lucky enough to get a wife like her. He never thinks it necessary to know about desires. He becomes full of compassion and sympathy for her because of her hard works and contention at a time when he has been unable to give her anything good to eat during her pregnancy and childbirth; and a single piece of nice jewellery except those made at the time of marriage.

Dhane thinks, "But even so, how content she is! She always attends to my troubles. She bears the burden of the whole house. It is a matter of fate: karma joined this flower to a poor man like me" (23) In the novel Maina has been compared with a "jewel" that Dhane possesses. As Chhetri writes, "Although he was poor in material terms, God had given him this priceless jewel. It was many times better to be a beggar with a life companion like Maina than to be as rich as Kubera (wealth given by fate) but have no one to share your sorrows" (24). Such openhearted appreciation of Maina's dedication finally contributes to her disempowerment in the family in particular and in society in general.

In *Basai (Inhabitation, 1950)* the atmosphere in which the women characters survive is totally dominated by men. Maina and Jhuma can never raise their voice against male domination. Jhuma, an unmarried girl has to suppress her feelings because she has imbibed these values from the domestic environment. Maina is the central female character in the novel. She is the wife of Dhane and mother of her only son. She is simple, hardworking and kind hearted woman who remains busy in her household chores.

Dhane appreciates Maina saying, “How hard it is to understand the games the gods play! Although I am poor, the lord gave me a wife that not even a king could get! I am poor, but I am fortunate to have a wife like you!” (24).

This is how a woman is always expected to live for someone else and for that she is openly flattered in big words like Dhane does here. What Maina really desires goes unnoticed. Dhane only thinks of himself and finds to be fortunate, but the question comes, “What about Maina? Is she ill-fated then to be assigned to Dhane, a poor one?” Thus, in the patriarchal society a woman occupies none or less space in a society due to various factors and levels of oppression both directly and indirectly. According to Collins, “people simultaneously experience and resist oppression on three levels: the level of personal biography; the group or community level of the cultural context created by race, class, and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions” (Collins 1990/2000:227). At the level of the individual, she insists on “the power of the self-definition” (Collins 2004:306) and “self-defined standpoint” (Collins 1998:47), and that “each individual has a unique personal biography made up of concrete experiences, values, motivations, and emotions,” thereby reasserting both the subjectivity and agency absent in earlier critical models (e.g., the Frankfurt School).

For Collins (*ibid*: 50), breaking silence represents a moment of insubordination in relations of power— “a direct, blatant insult delivered before an audience.”

Similarly, we find in the novel that Maina is worried about Jhuma’s condition and the threat on her family’s prestige and dignity. She thinks of finding Rikute and forcing him to accept Jhuma as his bride so as to save the honour of the family. For that purpose, she sends Thuli, Jhuma’s friend, to Limbugaon to check the whereabouts of Rikute. Maina thinks if she manages to make Rikute marry Jhuma, everything will be

settled. If not, everything will collapse along with the life of Jhuma. The tragedy of such a conservative society is that while the real culprit, Rikute goes scot free it is only the woman has to face the consequences. Nobody will even think of him.

Jhumavati is the sister of Dhane. She is a simple, beautiful and innocent village girl. In the novel when Jhuma encounters Rikute's forceful gaze, it is said, "natural womanly modesty appeared on the girl's face, and sweat glistened on her brow. She lowered her eyes, sat down to one side of the spring, and began to wash out the various implements her family used in religious rituals" (12). This shows that patriarchy always demanded women to be modest, less talkative and unable to look directly at someone especially 'male' other than near and dear ones.

In the patriarchal society women are often considered as vulnerable and sensible like the delicate flowers so as to sustain male assertiveness in the social circumstances. Regarding the encounter between Rikute and Jhuma Chhetri writes:

"The young man reached the spring and stopped to gaze at a girl who was there. She was just like a budding flower. He had seen many such beauties wrapped in silk blouses and blue saris, and he had thought them to be real nymphs. But how could he have imagined such a flower in an ordinary hill village wearing a common calico skirt, a dirty white cotton waistband, and a blouse torn in three places? [. . .] The only difference was that those flower buds in the towns watered their roots themselves while nature itself watered this one. In the town, they wore rouge and fake roses, but the goddess of nature had endowed this one with every adornment. In the town, the whole environment had been built but here everything was just as it should be." (12)

Here the overall attitude towards women is a negative one, though village girls seem to have been praised than those of the cities. A woman is a woman after all. She is a human being like every man in the society irrespective of class and gender. However,

behind such images there lies the politics to subjugate woman just as in the novel Jhuma is described as a budding flower and those girls from the city as real nymphs. Jhuma is represented as being close to nature.

In *Basai* there is another male character called 'Mote Karki' other than Rikute. Mote Karki likes Jhuma and wishes to marry her if he can get her hands from her brother, Dhane. But Jhuma does not pay attention to him. Mote Karki is not particularly handsome or cheerful. On the other hand, he admires her simplicity and innocence and it is because of this as the novelist writes "he was drawn to Jhuma" (28).

Here, Mote Karki, who has been presented as a helpful person in the village, a member of same patriarchal society, gets charmed by the external beauty of a woman. For women like Jhuma and Thuli, Jhuma's friend, it is necessary to beautify their bodies not for themselves but for someone else. They have internalized the belief that female beauty gets its complete meaning only if there is some male to appreciate it. It brings to light what Mary Wollstonecraft has said in her essay, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman"- "...should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least 20 years of their lives." (19). Here, Jhuma and Thuli think in similar lines that patriarchy has drawn for them. Thuli says, "Well, I might be. But even if I am, who do I have to show myself off to that I should bath so early? Who have you got at the market to do yourself up for?" (25)

After marriage women have to spend their whole lives in domestic chores like washing, cooking and serving food, child bearing, rearing, and emotional and sexual services. These chores are considered as typically feminine qualities and therefore very much natural. Regarding a woman's confinement within such domestic sphere, Sheila Ruth in *Issues in Feminism* writes, "Women are expected to serve man; taking

care of their homes, property, clothing or persons; economically doing countless jobs for which women are ill paid or not paid at all; sexually as wives, mistress or prostitutes; reproductively assuring means of paternity through female chastity” (86). Hence, women have to be dependent on male members for the fulfilment of their financial needs also. This applies to all women who are satisfied in their roles as a mother and housewife, as reiterated by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963):

“Their only dream was to be perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands..... They gloried in their role as women, and wrote proudly on the census blank: “Occupation: housewife.”

(47)

Maina loves Jhuma but remains helpless in front of her husband. She is worried thinking about the condition of Jhuma after her brother comes to know about her illicit relation with Rikute. While talking with Thuli, she says, “What else can I do! When I look at her face I do love her” (75). Being a woman, she has internalized that she is helpless and powerless in comparison to her husband. Maina, in her anger, abuses Jhuma, “What will happen when your brother finds out? You have rubbed soot in all our faces, where can we hide them now? Tomorrow, when word gets out, all the villagers will spit on you and then where will you hide? It would be better for you to die before that happens: now in a patriarchal society it is believed that the husband should be protective and the wife should be submissively protected occupying their space as a mere recipient in the society. Similar is the case with Maina, who sobs hiding her face in Dhane’s lap because of death of Nande’s pregnant buffalo out of

Dhane's beating and she is worried regarding the outcome of this incident. Dhane consoles her saying, "Oh, why do you cry like this? Your husband has not died! Why worry when I am still with you?" (61) But the question comes, in time of bad days, "How can a wife remain silent?" It is only an acceptance of the belief that as long as women are with their husbands, they do not have to worry about anything, for everything will be done by their husband. Such privilege on the part of women ultimately handicaps women's assertive role which in turn results in their disempowerment.

Mary Wollstonecraft, in her essay "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman", exposes the situation of women in the patriarchal society and examines how woman is registered to the status of secondary being regarding the upbringing and schooling of female. She writes, "Females, who are made woman of when they are mere children, and brought back to childhood when they ought to live the go-cart forever, have not sufficient strength of mind to efface the super inductions of art that have smothered nature" (395). As a result, a woman is confined into the vicious circle constructed by ideas of male. Similarly, woman in patriarchy is forced to live a life of double existence: existence of woman and a child at the same time.

In the novel *Basai* Jhuma has been sexually abused by the immoral soldier who evades after the sinister act. Rikute, who lures her showing the vision of charismatic Munglan and promises to marry her. Jhuma too shows her interest in his story of Munglan in which he says:

Ay, what tales I could tell you of that! [. . .] There are electric lights so bright it seems like the sun is shining in the night. And the shops aren't on open hillsides likes this! The bazaar stretches as far as you can see – proper big roads with cars, trams, and rickshaws running along them. You don't have to walk a step; a rickshaw will always

run you along. That's how it is there. I was fed up when I realized how things were here. (32)

Thuli, Jhuma's friend does not know how to react after hearing her story. Therefore, she says, "It's a complete disaster. You did what you did, and you trusted such a corpse of a man you did not even know. They say he left in Phagun" (77).

Day by day Jhuma's condition worsened as the news spread in the village. Her brother and sister-in-law wish her to be dead. Though they love Jhuma, they cannot sacrifice their prestige in the society. Jhuma's own conscience tells her "You deserve to be punished. You are a sinner" (80). Jhuma's brother Dhane considers his poverty and helplessness as the cause of his sister's pathetic condition, more so after Jhuma leaves home with decision to end her life. His own conscience questions him after Jhuma leaves the nest with deep wounds of laceration by her own brother and sister-in-law.

Chhetri writes, says, "If society had not been so ready to mock Jhuma's small misdemeanour, would she had left the house today in such desperation? Was the fault hers alone? Was it not the fault of the soldier, who had taken advantage of an innocent girl to gratify his desires? But it is the helpless girl and her family who are punished by society" (86-87). Instead of his conscience, Dhane listens to the ruling ideology and in response of his wife's request to search for Jhuma, he answers "If she is dead, we will hear of her" (87). Thus, this shows that in patriarchal society family reputation counts more than the life of woman like Jhuma, who was sexually exploited by Rikute and later harassed by the society.

Jhuma comes to a state of committing suicide by jumping off from a rocky cliff had it not been the timely intervention of Mote Karki as a rescuer. The novelist writes

“When injustice and oppression go beyond extreme and those who suffer them need assistance, then in some shape or form, help always come from the Lord.” (90).

Maitaghar (Parents' Home, 1950)

The next novel taken up for study is *Maitaghar ((Parents' Home, 1950)* by Lain Singh Bangdel. Lain Singh Bangdel was born in 1919 in Darjeeling. He spent his early life in the Himalayan Kingdom. Later he graduated with a degree in Fine Arts from the Government College of Arts and Crafts in Calcutta in 1945 with a first class first. He wrote popular Nepali novels like *Muluk Bahira*, *Maitaghar* and *Langda ko Saathi* during his stay in Kolkata. In 1952 he travelled to Europe where he studied art in Paris at the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

While in Paris in the 1950's, his meeting with Pablo Picasso and George Baraque left a deep impression on him. Bangdel was the first Nepali artist to study and work in Paris and London, and made a name for himself as an artist with his distinctive, non-traditional Nepalese style. From 1968-69, he served as Fulbright Professor at Denison in Ohio and taught Nepali History of Art. Some of his accolades included the “Commendatore from the Italian Government for his contribution in the field of Arts and the ‘National order of Arts and Letters’ from the Republic of France (France’s highest honor in the field of Arts). In addition to it he was also awarded Knight Commanded of Royal Victorian order by Great Britain. Bangdel died in 2002.

The plot of the novel is woven around the life of a girl Sani, who lived with her mother Ratna and father in Singmari, Darjeeling. When the novel begins, we are introduced to the main characters consisting of the Subedhar couple and their son Hari on one hand. The other family was Sani and her parents. It focuses mainly on Sani

and her relationship with Subedar's family. They always desired to have a daughter of their own and fortunately this longing for a daughter was fulfilled by Sani (though she was not their own). When Hari is in class 10 a tragedy struck the family with the sudden death of his father. Though he is interested in studying further he is unable to continue due to financial crisis though the rest of his friends had gone to Kolkata to study. Sani's family resides within a close vicinity of the Subedars who treat them as family members. Subedarni's son Hari was born many years after marriage. She had hidden the thirst / desire to be a mother as years rolled on. She was continuously worried thinking what if she was deprived of motherhood – whether her youth and femininity would remain incomplete. This clearly depicts the insecurity of women who think that the identity of a woman is defined only in terms of motherhood. It gets complete meaning thereafter. If a woman fails to accept assigned roles, as Beauvoir opines “she is seen forthwith as a praying mantis, an ogress. In any case she appears as the privileged other through whom the subject fulfils himself” (994). These discourses form a network of power relationship which turns out to be ‘truths’ which further allows the legitimization and the perpetual domination of women. Childless women are stigmatized by society. Therefore, not having a child makes a woman's life miserable as in the case of Subedarni. This is expressed by Adrienne Rich in *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* explains the predicament of a woman even after being a mother which makes them equally helpless:

“The mothers: collecting their children at school; sitting in rows at the parent teacher meeting;straggling home to make dinner,and tend to children after a day at work; fighting to get decent care and liveable schoolrooms for their children; waiting for child-support checks while the landlord threatens eviction; getting pregnant yet again because their one escape into pleasure and abandon is sex; the mothers, if

we could look into their fantasies—their daydreams and imaginary experiences—we would see the embodiment of rage, of tragedy, of the overcharged energy of love, of inventive desperation, we would see the machinery of institutional violence wrenching at the experience of motherhood.”

[p280]

If one looks at the institution of motherhood, one also needs to look at the expectations society has of women who decide to have children, with the everlasting debate over whether women can really “have it all”. Also does women to get a chance to decide when they want to have their children, how many of them they want, or whether they want any children at all? Women have no say in these affairs.

On one occasion, Ratna says that they would return to Ilam (in Nepal). Subedarni reiterates in disbelief:

“Will you be returning to Ilam? Ratna nods her head and adds further:

‘Yes, didi- Sani’s father has given his final decision of shifting to Nepal.’ (p10)

Ratna has no choice but to abide by the decision of his husband and has no say regarding it whatsoever. It is the decision of the male member that matters and one hardly cares about asking about anything related to the family from a female. It is he who is the Supreme Being and one who runs the family. Thus, patriarchy presents the cultural identification of women as ‘other’ and ‘negative objects’ Beauvoir subverts the myths of such negative images created by patriarchy questioning the logic behind these dichotomies. The images of women are the result of construction. All the myths have been created to dominate and exploit women. The contribution of women in the society is always forgotten. Marilyn Frye in *The Politics of Reality* (1983) points out that “woman’s experience is a background against which phallogocentric reality is a foreground . . . it is essential to the maintenance of the foreground reality that nothing

within it refers in any way to anything in background, and yet it depends absolutely upon the existence of background” (167). Like Beauvoir and Frye, Val Plumwood in her “The Blindspots of Centrism and Human Self-enclosure” argues that the overall effect of hegemonic centric conceptual structure erected on the foundation of dualism is not only to justify oppression by making it seem natural but also to make it invisible, by creating a false universalism in culture in which the experiences of dominant ‘center’ are represented as universal, and the experiences of those subordinated are rendered as ‘secondary’ or ‘irrational.’ A similar idea is expressed by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)

“But forbidden to join man in the world, can women be people? Forbidden independence, they finally are swallowed in an image of such passive dependence that they want men to make the decisions, even in the home.” (p76)

The next part of the novel takes place after a gap of 13 years. Ratna and Sani come to meet the Subedarni’s family from Nepal and the duo wait on the varandah. After their meeting the two ladies share their experiences of becoming widows. Now Sani and Ratna had returned from Nepal as they were bereft of shelter. It is then decided that Ratna and Sani would stay with the Subedar family. Sani would take care of household chores. Life rolls on in this way.

One day Sani breaks a cup and saucer. Ratna is furious and picking up the pieces of broken crockery murmurs:

‘What a hopeless woman are you in domestic chores. How will you survive in your husband’s house? Such unlucky women tend to ruin their own fate also.’ (p 20).

Sani is hurt by her mother’s comment especially for comparing the breaking of crockery to having an ill-fate in life. One could also notice Gender inequality at other instances in the novel. Hari is reading a book while Sani is engaged in household

activities. The inefficiency in her domestic sphere is equated with having a bad fate. If a son would have broken it people would have overlooked the matter. So, the family is the first site of oppression for a woman. Differences in the treatment of a son and daughter are very evident.

There are also other instances of gender bias and patriarchal structure that gets reflected in the novel. Hari works in office while Sani is engaged in household activities from morning till evening. Then gradually the year passes by and Diwali the festival of light comes. Sani desires to see it. Having been raised in Nepal she had never seen it before. Sani asks permission to Subedarni saying,

‘Bari, today on Diwali it seems the myraid light shine brilliantly in town. It is almost like a fair where large crowds gather to see it. I have never seen it before. Can I also go to see it?’ To this Subedarni replies: “If you can find time after your household routine you can go. But with whom will you go?” (p29). Sani replies ecstatically “I will go with Lamichaney’s sisters who are all going in a big group. (p 29) Sani is happy for having got the permission. However, her mother Ratna intervenes and says: ‘you are planning to go to town to see lights, is it? You have lights at home also what need is there to see it? (p29). A little later Hari their son comes and when he expresses a desire of going to town to see the brilliant lights and crowds of people nobody objects to it. So finally, it is decided that if Sani has to go to town she was to go with Hari and not with her own companions.

Here it is shown that a woman is bound to the domestic sphere which an unpaid. Neither is her contribution in the family in terms of free service provided to the family acknowledged in the long run. Also, when Sani is asked to see the lights in town of Diwali with Hari, it shows that a woman is compelled to be dependent on the male member of the family be it her father, brother or later husband. It clearly evinces

how the family is the first site of oppression for the girls. Even their mothers (who have grown-up under the patriarchal norms of the society) are unable to get rid of this rigid and harsh mentality due to the fear that if anything happens to her daughter then once again the mother will be questioned regarding her failure in bringing up her child. Therefore, it becomes extremely difficult even for the mothers to open up their hearts due to this problem which is stated by Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792): "Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, *outward* obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man..." (19)

They are also fed by the Hindu idea and thought that during their old age it is the son who stays at home and takes cares of their parents and moreover they are the ones who will light fire to their dead bodies. Otherwise, their soul will be not satisfied and hover around here and there and won't reach heaven. Security provided only by man was disliked by feminists like Betty Friedan who has written in *The Feminine Mystique*: "Protectiveness has often muffled the sound of doors closing against women." [p324]

Sani's talks of marriage start within the family though she is unaware of it. Hari like a brother reveals that that some talks are going on. Sani refuses to get married and desires to stay forever with her own family instead. Sani says, 'I don't want to get married Hari daju and don't ask me again.' To which Hari asks, "Why? Will you remain like this forever?" Sani replies in affirmation, "Yes, I will remain like this." (p40)

Though Hari and family do not compel Sani in this matter his ways of reasoning are imbued with patriarchal mindset. Therefore, Hari says: ‘Sani, telling such things will not do. One day on the other daughter has to go to her husband’s home. A daughter’s home is always meant to be in her husband’s house, not in her parent’s house.’(p- 39) This idea of compelling daughters to get married was disliked by feminists. They should be allowed to remain single if they decided to, as expressed in *Faces of Feminism* (1981) by Olive Banks.

“Celibacy was important to the feminists because it attempted to set up the alternative role for women apart from the traditional sphere of marriage and motherhood: an alternative, indeed, that was followed by choice by many of the pioneers. It enabled them to avoid the sexual and economic subordination of marriage, while at the same time pursuing for themselves an interesting and challenging career.” (p97)

When Sani starts crying after hearing this Hari consoles her by saying this is the rule of life for daughters. Sani utters: ‘Hari daju, I don’t think that I have done anything wrong to this family. Even if I have made any mistakes, please forgive me. Hari daju, I don’t want to get married to go to a new place and stay with unknown people. I will stay in my parents’ home. I will remain here and serve my elder aunt, my mother and you also...’ (p 40) Sani almost begs him to allow her to stay in her parents’ home but nobody listens.

The issue that crops up here is that women are pushed into the trap of societal institution like marriage. Any amount of pleading to remain single used to fall on deaf ears in earlier times due to patriarchal ideology. However, times have changed now. With education and self-empowerment/economic independence women can remain single if they choose to do so. But it wasn’t allowed during those times due to

conservative mindset of the parents as well as the patriarchal norms and Hindu laws of marriage which compelled the parents to get their daughters married as soon as possible whenever they attained puberty. The parents also had the fear what if their daughter elopes with someone then the family will earn a bad name in the society.

Sani's marriage arrangements are going on. It is a known fact that patriarchal ideologies are passed from one generation to another. It is observed, even more rigidly by men. One day Hari gives instruction on what should be done; how she should behave will other after marriage. Hari says:

'Sani , once you go to your own house the biggest religiosity of a woman lies in along with obeisance towards God lies in her action of serving her husband and his family .You should instruct the servants and be efficient in running the house .If your mother –in –law mistreats you or says anything to hurt your feelings ,you as a daughter –in –law should not think of your parents' home and cry .You should treat your mother –in –law like own mother. If you are able to please your in –laws, they will surely treat you well.'(p 44)

In patriarchal societies just like we find in this novel, contributions of men are thought of as more valued than the women. Moreover, women the dictates of the society in which she lives there is a divide between their personal experiences and the way the world is represented by society as a whole. According to Dr. Dorothy Smith such kind of situation is referred to as bifurcated consciousness (Smith 1987). She also strongly feels that there is a division between the directly lived, bodily experience of women's worlds (e.g., their responsibilities for looking after children, aging parents, and household tasks) and the dominant, abstract, institutional world to which they must

adapt. There are two modes of knowing, experiencing, and acting that are directly at odds with one another. (Smith 2008)

Carrying on further Hari say's you should not talk too highly of your parents' home. Whenever you make mistakes ask for forgiveness and above all treat your husband as a God. Never speak loudly or disrespectfully with the in-laws. Hari says:

‘Sani you should not talk too highly of your own home with your in –laws. Instead consider and make it appears that their home is far above your parents’. If you make a mistake any day, ask for forgiveness. You should sleep later than other family members and get up much earlier. Treat your husband as God. Yet, do not forget to worship another more power full God above him also. Offer your prayers to him every day. Do not talk rudely with anybody. You should maintain a cordial relationship with people known to your husband’s family. Do not make a sad face in your husband’s house. Remember to show a smile on your face when speaking to somebody. Do not show tears in your eyes to anybody.’ (P-45)

Patriarchal societies are more or less concerned about ruling the women. As a result, not only do women find it difficult to find their experiences acknowledged in the wider patriarchal culture, their viewpoints also tend to be silenced or marginalized to the point of being discredited or considered invalid. This aligns with Wollstonecraft idea of female subjugation due to patriarchal norms.

"... Obeying a parent only on account of his being a parent, shackles the mind, and prepares it for a slavish submission to any power but reason."

Wollstonecraft, 153

Years roll on. Two years later Sani comes to her parents' home when Ratna was ill. They find that Sani had lost a lot of weight. Seeing Sani, Subedarni senses that Sani is not happy in marriage. On Subedarni's question regarding the deterioration of ever health Sani keeps quiet. After much persuasion she reveals that her husband had brought a 'second wife'. Subedarni is shocked thinking how anybody could do this to an acquiescing, harmless girl like Sani. She discusses the consequences that are likely to follow on the mine, health and life of a woman who loses her husband to another woman. Subedarni utters:

'When a husband brings home a second wife, what will life be like for any woman? Such consequences are likely to follow after a woman loses her husband to another woman. After such a tragedy undergone by married woman even milk will begin to taste like poison, medicine will cause death. Her experiences will often drown a woman in the sea of tears. Some even move closer to death.' (p65)

Then ruminating deeply Subedarni thinks of what could be the reasons for Sani's husband for bringing another wife. She comments further by saying may be such things were destined for her. Subedarni says: 'Didn't your in-laws say anything in this matter? Didn't they oppose to the actions of their son? But what could you do Sani, maybe this was destined for you. Maybe you could not please your husband and make him your 'own'. You seem to have been neglected by your husband. But when men bring home a second wife when already having a first, circumstances often turn out at the end for such cruel men that they have to repent for their actions and hold the feet of the first wife.' (p65)

This is what a typical mindset within a patriarchal society. Women are always neglected by the superior men and they possess the right to do whatever they want even if it is marrying another woman. What turns out from this is that men only love

the body of women and as long as they are capable of satisfying the lust of men they are of use to men. Whenever their thirst for the body is over, they can dump their wives and find a new body to replace the old one for satisfying their desire because they are the ruler. This idea is also expressed by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, 1969

“But the principle of marriage is obscene because it transforms an exchange that should be founded on a spontaneous impulse into rights and duties; it gives bodies an instrumental, thus degrading, side by side, dooming them to grasp themselves in their generality; the husband is often frozen by the idea that he is accomplishing a duty, and the wife is ashamed to feel delivered to someone who exercises a right over her.”

(p465)

They are the one who earns and therefore can control and subjugate women. The ‘nature’ of the body had always been the central focus of feminist debate. For, Kate Millet the oppression of women is due to the mainstream role theory. According to her domination of women by men is due to the fact the women have already accepted the norms laid down by the patriarchal society. The men occupy the public world, dominate key social and political institutions and exercise a distinctive instrumentalism; all stereotypically masculine. Women, similarly, are commonly described in terms of their ‘sex’, as the ‘second sex’. But it is as their gender that they have in fact been known as private, passive and expressive. Knowledge of the construction of gender is, then, the key to an understanding of woman’s oppression and to her liberation. In the terms of role theory, gender is the collection of traits learnt as sex role. On the one hand, women acquire the attributes of their sex role as small children; learning them as the ‘natural’ attributes of females. In their role as

primary socialization agent, the mother, they also become complied in their own oppression, as they conserve distinct gender attributes in the rearing of their own girls and boys. On the other hand, role traits are reinforced and maintained in the settings of adult life in the counter-positioning of role expectations as these enforce prohibitions and sanctions, constructing the dominant cultural institutions and power structures.

Similarly, in the novel we find out that even after giving her life to an unknown man what more should a woman sacrifice to make a husband her 'own'. She does not have a say within the power structure of the patriarchal society. Although a woman lays down her entire life for the service of her husband and his entire family and providing the free service of unpaid labour throughout her life she is never respected or given her due. She becomes a commodity who can be dumped anytime according to the wishes of her husband. This idea was reiterated by Mary Wollstonecraft in *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

“She was created to be the toy of man, his rattle and it must jingle in the ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused.” (p- 118)

In such kind of structure, the man has the right to fancy another woman and marry her (even though he has another wife at home). All the adjustments had to be made the women only even if it sharing her husband with the other women who will be her husband's second wife. Thus, it could clearly be seen that the typical patriarchal mindset blames the woman for her incapability of pleasing/satisfying her husband. The structure and outlook within this stereotypical patriarchal society is such that no one will ever shift their attention to man's actions, his wrong doings and injustice done to his first wife. Instead, it will always be the women who will be forever questioned, manipulated, marginalized and silenced.

Days pass and Sani's mother Ratna dies. She is still in her 'maitaghar' or 'parents' home. One day Hari passes by the Victoria Falls of Darjeeling. At that moment he hears a grass cutter singing to himself "Nari ko Janma Haray ko karma, Aarkakai susaray."(p-65)

This means that a woman is born to be a loser in life. Her life is meant to be dedicated to the service of others till she lives. Generally speaking, woman in the Nepali community are respected and are not like the woman of the North East. Domestic violence or injustices done to woman are minimal. Rape or other crimes against woman are rare. However, if any tragedy strikes in the life of a woman by way of death of her husband, separation or any other reason, it is meant to be accepted as something predestined for her by her fate. People of this community have a fatalistic attitude towards life and women are asked to accept everything and make compromises in life.

Though Hari feels sorry for Sani he cannot do anything to help her. Sani is indirectly asked to go to her husband's house but she refuses to go. Hari often discussing with his mother says that if Sani does not go to her own home then where shall she go? People talk various things which we cannot stop. So, though they feel sorry for her they cannot permit her to stay for life. The societal conventions compel the mother/son duo to harbour this though because of patriarchal ideologies. Subedarni as a mother feels sorry to ask Sani to go back. Being shelterless Sani was under their roof yet they could not help. Therefore, Hari says, 'Adjust with your husband's second wife and stay with them.'(p66)

These are the ideologies that thrust woman in the murk of hell. She is asked to make a compromise and allow her husband to be shared by two women living

together under the same roof. Unable to visualize herself in this situation Sani finally makes up her mind to go away from this home. Wiping her tears with the edge of a thin shawl, Sani takes leave from this 'maitaghar' or (parents' home) for life. She moves towards an unknown destination which is neither her husband's house nor return to this maitaghar (parents' home) again in life.

Bholiko Pratiksha (In Anticipation of Tomorrow, 1990)

The novel *Bholiko Pratiksha (In Anticipation of Tomorrow, 1990)* by Pushpa Rai has been considered by many critics, writers, scholars as the first feminist novel in the true sense of the term. Pushpa Rai born in 1920 in Darjeeling has carved a niche for herself as far as feminist writing in Nepali literature is concerned. She passed matriculation from Sardeshwari school in Darjeeling. Later she graduated from Darjeeling Govt College. She worked in Mission Girl's High and at the same time taught in Night College in Kurseong. She has many literary works to her credit. She is still alive and lives a comfortable life in Kurseong.

The novel revolves around the life of a girl who was herself an illegitimate child. She was adopted by a Thapa family. She was affected by polio in one of her legs and limped slightly. She has a pretty face and was very good in studies. Santi was brought into the Thapa family because Santi's foster grandmother (who had a lot of interest in having a daughter in the family). After the grandmother's her foster mother was forced to raise the baby and was harsh towards her. Mrs. Thapa (Shanti's foster mother) never treated Shanti well. Even where there was a talk of bringing an orphan baby at home, she objected on the ground saying it was better to bring a son home which again typifies a stereotypical mindset of having a boy instead of a girl because in a Hindu custom all the rituals after death of their parents the rites and rituals are to

be done by the son only. However, the actual reason was that this adoptive mother was a quite young lady who had married an elderly man for money. When he was kind towards Shanti because she was an orphan, their daughter and due to her physical deformity, she was jealous. Instead the mother looked upon Santi as her competitor in love for which there should be no reasons for. After all "Aging is not 'lost youth' but a new stage of opportunity and strength (p264) as stated by liberal feminists like Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963

Therefore, the foster mother should have no reasons to feel insecure. Yet, as Betty Friedan has said it is "the chains that bind her in her trap are chains in her own mind and spirit. They are chains made up of mistaken ideas and misinterpreted facts, of incomplete truths and unreal choices. They are not easily seen and not easily shaken off." (ibid, p58- 59)

Santi with a post graduate degree in Economics was a highly qualified lady and never shared such thoughts for her foster mother. In Nepal Santi meets a man called Sailendra who shows interest in her which she thinks is true love. She reciprocates to his advances and comes into close proximity of having a physical relationship after which she gets pregnant. When she tells Sailendra about the matter, and also asks him to sanctify this relationship by going to the Guneshwari temple and taking vows of marriage to which he evades the topic. Later on, that same day a piece of paper falls from his pocket and Santi picks it up (without his knowledge). In that letter it was written that his wife was waiting for him at home. So, the actual truth is that he is a married man who had cheated Santi who became pregnant with his child. Having a strong will and economic backup she does not go for an abortion. Neither does she hang herself like her own mother.

If one reads the novel minutely in-between the lines it becomes very much evident that Santi herself was an illegitimate child. Her mother had hanged herself because she could not bear the stigma of being an unwed and that the unmarried girl giving birth to a child. Santi on the other hand is ready to give birth to an illegitimate child to unlike her mother. Instead we find in her strong woman who is ready to fight for her cause and to show the society that there is an emergence of a new woman who will not be subdued against the dictates of the society. Rather she will live her life according to her own wish. It is her private sphere where no outsiders have the right to step in to mentally torture her. Irrespective of the consequences that would come over her being for having giving birth to an illegitimate child she goes ahead with decision. She is ready to face any challenges given by the society. She is a perfect epitome of woman as Simone de Beavour has expressed in *The Second Sex*

“There have been and there still are many women who do seek to attain individual salvation on their own. They try to justify their existence within their own immanence, that is, to achieve transcendence through immanence. It is this ultimate effort—sometimes ridiculous, often pathetic—of the imprisoned woman to convert her prison into a heaven of glory, her servitude into sovereign freedom, which we find in the narcissist, the woman in love, and the mystic.” [664]

A lady with a strong mindset like Santi thinks that it is better to expose the stereotypes of men like Sailendra so that henceforth innocent young girls may not be victims of such inhuman activities of men. Shanti is waiting for her child in her womb to come out to this world. She wonders what she will name her for whom the novelist is dreaming of in anticipation of tomorrow and the novel end with these thoughts

reverberating in the background and thus makes the novel open-ended for a multiple interpretation by the readers.

Madhyantar (Interval, 2007)

The novel *Madhyantar or (Interval, 2007)* was written by Pushpa Rai in 2007 and this novel too has feminist, gender-bias and patriarchal overtone. The title *Madhyantar (Interval)* indicates a time interval. The upheavals in a personal life are comparable to the ebb and flow of life. Time is not static. Dynamic changes come with time. One incident cannot stop life. It has to move on. It is in the context that literary icons such as Indra Bahadur Rai has said in the 'Preface' of the novel *Madhyantar (Interval, 2007)* that life is not made up one single life. We come taking birth and rebirth many times into this world. Many generations of women have lived their lives according to patriarchal ideologies. After these women has taken birth. So, modern women are the representatives of the new generation.

The novel *Madhayntar (Interval, 2007)* revolves around the life of the girl Purnasha and her husband Ram, who narrates her experience of being betrayed by him in their conjugal life. It portrays her youth, love, marriage and divorce which forms the plot of this novel. Purnasha was in love for 5 years after which she married Ram. Unfortunately, within 1 year of their marriage she comes to know of the actual nature of Ram from a servant that he was of a flirtatious nature. Even after marriage he used to go out of town for 1 or 2 days on the pretext of an official tour taking women along with him. Purnasha gets shocked when this was disclosed by her friend Anandi as she loved her husband very much. Purnasha takes a bold decision of leaving her husband as she was a self-dependent lady. She was a true representative of a psychologically

and emotionally hurt woman. Though their divorce was not done legally but their separation from her side was for life.

After seven years Ram has sent a mail requesting for reconciliation. The life of modern women has been defined in terms of technology. Feelings of man which should have been expressed in other ways have been done using technology. It is sent in a shallow manner which can be erased any time from a man's heart as well from his device (so that no legal proof remains also). The whole novel is sent in the form of a letter from Purnasha to Ram expressing her views of marriage, the love she gave on her husband and the expectations she had of him in life. The novels end with the letter from Purnasha stating how she was only meant for sexual gratification of her husband and not as a wife:

“There was no love from your side. Being a wife, I had to wait in the bedroom to be an object for your sexual gratification. There was no emotional bonding as should have been between a husband and wife. But where was that? How brutally did you often treat me in the darkness of the night? Things of which only I was the sole witness of it.”(p72)

Indirectly she talks about marital rape and violence that some women go through who remain mute rough out their lives. According to Sir Mathew Hale: “The husband cannot be guilty of a rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their mutual consent and contract the wife hath given up herself in this kind unto her husband, which she cannot retract” (Hale, History to the Pleas of the Crown, 1736) This led to marital rape exemption into the common law system which gave protection to a man who cannot be charged for rape against his own wife. The above statement holds true even in the penal statute of India, under the exception clause 2 of

section 375 of the Indian Penal Code 1860, which exempts the man of the sexual offence against his wife is not rape if the wife is not of more than fifteen years of age. But sadly, there is no such clause for the upholding the sentiments, values, and feelings of what goes on within the women who has to bear the pain of the rape and even then, she has to remain silent and serve her husband's need and demands.

Critics like Helen Cixous have strongly objected on women on not writing about their bodies in 'The Laugh of The Medusa'.

"We've been turned away from our bodies, shamefully taught to ignore them, to strike them with that stupid sexual modesty; we've been made victims of the old fool's game: each one will love the other sex. I'll give you your body and you'll give me mine. But who are the men who give women the body that women blindly yield to them?"

Here Cixous talks about being vocal about their bodies being in speech of writing. Women need to break their silence and be vocal about their subjugation in any form, whether in speaking or writing. Here the heroine Purnasha has written in a letter if not a complete text.

In the novel *Madhayntar*, in her last Dialogue, we find Purnasha indirectly saying that she was also equally powerful and that she can take legal actions for ruining the future of an innocent wife. In this new age of women empowerment, a rebirth of new women has taken place after an 'Interval'. So, it is useless seeking reconciliation with me.

"You were confident thinking that a woman belonging to the lower strata of the society would never be able to match up to your status and overpower your glorified position, in this hierarchical class structure. Women like me and my family bereft of

any economic resources to get any weightage in society would never be able to knock at the doors of judiciary to seek justice.”(p88)

Purnasha tells Ram that it was her friend Anandi who exposed the nature of Ram’s betrayal to her. As he was having an affair with a lady called Miss Suchismita and went to tours with her. Anandi tells:

“Listen friend, if I had been in your place, I would have spat on the face of such a disloyal husband and left him. What if he has a high status in society, we are also educated women, economically independent. Why do we have to be subjugated and remain with a husband like him. Don’t we have our own prestige, self – esteem and self-dignity?” (p77)

Juneli Rekha (Lines of Moonlight, 1979)

In the novel *Juneli Rekha (Lines of Moonlight, 1979)* it is shown that there was a helpless widow called Malini, who worked as a gardener in the Manager’s bungalow. The Manager used to pass strange comments regarding her beauty and youth. After the death of Bela Chokri(who is actually the mistress of the Manager), Malini was asked to take her place. Incidentally there was this system of keeping mistresses by the Tea Garden Managers. Most of them had left their families back in England and often exploited the women of the gardens to satisfy their carnal pleasures. She was called a ‘Chokri’ (which means a young girl who was given the status of his mistress, with a separate quarter and a servant. She had to go to the Manager’s bungalow, when she was called.). Malini was asked to be a chokri but she refuses and with the help of another labourer flees from ‘Meki’ tea estate in the darkness of the night. Such was the plight of women during the colonial rule.

The status of being a woman as projected in these Nepali novels brings to the forefront some of the key theoretical ideas of Gayatri Spivak Chakraborty. Spivak's critical interventions encompass a range of theoretical interests, including Marxism, feminism, deconstruction and post-colonial theory. Along with other leading contemporary intellectuals such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, Spivak has challenged the conventions of literary criticism by focussing on the cultural texts of those people who are often marginalized by dominant western culture: the working class, women and the postcolonial subject. Spivak's definitions of woman are expressed in 'Feminism and Critical Theory', where she argues that:

My own definition of a woman is very simple: it rests on the word 'man' as used in texts that provide the foundation for the corner of literary criticism establishment that I inhabit. You might say that this is a reactionary position. Should I not carve out an independent definition for myself. Should I not carve out an independent definition for myself as a woman?

(Spivak 1989: 77)

Nirgaman (Abandonment, 2006)

Bindya Subba, is a true epitome of contemporary Nepali feminist writer who can be compared to Shashi Deshpande. A recipient of Sahtiya Award in 2003 for the novel *Unfathomable*, her oeuvre of works consists of poems, short story collection. Her first novel was *Hospice*, followed by *Nirgaman (Abandonment, 2006)*.

The novel centers on the family of Akshay, (a Govt Officer of high rank), his wife Trishna, who besides being a Professor of a college, she was a celebrated literary figure also. The couple had a five year old son called Parag. Living with them was Akshay's old mother also. In a mysterious manner the narrative unfolds a strange

problem that this family was going through at this juncture. Akshay's wife had suddenly deserted their home without leaving any clue as to where she had gone. Whether it was a temporary exile or for life? it was not known to anybody. Would she return to her husband and son any day? The question remained unanswered.

Sometimes his thoughts go back to the times when Trishna was with them, trying his best to discern what could have made her take such a decision. The situation a woman finds herself in makes her bold enough to do things never thought of before, as expressed by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second sex*, "The curse on a woman vassal is that she is not allowed to do anything; so she stubbornly pursues the impossible quest for being through narcissism, love or religion; when she is productive and active, she regains her transcendence; she affirms herself concretely as a subject in her projects; she senses her responsibility relatively to the goals she pursues and to the money and rights she appropriates." p721

He often recalls the conversations they had at times. One day as talks about domesticity was going on; Akshay casually mentions that it has become slightly difficult for his mother to look after their son Parag due to her ill health. Therefore, Trishna should devote more time in the household activities. Trishna looked slightly disturbed and said - 'I'm doing everything as much as I can, inspite of my busy schedule. Papa, amidst my dual responsibilities I often tend to forget my name. What is my name?' (p 21). Akshay replying in a jovial tone says - "Don't be silly". Yet, Trishna insists on her name being pronounced and says; - "No seriously I mean it. Please pronounce my name as I have forgotten it. What is my name?" (p 21)

This brings to mind what Betty Friedan said about women. They often tend to lose their identity to the extent that they cannot remember who they are. Therefore, she says in *The Feminine Mystique*,

‘There is no other way for a woman to dream of creation or of the future. There is no way she can even dream about herself, except as her children’s mother, her husband’s wife. (p 88-89)

As Parag grew slightly older Trishna started her literary pursuits. Slowly she penned down a few poems some of which were written jointly with others also. Some were written for Akshay and some on her present life. Yet at times she wrote: -

‘Subjects, Images have all become limited. That spontaneous flow has lost its pace. Impressive writing do not come these in whatever I try to write.’ (p- 21)

Akshay could not comprehend the meaning of her statements most of the time. It is not that Trishna never loved her family. Akshay was confident of his wife’s love for him. When they were in amorous conversation, Trishna often said – ‘Papa you are the most important man in my life. The only man the woman within me with a big heart and my tenderly feeling has accepted you.’ (p21)

Likewise she loved her son Parag. Now when reminiscing these bygone days Akshay feels that her irritations and disappointment over certain matters was due to her inability to give time to so many selves of Trishna. The obligations of domestic life come must have caused hindrance to her aspirations and left her disillusioned. That is why she said: - ‘Another part of my life is lying aside looking for avenues and directions.’ (p25). That is why perhaps Feminists like Bonnie Kreps has mentioned in ‘Radical Feminism I (*Feminist theory Reader* ed by Carole et al, 2012), ‘Modern

women is in the grip of vicious circle and in need of urgent liberation. The more she resigns to the demands of her situation, the more she will stunt her growth...’ p48

Akshay now feels that these could be the reason for her sudden disappearance.

Amidst this recapitulation of the bygone days Akshay recalls his meeting with Trishna during an inter college debate. He was impressed by her oratory skills. Though he did not share the same literary nuances as Trishna but on reading some of her poems he admired her aesthetic sense .

In one of their next meetings Akshay got a chance to speak to Trishna which now when looking back was a projection of true self. Said Trishna – Apart from a working woman I am a writer too, do you know that? (p17). To this Akshay replied that he was aware of it but was not a writer like any other human being. It is only that people tastes differed in life.

A wife who is writer which is the domain of the male. I am moving with utmost dedication towards the fixed goal of my life. Are you ready to accept me as your wife along with firm determination? (p 18)

She glanced at him anticipating a reply. He kept quiet for a moment but replied finally saying, “Everything will fall into places with time.” (p- 18)

Akshay reminisces many instances of their past when she Trishna had given a true definition of herself as:-

“My name itself is Trishna. Yet this thirst is not for water but it is a quest for the value of life, the search is for directions that can usher in new knowledge over people.” (p- 19)

People had their own perceptions and differed with one another, as far as this act was concerned. Akshay also had to endure various taunts of people who gave him questioning glances as regards this matter. Even in such turbulent times he had a strong conviction that Trishna was always loyal to him. Yet, in trying to discover the reason for deserting him and their son Parag, putting motherhood into shame, his head reeled once again.

Flashback of times spent with her coming flooding before his eyes. By then Akshay had begun to understand that Trishna had a different philosophy in life. Feminism was also one of the domains of her extensive contemplation where she desired that people should change their perceptions regarding women. She often said, “Women have made a considerable progress in the field of education and acquired economic independence also. Yet there has not been amelioration in their condition due to the faulty system existing in the society” (p39-40).

Trishna voiced her opinions stating that a women’s position within a household and her role in the family has not witnessed any significant changes and said –

“Narrow mindedness towards women, hope and anticipation of the roles assigned to them, adherence to rules made for them, standards and boundaries made especially for them only and attitude of three fourth of the population still remains the same. The feministic ideals created by the Indian society in the distant / remote past remains as it was initially. Modern society has not made any changes or amendments in it.” (p 39-40)

Trishna had very less friends, acquaintances. If there were any there, they were her literary peers. Sometimes they used to visit her which no doubt made her happy. Yet, she could not receive them warmly because they were more of gentlemen in the

group. Though Akshay spoke with them as a formality, there was a certain serious expression over his face. Later he got to understand that these people with a broader outlook in life dropped at times for literary discussions without differentiating between the genders. Though Akshay's mother never interfered in other matters, she objected to this and said – ‘who are these people who have come today? Don't call gentlemen at home. It does not look good in the eyes of the neighbours’ (p63)

This is why Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* has called it a ‘Problem that has no name’.

When woman was seen as a human being of limitless human potential, equal to man, anything that kept her from realizing her full potential was a problem to be solved: barriers to higher education and political participation, discrimination or prejudice in law or morality. But now that woman is seen only in terms of her sexual role, the barriers to the realization of her full potential, the prejudices which deny her full participation in the world, are no longer problems. The only problems now are those that might disturb her adjustment as a housewife. So career is a problem, education is a problem, political interest, even the very admission of women's intelligence and individuality is a problem. (p86)

Trishna was shaken by such comments of her mother – in – law. Akshay though a loving husband kept quiet which according to her meant not standing in defense of the wife and take the side of his mother. In her moments of dissatisfaction she has written somewhere.

‘In moments of deep reflection I neither consider myself as a woman nor a man. I am simply a human being, therefore, I desire that such walls which create a difference

between genders be broken down by our system. With natural ease man woman should be practical in their mode of thinking. People of both genders should live with a feeling of generosity and helpfulness towards one another.” (p 40)

This is why Kate Millet has written in *Sexual Politics*, Women under patriarchy “are for the most part marginal citizens when they are citizens at all, their situation is like that of other citizens. (p55)

Various thoughts come to Akshay’s mind. After all where could have Trishna gone? Today neither is there a roof over her head nor a floor to tread upon. It is altogether a different for Trishna. Her own perceptions were infinite and boundless as a sky, along with it she must have had her own emotions to tread on. Was it difficult for Trishna to sever all ties with the family and leave home? Was it an impulsive decision or pre-planned? Had she forsaken the family for life or was it a momentary phase? When would her exile come to an end? Such thoughts troubled him.

On a holiday Akshay decides to change the setting of the room. Initially he changed the position of the study table where Trishna used to spend most of her time. Having done it he couldn’t accept the changes and brought it to its former position. Trishna never liked anybody touching her books. Every day it used to be untidy in a hurry to complete her domestic chores and reach college in time. However, today they were arranged properly and table was tidy. It appeared that she had done on purpose for the last time like as if she would never return. Looking intently on the table he notices a thick register with some loose papers on it. On the topmost part of the handwritten papers was a painting. The painting contained fragments of a broken mirror. The small pieces of glasses contained reflection of a woman. On looking intently at them he figures out that it was of Trishna.

This painting which she could have kept with an intention to make it a cover of her book is symbolic of the fragmented self of Trishna herself. She had many roles to perform i.e. of a mother, wife, daughter in law, an academician and lastly a social reformer to improve the condition of uneducated women who were unaware of their subjugation. On turning the pages of the register, Akshay got to understand that the handwritten papers were the manuscript of a novel she was writing. It did not have a title. May be Trishna thought that she would write later. He moved his fingers and read the Dedication –

The uninterrupted expression of my consciousness is dedicated to the person who is an intimate part of my existence – that is for you Akshay.

Akshay plans to publish the novel keeping in mind the hard work done by the writer Trishna. Therefore, he says – ‘I will give life to this work of creativity. I will publish it.’(p81). In the meantime Akshay buys different newspapers and reads thinking that Trishna must be pursuing her literary activities as usual. She used to write in English also. Even if she were to write with a pseudo name he would be able to guess that it was Trishna’s, as he had fair idea of the subject that would be reflected in her writings.

On a holiday Akshay turns over the loose pages inside the register. He reads them slowly. The main character of the novel was Pratibha who was exemplary figure. She was a torch bearer amongst women who was trying to usher in some changes in society. Some of the thinking expressed was of the modern age. But side by side talks of Vedic age and days of the Purnas were also to be found. The heroine Pratibha has said: -

‘Talking about the different shades of women .I’m also the woman who amidst the beating of dhol (drum) gives out loud shrieks as she sits on the funeral pyres of her husband to immolate herself as a sati. I’m also the modern rebellious woman conscious about her own empowerment...I am a woman...a shadow of Durga. I’m also the one who can destroy the evil in this world, yet, I am also the silenced woman who has been made helpless by the hierarchical system of the society” (p 82)

Very painstakingly Akshay reads the manuscript. He can make sense of all that was written as the perception of the heroine Pratibha, could have been an expression of her own frustrations when she could not find a congenial atmosphere to pursue her dreams.

He remembers Trishna saying “Papa, please make a big library for me here, a separate room to do my own studies.” It was her immediate need for which she made a request. It brings to mind Virginia Woolf’s thoughts on the need for a private space for a woman to pen down her thoughts. “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction. ”

Woolf, (Chap 1)

This further throws light on the importance of a library for a committed writer, which in Woolf’s times was deprived of a separate space to pursue her literary works. Instead it was done in the common sitting room. The environment was not congenial and that is why women could not come up with fine piece of writing as mentioned in the essay ‘A Room of One’s Own’.

“Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, to bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.”

— Virginia Woolf, ‘A Room of One’s Own’ (Chap 1.32)

To pacify her momentarily he had said – “Yes, it shall be made for you someday.”(p82)

Now Akshay regrets if only he had done things which would have made her happy Parag would not have lost his motherly affection. Now he is determined to get the novel published so he meets a few publishers out of which a gentleman called Diwas comes forward. On reading the manuscript he full of praises for Trishna’s aesthetic sense. By then two years had passed. Akshay’s mother was forcing him to get married but he refused saying that Trishna has gone for her work and this exile is temporary. Both Akshay and publisher think of giving a title to the novel. Finally they decide to name it as ‘Aishwaryamee’, as it was a strong feminist text. Copies of book came from printing house.

A big pompous ceremony is organized for the book launching function. Lists of invitees are made and invitations are sent. Festoons are tied up and so was a banner in the name of ‘Aishwaryamee’ by the author Trishna. Finally the big day comes and Akshay imagines the happiness that would have glowed on the face of Trishna for the satisfaction of her work but she was not present today. The media was there and it was also in news clippings. The novel ends with Trishna being a torchbearer in bringing a revolution in the lives of women. Trishna was immortalized by her work of art.

Conclusion

Patriarchy defines a woman with reference to man, who in turn is preoccupied with the notion of supremacy. These patriarchal myths demand women to be silent and subservient to men. According to Virginia Woolf, “men are the ‘opposing faction’; men are hated and feared, because they have the power to bar her way to what she wants to do - which is to write.” (818) So, a woman cannot develop her potentialities in such restrictions and dominations. Such situation only damages one’s creativity and potentiality. That is why women have been lagging back in the society. It is obvious that women’s activities and behaviours are restricted and regulated through patriarchal ideologies. Patriarchal society has hindered or prevented women from realizing their true potentialities.

In the androcentric dualism, Val Plumwood, writes, “Men are stereotyped as active, intellectual, inexpressive, strong, dominant and so on, while women are represented in terms of complementary polarity as passive, intuitive, emotional, weak and submissive” (103). She further argues that in androcentric context, that a woman’s task in the house like labour and child raising are treated as inessential, as natural involving no special skill or care, as the background services that make ‘real’ work and achievement possible, rather than as work themselves.

For feminists like Simone De Beauvoir the category of gender identity is not determined by one’s biological sex: rather gender is a social construct, which can be resisted through social and political control. Likewise, French feminists like Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva generally agree with Beauvoir that the category of feminine identity is a social construct.

Women have been treated unjustly in social, political, cultural, financial and even in the artistic sectors of the society. Certain binaries have been created and circulated in the society in which women are always placed in the secondary position. That is why feminism tries to blur all the boundaries and binaries to establish justice and equality in the society in general. Moreover, the problems of women that cannot be addressed by the general feminism are addressed by multicultural feminism. Third world feminism deals with the problems of women of the third world countries with their different cultural, economic, geographical, and other typical experiences. These binaries are biased and coloured with politics of segregation.

Woman's oppression is legitimized and perpetuated by a hierarchical social structure that allows one group to dominate other. Rosemary Radford Ruther, in *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*, argues that hierarchical social structure is rooted in dualistic ideology "transcendental dualism," (194) which stresses separation, polarization, and detachment between sexes, classes, and human and nonhuman beings. In these binary oppositions, man, upper-class and white human beings are considered superior to woman, lower-class and people of colour.

Even in the Nepalese society, women are compelled to live along the line of patriarchal mindset with the belief that "*chori ko janmahareko karma*" (to be born a daughter is to have an ill-fate). This makes it more convenient for patriarchal culture to define woman's role as submissive, inferior, immanent and dependent so as to ensure man's continuous independence from female. Thus, oppression of woman in the feudal-patriarchal society operates under the ideological principle of patriarchal masculinity that seeks mind-body, landlords-peasants, high-low, rational-emotional and so on.

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CHAPTER-4

The Novel as History: A Reading of *Balivedi (Sacrifice, 1970)*

The novel *Balivedi (Sacrifice, 1970)* written by Samiran Chetttri from Darjeeling is a truly historical novel written against the backdrop of WW II. It highlights the life of those serving in the army in different parts of the globe, the sacrifices they along with their families' make. The novelist has taken a slice of history and subsumed it within the sphere of literature. The chapter is written in a simplistic mode to narrate the actual events of history that coincide with the happenings in the fiction. It is mainly to show the actual contribution of the Indian Nepalis or Gorkhas in the Freedom Movement which has found very less coverage in the History of Indian Independence. Though it is written as a chapter within a thesis of literary studies it is not written using the New Historicist theoretical paradigm but in the actual historical mode.

The history of the appeal of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Singapore in (1943) to the Indians to join the Azad Hind Fauj is an important turning point in the history of the involvement of the Gorkhas in the Freedom movement and it shall be highlighted with great accuracy though the narration of this lesser known or unknown fact is woven along with the storyline of fiction. The rest of the facts as stated in the novel were exactly as had been experienced by the Gorkhas when they were initially serving in the British Army as Gurkha Regiment. Later on the call of Netaji they became soldiers of Azad Hind Fauj and finally they took resurgence as the Gorkha Regiment as we can still see today. The story of the fiction from beginning till the end

are the lived experiences of the Indian Nepalis initially in Burma, then in Singapore, then in Imphal war front and finally in India.

The novel is woven with the help of the fictional characters, which introduces us to the family of the Mohan Thapa, a resident of Darjeeling with wife Banira and daughter Kamala. It begins with the events of the decades of 30's. By then Hitler of Germany had not made an attack on Poland. The British was at the height of its expansionist drive with its military strength. That is why may be in the 19th century, seeing its military power several comments have been made on it. In 1821, the Caledonia Mercury wrote of the British Empire, 'On her dominions the sun never sets: before his rays leaves the spheres of Quebec his morning beams have shone three hours on Port Jackson and while sinking from the waters of Lake Superior his eye opens upon the mouth of the Ganges.'

Europe was looking Eastwards and trying to expand its borders towards Asia. Some ex-army men post retirement had become 'gallawallas' meaning 'recruiters' in the local language. They encouraged the Gorkha youths to join the army. Those from India joined in large numbers from Dehradun, Assam, Shillong etc. Many youths started pouring in from Eastern Nepal also which had a large settlement of the Kirati tribe, favored in army.

In this manner Kamala's father Mohan Thapa too joined the Jalapahar Recruiting Depot. After being recruited they were taken to Burma. World War II had not begun as yet. Even then Europeans were strengthening their power in the East Asia. The army men could take along their families also with them. Therefore, Mohan had brought his newly wedded wife from Namsaling as he decided to take her also. From the First World War itself seeing the valour of the Gorkha soldiers, the English

were highly impressed by them. Both Kamala and her younger sibling Shashi were born in Matina. At the end of 1939 Hitler made an attack on Poland. Victory over Poland increased the confidence of Hitler by leaps and bounds. After that he goes on winning spree over many European countries. On the other side, seeing the victorious glory of the British in South East Asia, Japan becomes restless. So there is a war in South East Asia.

The Gorkha soldiers who were employed in the British Army were taken from Matina in Burma to different parts of the world to participate in the war. Mohan also went to the war front but unfortunately he never returned. Banira becomes lonesome and worried on not having any whereabouts of him. Yet, she could not do anything other than pray for his safe return. During this phase Banira gets a flash back of all that happened fifteen years ago.

From very early times wives of army men had to live without their husbands and depended on letters only. Today she was all the more anxious to get one from Mohan after he went missing. After this incident, to sustain their livelihood, kamala a small kid then had to go to the railway station to collect the coal pieces. This was due to the fact that Banira was pregnant with their second child. It wasn't easy task for a small girl because after filling the sack with coal it had to be dragged aside. Banira on the other hand used to knit sweaters and various woolen garments to supplement their income. In the mean time slowly the streets of Matina were filled with beggars and the sight of injured people increased.

The whole night the sounds of fighter planes, jet helicopters were heard. Kamala a small child of five years went to the post office frequently to enquire if there was any letter from her father. She asks him, "Uncle is there a letter from my father?"(p21) When the reply was "No, it is not there..if there was any I would have

given you. It comes in your mother's name. Banira is your mother's name. Isn't it?" (p21).

On hearing this kamala makes a sad face. It is not only the persons serving the army; it is the whole family making sacrifices for the nation. The same evening many injured soldiers were brought from Daren on a train. Some had lost their eyes, some limbs and some hands. Some had unfortunately succumbed on their journey back home. However, in between Banira used to get some news from her friends. Azad Hind Fauj had put a group of English soldiers in a difficult position, which was published in 'Rangoon Tribune'. Yet, she wonders when so, many injured soldiers had returned home, why only her husband Mohan did not return? There was a radio station also in Rangoon which updated the families of some of things that were happening.

Time and again Banira used to go to see the railway wagons in which injured soldiers were brought home. One day a gentleman seeing her peering over the boggy asks her what was she looking for? When she said her husband, he replies, "He will come back if he is alive. One more *boggy* (compartment of train) will come in the evening. ..Search in it also. This is Irrawady platoon. From where did you hear the last from him?" (p22)

To his query she replied that it was from Inzong. On hearing it the soldier says it was very far from where they had come from. 'May be he has been kept as a prisoner with the Green Hayward Regiment soldiers in Singapore' (p22), he said.

Banira is aghast on hearing about imprisonment and asks innocently, 'If Mohan is kept as prisoner of war, will he be killed?'(p22). To which the soldier replies – 'No. he will not be killed but just be imprisoned. Yet, it is better to die than

be in prison.’(p22).Meanwhile as they were waiting for Mohan’s return or a letter or some news of him, a strange thing happens.

One day kamala meets a man who had come in a train. He was an injured soldier. Though she does not know him personally yet with an anxious face asks him- ‘Uncle did you see my father in the Army?’ He does not know what reply he should give her. Yet says; ‘Your father? What is his name, I simply forgot’. (p23). To this the small girl Kamala quickly replies – ‘Mohan Thapa’. On hearing the name he pretends to be acquainted with him as he does not want to disappoint a small child who is so desperate to hear something about her father. Therefore he says, ‘Oh! He is there in Inzong. I myself got injured and was deported back whereas your father went further beyond the territory’ (p25).

Kamala questions him further asking him why her father was not sending letters to them. To this, the unknown Soldier whom she addresses as ‘uncle’ replies that they don’t usually get a chance to write as they are always fighting in the deep jungle. On getting some piece of news regarding her father, kamala rushes home to deliver this to her grieving mother. Everyday Kamala goes to meet the soldier ‘uncle’ in the hospital. She is happy to hear about the feats of valour shown by her father. (These things were told not to lie to a small girl but to make the loss or absence of her father less painful). One day as usual Kamala goes to the hospital to meet the unknown Soldier. To her dismay she finds he was discharged and had left a letter instead that was written for her mother. While this meeting with Unknown Soldier was going on every day, in the meantime Japan bombarded Matina. The civilians were evacuated by the British. The families of army men as well as civilians were moved towards Rangoon amidst hardship moving on foot sometimes and sometimes on army vehicles, sometimes on train until they reached Rangoon. From there they

were deported on a ship and sailed towards home. Finally on reaching Bandargaha port they landed in Kolkata from where they went to their respective hometowns.

With heavy heart on not meeting the soldier 'uncle' as on the other days, kamala returns home handing over the letter that was left for her mother. In that letter he reveals to Banira that he had never met her husband Mohan Thapa. From the talks of Kamala he had got to understand that they had nowhere to go in case they were evacuated from Burma. Therefore as gesture of kindness he offered them a place of shelter. In case they were taken to India, they could go to his house in Darjeeling where he had an aged mother. It had been months since he had not heard from her but hoped to meet her in the days to come. For this reason he had left a photo behind, in which there was his home address also. If they had decided to go they could show the photo to anybody and they would help her in locating his home.

As war was raging in different places, the Japanese had already started the bombardment of the city of Matina. The Australian army staying there moved towards South. The families of army personnel as well as civilians were evacuated. A long procession of people with some light luggage walking slowly was a common sight. The Burmese of Martina went to the rural areas and hid there. Some Gorkhas followed them. Banira is in a big dilemma. What should she do with two small kids and where could she go?

Should she return to India or wait there itself for Mohan? Will Mohan ever return? Thinking about the life and security of her children she thinks it will be better to leave with other evacuees and go to India, rather than die there in course of time without any companions to walk along as an escort. On her way she meets an old man who on seeing her with two small children (a girl and a boy) walking with others enquires if she was also an evacuee. She replies in the affirmative. Then he questions

about their father. To this Banira replies that she not heard from him since months and had no idea about his whereabouts. He also shares a similar predicament of his two grandsons, whose news he had not heard about for months. Banira questions, 'Grandsons? What about son and daughter- in-law?' (p26). To this question old man replied that his daughter-in-law was staying in her parent's house. He himself was any ex-army man now living as pensioner.

As they were walking along Banira asks him when he had come to Burma. He said in the year 1890, in the same year when the British had taken over Burma. The vehicle was slowly moving along the road. He talks about having got married and becoming the father of two sons. The elder son Youhan kumar had gone to India with one sahib. After that he never returned. Banira asks about the younger son. He said that the younger son was also the father of two children. It is the same grandsons who were now fighting the war in Inzong. His younger daughter- in- law went to her home. 'Then what happened to your son?' asked Banira. 'Did he die in the army?' (p27), to this query the old man replied, 'not everybody dies in the army' (p27). Banira is a little relieved to hear about it. However, his was a different story of valour but not while serving in the armed forces.

The whole family used to stay in a place called Miyo in those days. There were 4 houses of Nepalis. Some new neighbors had also come over a year after being in the army. One night when it was a festival of the Burmese, a group of youth in an inebriated state had come to that place. The boys were playing their cultural sport called 'Bharsal'. In that household there were three daughters- in- laws. A youth held one by her arm and was pulling her. Unfortunately there were no gentlemen in the house except for an old father who raised some noise. Then the Burmese started talking in an insulting manner hinting at the racial discrimination. They addressed the

Gorkhas as 'foreigners' who were a misfit in their own country and had moved elsewhere. They were addressed in derogatory terms and were called 'Bhatuwas' or people who sustained with the leftover food of others.

In the meantime the crying of one daughter-in-law was heard. On hearing it his younger son, who at that moment was taking care of his newly born infants could not hold himself. The old man had stopped his son but his rage was beyond endurance because it was question of dignity. On seeing a single woman dragged by 2 men he just couldn't stop himself at the scene, not just considering her to be a neighbor's wife or a muted helpless person but the fact was that she was Gorkha woman. He killed them with his khukuri and ran to get hold of others also when suddenly one of them shot a bullet on his chest. He fell down dead. As the news reached the cantonment area people came rushing to the scene. The gentleman of the house whose wives had been saved by a good hearted person was given a burial with 'deep respect' to the departed soul for his act of kindness. Even in a place out of their homeland where they are treated as inferior second class citizens the Gorkha youths never hesitated in their duty as far as protecting dignity of women were concerned though they may not be of one's own kin.

The old man though having lived in Burma since 1890 was aware of all the contribution that the Gorkhas had given whether in India or in any part of the world. They used to get news from the Army that the Non-Violent and Non-Co-operation movement had started in India in which there was active participation of Gorkhas from Darjeeling district, Assam and Dehradun, Bhakshu. It was first adopted by the special session of the Congress which was held in September, 1920 in Calcutta under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and was 'reaffirmed, almost unanimously, at the annual session at Nagpur in December, 1920'¹. The movement was started mainly to

defy law and order, disregard government rules, to give up Government titles, boycott foreign goods and refuse to pay taxes.

In the meantime war was going on in different places. The Japanese had slowly taken over everything they had captured including the Inzong oil refinery. They were skilled fighters and did within seven days. The Japanese had captured 2000 Allied forces and were taking them to Singapore via a jungle on foot. The sepoy were on empty stomachs since the last three days. Many White soldiers had died due to hunger and also due to whipping while in Darien, (Burma) itself. Mohan kumar Thapa was also in this group. He was standing upright no doubt but trying to remove a leech that was stuck on his foot. Seeing him halt one sepoy whips him. Mohan could not endure the insult because what he did was not due to indiscipline but seeing the urgency of his requirement after a leech got stuck to his body. He tries to repeat the act but before the stroke of the whip touched his body, Mohan tries to snatch the whip and pulls the sepoy. The other guards stand in attentive pose pointing their guns towards Mohan. The prisoners stood alert.

One Major notices the scene and comes to the spot. He looks at Mohan properly and patting his shoulder asks him to carry on walking. He briefed the sepoy with many things.

One King Regiment Sergeant was quite brave enough to brief him that the soldiers would not be able to walk as far as Singapore as they were hungry and feeble. 'You may get something in Homalin,' (a small town in Burma) says a black Captain (p42). The Japanese Major asks them who the unit commander was. One Irish Colonel from the Green Hayward group comes forward. The Japanese Major instructs him that the captured soldiers would have to halt there to give them food and rest. On the third day

the captives reached North East part of Burma's Liu jungle. They halted on the banks of river. It was after sunset, when somewhat dusk had set in. The prisoners were made to stand in a row. Then a roll call was taken.

All of them were attentive as Green Hayward Group's Colonel started taking roll call. He addressed them as 7th Battalion and a reply of 'Yes Sir' (43) came from a black captain. The Colonel orders the Captain to continue. At this command he calls out a series of numbers like 15/11, 19/11 and 'Yes Sir' (p 43) comes the reply. To this it is assumed that he was left behind or he had died.

'Now Greenwich Company' somebody calls out. 'Yes Sir' says a Scottish Lieutenant who comes forward to take the roll call. 'Ready? ...Number 88907' 'Yes Sir' was the response. Number 50809, there was no reply, Number 50088; there was no reply which meant that many had died from this company. (p42)

Next is the turn of the King Regiment. One Sergeant comes forward and salutes the Colonel. He starts the roll call. 'Number 100556' 'Yes Sir' was the reply. Then again 'Number 100559' there was no reply. All these soldiers whose roll calls were not taken, their hands were tied by the Japanese. Seeing this Colonel of the Hayward group asks the Japanese Colonel – 'What are you doing Colonel?'(p 44)

At this the Japanese Colonel says, 'you need not get a reply for everything. This is our system of functioning. We do not have permission to say anything about it. Stand where you are. Continue the roll call.' (p 44) he commands the other officers.

This time it was of the 5th G R or Gorkha Rifles 'Yes Sir' says an English Captain and moves forward. He starts calling out their number and names. 'Number 9 – Phukam Rai' 'Yes Sir' was the reply. 'Number 8 Madan Singh' 'Yes sir' was the response. 'Number 10 Mohan Kumar Thapa' 'Yes Sir' came the reply. 'Number 11

Chandra Bahadur Chettri' there was no reply for this number. Besides them many friends from other Gorkha Battalions like them 3/GR, 6/GR and 5/GR had remained behind them.

With hands tied behind them there were some blacks, Irish, English and Scottish soldiers. They were separated from other Gorkha and Indian soldiers. Nobody understood the reason. It was meant that young and strong POW were kept on one side, the injured and weak were taken close to the river.

A colonel who was himself imprisoned showed his resentment at this act and says: 'Colonel this is gross injustice. This is totally against the norms of the Geneva Convention. You cannot kill our brave soldiers with such brutality. This is genocide. Colonel you cannot do such injustice to us' (p 44)

Ignoring his comments the Japanese colonel shouted – 'Ready?' and a reply of 'Yes, Sir' came. The prisoners were made to stand on the edge over the banks of the river. The brave soldiers standing as prisoners, now at the mercy of the Japanese did not move an inch. Nor did they show an expression of fear on their faces. One young black soldier exclaimed –'Leave it Colonel. We are ready to die' (p-45) to the imprisoned Colonel. In the meantime all British and black prisoners started singing 'God save the king' (p-45)

'Colonel' shouted the Irish colonel once again to the Japanese colonel. At this the Japanese colonel turned around and said that he could not do anything on his own. It was an order of his superior and he had to follow it. Tojo the PM of Japan refused to follow the norms of the Geneva Convention. He even said that if the Irish colonel had been in his place, he would have been done the same thing as he was doing on the direction of Tojo.

Yet the Irish colonel insisted on going by the rules of the Geneva Convention. The Japanese colonel did not heed the logic of the imprisoned colonel. Instead he said, 'Ready? Now shoot'(p 45). The prisoners were shot at point blank range. All the bodies collapsed. The colonel removed his hat. All Japanese and British soldiers made a sign of cross and prayed that their bodies may reach heaven. The imprisoned colonel looked at the Japanese colonel and said, 'I'm also weak but you didn't you kill me?' (p45). To this the Japanese colonel replied that they could not kill him because Japan had received many benefits using him at many instances. The moon shone brilliantly. The dead bodies surged up and down floating along with ebb and flow of the river.

The remaining prisoners were taken to Singapore jail where they had to spend days and months, uncertain of their stay there. The jail was fenced all around with barbed wires. Along with it was the strict vigil of the Japanese sepoys which made their escape impossible. They were subjected to great torture.

The whole day they were made to clear the heavy vegetation and make roads amidst a dense jungle. They were given two square meals a day consisting of Burmese rice and dal (pulse which the staple food of Indians also) only. Their body structure consisted of merely flesh and bones – in fact very difficult to keep themselves alive. The number of prisoners increased day by day. It was becoming difficult to survive. It would have been better if all of them were shot dead. Two British soldiers had made attempts to run away and had tried to jump over the boundary. The Japanese soldiers struck them with bayonet from behind. Both were killed and their bodies fell over a gorge.

Their dead bodies were brought and laid on the ground where the roll calls were taken. One was very young boy. The bayonet had pierced on his neck. This was

meant to be an exemplary consequence that is likely to follow if anybody dared to make such attempts in future. One night Mohan kumar Thapa (Banira's husband, now a POW) lay on his cell and thought of his family back in Darjeeling. While he was ruminating over his past life one sentry was stabbed by somebody. The blame was thrust upon prisoners. There was search for Group commander. A Colonel who was sleeping was dragged and taken outside to the ground. After that night the Irish colonel also disappeared. Henceforth nobody would be there to speak on behalf of them. In that cell there were about thirty Gorkha soldiers and some Garwalis among the prisoners of British Army because by then most of them had succumbed to their injuries. A month had passed since he was in prison.

When the golden rays of the sun fell on the ground soaking them in warm sunshine (as roll call was taken) Mohan's thoughts were often wandered to his beautiful hometown Darjeeling in autumn. Situated against the backdrop of the snowcapped Kanchenjunga which glistened with the iridescent rays of the morning sun brought memories of life at home. The lush green leaves of the tea garden which looked like a thick carpet, the muddy pathways in between; the toy train which gave joyous ride to the tourists (as they take breathtaking view of the beautiful scenery around) came flashing before his eyes. Side by side Mohan also thinks of the harsh realities lived by the innocent folks who live at the mercy of the British, which often goes beyond their level of endurance and compel them to leave home in search of better opportunities. Mohan thinks "why have only the Gorkhas taken the responsibility of sacrificing their lives by dying for the British in their Army. The innocent folks fail to realize that they are dying for the security, peace and longevity of those very people who subjugate them". (p46) Ruminating deeply, Mohan thinks that "the British has given absolute power to the Manager of tea garden who can

shoot a native if he is found guilty. Why are we tolerating this oppression? We cannot be absent for a single day even if there is torrential rainfall, instead our wages shall be deducted for that day. Our Gorkhas are serving the White Imperial Masters and also taking care of their property. What do we get in return? We get a bare minimal wage which is hardly sufficient to give two square meals a day. Will I even get a chance to return home some day? There are less chances of it. These British folks never allow the Gorkhas to rise above the rank of Subedar in the Army on the ground that they are not educated. The British themselves hardly gave us a scope to study because we never had secondary schools. Our education was limited to primary level only. How do I make other Gorkhas aware of what I have realized today? Henceforth I will shoulder the responsibility of making my people aware of what we are being subjected to. Yet, how do I do it, as I'm imprisoned myself. Nobody will think of helping a soldier in distress. Instead they will try to put more innocent youths in it.”

(p47)

When the roll call was about to start one Indian army General was seen coming out from the Japanese Commander's room. He was donned in a black uniform. Between the collar and on his chest there was a photo of a Tiranga with a tiger in the middle. All the Japanese officers saluted him. The prisoners were bewildered seeing the scene and wondered who he could be. There were other Indians following him. Their uniform was not the same. Some were wearing Japanese uniform and some Indian. But on everybody's chest there was a photo of a Tiranga with a tiger in the middle. Slowly they go to understand that they were INA soldiers fighting for India's Independence from the British imperialistic rule. They were sons of Mother India.

To meet the Gorkha soldiers and other Indian soldiers' two prominent figures came inside Pearl Hill Jail. They were Subash Chandra Bose and Rash Behari Bose. Before SC Bose met POW the Japanese commander asked the Indian prisoners to go outside and stand in the lawn. The POW thought that they would be shifted to a different location or be taken elsewhere and killed. On meeting SC Bose, the imprisoned soldiers were astonished to see him shaking hands with prisoners one by one. He was to address the Gorkhas as well as other soldiers staying in the cellular jail so far. The Japanese officers as well as ordinary sepoy were in attentive position.

Bose speech at Singapore on July 4th, 1943 was as follows:

“We have a grim fight ahead of us – for the enemy is powerful, unscrupulous and ruthless. In this final march to freedom you will have to face hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death. Only when you pass this test will freedom be yours”¹

Then spoke S C Bose –“You are all sons of Mother India. Your motherland is in distress and now calling you. Only by giving your blood she will get Azadi or freedom. Freedom attained without struggle and sacrifice will never be permanent. Give me blood and I will give you ‘Freedom’. From this moment you are no more POW. You are soldiers who will be holding the flag of INA and fighting for your motherland. Tomorrow you will be taken to the barracks where your uniform shall be distributed. In case anybody does not want to participate in the attainment of Azadi or freedom from the British rule he can choose to do so and remain as POW” (p48)

Amongst the Indian soldiers Mohan Kumar Thapa standing in the 2nd row says – “No Netaji, we are also sons of Mother India. Till this moment we had been fighting as soldiers of the British being in service in the British Army. From now onwards we are no more under them. We are ready to give our blood in fighting for our Independence” (p48)

Subash Chandra Bose summons Mohan to the front and he stands beside him. Netaji asks – ‘Where are you from?’ (p48)

In an ecstatic tone Mohan replies saying – ‘My name is Mohan Kumar Thapa. My house is in Darjeeling but I was staying with my family in Burma’s Matina. I had to leave them there when I was called for war.’ (p48)

S C Bose was happy to know about Mohan and his family. Turning around towards everybody Netaji says, ‘I have a deep respect from the Gorkhas. In 1939 the British had kept me under house arrest in my home in Kurseong’s Gidday pahar. During those days the freedom fighters from Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong used to come to meet me. Amongst them you can never forget Dal Bahadur Giri, Pratiman Singh Lama, Helen Bahini (or sister). In that same place I got to meet Kharga Bahadur Bista for the first time. Whatever he has done for me, I will never be able to return his favors in this life. It is this same Bista who helped me to escape from my home in Elgin Road, Kolkata in disguise and run away to Afghanistan first and then to Germany later. Even if I die, once India gets Independence the country will also give recognition to the contribution of Kharga bahadur and other Gorkhas in the Freedom Movement of India” (p48)

These factual statements are supported by such writings:

[Directory of Indian women today mentioned about Savitri Devi (who was one of the women freedom fighters from Darjeeling district) as follows: “Savitri Devi, First

Nepali woman freedom fighter, b. 1903. Her original name was Helen Lepcha. Gandhiji renamed her 'Savitri Devi' when she went to Sabarmati Ashram on his invitation. Her area of activity was Jharia coal Fields, Bankipur, Danapur, Patna etc. used to lead large processions protesting against the British regime. She lived in Anand Bhavan also for some time. She was the first woman to be elected as a Municipal commissioner of Kharsang Municipality. She helped Netaji Subhas Bose escape through Kabul. Even at this advanced age, she is an active social and political worker was awarded Tamra Patra in 1972 Add: Kharsang"]²

Mohan goes back to his room and thinks of his situation. Should Mohan leave his job and join Azad Hind Fauj? How can patriotism be obtained? What was his responsibility? He had been earning his livelihood from the British so far. However, at the same time he had rendered services to them. Today he may be prisoner of war. Yet, at the same time we Indians have been treated almost like slaves. India is ours. If I have to die I will die with the brave sons of our Motherland. If people don't harbor feelings of patriotism, then what favor has he done to the world that has given life to him? After we drive away the British, will India surely get freedom? The British Imperialists have colonized India for 200 years. Yet, they are reluctant to grant Independence to India. What about these Japanese? Can they secure Independence for India if some of them get inside the country and fight with British? Moreover what guarantee is there about the Japanese that they themselves cannot become Imperialists in future? (p49)

The rescued soldiers were taken to Captain Azad overnight. This is even greater. After having food at Azad Hind Fauj camp they were sent to the field. They felt this hero was really great. The British had become weaker by then. Captain Azad

said that even US had attacked Japan. Black soldiers seemed to have helped the Americans. African Negroes seemed to provide more security than the American Negroes. The chinky eyed Gorkhas could not trace the difference between two types of Negroes. It was these same African blacks who had killed the Japanese on the way to China from Lhaso. Those who survived and fled to the North were killed by the land mines.

The Great World War II had started in the strict sense towards the end of 1944. The number of soldiers in the Azad Hind Fauj was increasing day by day by bringing prisoners from other places as well. Everywhere in the Japanese fort there was an Azad Hind Fauj soldier posted. A new army was sent from the Naga hills. The British and their Allied forces were divided in all parts of Burma. As Hitler's power in Europe waned so did in France, Russia and Canada. The President of US and the Prime Minister of the UK did not seem to have the skills to deal with Hitler. Hitler did not heed the talks of anybody. The war continued to escalate.

Mohan Kumar and Randhoj were together so far. 9, 7, 4 G/R had already crossed Mayu. After that was the King company also. The Americans had gradually merged with them. Bombing was another problem that was going on. The Azad Hind Fauj was in a defensive position with the Japanese. The U.S. Air force started bombardment over the enemies. Thousands of air craft's that resembled eagles were spotted over the skies of Burma. Death was hovering around everybody. The village of Burma including its forests, cities everything was devastated by the bombs. It was a disgusting sight.

Randhoj, Mohan and 5 of his friends had merged with the Japanese and climbed the Liu hills. In this mountain 4 G/R soldiers along with Americans had made a camp there. The Japanese kept the soldiers of Azad Hind Fauj in front of

them. Randhoj and Pritiman moved ahead of Mohan to examine the situation of the camp and climbed upwards towards the Rocky Mountains. After reaching a great height they see with binoculars and find a camp on top. They notice that American soldiers along with battalion of Gorkha soldiers which had to be destroyed immediately.

These camps had barred the progress of Japan. He sees again with binoculars and finds that one Gorkha soldier was on duty and was in 'attention' position. Seeing a row of Gorkha soldiers with slanted hats and straps on their chins, Randhoj felt sad to see them now as opponents of the other side. Calling Prithiman Rai he says, 'Pirithi, see the person in front, on the top. Is he not Subedar Sanchaman Limbu? (p51) Pirithiman shows anxiousness to see and spots him and other Gorkhas as well. Pirithiman further says 'Yeah! It's him. Before I was captured he was just a Jamedar. Now it seems he has got promotion.'(p51)

The British Army that had advanced at a fast pace had to be stopped. For that purpose the INA soldiers who had already reached Morang had to be brought back. In this group of soldiers there were some Japanese and some Gorkhas also. The group commander was Kulvir Thapa and the rest in the group was Amar Singh Thapa, Gopal Rana Parasram. Others like Lt. Man Bahadur, Lt. Narayan Rana, Mohan Thapa were in advance position in the troop.

In the Caleb the Gorkhas and British soldiers were predominant. Innumerable Gorkha soldiers gave up their lives. The Australian Army was not allowed to move forward by the Bahadur group (one of the groups of the INA) of the Gorkha soldiers. A message was to come from Tokyo that evening regarding an appeal for the safeguard of Mother India to be shown with dedication to all India soldiers in the army.

Captain Kulbir Thapa and Mohan Kumar are listening attentively. Netaji's ADC who was Bhim Bahadur Khadka was speaking in Nepali as an appeal to the Gorkha soldiers to realize their duty towards Mother India. There was Radio station at Rangoon that gave some news in Nepali as authenticated by the following facts of history.

[Azad Hind Radio Station at Rangoon: On 28th February 1944 INA's own radio station was inaugurated at Rangoon to help in the task of Liberation. Bhim Bahddur Khadka was in-charge of Nepali section in Burma. His Nepali section was sent to Prom in Burma and to the frontline for distributing pamphlets and making announcement through the microphone to the British – Indian – Gorkha Force to revolt against British Raj. Fighting in the frontline as British soldiers he came to Kohima when National Flag was hoisted in Kohima Shyam Singh Rana was in the propaganda unit of Rangoon].³

“Dear Gorkha brothers. Today we, the three million Indians living outside India face a great challenge. It is through these 3 million Indians that 388 million Indians all over India will have to be freed tomorrow from the clutches of the British. The challenge is not to stay that it is not possible to fight with such a powerful empire. Turn the pages of history and see how within 21 years of the service of 5000 Sikh fan volunteers of the 3 million Irish living in the Marseille liberated Ireland from the clutches of the British. If that is the case then why can't so many of Indians give freedom to India? Dai ho! Today you have the challenge of the soul of Bir Bhimsen Thapa and Rani Laxmi Bai, see victory one day for India. Today you have to sacrifice your life no doubt but you have to kill many enemies also in the process. The British are proud that the sun never sets in their country. History has shown that empires are formed but can be dismantled also. In 1939 when the Germans invaded Poland that

time every Polish had chants of 'Let's go to Bonn! In December 1941 every Nippon Soldier chanted -'we have to reach Singapore. We shall also say, let's go to Delhi! Delhi chalo' (p-57)

"You need to safeguard the security of the Mother India, Aren't you ready to pay back what you owe a mother, for the milk and protection provided by her at one time by giving your blood today? If you want to get salvation, you need to sacrifice your life first. Let us die a heroic death so that those burning our corpses will also shed tears to mourn for us" (p59)

On hearing this Army jawans were suddenly shaken. The Gorkhas rise up with grit and determination to do anything for Mother India and started chanting 'Chalo Delhi! Delhi Chalo', Inquilab Zindabad, Lal Qilla is ours. The British have to lose anyhow.' (p59)

Like flames rising towards the sky the soldiers moved forward ignoring the cannons and machine guns due to which thousands of Gorkhas died. The captain was also injured. Mohan kumar carried him on his shoulder for a certain distance. Yet, he could not go further. The Captain ordered him to move on. On getting to know that Lt. Colonel Inayat Kiyani who was the commander of 2nd Gandhi Regiment, a section of INA would be arriving by train from Mandalay everybody was happy. S C Bose himself welcomed this group of soldiers.

The Captain of this Regiment was Hari Madan Thapa, a Gorkha. The enthusiasm of the brave soldiers increased manifold on seeing Netaji. Crossing the Chidwin River and having passed through Tedim and Morang forests, the soldiers reached Caleb. In the meantime Col. S A Mallick's group wiped out the British troops from Manipur for which he was granted the title of Sardar-e-jung. After that the Azad

Hind Fauj ordered that no INA soldier would kill or injure an Indian soldier serving in British Army.

As WW II was going on everywhere, the story of the battle of Imphal Front deserves mention. After the demolition of Patel airport (in Manipur) Major Pritam Singh's army marched towards the mountains. Captain Hari Madan Thapa's unit reached the area of the Australian Army and barricaded them. As the shots were fired Capt. Hari Madan Thapa started shouting at the Indian fighting on the enemy side saying – 'Don't shoot us. We are your brothers. We are not fighting against you; our fight is with the British' (p 60).

During the daytime the US Air Force showered bombs on the Gandhi Brigade, (another group of the INA). Major Pritam Singh seems to have got an intimation of an attack by the British Army. Yet, it was his good fate that the Japanese soldiers came from behind. In the meantime Major Pritam Singh's Army surrounded the British battalion. The hungry soldiers were incapable of matching up to the power of the enemies and fight with them.

With the dropping of bombs by the Americans from above and the hitting of machine guns from below the heroic soldiers of the INA could not endure it. For three days they were on empty stomach but they could not carry on further like this. A bullet had entered Captain Hari Madan Thapa's ribs. Corporal Nanda Singh had carried him to Doctor Maj Akbar Ali Shah. Dr. Shah did remove the bullet from his body but a lot of blood loss had already taken place by then.

Hari Madan Thapa dies and becomes a Gorkha Martyr. Netaji salutes his body and gives a speech of citing Hari Madan as an exemplary of Indians giving life for India's Independence. Many Tamils in Malaya also joined the Azad Hind Fauj. Due to lack of ration Azad Hind Fauj started weakening. The contributions of Lt.

Mansukh, Capt. Ravo, Capt. Hari Madan and Lt Ajib Singh cannot be forgotten in the history of India. The feats of brave soldiers of the Azad Hind Fauj featured in all leading newspapers of the world. By then Mohan Kumar Thapa was already promoted to the rank of a captain. On his directions 2nd Lt Narayan Rana had broken the seven barricades made on the road where the British were to pass through, with his khukuri. On the advice of Netaji's ADC Bhim Bahadur Thapa, what all the Gorkhas have done for the freedom of Mother India cannot be simply put into words.

Japanese Marshall Tirchi and General Kawabe later did not want to attack India. The Japanese were not interested in getting Freedom from India at their expense. India's Independence was not their matter of interest. The faith and hope that they had on the INA soldiers was diminishing slowly. The INA seems to be fighting only for India's freedom and not to help Japan in their expansionist drive. Although the dexterity of Captain Mohan Kumar was indescribable, some of the officers who fought with him had given wrong information to him. This hampered certain things.

At the same time the Japanese themselves stopped getting ration. The land that the Japanese occupied was extensive from Manchuria to Singapore and from New Guinea to Mandalay. There was inconvenience in the exchange of news and transportation of people from one place to another. Along with the necessary war equipment equally important was other necessary supplies like food, medicines and many more. Due to scarcity of supplies the energy of soldier's decreased. Within the Azad Hind Fauj there were debates and dissents among senior officers. Due to this the army could not work with once force. Japan made a mistake by doubting the motives of the INA. They felt the captive soldiers who were at one time serving in the

British Army, especially the Indians and Gorkhas were now interested only in the Freedom movement.

That is why they began to look at INA with eyes of disgust. Seeing the activities of the INA, the Japanese were apprehensive that they themselves could be attacked someday. Many experts among them stated keeping a strict vigil on the INA. When this happened both armies became weak. At the same time hunger, pain of wounds, diarrhea began to plague the army. After Netaji removed all these difficulties the army regained its strength. Yet, some of the mistakes of the Japanese army weakened the INA. The Japanese defeated the 7th division at the Aarkon valley but later they were defeated in Kohima and Imphal.

The Japanese had a special technique of cordoning the enemy and winning over them. In this way they had won the British in Malaya. Later in Manipur they tried the same method but here the British were shrewd enough to defeat the Japanese instead. Slowly the Japanese started losing their self-confidence. In winter they could not retaliate with great vigor because of the cold weather. Moreover cholera was rampant for which there was no medicine. Yet, if we are to turn the pages of history we get to know that the British fought till their last breath everywhere whereas the Japanese could not. Moreover, when General Yamahita, the commander of the Japanese army stationed at Philippine Island demanded aircrafts, all the air crafts that was required in India –Burma were sent there instead. It decreased the power of British India but still General Yamashitta had to lose before the US air force. However, General Tojo and Lt. General Motaguchi appealed to the Japanese government for the benefits of India's independence.

His suggestion was that if the Independence of Asian countries were to be achieved, the foremost task was to drive British out of India, as the British were

daring to annex the whole of Asia to their empire making use of Indian Army. If India was to gain Independence the British would get the facility. General kawabe did not accept this suggestion. The supply of ration by the Japanese to the Azad Hind Fauj was never sufficient. Since the Japanese began to persecute the Burmese, the INA stopped getting help from the Burmese people. Slowly with the passage of time when INA soldiers went to Burmese villages to get fodder, they started disappearing mysteriously. Besides food items called sakarpara that was prepared in Mayo also started coming in a rotten condition. The main reason that added to the woes of Azad Hind Fauj was that they were not helped by the Indians.

It was a sad state of affairs that the Indians mistook the radio broadcasts and message of INA as Japanese propaganda. Instead they had more faith in the propaganda of the British. Rations stopped coming from India. The main reason of the defeat of Azad Hind fauj was not their inability to fight or the lack of support from Japan. It is the shrewdness of the British which made them powerful. False rumors were spread by the British propagandist saying that the INA owed allegiance to the Japanese and did whatever they demanded. In fact they alleged that INA had already sold India to the Japanese king and gained support from the native Indians. In July 1945 under Maj. Gen N.C. Chatterjee, Azad Hind Fauj celebrated Netaji week with pomp and grandeur. The National flag was swayed here and there. Along with speeches, a film exhibition was also done. Sweets were distributed to children and crackers were burst. Under S.A. Ayer, M.A. Saale, A.C. Chatterjee, Capt. Mohan kumarThapa and Rana, March past was organized by the army. In the history of the work Indians living in different Asian countries rejoiced in this ceremonious occasion.

The festivity was attended by S.C. Bose's most loyal comrade Major Durga Malla, a prominent Gorkha who made a mark for himself with his valour. Also to grace the occasion was present the soldier cum musician Capt. Ram Singh Thakuri. Slogans of joy started pouring in from the streets of Saigon. Indians who had become local inhabitant of Saigon like Narayan Das Khemlani, Chandan Mal, Khiya Mal, Shiekh Mahmud and Ramnath cannot be forgotten as brave sons of India who had helped a lot in the freedom movement of India

In Maj General A.C. Chatterjee's camp was Mohan kumar Thapa. One evening when in Saigon a person by the name of Gulab Ahmed came and expressed his desire to join the INA. Having talked of his past experience of working as an accountant, he was permitted to join the INA. He also mentioned that despite serving in the Hong Kong police for 16 years, the British did not bother to give him any further benefits. Ahmed was sent with Sahey Sahib to Hanoi. On 10th August 1945, after Japan surrendered to the British, Mohan Kumar Thapa sent a message to Netaji for further orders. Capt. Thapa was directed to go to Singapore. Maj Gen A.C. Chatterjee and Mohan kumar Thapa carrying funds, boarded a flight to Singapore. There was fog in the sky which led to poor visibility. This in turn caused spillage of oil and duo had to make emergency landing in Taipei.

They had to go to a place called Ipo where the INA camp was located. After having lunch with Lt Colonel Dara in the afternoon they proceed towards Singapore in a car. There they got to know that Netaji left from Singapore to 10am but to which place it was not known. The Japanese liaison officer Lt. Colonel Moratay also could not say anything about his whereabouts. After Singapore was taken over by the British they got to understand that INA soldiers were going to surrender to the British. Capt. Mohan Kumar Thapa and Lt. Narayan Rana apprised Maj General A.C.

Chatterjee about the matter and even suggested that it would be better to die than surrender. Maj General took their words seriously and taking a group of 8 people flew towards in search of Netaji.

All the funds collected earlier were left over in Singapore and they moved out. On the way they came to know that Netaji had returned to Saigon. Finally it was understood that on 18th Aug Netaji had left with Rahman to an unknown destination. INA had to face a lot of hardships. The torrential rain in the N.E. frontier forced them to leave the Imphal campaign. Arakan, Manda and Mitkila were taken over by the enemy one by one. Some aid that was coming from Germany via sea route was completely cut off due to the presence of “seven Fleet” of US in the Indian Ocean.

Netaji was worried after grocery stopped coming. Japanese soldiers were starving to death. In Assam’s 17 Depots Japanese barracks and other warehouses were burnt into ashes. Seeing such activities he thought ‘will the so called civilized Eng-Markin and allied forces give honor and respect to the Jhansi Rani brigade of the INA? (p64). The Allied Forces and others with them even after seeing the Red Cross symbol in Daren, they hurled bombs at INA hospital and destroyed the much needed medical infrastructure. Added to it was it killed the already injured people battling for life which cannot be forgotten in the history of INA.

Everybody knows what kind of decency can be expected from the British and Americans. On accepting life’s uncertainty the INA soldiers did not want to return to Bangkok. Krishna Bahadur (who was at one time Netaji’s bodyguard) in the company of Maj Mukhia was taking a long procession of 150 able women soldiers of the Jhansi Rani Regiment. Their contribution in the freedom movement remains unforgettable. A group of women soldiers under the leadership of Miss Stella was passing through a dense jungle on their way to Matina. Unfortunately they went missing and could not

be traced. The route to Molmay railway station was on the Thai. Burma border was a tough one, yet the women soldiers were treading on steadfastly through the jungle where the communist Guerillas were hiding. Very soon an emergency siren was heard at a distance after which sound of bomb blast was heard.

Now their journey was to start. A good train comes and in a compartment without a door or shutter everybody gets in, The Jhansi Rani group of soldiers get in squeezing themselves due to lack of space. On top of the carriage piling up sand bags and with faces turned in 4 directions Karna Singh with few soldiers climbed up. The wagon started moving slightly downward. It was pitch dark outside. A huge risk was involved in a carriage moving downwards for its wheels could come out if the track and run into the jungle. Or at places where there was a sharp bend, there were chances of the carriage to fall off the ridge. Kamala Thapa and Indira Chamling were sitting down near the door of the wagon carrying machine gun on their hands.

Miss Salima and Pratibha were standing beside them with rifle on their hand. The search light of the engine was turned off by Capt. Mukhia. Major Josephine and Lt. Bhim Singh Rana were standing on the engine. Breaking the silence of the night the wagon was moving forward.

They were apprehensive of attacks anytime. Suddenly they were attacked by the Guerillas who were hiding nearby. They started firing. Dense fumes emanating from the ammunitions created a feeling of suffocation inside the carriage. After crossing the danger zone, a horizontal place came. Maj Mukhia stopped the engine as Pratima Pal who was standing near the door to act as a shield to protect the rest was not there. Then they came to understand that she was hit by a bullet fell off and died on the journey, unnoticed by anybody.

Mukhia gets inside the wagon. It was dark inside and there are rows of legs stretched on the floor, he found it difficult to stand properly and says, 'all of you move a little and give me space to stand'(p65). There was no reply. After a short while the wagon crosses a low bridge and the water of the river seems to be blurred may be by the blood of the martyrs who were dying on and off enroute their journey. The sun was rising slowly from the east. The boggy was faintly lit.

Meanwhile someone falls again and this time it was Josephine from the engine. As sunlight seeped inside to give slight visibility, Mukhia saw that most the soldiers had died and some seriously injured. While giving water to Indira Chamling she breathed her last. Those who were on the top of the roof were dead and their bodies were hanging from above. Seeing Josephine on the floor he was startled. He hurriedly kept her head on his lap and shed a drop of tear, as a mark of respect for the martyr. He bid her adieu saying, 'You have become John of Arc. I shall definitely write your story. (p 66)

INA Brigadiers and their functions: The INA was divided into a number of Brigadiers. Some of them are (i) Subash Brigadier, (ii) Gandhi Brigadier (iii) Nehru Brigadier (iv) Azad Hind Brigadier (v) Rani Jhansi Brigadier, in addition to these above Brigadier the INA force was classified into three more groups in Indo-Burma front viz (a) Bahadur Group (b) Intelligence Group and (c) Reinforcement group

Subash Brigadier: Include soldiers of Sikhs, Godwali, Pathan, Gorkhas etc. The defence Ministry of this Brigadier was Lt. Col Shah Nawaz. In Gandhi Brigadier: The commander was Lt. Col Kiani Singh. It was commissioned in March 1944 to proceed towards Imphal.¹⁸ In Nehru Brigadier: The commander was Guru Das Singh Dhilon.¹⁹ In Azad Brigadier: The commander was Lt Col Gulzara Singh ⁴

In February, 1944 the main body of the Subash Brigadier of INA was given independent charge by the Japanese General to proceed to Kohima. Rani Jhansi Brigadier: this brigadier was founded in Singapore. In its early stage of foundation, about 126 girls were recruited in the Brigade. Women had to play dual parts – soldiers as well as nurses. The role of three groups like Bahadur, Intelligence and Reinforcement was redefined. The Bahadur Group would operate behind the enemy front, carrying out sabotage, espionage and subversion of Indian troops. (b) The ‘Intelligence Group: Would work similarly in the battle area, and this Reinforcement Group would collect Indian Prisoners and press them, after indoctrination into the INA’,⁵

At a further distance some Irish soldiers were present when INA reached the spot. There was a British Major who was instructing the Irish soldiers that those who were not injured or less injured should be taken to a spot. Turning at women soldiers he asked them who was their commander? to which Krishna Bahadur Mukhia replied that it was him. Captain Peter saluted him and asked if he was hurt.

He said he was not hurt but some arrangement should be done for the treatment of the injured and for the burial of the dead. In a sarcastic tone Peter said everything would be done. While the Irish soldiers were separating the two, some 15/20 Japanese soldiers came on the scene. They killed some Japanese officers and took some as POW. Maj Mukhia thanked Japanese officers Major Izuki for coming to their aid. From there the Japanese escorted women soldiers to Bangkok. From 1944 Japan faced a lot of crisis getting ration supply which affected INA also. Netaji was worried seeing this. Therefore he opened a bank in Rangoon and appealed to India living across the globe to contribute some funds for it. After some time the bank was

able to generate a considerable amount. As Japan was getting weaker the British was fighting with new vigor. Amidst this on Jan 1945 Rash Behari Bose died.

In the next month the British hurled bombs in Rangoon after which many Azad Hind Fauj soldiers left and joined the British Force. On April Netaji left with a handful of his loyal comrades and left Rangoon to Bangkok. Remaining INA soldiers were taken as POW. Major General Chatterjee sahib takes out his group towards Hanoi in the hope of meeting Netaji to discuss further plan of action. However, none of INA soldiers could tell where Netaji was then. Capt. Mohan Kumar Thapa had fever since the last four days. Yet, somehow he was trying to pull on. Suddenly on 23rd April Tokyo radio broadcast that S.C. Bose and Rahman had met with an accident probably on an aircraft in Taikolas (Formosa) on the 18th. Mohan refuses to believe.

Slowly the soldiers of the Azad Hind Fauj were being arrested everywhere. Along with Maj Gen Chatterjee, Capt. Thapa was arrested also. The British took the bigger group to Singapore's famous Pearl Hill Prison, which had been conquered by the British from the Japanese. The pearl hill prison (built by the Japanese) was nothing better than Kalapni's cellular prison. Stationed inside were many British and Indian soldiers. Along with the whites, there were Indonesian, Chinese, Indian and Anglo soldiers as POW. Inside the jail, every morning the captive soldiers of INA used sing patriotic songs.

Soon Maj Gen A.C. Chatterjee, Abdul Rahman, Capt. Mohan and many others were sent from Pearl Hill to Bidadari camp (a region of Singapore). The INA hospital in Bidadari estate was no longer a hospital but a camp to keep POW. The remaining soldiers who were kept in Pearl Hill like Major Saha, Capt. Ram Sigh Thakuri were taken before Mohan and his companions to India. Mohan got to know from others

that after they left Pearl Hill prison many soldiers got cholera and died out of which there were innumerable Indians and Gorkhas.

From Bidadari camp Capt. Thapa along with others were taken to Delhi to decide cases against them. A year before that the British had hanged many INA officers and soldiers in the historic Lalquilla situated near Chandni chowk. In 1944 Maj Durga Malla and commission officer Dal Bahadur Thapa were sentenced to death. Durga Malla was a commander of the Intelligence Department. He was captured in Kohima. He was accused of acting as a spy of the INA who was plotting to overthrow the British Government. The decisions given by Lal Quilla's court was to hang him. Even after the death was pronounced the British repeatedly tempted him to surrender and he would be released but he refused.

A day before he was hanged his wife was brought and shown him giving him a choice whether he would like to die or be released for his family's sake. Yet, he was firm in his decision. Instead he told his wife 'Sarada, don't worry, crores of Hindustanis are with you,' likewise Dal Bahadur Thapa, the commander of the guerilla squad, was also hanged.

[Historical facts about him: Durga Malla, the son of Ganga Ram Malla was born in 1913 at village Doiwala, Dehradun Dist. He took part in the 'Salt Satyagrah' of 1930 while he was student of class IX. He joined 2/1 Gorkha Rifles on 26th January 1931 at the age of 18 in Dharamsala cant. He "joined Indian National Army in Singapore in 1942 and fought against the British Forces. He crossed the India – Burma Border into Assam in an Intelligence assignment for the Indian National Army where he was captured by the British at Ukrul near Manipur on Mar27,'44. He was sentenced to death by court Martial. One day before his execution his wife was brought and showed to him. He was pressurized to admit his anti-British activities and he would

be pardoned. But he never surrendered before the British authority and was ready to die as a brave Gorkha. Instead his last conversation with his wife was as follows, “Sharda, I’m sacrificing my life for the freedom of my Motherland. You need not be worried as crores of Hindustanis are with you.” Finally he died on the gallows in the Delhi Dist. Jail on August 25th Aug 1944.]⁶

In one of those days when the Azad Hind Fauj radio was operative at different places, one tragic yet daring news was announced from Saigon. The British were planning to destroy the radio station of Rangoon. On one occasion some miles away from the city of Rangoon, Netaji was preparing to leave for Bangkok. Two Gorkha girls called Indrani Thapa and Savitri were positioned as guards outside an INA camp. These girls had got military training as they were from Jhansi Rani Brigade of the INA. Suddenly Savitri notices that one British tanker was heading towards them targeting the INA camp after they got an intimation that S C Bose was inside. They had no idea as to what should be done. Besides they had no time to ask anybody. All they could think of at that moment was to save Netaji’s life anyhow. Or else how would Azad Hind Fauj function without its biggest leader and freedom be achieved for Mother India? They thought of an incredible idea which could not have easily been thought of has it not been for these simple minded race like the Gorkhas who are loyal in the endeavors.

Both of them planted powerful bombs on their chests and stomachs and also covered their bodies with greenery around them. They slept flat on the path as the tank was drawing closer to them. As the tank ran over the bodies of and crushed them brutally there came a deafening sound as they blew themselves up to save Netaji. The tank along with the British soldiers was devastated. Everyone heard the story of sacrifice of the “suicide squad” by two Gorkha girls, who became martyrs of the INA.

The contribution of the Gorkhas in different times and regions cannot be written down in a constricted space. Prior to this many INA POWs kept in Rangoon were treated very brutally after British took possession of it. There are instances when many INA soldiers were pressurized to leave INA. Those who refused to do were killed by piercing with a sharp spike amongst whom were many Indians and Gorkhas.

Before this also there were many Indians of INA who were kept as POW. Amongst them were some Gorkhas like Captain Karna Bhadur Rai, Lt. Mangalay Biswakarma and many more. Their cases were fought by acclaimed lawyers in Delhi. In this context we need to mention the name of three captive soldiers like Maj General Shah Nawaj Khan, Col Sahgal and Col. Gurbaksh Dhillon who were charged of treason. In order to probe into the case and try for their acquittal, a defense committee was formed consisting of 17 members amongst whom Bhulabhai Desai was the leading person. In the court martial hearing held on Oct 1945, Bhulabai based his argument upon International law. He argues that the accused resorted to taking up arms to get Independence for the country as per the order of the Provincial Government established by S.C. Bose. This in turn had the recognition of a few sovereign governments and therefore the Indian Penal code did not apply to their case. Yet, the judge gave his verdict of changing their death sentence transportation for life. While their trials were going on their case reignited the Indian freedom struggle with a renewed zest.

The war came to an end. The brave soldiers returned to their respective homes. English King George VI, along with the support of America won over Japan. Having no option the Japanese PM Tojo committed suicide. The British could not trace his whereabouts. In Europe too Germany and Italy were destroyed. The POWs of all nationalities were released. Among the brave sons of Mother India of Azad Hind

Fauj, some were hanged, some were released. The three officers charged with treason were acquitted also. Finally the National Congress leaders were given assurance by the British that they would give Independence to India. While this was going on, on the other side the British were felicitating the gallant soldiers. The ceremony was observed with lot of grandeur and pomposity. After the British viceroy was given a Vice regal salute of 31 guns, honors and medals were given to those Indians who showed their valour and helped the British in their war in Burma. They were honored with the Victoria Cross. Amongst these Gurkha was Subedar Ratan Kumar Thapa, who was one of them. He came forward with chest puffed up with pride to receive the most prestigious honor provided by the British to their Army. Two drops of tears rolled down his cheeks.

It could be that he thought of his parents and his brother Pirthiman who was now a POW of the Azad Hind Fauj. Likewise Captain Mohan Kumar Thapa was also a POW inside the Lal Quilla. While Ratan Kumar Thapa was getting the Victoria Cross his brother was ailing inside Lal Quilla. Captain Mohan Kumar Thapa and Ganguly had requested a lot to the British to send medical aid to him but all pleas fell on deaf ears. From Mohan's cell, Pirthiman's cell could also be seen easily. Time and again he was calling his mother's name. Mohan was saddened seeing the condition of his friend. In his last stage with much difficulty he stood up and turning towards Mohan he said – 'I am going Mohan...you may be released. Please do the death rituals of pouring a stream of water from a copper vessel called 'lota' (a small 'cylindrical vessel' used by the Nepali Hindus when praying or in auspicious occasions) on a river or a plant in a flower pot, from your side. Make a shade for people to rest in my name. On top of the shade keep a photo of the Tiranga. O!

Mohan...” (p81). Uttering that with much difficulty he passes away. Finally after some months India gets its Independence.

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CHAPTER-5

The Politics of Subversion: A Reading of Select Nepali Novels

Literature does have powerful effects on history, and vice versa, (...) in both containing and promoting subversion, and to instances of state and hegemonic control over cultural expression. (Brannigan, 1998, p. 4)

The theoretical premise of New Historicism has amply explored how power relations render an important context for production of literary texts. Stephen Greenblatt (1982) claimed, "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere." (93) According to Brannigan (1998), "each epoch is characterized by its mode of power and its attendant cultural forms." (67) Literary texts had political functions in New Historicists' views. According to them, "texts of all kinds are the vehicles of politics insofar as texts mediate the fabric of social, political and cultural formations" (Brannigan, 1998, 3). Moreover, "literary texts are vehicles of power which act as useful objects of study in that they contain the same potential for power and subversion as exist in society generally" (Brannigan, 1998, 6). Grounded on it, Stephen Greenblatt, the most important New Historicist, developed his idea of power and put forward two terms: "subversion" and "containment" (Greenblatt & Gunn, 2007, p. 401). According to Montrose the terms are often used to refer to the "capacity of the dominant order to generate subversion as to use it to its own ends." (Montrose, 1996, p. 8)

Subversion is traditionally associated with the challenging of a dominant worldview; the act of trespassing against accepted social and organizational mores. Yet this established view is challenged by emerging perspectives highlighting how subversion is always incorporated within and made part of any social order (cf. Stally brass and White, 1993; Linstead et al., 2014). This builds on similar work, revealing the role of entrenched practices of subversion for paradoxically reinforcing prevailing organizational beliefs and norms (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992; Foucault, 1977, 1990).

According to Lesley Brown, the term “subversion” literally means “to overturn, overthrow, undermine, weaken or uproot, especially by covert action, structures of authority and order pertaining to a country, a government or a political regime. On the moral front, a subversive is someone who surreptitiously undermines the character, loyalty or faith of another person implying corruption or even perversion. While subversion may very well lead to revolution, the two terms cannot be said to be synonymous with one another. Historically speaking, subversion is often opposed to revolution: the latter is as brutally sudden, disruptive and definitive as the former is slow and subtle, unremittingly corrosive and generally based on indirection. While subversion may be said to hinge on repetition and uses more circuitous ways, revolution is outspoken, dogmatic and strikes once.” (The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, ed. Lesley Brown, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, 3127)

Subversion, thus, has been interpreted variously by different scholars. However, one thing that is common is the notion of ‘subjugation’, ‘domination’, ‘subaltern’ and that of ‘power’ which finds prominence while analysing any work of literature on subversion. Homi Bhabha, one of the leading post-colonial theorists states subaltern groups as “an oppressed minority groups whose presence was crucial to the self-definition of the majority groups. The subaltern social groups were also in

a position to subvert the authority of those who had hegemonic power.” (1996:191). Similar ideas are also to be seen by Boaventura Sousa Santos in “Toward a New Legal Common Sense” where subaltern can be seen within the background of counter hegemonic practices, movements, resistances, and struggles against particular social exclusion. He goes on to state that the subaltern theory takes the perspective of the “other” as one who has had no voice because of race, class or gender. Finally, it could be seen as a norm that is established by persons in power by imposing on the “other” (2002:458). According to Gramsci, the term ‘subaltern classes’ are those groups ‘subordinated by hegemony and excluded from any meaningful role in a regime of power’ (Holden 2002: 202). Gramsci reiterates that in order for a specific social group to gain and uphold power they must create ‘a form of social and political “control” which combines physical force or coercion with intellectual, moral and cultural persuasion or consent’ (Ransome 1992:135). “The Empire Writes Back” uses the term ‘post-colonial’ to refer to “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989: 2) and it is in this sense of the term that we are going to label our work on Nepali literature as postcolonial.

Theorists of domination more or less agree that domination is a kind of unconstrained, unjust imbalance of power that enables agents or systems to control other agents or the conditions of their actions. Domination is a kind of power, and usually social power—that is, power over other people. Domination involves imbalances or asymmetries in power. The English domination comes from the Latin dominus. A dominus is a master, and mastery represents an extreme of social power. Masters usually have all but complete control over how their slaves will act or over the conditions in which they act. As a result, the master/slave relation is often treated

as the most obvious case of domination. The power a master has over a slave may be the clearest case of domination, but it is not necessary to have a literal dominus in order to be dominated. Medical care (or the failure to provide it) is rife with potential for domination. The sick is vulnerable to those who control what they need to get well (O'Shea 2017, 2018). The disabled choose and act in a world constructed almost entirely for the benefit of and controlled by others (De Wispelaere & Casassas 2014). Workers often have little say in the conditions or culture of their workplaces (Gourevitch 2011; Breen 2015; Anderson 2017). Migrant and immigrant populations usually exist in political limbo where they are deeply vulnerable to exploitation and have no legal standing to contest their treatment (Honohan 2014; Costa 2016; Sager 2017).

Mishra and Hodge say that postcolonial criticism “foregrounds a politics of opposition and struggle, and problematizes the key relationship between centre and periphery” (cited by Figueira 2008: 31). Postcolonial theory, thus, studies the forced dominance that the colonizer exercises on his colonial subjects, which leads to their sense of inferiority and damages their self-identity. This is what led postcolonial writers to write against it and try to reinforce that identity while also dealing with issues like hybridity, ethnicity and multiculturalism. Cultural and societal History is also addressed in postcolonial literature. Cultural and ideological implications of a literary text also have become important since the emergence of postcolonial studies. The postcolonial text aids as a medium to convey and communicate the identity and national interest of a society and it also tries to get rid of the fact that it has no history or literature, a quality which was attributed to it by many imperial texts. Similarly, we have a group of Nepali diasporic and postcolonial writers addressing comparable themes in their subject matter while delineating the master-slave problems, women

problems, problems related to migration, displacement, language, identity, power, resistance and subversion. According to Ashcroft (1985), “The imperial education system installs a ‘standard’ version of the metropolitan language as the norm, and marginalizes all ‘variants’ as impurities.” (p- 7) and, therefore, “In practice the history of this distinction between English and english has been between the claims of a powerful ‘centre’ and a multitude of intersecting usages designated as ‘peripheries’. The language of these ‘peripheries’ was shaped by an oppressive discourse of power. Yet they have been the site of some of the most exciting and innovative literatures of the modern period and this has, at least in part, been the result of the energies uncovered by the political tension between the idea of a normative code and a variety of regional usages. (p- 8)”

According to Ashcroft (1985),

“Syncreticist critics argue that even a novel in Bengali or Gikuyu is inevitably a cross-cultural hybrid, and that decolonizing projects must recognize this...Nevertheless, especially in India where the bulk of literature is written in indigenous Indian languages, the relationship between writing in those languages and the much less extensive writing in english has made such a project a powerful element in post-colonial self-assertion,...In settler colonies, where decolonizing projects underlay the drive to establish national cultures, the problem of language at first seemed a less radical one. The fact that the language seemed to sit uncomfortably with the local ‘reality’ was perceived to be a minor irritant that would be solved in time, and, in any case, there was no other available language ... Nevertheless, as later critics have perceived, this position, too, glossed over major problems of language and ‘authenticity’.” (*The Empire Writes Back*, 29)

The above situation could be easily applied to the writings in regional languages in India and therefore the branch of Nepali literature (most of which remain untranslated even till date) is part of this so-called postcolonial or subversive literature whereby these writers are trying to write in their regional languages and overcome the barriers of language. According to Ashcroft (1985), “Post-colonial literatures developed through several stages which can be seen to correspond to stages both of national or regional consciousness and of the project of asserting difference from the imperial centre.” (The Empire Writes Back, 4) Thus, we can see that the regional consciousness and the larger problems within the community living gets portrayed in these Nepali novels where the writers try to situate the complexities and subversion through the aid of certain characters in these novels.

This chapter analyses and evinces how fiction in Nepali uses the theories and practices of subversion as part of the postcolonial discourse in their plot concerns and themes. The novels in general highlight complications pertaining to the same and also show how resistance got projected, circumscribed and theorized in different forms within the context of Nepali diaspora as a result of subversion. The chapter chooses three novels in total in order to analyse the politics of subversion. In the novel by Asit Rai *Yantrana (Agony, 1979)* the author is evidently Leftist in his political views. The novel touches on various aspects regarding the lives of tea garden workers. They champion the emergence of trade unions in tea estates. *Yantrana (Agony, 1979)*, especially is interested in the valorisation of the proletariat. Though the novels seem formulaic in that respect, pitting a capitalistic villain and a rebel proletariat as the saviour hero, in a community such as Nepali diaspora the need for this positioning of their subjectivity is really important. The chapter also uses the plots and premises of *Tara Kahilay?(But When?, 1979)* by Prakash Kovid and *Juneli Rekha (Lines of the*

Moonlight, 1979) by Indra Sundas. These works also use rebellion and subversion majorly in their themes and plots. Together these novels offer a cross-section of resistance literature in Nepali diasporic literature.

1. *Yantrana (Agony, 1979)*

The novel *Yantrana (Agony)* written by Asit Rai, a novelist from Darjeeling was published in 1979. It is a socio realistic portrayal of the lives of the people in the tea gardens. Its plot revolves around the hardships endured by people for whom life has all along been the same since generations. However, these simplistic rural folks fail to understand that they have been oppressed by the colonial masters. The novel *Yantrana (Agony, 1979)* is the story of the agony of the people who are subjugated and suppressed by those in power. They are compelled to bear the injustice meted out to them and remain silent, to the extent of making them voiceless for centuries. The novel is woven through the fictional characters living during the colonial and neo-colonial era.

The novel basically revolves around the oppression of the workers. It highlights the need for the formation of the Trade Union. With the coming of the trade union, slowly they realize the Individual Rights of the workers. The myth that the owner is equivalent to God – someone whom they had looked upon as their benefactor is broken. In the course of time, they put forward various demands to survive and reclaim the dignity of living as human beings do. Deprived of basic needs like hospitals and doctors, many incidents take place which further the cause to make their rightful claims. The debates and discussions between the labourers and owners as well as the management are portrayed clearly. When their demands are not met protest and agitations start in the tea garden culminating to strikes in the factories

which lead to the imprisonment of union leaders. This calls for a mass movement for the release of the leaders. As the movement reaches its peak the workers are conscious enough to realize that they are bound by the chains of slavery which need to be broken. Finally dissent, disagreement and agitation lead to subversion and the toppling of the hegemonic Centre. This brings to mind Michel Foucault's statement "Where there is power, there is resistance." (*The History of Sexuality, Vol 1: An Introduction*)

When the novel opens the following conversation is going on in the office of the Tea Garden. One Babu says, "Why yesterday, in heavy pruning many could not complete their daily quota of work. What should be done Bara babu?" (p 1) Another one comments, "For those who could not do their daily share of work and fulfil the requirements, I think their wages need to be reduced or else the Manager will be angry with us. They have asked us to increase the supply of tea leaves than last year." (p 1) Workers in the tea garden have a lot of grievances and it is for this reason that some of the representatives were going to meet the owner. However, there are some amongst them who discouraged others especially the office staff who think of nothing other than being in the good books of the owner and the likes. One person says, "What is the use of meeting the owner? People like us have to do our work, save our job and work accordingly. If we the office staff join the union it will come to the knowledge of the rest and everything will be leaked." (p 32)

Chandra Bahadur, the protagonist looked properly at the speaker who was Gurung babu. People like them allow themselves to have a blind faith in the system which is the reason for hegemony. There was never a serious functioning of the Trade Union though it existed at one time. It was due to the lack of dedication and unity among the members. Therefore, it was there merely for namesake. At one stage there were even

several clashes that led to the re-organization and functioning of the union with a renewed interest.

Even after working for three years, Chandray, a garden worker was never made permanent. During this duration, three managers were transferred yet, nobody did anything for him. There are many instances in the novel to show the subordination of the workers. For example every year the labourers were given holiday in 'Chaitay Dasai' which is a small festival of the Nepalis. In earlier times the festival of Dussehera or Bijoy Dahsami was celebrated by the Nepalis in summer season, immediately after Ram Navami. It was only after some people got cholera on a particular year that it was shifted to being celebrated in autumn in October. One year the owner refused to give holiday, which caused a small spark to ignite into flames. The denial of a right which they had been getting every year caused discontent to many. At the same time the union was becoming stronger day by day. The owner was worried seeing this. The holiday during 'Chaitay Dasai' was a rightful holiday and everybody felt it was a denial of their individual rights. Some representatives of the Union go to meet the manager who expressed his inability to do anything for the labourers and asked them to meet the plantation owner. The owner was rigid in his own reasoning and there was a heavy debate over the matter. The union gave threats of going on a strike. The owner on other hand said he would close the garden. Hence, the meeting could not yield any fruitful outcome.

When the union representatives reported the outcome of the meeting to the workers, they refused to accept it. They made plans to intensify their activities such as doing 'gherao' or 'not reporting for work' etc. to press for their demands. The first step of their defiance of the Imperial order was not reporting for work. The next morning as

the clock struck 7, nobody stirred neither men, women or chokra (meaning young boys).

Duncan Brown in *The Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature* says that among the debates about postcolonial theory is its theorization of the silencing of the colonized “within the colonial encounter”. But he says that despite the attempt to “silence the other”, “the colonized have continued to speak, often in unofficial ways and from unofficial spaces, but also from the centers of their societies” (Chew and Richards 2010: 47). Thus, we find in the novel that in spite of trying to silence the demands of the workers by refusing them their denial of rights the workers instead of going to work they went towards the godown and assembled on the ground to make further plans and thus trying to speak of their rights and demands. According to Ashcroft, “The attempt to “marginalize” the colonized world directed the fight of the colonized people towards achieving plurality, multiplicity, and uncentered position, and so, marginality [...] became an unprecedented source of creative energy” (Ashcroft et al 2002: 12). Thus, we find in the novel that these marginalized workers have become united in their stance for a common goal of emancipation from their colonial masters.

The office staff asked them to get back to work or else the day’s wages would not be accounted. The workers ignored the order and insisted on getting the leave on ‘Chaitay Dasai’. Spivak in her seminal essay “Can the Subaltern Speak” has stressed about the fact that when the Subaltern speaks, it no longer remains as subaltern, so subalterns are marginalised people who have no voice, people who find it difficult to speak. According to her, the subalterns are not people who can be represented by privileged people. They are subjects who should speak for themselves. They should be inventors and masters of their own voices. It is only when the subaltern speaks for

themselves that they can cease to be subaltern subjects. What we find in the novel is also the same that the workers who are the marginalized people suddenly find their own voice to revolt against their demands. The crowd started swelling slowly.

Gurung babu, a sycophant says – “On getting some information in advance that there can be a gherao today, I have kept people who were supposed to go for work, to their respective homes itself. Why should we get in between the agitators and the owners? It can only project us in a negative light in the eyes of the owner. What can we get by going on strikes and doing gherao? It will harm us ultimately.” (p 35)

After few days there was a verbal fight between the owner and the manager resulting in the Manager quitting his job. On that very evening the owner calls the staff one by one and gives them a threat saying – “Hope your condition doesn’t become like that good for nothing Manager. I don’t like staff who cannot control the labourers and maintain discipline in work place.” (p37)

He also looked at Chandra Bahadur with rage and said, “Chandra Bahadur I believe your mother was also one the leaders in the last procession. Why is there a need for such activities? You explain this to your mother. You have a big role to play in the progress of the unions’ activities. This is the last warning.” (p 37)

To a person like Chandra Bahadur this accusations and threat was unbearable. To lose self-respect and survive with slavish mentality was slowly becoming intolerable to him. The feeling that he could find a job and survive anywhere was coming over him. Without lowering his head and shifting his gaze from the eyes of the owner, he replies, “Now I have understood this malik (or owner) that without raising our voices and fighting for our cause nothing can be achieved. I have been working earnestly for many years anticipating your kindness and sympathy to be shown some day. Instead,

you have always doubted my integrity and have been threatening me time and again. You know very well that I have been working here since the last 4 years. In spite of that I have never been made permanent in my job. This year I will be appearing for BA exams. Now I'm not afraid anymore thinking, what if I am removed from this job. I can work anywhere and get a better life. My love for this tea garden is the only reason that has kept me here. Or else I would have left this job of a meagre sum of 120/ rupees long ago."

Such lines had been reiterated by Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, (1967) "thus the native discovers that his life, his breath, his beating heart are the same as those of the settler. He finds out that the settler's skin is not of any more value than a native's skin; and it must be said that this discovery shakes the world in a very necessary manner. All the new, revolutionary assurance of the native stems from it." (p 35)

Chandra Bahadur was surprised at the reaction of the owner. Instead of showing an outrageous behaviour the owner gives assurance that he shall be made permanent at the earliest. In fact he was bewildered seeing the sudden change in the behaviour of the owner who started showering benevolence and sympathy towards him. In the meantime CB had become a graduate and is made a permanent staff with a hike in his salary to make it Rs150/. He gets an offer of a job as a teacher from nearby places. Yet, he stays in the tea garden as he had a deep desire to serve the people of the garden where he was born. He wanted the rural folk to progress and raise their standard of life. Most important of all to liberate them from the unjust treatment meted out to them.

Sometimes the members of the union used to come to meet him and take suggestions, have discussions and also his signature on some papers. Yet, they always used to come secretly which surprised Chandra Bahadur very much. Therefore, at times Chandra Bahadur says, “You need not come secretly to meet me. Come without any fear. Who can do anything?” (p 38) To this the union leaders often reply – “No, actually we think that such matters should not affect your job.” (p 38). Seeing such state of affairs Chandra Bahadur often ruminated deeply thinking that, “If the union leaders have this mentality then what can be expected from the rest. If feelings of self-dignity, self-sustenance, equality of mankind, together with different types of struggles in life have to be instilled in the minds of the union leaders then what could be the mindset of the large masses of rural folks who follow them blindly.” (p 38)

A lot of unity was already evident amongst the people of the garden. Following the footsteps of Chandra Bahadur many staffs of the tea garden had joined the union. The owner did not have monopoly like before. He was trying his level best to destroy the union. He often gave money to some people who could betray the cause of the union and secretly give information to him (malik). Yet it wasn't possible for him to dismantle/break the union. The people of the garden were determined in getting their demands fulfilled and were ready to fight for it. A worker is also a human being and should have a right to live in that manner. They should be provided with jobs according to their capabilities. They should be given proper housing facilities as well as medical facilities. Along with a decent wage to survive, a worker should also be given winter allowance and hill allowance which is entitled to all other government servants.

Slowly all these perceptions regarding their individual rights had begun to be felt by every worker. Along with it they understood that the owner is not a God but their

oppressor instead who made them sweat and profited out of it. They have started hating the owner.

Now Chandra Bahadur has understood why his grandfather in spite of giving all his youthful energies, sweat and blood lived in hellish circumstances. Why his mother gave birth to him under the tea bush. What his father Man Bahadur got after falling from the cliff and being buried under the debris? What had the owner done for the family of a person who gave his life for such a cause? Who had created this situation where a mother while raising a son and educating him often survived on half square meals a day.

Chandra Bahadur had also got to know from the elders that after his father's death, the plantation owner had given their family Rs 100/ to do the last rites. In fact, for the owner a person's life had the value of Rs. 100/ only. Many thoughts slowly crept up in his mind, "What is my actual service to my brethren. Should I give importance to attaining sole benefits in life or should I strive hard so that the same comfort and benefits be given to everybody." (p 40)

One day the Malik calls the office staff and questions them about their problems which if told to him would be solved immediately. Instead of approaching him why was the office staff also joining the union? Chandra Bahadur has love for the tea garden where he was born and grew up. This is also the place where his forefathers were buried. He always had a feeling that responsibility towards his follow beings was upon him. He had to make the graveyard of his fore fathers secure so as to call it their own land.

As this was going on a big tragic incident occurs which hints at the nugatory significance of a worker's life that later becomes one of the reasons for subversion.

One day Chandra Bahadur had taken leave to do some work in his house. On that fateful day an accident happens in the factory. A labourer's coat was pulled by the tea leaves crushing machine. Along with the coat his hand was pulled also. Loud shrieks poured in seeing the incident as blood was oozing from it saying, "Somebody is killed! Hurry up, hurry up and save him." (p 45)

Amidst this somebody ran up and switched off the machine. By the time a big injury had already occurred and a lot of blood was oozing from it. Everybody was running hither and thither towards the factory to know who was injured. The news spread was rife and every family was worried thinking what if 'he' was their own kin. In the meantime, the family of the injured worker consisting of his wife and daughter come rushing to the spot. Seeing his condition, the wife nearly collapses. The manager was called but he was nowhere in the scene. On seeing the labourer many requested Chandra Bahadur to take the injured person to the hospital as his condition was worsening, "Secretary Saab, please do something from your side. At least call one vehicle and take the injured to the hospital. When this worker was working the edge of the sleeve of his coat was pulled by the machine, dragging him also. Thankfully someone remembered to switch off the machine. Or else he would be in pieces now." (p 45)

Chandra Bahadur knew the truth that the owner and the manager both had gone to see the flower show. Therefore, he called the taxi with three or four workers holding the injured person in a stretcher and waiting for it. After much waiting the taxi arrived. Putting the serious labourer, the taxi sped through the rough winding roads taking him to the Government hospital. There were three or more people in it. By the time the patient was taken inside he was already cold. On examination the doctor pronounced him dead. He further said that the patient was brought too late to the hospital and by that time a lot of blood loss had taken place. Had he been given

some medical aid on time he could have been saved. The body was taken for post mortem. Completing other formalities, it was finally brought to his house in the garden at 6 pm. The statement given by the doctor in the hospital of the town, created a furore in the Tea garden. Even Urmi as an educated conscious person had rushed to the hospital and was present at the time when it was declared by the doctors.

After the incident the labourers could not endure the inhuman treatment meted out to them. An urgent meeting of the executive committee members was called to make a strategy of what plan of action should follow. The next day a procession was to start holding a big flag showing their discontent on the carelessness of the management causing death of a worker in an inhuman way. The oppressive atmosphere in which they had been serving for year's altogether was beyond their endurance any more.

According to Ashcroft et al., "Bhabha has similarly asserted that the colonized is constructed within a disabling master discourse of colonialism which specifies a degenerate native population to justify its conquest and subsequent rule. Unlike Spivak, though, Bhabha has asserted that the 'subaltern' people can speak, and that a native voice can be recovered. His introduction of the ideas of mimicry and parody as both a strategy of colonial subjection through 'reform, regulation and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other', and the native's inappropriate imitations of this discourse, which has the effect of menacing colonial authority replacing theory (Bhabha 1984b: 126-7) suggests that the subaltern has, in fact, spoken, and that properly symptomatic readings of the colonialist text can and do 'recover a native voice'." (as quoted in *The Empire Writes Back*, p- 29). Similarly, as requisite of a postcolonial and subversive novel, we find in this novel that the people in the procession would demand a hospital with good doctors immediately to save the lives of the rest. Besides they would also make a claim that the family of the deceased

worker should be given compensation, along with some security for the future of the family. The whole night Chandra Bahadur, Urmi and few others move around the garden explaining the agenda, as well as the programme schedule.

The next day all the people who had left home do not go for work. Instead, they assemble in the ground. Within an hour the whole village was empty. Starting from the elderly people to small infants in the cradle, hung by the straps on their mother's head was a part of this procession for the first time. At the beginning of the procession was the dead body of Dhanbir who was now considered the first martyr in this fight against oppression? The crowds swelled. Seeing the swelling crowds and the excitement portraying the unity among the labourers, the manager and owner had gone to a safer haven.

The raging mob chanted slogans saying –

“Sahid Dhanbir, Zindabad.”

“Injustice must come to an end.”

“The owner Bhimay Murdabad.”

“Mazdoor Union, Zindabad.”

“We workers are human beings, Zindabad.”

“We Demand Safety of Our Lives, Zindabad.”

“We demand a hospital and doctors, Zindabad.”

“Owner Bhimay Rana shall be toppled down, Zindabad.”

“We shall take life for a life, Zindabad.” (p 47)

The procession proceeded towards the owner's bungalow. The agitation and excitement doubled as it reached nearer. Some went to the extent of saying – 'Malik's kothi (or bungalow) shall be burnt. Yes, it has to be burnt.'

Chandra Bahadur started explaining the frenzied crowd that the bungalow, godown, factory and tea bushes were their own property and should not be destroyed. In spite of his sayings the uncontrollable youths in a fiery rage started pelting stones and breaking the window panes, bulbs in electric poles, rampaged and marred the flowers in the garden and broke the gate. In the meantime, the police vehicle arrived. They did not stop the procession. Instead, they barricaded the bungalow to prevent further damage.

Urmi gives a speech followed by others. The labourers demand that the owner and the management accept their callousness. Until all their demands are fulfilled, they would not go back to work. The garden would go on a strike. The president of the Union Hem Pokhrel, the MLA, seconded Chandra Bahadur's proposal of holding a strike in the tea garden. He even gave an interesting speech as to why they should now come forward to take a step to dismantle the hegemonic rule. The strike would start from the very next day was given in writing. It was signed by the President, Secretary and circulated in the garden.

It was the month of July and the peak season for the plucking of tea leaves. A strike during these times would cause a huge loss to the owner. In the evening of the strike Chandra Bahadur along with the local President and three, four members were arrested. Six of them were taken to Darjeeling Thana. Luckily Urmi was not at home or else she would have been arrested also. A warrant was issued in her name.

Chandra Bahadur's arrest did not dampen the spirit of the agitation that was going on. Urmi was working in an even more active manner than too hiding from Management and Police both.

The next day another big procession marched towards the Thana- saying, "Release our Leader."

Another one shouted "Injustice has to be demolished from the tea garden." Someone added, "Our demands have to be granted." (p 48)

The strike continued for many days. In the tea garden the tea leaves had grown in bountiful waiting for the first flush to be plucked. In the meantime, the machinery parts in the factory had begun to rust. Finally, the owner had to yield and be subdued due to the labourers' unity. He had to send a message for a compromise.

On the fourth day of the strike there was a tripartite meeting between owner, labourer and the government. There was a heated discussion in the table talk between the owner and the representatives of the union. An assurance was given of constructing a hospital within a year and taking care of the health of the labourers.

Apart from it a sum of Rs 5000/- was given as a compensation to the family of the deceased worker. Other than that, the expenses for the education of his eight-year-old son would be borne by the Management for the next ten years. The owner accepted his fault in overlooking the safety and health of the workers. Six people who were arrested were released and the two warrant orders also taken back.

However, the owner said that he would not give the wages of four days during which they were on strike. After getting this news from the representatives again the masses of people sitting outside the Dak Bungalow started chanting slogan like – "We must get four days wages or the strike shall not be lifted." After a long time, a final

resolution was brought out. The wages of two days would be borne by the owner and for the remaining two days, it would be adjusted in the earn leave. Malik Bhim Samsheer Rana's condition was pathetic after this whole affair. There occur various types of exploitation in the plantation. The Union is weakened as strategies to break the unity among the workers are put to use.

The garden opens once again. After seven days Chandra Bahadur, two workers, two chowkidar, three labourers were issued a charge sheet for spreading unrest in the tea garden amounting to destruction of public property, and disrespecting the owner. On the discretion of the unanimous consent of the Central Committee they are thrown out of work. The shrewd plan of the owner was beneficial in breaking the unity of the labourers. Everybody was shocked by it. More than half of the labourers joined hands and started begging for forgiveness. Chandra Bahadur gets the information that even the office workers had gone to meet the owner.

The next day Chandra Bahadur organises a meeting and gives a speech where he requests them not to falter or give up. They shall win against this injustice one day, he assures them. The Central Committee strongly condemned the step taken by the Management against Chandra Bahadur and few others. They should immediately be reinstated back to work and the order for which should be given in writing.

The union complained against the injustice done to them and launched a case in the Tribunal Court. Amidst this many workers went to the owner and ask forgiveness. Few even backed out from the union for the fear of losing their job. There was restlessness and bewilderment amongst the people. Making use of this opportunity the owner takes in writing from these helpless people, "Henceforth, I shall not keep any connection with the union. In case I make any mistake, which offends the owner he

can go to the extent of terminating my service. Under such circumstances I shall not raise any objection to it.” (p 51)

In between this the owner thinks of another plot and that is to do ‘Hatta Bahar’ or (eviction from the garden) to Chandra Bahadur. He starts a signature campaign in which he is partially successful. The majority refuse to sign. One day the owner summons Chandra Bahadur to have a talk with him. For this he sends the chowkidar to inform him. Initially Chandra Bahadur refuses to comply with him. Then later thinks that he should make a visit to know what it is for.

Greeting Chandra Bahadur in a cordial manner the owner welcomes him and says, “Chandra Bahadur I am also a human being. I also feel the necessity to live a life, look into the security of my family and their future. All of you should come forward and share your grievances and problems with me. Slowly I will see to all of them and provide all the facilities one by one. Every year I am making 3, 4 new houses, employing new workers, giving you bonus as you can see very well. Whatever facilities the labourers in the other tea gardens are getting the same has been given to all of you. This tea Garden has given you and me both a source of livelihood. Let us work together. Why do you involve others? You work collectively amongst yourselves. Why do you need a Union? You give me your word for it; I will immediately reinstate you to your work. When you are in need, I am there for you. When I am in need you must stand by me.” (p 51)

Through such dialogues we can see the politics of hegemony operative in the grand narratives which reminds one of Steven Lukes who has said in *Power: A Radical View* (1981),

“To use the vocabulary of power in the context of social relations is to speak of human agents, separately or together, in groups or organisations, through action or inaction, significantly affecting the thoughts and actions of others (specifically, in a manner contrary to their interests.” (p 54)

Along with an alluring talk, the Malik gives a white envelope saying, “Take this as a gift for the compromise between us along with some understanding and assurances.” (p 51) Chandra Bahadur refuses saying, “What is this for? No, I do not deserve your gift.” (p 51) Insisting further the owner says, “Aray, Mr Chandra Bahadur just open this and see it once. There is a cheque of Rs 10,000/ inside it. So, keep it, keep it.” (p 51)

The owner had given him money requesting him to give up the union and come into terms with the management who were their benefactors. After all they would have to work in tandem with them. Chandra Bahadur tears it and throws it on the sofa and replies, “Don’t consider me such a lowly person, malik. I am not the person who can be bought with your money to be a slave forever. Neither I am seeped in any selfish motive nor am I a traitor to barter my soul and snatch the hungry mouths and roofless shelters of the masses. The inequality between us – you the owner and us the labourers cannot be settled with this type of compromise. We have the unity of the labourers to fight back with.” (p 52)

This brings to mind the phrase of Abdul JanMohamed “Our marginality can be our chief asset.” (p78- 106)

Like a raging storm Chandra Bahadur marched out of the room. Anger, excitement and rebelliousness had taken a sudden turn on Chandra Bahadur which showed the violent and turbulent side of him. While Chandra Bahadur was like a volcano ready to

explode, the atmosphere in the office was filled with fear and uncertainty. With the sudden arrival of Chandra Bahadur, a strong earthquake shook the ground. These helpless people without any moorings who have lived all through their lives under oppression were voiceless. These almost dead and lifeless elderly staff still in service out of domestic obligations feared to raise their head and look into his face.

He looked at every individual face and remarked sarcastically, “Why does silence pervade here. Have I come by mistake to a graveyard?” (p 52) To this Bara babu replies, “We are busy in keeping accounts of payment done, Chandra Bahadur. What to do when we work for our belly, we are compelled to remain silent.” (p 52)

Chandra Bahadur feels like slapping them one by one. Yet, he cannot do anything and pities their folly instead. Barab Babu tells him, “For what work have you come Chandra Bahadur. If the Malik sees you here all of us shall face a big problem. Please do think of our stomach also.” (p 52) The slave within Bara Babu comes out.

According to Ania Loomba in *The German Ideology* (written in 1866), ‘Marx and Engels had suggested that ideology is basically a distorted or a false consciousness of the world which disguises people’s real relationship to their world. This is so because the ideologies that most circulate or gain currency in any society reflect and reproduce the interests of the dominant social classes..... These beliefs both persuade workers to continue to work and blind them to the truth about their own exploitation; hence they reflect their interests of their master, or of the capitalist system’ (Loomba, p25)

Chandra Bahadur does not reply. Somebody remarks, “Please speak softly or else the news may reach him.” Chandra Bahadur replies, “Let it reach. Why are you afraid of truth? It is this fear which has made us voiceless for years to the extent of almost losing our entity as a human being. It has taken our food and shelter. Bara babu, what

have you got over the years? What will you get in the days to come? What makes a person like you work in this age of 60, 65 years? Is it easy to work for eight, nine hours a day with a body which is fully exhausted in the scorching summers and monsoon both? No, we can we not afford to live like this anymore- filled with fear.” (p 53). This brings the statement of Michel Foucault to the fore as stated in *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*,

“People know what they do; frequently they know they do what they do; but they don’t know is what what they do does.” (*Madness and Civilization*, 1961)

Not being able to get out of the slavish mindset Bara Babu says, “Ok enough of it, Chandra Bahadur. The owner and the rest have monetary resources as well as power in their hands. With money what can you not get? Our anger and resentment cannot match up to their strength. (p 53)

Though there was softness in his tone Chandra Bahadur totally disagrees with Bara Babu and says, “Ok, you think of your individual future. You lead your own paths. You become slaves of your owner and follow him like faithful dogs. But I cannot survive like you – being a lifeless puppet with strings in your master’s hands.” (p 54) Actually, they cannot get out of the system due to their slavish mentality. They think the owner is their sole benefactor. They do not understand that they are oppressed and used.

Ideology has the function of obscuring from the working (and oppressed) classes the ‘real’ state of their own lives and exploitation. (Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism* p25)

Therefore, Chandra Bahadur says, “It is strange that you are afraid to listen to my talks of our rights and the injustices done to us. I will speak. I am still speaking

against the owner but why should you be given punishment? Fear, Fear...Can't you feel anything other than being afraid?

There was a lady leader called Urmi who was also equally active in the Union like Chandra Bahadur. She was a teacher by profession. Urmi used to help Chandra Bahadur. Sometimes she used to provide financial help to his family without his knowledge. There was still not much stability in the union. However, she was an active member and worked hard.

The case was going on in the Tribunal Court. The owner had thought that the representative of the labour union would not be able to employ a lawyer on its behalf to fight a case in the tribunal court which was far away from the garden. So, the case would go in favour of owner and one-sided decision would be taken.

Edward Said is of said to lay more emphasis on the 'impositions of colonial power instead of resistances' to it. Such a dichotomy portrays unequal colonial relations in which 'colonial power and discourse is possessed entirely by the coloniser' and shows very little scope for change (Bhabha, 1983: 200)

But later he got to understand that the case was filed by the central committee in the Tribunal court for which they had their own lawyer. Side by side funds were raised for this case in the neighbouring gardens also. Apart from that the union members were pressurizing the high govt officials and making them sign some papers in their favour. They had MLAs also as some of their representatives.

Franz Fanon has noted in *Black Skin, White Masks*, 'a man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language' (18)

Time was passing by. Yet, everybody had a strong faith that due to the power of their union this case would go in favour of the labourers. Six months passed. Due to secret

plans of the owners, some people lost faith in the union. During this phase 2 men who had been victims of oppression joined the army. Another person started working in a Govt. office as a peon. For Chandra Bahadur the existence of the union was a matter of importance. It was a threat by the labourers hinting at the subversion that was to come later. Chandra Bahadur tried his best to make the union strong and to follow the case in the Tribunal Court. With his patience and positivity, he was fighting a challenge with the owner. He began to feel the economic crisis also. Urmi suggested that he should take up the job of a teacher. Chandra Bahadur refuses saying he has to improve the lives of the people of the tea garden.

One day 2 drunkards come and create a scene. They abuse that they lost their jobs due to him. They even go the extent of saying, “If you cannot reinstate us to work then you look after our children also. The only thing that the union does is instigate the innocent people and make them lose their jobs. Malik (owner) is correct on his part. He is like God. You spoilt our future. Now we don’t need the union. We shall not spare any individual member of the union.” (p 56)

Discursive practices make it difficult for individuals to think outside them-hence they are also exercises in power and control. (Loomba, p 39)

Yet, Chandra Bahadur does not falter in his cause which is beneficial to all. He is firm in his dedication and innocent. He comes forward and replies, “If by any chance I have made any mistake, done anything to break your trust, injustice to anybody or shown any sort of partiality to anybody, then I can bend my head to expose my neck for you to hack me with your Khukuri.” (p 56)

Chandra Bahadur often tells himself that he has a big responsibility, “The oppression, subjugation and injustice done to the helpless labourers by the malik (owner) have to

be retaliated strongly. The fatalistic rural folks often blame their fate and also to the deeds of their previous lives. These innocent people trapped in enslavement need to be made conscious about what is being done to them.” (p 57)

CB reiterates what has been said in ‘Resistance, Opposition and Representation’ in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* by Bill Ashcroft et al ‘After the period of ‘primary resistance,’ literally fighting against outside intrusion, there comes the period of secondary, that is, ideological resistance, when efforts are made to reconstitute a ‘shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system’ as put forward by Basil Davidson. (Davidson 1978: 155)

Chandra Bahadur had become an integral part of the union and had started working accordingly. These days he has started the addressing the owner as Mr. Rana without any hesitation. After removing Chandra Bahadur from his work, the owner was filled with a sense of satisfaction. He felt that perhaps this step taken against a worker like Chandra Bahadur would make him subjugated and mellowed down with time. Chandra Bahadur would definitely be subdued and return to beg for mercy. Or else he would leave the station seeking job elsewhere.

However, on seeing Chandra Bahadur’s dedication in the functioning of the union the owner had a setback. Now he thinks of a new plot. One day the chowkidar comes with the order to vacate the house. He refuses to be uprooted from his land. Chowkidar says, “You have been asked to vacate the house.” To this Chandra Bahadur replies, “I will not because I’m not a migrant. I refuse to be uprooted from the land of my ancestors. They have won over this place.” (p 57)

After few days four chowkidars come again to do the same. Chandra Bahadur takes out a khukuri and wielding it rages ferociously, “If anybody has guts to vacate this house and lock it, you can go ahead. Tell your malik that we are neither guests nor foreigners. These tea gardens have borne the history of our fore fathers since generations. The law which you think is in your hands due to the power of your money cannot do anything to remove me. I have the right to eat and live here.” (p 57)

The owner did not make any further attempts. Amidst this the town’s highest Tribunal court decides the case in favour of the labourers. Everybody would be getting back their lost wages and would be reinstated to work. This came as a big victory for the union. However, Chandra Bahadur would not be working in the garden. This is what has been stated by Foucault earlier in *Discipline and Punish (1977)*,

“There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations’ (*Discipline and Punish, 1977*)

After CB’s marriage with Urmi, new life had started for him. Along with it came familial responsibilities. Though Urmi was committed to the work of the union she also felt the need to work due to economic crisis. Finally, she finds a job of a teacher in the high school.

Amidst this there was a construction of a hospital. One doctor, nurse and a compounder were employed initially. In between Urmi gets pregnant. Slowly her health deteriorates which worries Chandra Bahadur. One day Urmi gets labour pain. She is first checked by the tea garden physician. The physician says that she has less blood in her body and not in the condition to be operated immediately. Therefore, she is referred to the district hospital.

Urmi is brought to the Govt. hospital. Here in the Sadar hospital there is no doctor. Without the doctor's signature the patient could not be admitted. Leaving the patient lying in the verandah, Chandra Bahadur starts running around looking for a doctor.

Chandra Bahadur goes to the houses of different doctors. One had gone on a tour, one was on leave and one had gone to his residence after his duty was off. Urmi's condition was worsening.

Chandra Bahadur is bewildered at the system operating in the hospital that is meant to serve people with ill-health. Chandra Bahadur begs him saying, "Forgive me doctor the patient is very serious because it is a delivery case. That is way I have come to request you. Please help me." (p 60)

The Doctor replies, "You know; now I am not in my duty. So, I can't help you." (p 60)

Somebody had suggested Chandra Bahadur that he should approach for help through a Politician. If only he gives a call, the doctor would be like a cat and come hurrying to the hospital but Chandra Bahadur did not go through such means. He felt that everybody should get the same medical aid, which is every individual's right. Chandra Bahadur joined hands and begs further to which the doctor replies, "You are very stubborn. Ok I will admit her and see the case also but do you know that since I am not in duty you have to give extra fees. Are you ready for it?" (p 61) Chandra Bahadur says, "I am ready for it; doctor, please do a little faster." (p 61)

Doctor examines Urmi and says that the case is serious. Only when the patient is in this condition you bring them to the hospital. This is how you kill people. Chandra Bahadur felt like saying it is you and your medical negligence that kills people. It is not because of helpless people like us. Chandra Bahadur tells the doctor to do

anything to save his wife. To this the doctor replies, "I cannot do the operation and you have to go to Doctor Roy."

Chandra Bahadur rushes, joins hand and begs Doctor Roy the surgeon. However, these people who exchange their souls for money talks about money first. Chandra Bahadur is willing to spend anything he has to, as Urmi's condition is worrying. Doctor Roy says that blood was needed for the operation. Many people were ready to give blood to a person like Urmi who dedicated her life for the well-being of the people of the Tea garden. Out of ten people only three people's blood matched. After blood was extracted and operation started Urmi dies after giving birth to a son. Chandra Bahadur was devastated. Sometimes he thought it must have been too much for Urmi to bear the injustice in the system in which they were serving. Yet, for Chandra Bahadur who was used to taking up challenges in life carried on his activities. He was raising a son without a mother.

The lack of sophisticated medical help system upsets the situation. It is one reason why the subversion is underway.

At several points in the novel, we see the self-respecting workers making demands to feel that their world is being unjustly side-lined. "Our work should not be of more than eight hours. If any work remains to be done after that, then it should be considered as overtime work and double wages should be given for it," (12) for instance, is a context. "Even after eight hours of work in case the required quantity of tea leaves could not be plucked the wages should not be deducted," the character continues. The workers also insist that "As granted by the Plantation Act, Quarters should be made." There are also explicit socialist dimensions such as when they declare, "Whatever profits the Company makes, twelve percent of it should be divided

amongst the workers as bonus,” or when they insist “When a worker’s post falls vacant, it has to be filled in by the local tea garden people,” and declare “The daily quota of plucking tea leaves has to be reduced. By chance any extra tea leaves is made to be plucked by the workers ten paisa raise should be given for the work done.”

As explained above, medical situation and its shortcomings go into the conversations about their dignity too: “The hospitals should have sufficient medicines and injections.” The characters also meditate about the basic amenities: “There should be an arrangement for drinking water.” “The ration distributed to the people should not be rotten and fit to be consumed. Likewise, the tea given during the tea break should be good.” (25)

Also, there are sections in the novel such as given below where the awakening consciences of the labourers are evident: Listening to all of them one by one somebody remarks – “Is that all? Certain things have been left out. What about the repairing of houses which have leaking roofs? What about the disbursement of monthly salary on time? Also, the maternity allowances for women. The harsh treatment meted out to the workers in the form of abuses and punishments. No, only this will not do.” “Someone interrupted saying that these minor things need not be discussed immediately. This can be given later. On hearing this one worker replies angrily, “To you these may be minor things but for us these are major things in life which we have been deprived of so far. (p 71)

Force was perpetrated in a subtle and clever way by the capitalist clout on the rebels. False allegations were made on Chandra Bahadur so as to break his morale. It was the month of January; many representatives were asked to go the labourer’s conference from different areas. From this garden 3 representatives were sent. Out of which

Chandra Bahadur was one. The day Chandra Bahadur leaves a big incident takes place. One manager called Surendra Prasad makes a visit to the garden. One day, during his visit, a huge boulder comes rolling down and crushes him.

Everybody considers it as an accident but those in power blamed Chandra Bahadur for it. They accused Chandra Bahadur for this heinous act. Biray who had now become a head chowkidar was the main witness for this incident. It was again a plot of the garden owner that Chandra Bahadur was trapped in. An enquiry is done by the police. Some photos of the site are taken. However, as Chandra Bahadur was returning from the conference, he was arrested at the railway station. They consider it as Chandra Bahadur's master mind plan.

There is a chaotic scene after the arrest of Chandra Bahadur saying that it is a false accusation to remove him from the cause he was running for. He had just returned from the Assembly / Congress. The next day there was a big procession under the leadership of Suryamukhi. They demand the release of Chandra Bahadur. Since he was arrested on non bailable warrant order, he couldn't be released on bail. The case started in session court. Biray, who was the right hand of the owner in giving evidence in the court, said that he had picked up a hanky from the site where Surendra Prasad was killed. It belonged to Chandra Bahadur and he showed it in front of everybody.

Chandra Bahadur was shocked at this false allegation. He remembered that he had left his handkerchief on the clothes line. However, he had never imagined that Biray could build up a story and betray him in this manner. The Govt lawyer was hell bent on proving him guilty. Chandra Bahadur knew that the lawyer was also fighting the case with the owner's money to purchase him. So were the witnesses, police officers

and ministers. However, he had only one thing that is his integrity and honesty to support him. In the meantime, the mazdoor union went on processions, meetings were called and speeches were made for the release of Chandra Bahadur. Chandra Bahadur was worried thinking about the future of his son. Though he was innocent the final judgement given as per IPC section No. 302 was that Chandra Bahadur was proved guilty of murder. Therefore, he was given a death order. After getting the judgement Chandra Bahadur was transferred to the central jail.

Against the decision of the session court, Chandra Bahadur appealed to the high court. The local leaders as well as the large masses of the labourers were working actively for the right judgement for him. The case started once again in the high court. There were attempts to remove the witnesses but they were adamant. Finally, the death penalty was changed to life imprisonment which brings Michel Foucault's statement to mind,

“Truth is not by nature free-nor error servile-but that its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power.” (Foucault, *History Of Sexuality*, 1978)

Chandra Bahadur nearly loses his mental stability after the declaration of the punishment. He bangs his head on the rod of the window inside the jail screaming, “Mr. Jailor saab, I cannot stay here anymore as I cannot breathe. I do not want to die here. Let me die peacefully in my home – my tea garden. You are being unfair to me. Why am I made to rot in this dark dingy cell? Let me run around in the lush green tea bushes. I want to fulfill my mother's dream. Let me shoulder her responsibilities and allow her to live peacefully. This is injustice.” [p- 79]

The jailor is bewildered seeing this scene. Therefore, tells him, “Mr. Chandra Bahadur, come to your senses. There is justice, law and government by your side.

Truth always triumphs. Do not lose your self-confidence. Be assured that you will be victorious.” (p 79)

Chandra Bahadur seems to show that he has lost his mental balance and sees hallucinations. He himself admits, “Chandra Bahadur is dead. He has been killed in front of my eyes. His dead body is playing a swing, trapped in the noose by injustice and lie. Who is this calling out, Chandra Bahadur? He is dead long ago. Ha! Ha! Ha! I am his ghost to make everybody scared. The owner is my enemy. I’m free from the chains of law. Yet, Chandra Bahadur’s soul has taken a rebirth on the bottom of every tea bush. If you don’t believe you can ask every single tea bush. Ha! Ha! Ha!” (p 79)

This is how Chandra Bahadur keeps calling out and running inside the small cell. It has been just one week since he has been transferred to this jail. The jailor Amar watches him intently. Seeing his activities, he thinks that may be Chandra Bahadur is a victim of injustice. His condition could be the result of plans made successful by the circumstances. The jailor often discusses about him with the superintendent who feels that may be the convict will go mad.

To this Chandra Bahadur says, “Yes, first I was made a murderer. Now I’m thought to be mad. When seeking justice, raising a voice against injustice everybody is considered to be mad. If I’m addressed as mad person today, do you want to know how I became mad. If an innocent person can be proved to murderer, then nothing is impossible here.” (p 84)

This goes on for two days. One day when both jailor and superintendent come to see him in the dingy cell, through which a small patch of light entered, he was seen to be sitting on the floor and staring in vacuum. Chandra Bahadur gets up and says, “I do

not want this life which has already been taken by the course of law. Instead, I wish to be hanged until death.” (p 83)

Biray's power was increasing day by day. Recently he has been promoted to the post of a Munshi. Even the Manager took his suggestion for any matter. Biray started taking advantage of his power. The Manager existed only for the name sake. All power rested in Biray's hand. The Manager informed about it to the owner which Biray got to know later. Out of rage, Biray slapped the Manager. The Manager resigned and left. After the next Manager came, Biray tried to have an upper hand over all matters. This created a problem for the owner as all Managers refused to work. Therefore, the owner made a plan to remove Biray from work. In around the same time the owner's son Yudhbir Rana returned home after completing his studies. He now took over the responsibilities of the tea garden. Yudhbir intervenes in Biray's activities. He orders Biray to ask his permission before doing anything.

Slowly there were clashes between the owner's son and Biray. Soon it was heard that the owner had gone mad. Seeing the condition of the garden filled with corruption on one hand coupled with the ill health of his father, Yudhbir does not lose hope. He tries to find the secret route regarding the state of affairs of the garden while he was studying. For this he tried to get information from a person called Dalbir Pradhan. Slowly Dalbir became the right hand of the owner. During this period one incident occurred. One basket of the best quality tea leaves called GFPO was asked to be taken by Biray. It was caught by the owner Yudhbir and on interrogation to the worker it was found that it was ordered by Munshi Biray. Biray was terminated from his services and was ordered to vacate the house as well. He refuses to oblige to the orders of the owner and wielding a khukuri says, “Let me see who can throw me out. I will not spare him without making him into pieces.” (p 87).

This is what made Franz Fanon say in *The Wretched of the Earth*, (1967) “you can’t say with certainty anything about the native. You can’t say that he is terrorized, or even apprehensive. He is in fact in a moment’s notice to exchange the role of the quarry for that of the hunter.” (p 41)

The next day the chowkidar comes, throws his belongings and locks the house. At last, Biray is compelled to go the house of the President of the Union, named Birdoj Subba. He accepts his crime of trapping an innocent person with a false accusation of having pushed a boulder to crush a person to death. He was promised the job of a Munshi by the owner.

Biray was lured by an offer of Rs. 5000/ for stealing the handkerchief of Chandra Bahadur from the clothes line to produce it in the court. To get the monetary reward, he agreed to be a prime witness for the offence shown to have been done by Chandra Bahadur. He joins hands and cries in front of the President saying that he has to do something to save him from losing his house. Such circumstances in the lives of people are exactly by what Franz Fanon meant in *The Wretched of the Earth*, (1967)

“The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor.” (p41)

This statement of Biray would serve as big evidence in the case against Chandra Bahadur which had reached the high court. Therefore, everybody took it in writing. Biray himself was ready to be a witness and give a declaration in the court that Chandra Bahadur was an innocent man who had simply been a victim of a plot framed against him. Biray’s surrender and acceptance of his crime in plotting against Chandra Bahadur gave the case a different turn. Everybody started running around for the release of Chandra Bahadur.

People like Chandra Bahadur a union leader who went against the existing system of governance and looked forward for change was considered an anti-social element. He became a target of the management. When he was inside the jail, country wide movement started against the exploitation of the natives. He felt he was not alone in this rebellion. Slowly new parties were formed which led to the coming of many trade unions at various places.

Chandra Bahadur dreams that injustice and oppression shall be brought to an end one day. Big changes will be witnessed after Independence. A government that can feel the pulse of the people will come to power. It will allow everybody to get a peaceful sleep. Private firms, personal system of governance shall be removed. The pathetic conditions, in which the tea gardens are now in, shall see major improvement one day.

To bring to light the poor management system prevailing inside the prison Chandra Bahadur was actively involved in various activities. To show the pathetic condition in which the prisoners were kept in by serving frugal meals of raw chapatis to keep their stomach half-filled, Chandra Bahadur goes on a hunger strike. This made him a target of the officers and was often whipped. Sometimes electric shocks were given to him on his bare body on the accusations of breaking the rules and destroying the discipline of the jail.

Chandra Bahadur is made to stand in front of officers who question him on and off. False charges are put on him by saying, "Are you not the youth leader of the labour party? You are the future Prime Minister of the Labour party, aren't you?" (p 89) In between he is whipped as he is questioned turn by turn, "Are you not the one to instigate the common people to go against the government and destroy the peace of the country?" (p 89) Another officer remarks, "You are the one trying to ruin the

capitalists of this country. You were behind the blasting of the bomb in the police station also.” (p 89) Whether Chandra Bahadur says ‘yes’ or ‘no’ along with every question he is boxed on the cheeks. Again, he is questioned, “Who are the prominent leaders of your party? Where do they stay? Where are its branches?” (p 89)

To every question Chandra Bahadur replies boldly that he doesn’t know. On getting such replies sometimes Chandra Bahadur is burnt on the face with cigarette butts. There is no end to the torture that Chandra Bahadur had to go through.

Time flows by. It is 5 years since Chandra Bahadur is tortured in jail. Sometimes he shouts inside the cell saying, “This is not a jail but hell where there is no end to the agony that one can be subjected to. However, the rule of the demons will come to an end one day. You are burying those who are still alive. Justice is denied to people. I too have right in this country. Injustice of the police officers cannot go on forever.” (p 90)

There is no end to the agony that Chandra Bahadur had to endure. Sometimes he screams, “You all are killing me alive. My hand has become useless. There is infection in my leg. This is not humanitarian. This is injustice.” (p 91) Somebody beats him on the arms and remarks, “We need this hand that does the work and leg that does the running around. We will not let you die so easily. But this hand and leg will not remain with you (may be due to amputation). Yet, you will live.” (p 91)

On the direction of the officers’ electric shocks are given again to Chandra Bahadur. His health worsens. One day a doctor is brought to check his health condition. Chandra Bahadur pleads the doctor to save him as he has to make many changes in this world. Therefore, he says, “Doctor I want to live. So please save me. I need to live. Even after enduring any sort of agony I want to remain alive. The doctor gives

him an assurance of remaining alive therefore he says, “You shall definitely remain alive. I will admit you to the hospital. I am not a police officer but a doctor who understands the value of a person’s life.” (p 91)

The doctor updated about Chandra Bahadur’s health condition which needed urgent attention. His right leg would have to be amputated due to infection. The sensation on his hands would never return. Other than that, his lungs were affected also. On the basis of this Chandra Bahadur was immediately admitted to the hospital. For two weeks he received proper medical care, good diet and medicines. Slowly his health improved. After some weeks Chandra Bahadur finds himself amidst those same officers. One day an officer comes to congratulate him for the news of his release. He tells Chandra Bahadur, “Mr. Chandra Bahadur, Congratulations! You are lucky because an order has come for your release. Tomorrow your people will come to get you. I pray for your good life in future. Please forgive me for whatever mistakes I have done. All the instructions come from above. I am just an executor. I am also a prisoner of law and I am bound to abide its orders.” (p 92)

Next morning Chandra Bahadur is released. He tells the officer, “Okay I am going. But I am leaving both my hands and a leg at your service.” (p 92) With the help of two guards limping his leg and almost dragging himself Chandra Bahadur is seen returning slowly through the town. Everyone cries seeing his condition. A person who was once an active leader, talented in various fields was just a semblance of himself. After returning home, the very next day Chandra Bahadur is taken to the hospital. The doctor informs that his legs will have to be amputated. Moreover, his lungs were badly affected also. To this Chandra Bahadur replies, “Okay let my legs be amputated. Not only one, you can go for two but I want to live. Even if I am under the rule of the barbarians where there is mismanagement everywhere, I will choose to

remain alive. I may be a victim of a capitalist society. Yet, I harbour a desire to live. Even if I am a section of a stigmatised society, I will survive to create history. Let the coming generation, the future proletariats read me minutely. Let them be assimilated in our struggle with a strong determination. I will make a new history in an era when the owner is considered at par with God – a face where there is autocratic dictatorship over people. It may be a time when the country is ruled arbitrarily. I will consider this as the extreme achievement of my struggle.” (p 93)

This brings to mind what Edward Said has said in ‘Resistance, Opposition and Representation’ in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* by Bill Ashcroft et al, “that resistance, far from being merely a reaction to imperialism, is an alternative way of conceiving human history.” (p 97)

Finally, one of Chandra Bahadur’s legs is amputated till the knee. Chandra Bahadur is considered as a revolutionary heroic warrior who was tortured and made to go through physical and mental agony in the jail. Yet, he never gave up hope. For this he was felicitated also. At the same time voices were raised by different leaders for his predicament.

Chandra Bahadur was transferred to the TB sanatorium. During his stay there, Chandra Bahadur often gets this feeling that growing up amidst the struggles and hardships of his father, Ananta, his son, would carry on this fight against injustice and exploitation of the people. This mantle would be taken over by son Ananta and one day they shall be victorious. As imagined by Chandra Bahadur, Ananta becomes an active and hardworking member of the party. He takes charge of the trade union.

Chandra Bahadur coughs at night and sometimes wakes up early morning. He looks out of the window. Sometimes the nurse teases him saying that maybe he was

waiting for morning tea. To this Chandra Bahadur replies that he is waiting for a new dawn to see the sunrise. Along with it he hopes his dreams are fulfilled by the new generation when there shall be a subversion of the hegemonic centre and the freedom of the natives who can breathe a gush of fresh air. With this the novel comes to an end.

Power establishes the things that we can do and the things that we cannot do. Resistance to power is part of the power relations, and hence it is at the same time rich in chances and without a chance. On the one hand, any resistance to existing power relations confirms this power network, and reaffirms its boundaries. On the other hand, the very appearance of a new factor in the power relations – resistance – brings about a redefinition of and a change in the power relations (Wickham, 1986). Gaventa's model of power is an attempt to integrate the three dimensions of power in order to explain processes of power and powerlessness in situations of social equality. He claims that a challenge, or a rebellion, can occur only if there is a shift in the power relations: a loss of power by A or a gain of power by B. As the ability of powerless people (B) to act increases, the options of the activators of power (A) diminish; hence, too the process of A's becoming weaker. Each triumph reinforces itself and builds further consciousness and activity among the powerless, towards further change. The meaning of the process is social change—an emergence from quiescence to political participation and, as this happens, a strengthening of the weak. From the point of view of the powerful, expectations of such outcomes are reasons for adopting many means in order to preserve B's quiescence. Therefore, if activities and rebellions of people like Chandra Bahadur and Ananta increases automatically the domination or subjugation by the superior Sahib will decrease.

According to Ashcroft,

“A characteristic of dominated literatures is an inevitable tendency towards subversion, and a study of the subversive strategies employed by post-colonial writers would reveal both the configurations of domination and the imaginative and creative responses to this condition. Directly and indirectly, in Salman Rushdie’s phrase, the ‘Empire writes back’ to the imperial ‘centre’, is not only through nationalist assertion, proclaiming itself central and self-determining, but even more radically by questioning the bases of European and British metaphysics, challenging the world-view that can polarize centre and periphery in the first place. In this way, concepts of polarity, of ‘governor and governed, ruler and ruled’ (Harris 1960) are challenged as an essential way of ordering reality. (As quoted in *The Empire Write Back*, p- 32)

The writer tries to articulate such mindsets of the colonial owners unwilling to succumb to the needs of marginalized workers but ultimately meeting to the demands of the working class as a result of their unity and rebellion against their colonial master. The elaboration of the living contexts of the Nepali working class is one of the main centres around which the novel works. Apart from the fact that the mainstream Marxist dialectic is profusely used, the novel also narrativizes and gives individuality to various sects of the labouring society. This is a very important step forward as far as the articulation of a deracinated society is concerned.

2. *Tara Kahilay? (But When?,1993)*

Tara Kahilay? (But when?, 1993) by Prakash Kovid also is a novel about the exploitation and oppression of the tea garden labourers which later lead to Anti-Colonial resistance. When the novel opens it is seen that most of the officers are Whites. That is why maybe in front of the Darjeeling thana flutters the flag of the

Union Jack. After giving salami to it Sergeant Henderson reads a list of the sepoys who have been transferred. Havildar Bhimsen Tamang is sent to Daruwa check post which is almost inside Daruwa jungle. (A single bridge divides this check post between Sikkim and India)

Henderson talks about having visited Badamtam tea estate which is close this jungle. He had gone to this place primarily to save the life of the Manager working there, as some protest were going on by the labourers under Mrigay. Even Henderson, a White officer was afraid of Mrigay Rai. Badamtam tea estate is nearly 10-12 km from Darjeeling town. About 3-4 km downwards was the Daruwa jungle. The place was almost dark even during the day time because it was a dense jungle. In that jungle the majority of the people residing there were the Rais who were brought from Eastern Nepal by the recruiters who got loyalty from British.

In the same place another clan of people resided who were the Lepchas. The tribal lepchas of Badamtam refused to accept the offers given by the British. The result was that the area of the tea estate went on expanding while the fields of the Lepchas reduced.

The situation was such that those who were migrants lived in the tea gardens while the Lepchas who were the original inhabitants lived on the bottom end of the tea garden. According to Ashcroft,

“A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place...A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement,

transportation, or ‘voluntary’ removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are a feature common to all post-colonial literatures in English.” (*The Empire Writes Back*, p- 8, 9)

After being employed by the British the workers of the tea garden comprising mostly of the Rai’s and other migrants were given numbers by which they were addressed instead of their own names. Such a pitiable condition and an inhumane act by these Britishers in which the human beings are just reduced to numbers as if they are no more a living being and that they have become frozen having no human characteristics directly obliterates their personal identity as an individual. They are reduced to the state of animals and just like the criminals they are given numbers for their names. It also shows the Britishers colonial mindset and authority and brutality over the lives of workers- to demean and to ridicule.

The Lepchas often raise brows at the existence of their neighbouring Rai’s’ working for the East India Company. Luksom, a lepcha lady remarks, “The Company has given you a number like to the people in the police force. What is your number?” To this a youth whose actual name was Kirtiman replies “My number is seventy.” Luksom smiles and says – “We will neither sell our names nor exchange it for a number.” (p 10)

Kirtiman remained silent for some time. Luksom while chewing an Amla (Indian Gooseberry) further carries on, “Exporting the tea leaves to their own country and giving you ration expenses in its exchange; the British will make you slaves one day. Do you want an amla?” (p 11) Kirtiman replies, “I don’t need your amla. Our stomachs are being taken care of unlike yours. What will you eat?” To this Luksom replies, “We eat whatever we grow. We are not like you who have to slog from morning till evening in the tea garden. Besides we don’t get whipped like you.” (p 11)

This statement does hurt the self-esteem of Kirtiman. This was aggravated when Luksom says, “Even when a tiger devours a person during day time your Imperial masters never take an initiative to look for you. Whether it is a human being killed or a dog, it is the same. If they make profit out of your hard work, they should be concerned about your safety as well.” (p 11)

Kirtiman’s ego is hurt and replies spontaneously, “They have made a house for us.” (p 11) Luksom’s reaction on the mention of a ‘house’ is different and replies, “Yes, it is a golden cage to keep parrots. We have managed to make houses for ourselves also. Even though it may be made of bamboo with thatched roofs of straw and walls of mud, a tiger cannot enter it. Nor does it have leaking roofs to give us trouble in monsoon.” (p11). So, a discussion goes on between the migrants who were working under the East India Company and the Lepchas who refused to come within the folds of the Whites and give up their lands. Luksom tells a worker, “Today you are an apple of the eyes of the Company, while we have become a target. However, keep in mind that one day these White pigs will do the same to you, do you understand 70?”

Worker No 70 who is Kirtiman says – “My name is not 70.” To this Luksom replies – “I know that but today I know you only as worker no 70.” Kirtiman feels little uneasy

and asks her when he shall be known by his name. To this Luksom replies, “Only when you become free from the chains of these White pigs, I shall recognize you in your actual self with your name.” (p 11)

Both Mrigay and Kirtiman work for the company. Mrigay was a renowned hunter whose fame in hunting was known to all the white officers. His main work in the tea garden was to accompany the officers when they passed through the dense jungle. He was asked to see to their safety even when staying in the garden from the attack of any wild animal. Kirtiman on the other hand was a worker who was addressed as no. 70 by the White officers. Both friends talk about the antagonism of the Lepchas with the British. However, at times Kirtiman feels that whatever the Lepchas are doing, say for example refusing to give up their lands are correct. Kirtiman thinks that it is they who had migrated have made a mistake by leaving Nepal. Mrigay asks what type of mistake he is referring to. Kirtiman talks about their life in the tea garden which is basically a life filled with oppression endured by them for years. Kirtiman says – “Whatever the Lepchas have done is correct. It is us who have made a mistake by leaving Nepal. Today we have to work like a machine in the tea garden only to get fourteen paisa per day. If we had done the same amount of hard work in Nepal, we could have got the value of gold from the products of our own land.” (p 24) Mrigay who was in the good books of the Whites interrupted by saying that we should not talk against our masters.

Kirtiman who was tired of the exploitation of the British talked about how they have been tortured since many years. Kirtiman says, “We have been treated unjustly and to endure this injustice for life is also a sin. The police officers are Whites, senior Manager is also a white gentleman and the garden Manager is also the same. Where should we go to seek justice? The Sardars have their own monopoly. If

you don't go to work for two days, the Sahib's officials come to whip us. We have made this land get the value of gold. They are getting profit out of it. If the company doesn't like any of our activities we are evicted from the garden. What should we the Nepalis do? Go back to Nepal or stay in India?" (p 25) It should be noted that not all Nepalis are migrants from Nepal. Darjeeling was originally a part of Sikkim. Later it was taken by the British on lease from the monarch of Sikkim and annexed to India. The original inhabitants of Darjeeling were the Lepchas who refused to give up their lands in exchange of anything they were offered by the British.

Mrigay tells Kirtiman that such thoughts may have come to his mind from his friendship with the Lepchas particularly Luksom. Mrigay being the private hunter of the Sahebs had access to visit their bungalow, often toured with them and went on hunting expeditions together. Mrigay was treated well. Kirtiman and his family were tea garden labourers who suffered throughout their lives.

Seema, Kirtiman's sister says, "Mrigay Daju, you may be getting favors from the Whites. They have made a house for you, given land to you to support yourself and many other things. Yet, in reality if we are to look around to the rest of the workers in the garden, most of the temporary houses given to them have leaking roofs. This gives us sleepless nights throughout the monsoons. There are no facilities of drinking water within our vicinity. We have to walk to a far-off distance to fetch water after our work gets over at 4 pm. By the time we return home it is 6pm. After making dinner and completing the domestic chores it's already 10pm. We get very few hours of rest as we have to start a new day by waking up early morning at 5 am. Life is tough for us." (25)

We get such a deplorable, pathetic and pitiable condition of these garden workers who have literally no say against their superiors. They have to live and abide by the dictates of the powerful class. They are denied of the basic amenities like proper houses and drinking water. Moreover, they have no transport facilities to make it little convenient for them. As such they need to spend their extra time by walking which could have given them some extra time for proper rest. According to Ashcroft, “The ‘truth’ of post-colonial societies, like that of other oppressed, or repressed, or silenced communities is ideologically determined. It stems from a construction of the self as subject in relation to the other... in post-colonial societies, the participants are frozen into a hierarchical relationship in which the oppressed is locked into position by the assumed moral superiority of the dominant group, a superiority which is reinforced when necessary by the use of physical force. Such accounts, too, are grounded in an awareness of the struggle between discourses as the fundamental constitutive mode of such relations.” (*The Empire Writes Back*, 170). Similarly, we find in this novel how the superior race i.e., the Whites asserts their dominance over the inferior race i.e., the Nepalis in this case. The typical colonial mentality by the Whites of oppressing the Nepalis by denying them of the basic rights gets clearly vindicated in this novel.

Mrigay too acknowledges that he has been noticing that the Chota Sahib or (the Assistant Manager) has been torturing the garden workers. Seema continues by saying- “When labourers are attacked by animals what is done for them? Chandu died of a snake bite. Where is the hospital for treatment of labourers in such circumstances? Many have been devoured by the tiger, where is the compensation for their families? The more the tea leaves are plucked the happier the Saheb becomes. Yet, where is the comfort and facility give to the workers?” (p 26)

Once again, we find in the novel how the Sahib used to deny the labourers of the basic compensations when these labourers used to die while working for these Sahibs. These things hardly concerned the Sahibs because for them what mattered was only profit. Even the lives of people hardly made any difference to their conscience.

Seema talks about an important matter regarding much discussion about her brother Kirtiman in the manager's bungalow. She was afraid that he may be evicted from the tea garden because of his frequent visit to Luksom's house (who is from one of the Lepcha families who refused to give up their land to the British)

Exploitation of Women

According to Ashcroft, "Women in many societies have been relegated to the position of 'Other', marginalized and, in a metaphorical sense, 'colonized', forced to pursue guerrilla warfare against imperial domination from positions deeply imbedded in, yet fundamentally alienated from, that Imperium (Spivak 1987). They share with colonized races and people an intimate experience of the politics of oppression and repression, and like them they have been forced to articulate their experiences in the language of their oppressors. Women, like post-colonial peoples, have had to construct a language of their own when their only available 'tools' are those of the 'colonizer'." (*The Empire Writes Back*, 172) The so-called subaltern women in accordance to Spivak's use of the term are mute and unable to speak up their internal feelings. As we find in the novel these marginalized women are treated only as commodities by the Whites for sexually satisfying themselves and thereby torturing these Nepali women as if it is the right of the Whites to do whatever they want. This typical colonial mindset of the whites also gets reiterated in the novel.

According to Spivak, ‘There is no space from where the subaltern (sexed) subject can speak’ (Spivak 1985c: 122). Ashcroft et al. while discussing about this problem goes on to say that “By implication, the silencing of the sub-altern woman extends to the whole of the colonial world, and to the silencing and muting of all natives, male or female. Such contemporary theories of colonialist discourse, like the post-structuralist accounts of language from which they derive, have been subject recently to criticisms which assess the implications of their politics. These criticisms have drawn attention to the negative effects which may stem from such discourse, stressing as it does, for example, ‘the absence of a text that can “answer one back” after the planned epistemic violence of the imperialist project’ (*The Empire Writes Back*, 29). They further go on to state that,

“the inescapability of the discourse which constitutes colonizer–post-colonized are not in fact only a sophisticated mask over the face of a continued, neo-colonial domination, another aspect of what Parry has characterized as the ‘protean forms of imperialism’, of which colonialism was only one historical stage. (*The Empire Writes Back*, 175-176)

Likewise, we also find in this novel issue related to women and their exploitation as a result of colonial mindset asserting the superiority of their race to dominate and subjugate the inferior subjects. It has been 3 days since Mrigay has gone to renew the license of his gun. In the meantime, 3 officers of the East India Company were to make a visit to the Tea Garden. One day Chhota Sahib or the Assistant manager comes to the compound of Kirtiman. There was a whip in his hand. Seeing him Seema pulls the chair and requests him to take a seat. Chhota Sahib looks at her from top to bottom. Then he says that Seema should be sent to the bungalow from the next day. He further says that Seema would be given her wages as usual. Besides if she can

make the sahib happy, she would be given 'baksish' (tips) also. The working-class women were often molested and even murdered with impunity. The novel does not balk from acknowledging these dimensions.

Kirtiman, the brother was shocked and did not know how to react. Gathering much courage Kirtiman musters to say a line, "But sir, what if Seema refuses to go to the bungalow?" (p 29) The Sahib says that whatever is ordered has to be obeyed by her. He rages with anger when Kirtiman refuses to send his sister.

To make Kirtiman comply with the orders given by him, the Chhota Sahib gives an ultimatum saying that in case she refuses, the attendance of Seema and her brother Kirtiman will not be taken from the next day. Their wages shall not be accounted either. Yet, in spite of the threats Kirtiman says that he will not send his sister. Due to this act of defiance the Chhota sahib starts whipping Kirtiman till he almost falls down. Seema comes running and joins hands to the Sahib to spare her brother from this torture. Finally, she acquiesces to his demands and says, "After my brother recovers from this trauma of ill treatment on him, I shall myself come to the bungalow." (p 29)

The Sahib says it is okay but Seema should make sure that he need not come again to remind her. With these words he gets on to the horse and takes leave. After he leaves the people of the village takes Kirtiman inside the house and puts medicines on him. That same day Mrigay was returning to the tea estate after the renewal of his gun's license. He heard about Kirtiman's incident in Gaylon dhara (name of a stream) itself. On reaching home Mrigay asks his wife who had beaten Kirtiman. His wife informs him that it was done by the Chhota sahib. He asks his wife Asha maya what was the main reason behind it. To this she tells him that his sister Seema was asked to go the

bungalow as Chokri (mistress) to which Kirtiman, her brother, did not agree. Then his wife tells Mrigay that somehow Kirtiman would have to agree to the orders of Chhota Sahib (or Assistant Manager). Or else Kirtiman would be evicted from the garden on the accusation that he was the person who had instigated the Lepchas not to come within the folds of the East India Company and agree to give their lands.

Banging his fist on the table Mrigay says that Kirtiman's sister was like 'his sister' also. As long as he was there nothing would happen to Seema. His wife gives further information that the person in charge of taking attendance of the labourers did not take Seema's attendance though she had plucked the tea leaves throughout the day.

Mrigay decides to visit Kirtiman. He would also like to see the power and strength of Chhota Sahib. So, putting a khukri on his waist, a gun on his shoulder, and some 10-12 bullets in his pocket he headed towards his destination. Mrigay being the hunter of the sahebsf had no problem in carrying a gun or using it.

On reaching their home he finds Seema putting medicines on the back of Kirtiman which was filled with the strokes of the whip. There was another person called 77 bajey (or old man) who shared his woe of how these White Sahibs had made his daughter a Chokri once. Now their eyes were upon Seema.

At that very moment, the Chhota Sahib arrives at the courtyard and calls Seema who was inside. He says that she has to go the bungalows immediately for the new visitors have arrived. There was a whip in hand and two chowkidars were standing beside him. Seema pleads her brother Kirtiman to let her obey Chhota Sahib's order or else they may lose their jobs, suffer pangs of hunger and finally be evicted from the garden. Kirtiman in a feeble tone forbids his sister from being a mistress of the Whites and thereby allow them to exploit numerous poor Nepali women with such a bargain.

Mrigay asked Seema to go outside and face him. Her brother Mrigay was there to control the situation. He even tells Kirtiman that whatever he was whipped by, he shall snatch that whip from Chhota Sahib and then see who has greater strength. The novel shows how the people were getting increasingly offended by the ruling class.

When Seema refuses finally even after Chhota Sahib's visit to their house, Seema is whipped. As soon as the first stroke falls on Seema's body, Mrigay comes out and stands in between Seema and Chhota Sahib. Sahib was startled for a moment. Gathering much courage, the Chhota Sahib says, "Don't be a thorn in my path, Mrigay. I know how to cross it." [p- 33]

This is what such actions is supposed to mean as posited by David Huddart in *Homi k Bhabha* (2006), The 'returned look' of the colonized native makes the White man (who thought it imperative to undertake the civilizing mission) uneasy of the fact and forces him to reconsider the behaviour and power of the colonized native. (p 39)

Mrigay replies in an adamant tone that he should prove it by his actions. To this the Sahib questions him, "Are you challenging me?" (p 33) Mrigay replies, "If this is not a challenge then what is it?" (p 33) On hearing this, the sahib lifts his whip to hit Mrigay. Mrigay reacts immediately, stops it and pulls him instead. Sahib asks him what his intention behind this action was. In an insulted tone, the Sahib tells him, "Mrigay what does your action mean? Do you intend to beat your owner?" (p 33)

Mrigay reminds him that labourers were the actual owners whose sweat had made them rich. Other than that, the daughter of these helpless labourers was being exploited by them also.

Therefore, Mrigay replies, "The actual owners are the labourers who have made you rich with their sweat and toil. Besides extracting their hard labour, you Whites have

also exploited our helpless women by forcefully making them your mistresses while your families are left behind in England.” (p 33) The Chowkidars move forward to get the Sahib out of this situation. Mrigay stops them saying that whoever would get into the scene would be chopped into pieces by the khukuri. Finding no options, Chhota sahib tries to run. Mrigay starts whipping the White Colonial Master. Within ten minutes he falls unconscious to the ground.

Asking the Chowkidars to reach the Chhota Sahib, Mrigay takes leave from the scene. After drinking a glass of locally brewed drink, he puts some bullets in his gun; Mrigay goes towards the Bungalow of Bara sahib or (Manager) and shouts – “Open the door.”

He challenges the Whites by asking the Bara Sahib to open the door. The head Durban tells him that keys are with the Sahib. Then he fires four gunshots in the air and asks the whites to come out.

The news of Mrigay beating the Chhota Sahib and firing gun shots to challenge the white colonial Masters is rife in the tea estate. The Sahib decides not to take any official action on Mrigay or else the matter would reach the Director of the Company. However, they had decided to do ‘*hatta bahar*’ or (*eviction*) to Mrigay. On the 3rd day after the incident, Seema comes to Mrigay’s house to inform him that both she and her brother have been re- instated to work. Seema also informs Mrigay that he shall be done ‘*hatta bahar*’, to which Mrigay affirms being aware of it. Seema requests him to go and meet the Bada sahib once. Mrigay’s wife Ashamaya also supports her statement. Mrigay tells his wife that if he is a tiger, she has to be a tigress. Mrigay tells Seema that he would not beg for mercy in front of Whites. He also asks Seema what she would prefer to see her brother as – a person whose head

was as high as the mountains or someone with head stooped low. On hearing this Seema gives up the idea of him meeting the Bara Sahib.

As the order of '*hatta bahar*' (eviction) was already given, Mrigay tells his father that they would not return till the Whites were there in the garden. His father feels sad thinking so because he had buried his wife here.

On the fourth day Sergeant (Subedar) Henderson accompanied by Nepali rifleman comes to Badamtam tea estate. He meets manager Hudson and asks him what the plans are for Mrigay. On this query, Hudson says that it is their fault. Henderson further questions Manager Hudson regarding Mrigay's opinion. To this Manager Hudson says that it has been four days since he has not met Mrigay because he (Mrigay) has a gun. From this view point it is evident that the Whites have mellowed down to some extent. The courage to subvert the hegemonic center by the fully exploited labourers is now evident in the days to come. The principle that all men are equal is likely to be implemented in the tea garden as stated by Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967)

“in the colonies from the moment that the native claims that he is the equal of the settler.... One step more and he is ready to fight to be more than the settler. In fact, he has already decided to eject him and to take his place...”

(Fanon, p34)

Manager Hudson often addressed as Bada Sahib says that he is ready to forgive Mrigay but for this he has to pay some fine as compensation for insulting Chhota Sahib or (Assistant Manager).

After lunch the head chowkidar goes along with Sergeant Henderson carrying the notice of '*hattabahar*'. By then Mrigay had already packed all his belongings. He says

he has taken only those things which he had purchased with his money. If anybody had doubt over it, they could check. Henderson doesn't allow anybody to open. He suggests that Mrigay should meet the Bada Sahib once who was in the Bungalow. For this Mrigay should first hand over his gun.

Mrigay teases him saying, "Does it mean that Bada Sahib or (Manager) is too scared of my gun?" [p- 38]

Mrigay further says that gun belongs to the company. Only the license was his. However, the martial races that the Nepalis are, they have the biggest thing beyond the gun and bullet. That is courage within them irrespective of the weapon to fight back with. This is what Franz Fanon has said in *The Wretched of the Earth*, (1967)

"I am no longer at tenterhooks in his presence; in fact, I don't give a damn for him.

Not only does his presence no longer trouble me, but I am already preparing such efficient ambushes for him that soon there will be no way out but that of flight".

(p35)

Henderson asks if Mrigay would like to meet Bada Sahib (Hudson). Mrigay refuses. He puts all his belongings over 3 horses and leaves the tea garden. He goes to Sikkim. After his departure Manager Hudson writes to the director of the company that Chhota Sahib should be transferred from the tea estate.

In the tea garden it seems that five youths had run away. They could not tolerate the suppression of the White Colonial masters anymore. They preferred to join the Army and had gone to the Jalapahar recruiting depot. After knowing about it, Manager Hudson is in an angry mood. He clenches his fist out of rage.

After Colonel Marshall looked at their credentials, he understood that they had run away from the garden. Instead of recruiting them, they were handed over to manager Hudson.

At the Colonel's action one of the boys numbered 213 even questions him, "We are not slaves of the owner of the tea garden. Why are we not recruited in the army?" (p - 51) On hearing this, Colonel Marshal asked them to bring a letter from the owner. Slowly this feeling of being oppressed under the rule of the White Colonial masters was getting seeped in the minds of the new generation Nepali youths.

After being brought to the garden, manager Hudson looks at them properly and says, "We the British can forgive the wrongdoers for a single offence but we will never do it for the second time. If you ever try to leave the garden, you will also be evicted like Mrigay. Do you know what can be the result of Hatta Bahar or eviction? This will be told to you by head chowkidar." (p 51)

At the behest of Manager Hudson, the head chowkidar explains to the boys, "Once you are evicted from the tea garden your name shall remain in the police station. Once a record of the name is there with the police, a person cannot get job anywhere. He will not be recruited in the army also." (p- 51)

The chowkidar even cites the example of how Mrigay was denied employment anywhere. At last, having no option he had to go Sikkim where the Police had a strict vigil over him. When this martial race that had made a mark for themselves by their valor was not being recruited into the army, it had a strong repercussion amongst the Nepalis. Slowly there was a conscious awakening of these helpless folks of the atrocities of the whites. Those who were recruiting the soldiers were also the whites.

Those who exploited them in the tea gardens were also the whites. Slowly a realization was coming over the Nepalis that they were being oppressed by the white colonial masters. Therefore, a need for an anti-colonial resistance was felt strongly.

Talks about hardships in their lives keep surfacing in the conversation of the tea garden workers. Kirtiman tells his neighbours that Mrigay was the only person who had the courage to fight against the Imperial Masters. He was a single person who raised his voice against the suppression of the British. If only there were more Mrigays in Darjeeling, may be the tea garden workers would be free from the clutches of the British. On hearing this one of the neighbor's remarked that many more Mrigays' needs to be born again.

Though the policeman had the power of the uniform, arms and ammunition with them, government by their side, yet people like Mrigay singularly had the capacity to raise voice against injustice. The seeds of angst and hatred against the British for the injustice done to the Nepalis were deeply embedded in Mrigay's mind. This led him to attack a policeman whom he thought to be mimicking the White Colonial Master. The novel seems to pin its hopes on more rebels being born in Darjeeling and more heroes to come forward.

Though Mrigay loves the tea estate of Badamtam and the people yet, he wouldn't like to reside in a place from which he was evicted. Therefore when talks of Badamtam surface Mrigay says, "I don't want to bow my head low and be at the mercy of the whites. Let me remain here. It was on the same banks of river Rangeet that I had defeated Sergeant Henderson on a shooting competition at one time. Let me reside in Daruwa Jungle with my head held high thinking of those days. I need to stay and do something very big in this place." (p 75) The last line of Mrigay that he was required

to stay in Daruwa jungle and do something very big keep revolving in Havildar's mind. It hints at the fact that Mrigay was the only daring person who had the courage to threaten as well as frighten even those who had power.

The havildar further says that he too worked for the same White people like Mrigay. He was also compelled to bear silently the injustice of the White Colonial Masters. He says, "Listen Mrigay, I am also working for the same White people. Like you, I am also compelled to bear silently the injustice of the White Colonial Masters." [p- 80] Mrigay asks him, "How are you tolerating it? Why are we compelled to endure it? How can we get rid of it?" (p 80)

In his reply the Havildar says, "All the officers are whites. We have to make our future generation big officers like them. But where are the colleges and facilities to get good education? Even if three or four of them manage to become officers, the command comes from the British officials where the natives have no say in it." (p 80)

However, after sometime showing slight optimism the Havildar interrupts Mrigay and says, "Listen Mrigay, it will not remain like this forever. Injustice shall come to an end one day. This land for which we have given our blood and sweat shall remain ours. It cannot be of the whites." (p- 80)

Mrigay interrupts him and asks – "But when?" or "Tara Kahilay?" The havildar continues by saying "It will be when our country shall be free from Colonial domination. To free our country our Shahids (martyrs) are giving their lives. Mrigay imagines that big day and says '*Tara Kahilay?*' or '*But When?*' At this the mountains and valleys resonate with the question of '*Tara Kahilay?*' or '*But When?*' and the novel comes to an end.

Max Weber defined power as,

“the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action” (Weber 1919a, p. 180).

It is the changing gradations of capability one has to exercise one's will over others. When these “chances” become organized as forms of domination, the give and take between power and resistance is fixed into more or less permanent hierarchical arrangements. This results in institutionalization. Thus, power affects more than personal relationships; it shapes larger dynamics like social groups, professional organizations, and governments. Accordingly, we find that the novel comes to an end with hope and optimism for a better tomorrow through the revolutionary zeal of the character Mrigay. Issues of identity, such as the effects on identity of racial and gender discrimination, of dislocation and relocation, of exile and homecoming, are prominent themes in postcolonial fiction. One of V.S Naipul's critically acclaimed works is *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), a novel depicting East Indians' struggle to find a foothold in the New World. On several levels, the novel is a fictive version of Naipaul's family history. The protagonist, Mohun Biswas, tries to overcome the limitations imposed on him by putting up a relentless struggle against the forces that aim to suppress his individuality. The manifest theme is the identity crisis, but on another level the cultural clashes within and the gradual disintegration of the East Indian community forms the major preoccupation. Therefore, unless more youths who are bold and daring like Mrigay come forward, get united, fight against the injustice and exploitation of the helpless people, can there be a subversion of the hegemonic center. Power should also be thought of as a capacity or ability that each of us has to create and act. According to Negri, power and politics must also be understood as the collective capacities we have to create and build new forms of community or

“commons” (Negri, 2004). Power, therefore, is the power we think of when we state of an ability to do or create something — a potential. It is the way in which we collectively give form to the communities that we live in, whether we understand this at a very local level or a global level and the novelist has aptly described all these power relations in this novel.

3. *Juneli Rekha (Lines of the Moonlight, 1979)*

Juneli Rekha (Lines of the Moonlight, 1979) is a novel by Indra Sundas. This novel does not show anti-colonial resistance in the actual sense of the term. Yet, it portrays the eviction of the helpless workers on the pretext of the slightest mistake. This prerogative given to the White Colonial masters to give the order of ‘*hatta bahar*’ (eviction) becomes one of the reasons for Subversion later. In this novel there is a widow called Malini who was given the job of a gardener in the Bada Sahib’s bungalow after the death of her husband Dhanay. There was a worker in the tea garden called Jassay who used to stay near her house. He had lost his wife recently. Therefore, to console himself he used to go to Malini’s house in the evening. Malini often shed tears talking about her late husband. Jassay listened to her talks and pacified her. Sometimes he used to go drunk after having millet beer. On such days she used to send him back. Seeing his behaviour Malini bars him from coming to her place any more. In spite of it, repeating his actions Jassay visits Malini again in a drunken state. He pulls her by the arm and asks her to go his house as he wanted to marry her. The neighbours get angry and ask him to go back. He returns and sleeps for some time. However, he is awakened at night. Jassay regrets for having got drunk and gone to propose marriage to Malini. First, he should have told the neighbours to

know about her decisions. But how could he have broached the topic as his own wife had passed away recently and so had her husband. Jassay's wife had given birth to a daughter but had died due to lack of proper care during maternity and neo-natal facilities. There was no hospital in the garden. Not even experienced nurses to look after both mother and infant after birth. Only midwife was employed in the small dispensary due to which both mother and infant died.

Malini was disturbed by the commotion that was created. What the neighbours must have thought about her character kept revolving in her mind. If she had sent him in silent manner to his own house the rest would not have got to know. After all society is likely to raise a finger on a widow who had recently lost her husband. Malini was overcome by a sense of guilt in spite of no fault of hers.

According to Ashcroft, "The subversion of patriarchal literary forms themselves has also been an important part of the feminist project. As in the post-colonial texts this subversion may not be a conscious aim of the authors. It may be generated, inescapably, by the ideological conflict that inevitably takes place in the text." (*The Empire Writes Back*, 174) Thus, this patriarchal mindset of the Sahibs in the novel cannot be denied as well. Accordingly, we find many such instances in this novel which also is a result of patriarchal mindset along with the concept of superior race. In a patriarchal society, man can get away with the slightest pretext of being in a state of intoxication. But the blot comes on the woman's character. Malini goes to work every day. She feels that there is a questioning look in everyone's eyes. She is filled with a sense of fear of losing her job only because of a single person.

Jassay asks pardon for what had happened that day. Jassay says, "Please forgive me bahini (sister). I don't feel like staying alone in a house which has silent walls. That's

why I come here often. That day I made a mistake coming to your place when I was drunk. However, don't get angry with me for this. Today I'm not drunk. Okay, carry on with your work. I'm going away." (p 9)

Yet one of the neighbours tells Malini why Jassay still comes even after the incident (hinting at her character that she may be encouraging him.). One day Bada bera's (cook) wife takes the initiative and says – "Bahini he is giving you trouble. I think Jassay's behaviour should be reported to sahib. By the way in case, you have any interest on him, then do tell us. Otherwise, you report tomorrow or else he may spoil your reputation." (p 11)The head bera (cook) tells many things about Jassay to sahib after which Malini is summoned by him. She is filled with fear in front of the sahib. Sahib says – "Do not fear but narrate the incident to me. Only then can I take action." [p- 12]Sahib listens to Malini's talks and then says, "Jassay is very badmash(wicked). He has insulted you." [p- 12] On hearing this Malini blushes. The sahib looks at her with uninterrupted gaze. Malini turns her face to the other side.

The sahib orders that Jassay should be summoned before him in the afternoon. During that time even the Writer Babu and Sanchaman, the supervisor should be present. In the afternoon all the 3 people who were asked to meet him reach the bungalow. When Jassay speaks with the sahib his heart also skips a beat. Sahib says, "You have insulted Malini. In my country when a sober woman from a respectable family is insulted a very big punishment is given. They can be sent to jail also. You have gone to Malini's house several times and insulted her. Therefore, you need to be given a strict punishment." (p- 14)

Jassay accepts his fault and asks forgiveness. He says, "Please forgive me malik (owner/sahib), I did a mistake in a state of intoxication. Give me one last chance

malik.... raja.” For the helpless labourers working under East India Company the Imperial government was malik for them, equivalent to the Raja of the territory. Such was the adulation and respect that these people had for whites.

Sahib pronounces the sentence of Hatta Bahar, “You are not fit to stay in this tea garden. You have insulted a woman. For this I have given you a punishment of ‘Hatta Bahar’ or ‘eviction’ from the garden. You have to leave the garden before sunset. This is my final order(p- 14)

The writer tries to plead on behalf of Jassay and says that the punishment given is too harsh on him. Instead, he begs the sahib to give some minor punishment like deducting his wages of two days. He is good worker of the garden. So, he should not be evicted. The sahib says, “Are you his lawyer? Don’t interfere when I have given my order. There should be no further comments. You Sanchaman, see to this that he is out from the garden by evening. Tomorrow morning you bring me the report. Now you all can go.” (p-15)

According to Moretona, “The subaltern classes are those individuals or groups that are subjugated by hegemony, subordinated by the dominant world-view, and excluded from having any meaningful position from which to speak. The term ‘subaltern’ was used by Gramsci to refer specifically to workers. In postcolonial studies the term has been used to refer to those individuals or groups dominated or oppressed by a more powerful ‘other’, within a colonised society.” (Moretona 2008: 8). In her seminal essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak tries to highlight the fate of the subaltern subject and how it is marred by the politics of representation. The sense of representation in the society belongs only to the privileged people and therefore effective representation by the subaltern subject can be a futile or useless

venture. This will always keep the subaltern in the terrain of margin, the silent centre, the centre of voicelessness. Therefore, people like Jassay who belong to the subaltern or marginalized class are always at mercy by their superior race. They are not allowed to speak and therefore when Jassay begs for mercy the sahib silences him by showing the reality that the sahib is his master and therefore, all the authority is in his hands. Whatever the master decides should be full and final. On his way home, the writer is not at all satisfied by this system of giving judgement. One person reports against another. The other person doesn't get a chance to speak or beg for mercy. Even in a criminal court there are hearing of both sides. The lawyers of both sides speak on behalf of their clients. Both sides try to prove their innocence. Only when there is an evidence of the crime, there is a final judgement or else the case is dismissed.

Unfortunately, here in the tea gardens only the white man is the sole decision maker according to his whims. Without listening properly or investigating into the matter deeply, he gives a harsh judgement of 'Hatta Bahar' or eviction.

A White man often talks about 'insult done to a woman'. They are the same people who do not hesitate to put arms around another person's wife, other's daughters and dance in the club throughout the night. That is not meant to be insult to women according to them. This is the White man's sense of judgement. This Sahib had kept a mistress called Bela Chokri since many years. After her death now this same white man who tries to be a saviour of Malini, asks her to take the place of Bela Chokri. The man who threw out Jassay on the accusation of 'insulting a woman' has now ordered Malini to be his mistress. The Sahib who had given Malini a job when she was a helpless widow now has to acquiesce to his demands. In the novel "Beloved", Morrison succeeds to fill in the gaps of the silences of her literary forebears by candidly recounting the incidents of rape slave women were subjected to. The

narrative of *Beloved* is unprecedented in exposing the sexual assaults directed at African girls who were forced on board slave ships. *Beloved*, thus, becomes a representative of a race of women who “lost their ribbon” due to the rape directed at them by the men “without skin” (181). In “The Fairytale of Rajabasha,” Mahasweta Devi evinces how at the very core of the mainstream marginal issue lies the typical power dynamics of a feudal master-slave relationship in which the former treats the latter sometimes as a commodity and at other times as an instrument of labour, a beast of burden.

The novel *Juneli Rekha* insists on presenting the plight of women as subjects of domination whereby they become doubly marginalized at the hands of the patriarchal society and their masters. The system keeps the working-class women at the receiving end, and makes them shoulder all burdens of domestic peace-keeping and also suffer to death within the double-bind of patriarchal homes and patriarchal workplaces.

Conclusion

The ideology of power and subversion presupposes a form of legitimating actions. According to Eagleton, a dominant power may legitimate itself by promoting beliefs and values congenial to it; naturalizing and universalizing such beliefs so as to render them self-evident; denigrating ideas which might challenge it; excluding rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and obscuring social reality in ways convenient to itself (Eagleton, 1991, p. 5). Such an operating formula is mostly characteristic of totalitarian societies. Discursive deformation of reality in favour of exercising the power of a person or of a group was a generalized phenomenon, and what we find in these four Nepali novels is no exception. Within such a background, literature, art, in general, has constituted a perfect ideological

instrument in representing the ideal socialist world and the new man. Totalitarian power can be defined through a transfer of Max Weber's concept of economical domination and its adaptation to a more general concept, that of social domination (Weber, 1930). Related to the results of exercising power Bertrand Russell, discussing the "Forms of Power", aphoristically affirmed that Power may be defined as the production of intended effects (Russell, 1986, p. 19).

If we go back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle's original notion of politics, we will find that Aristotle has talked about the idea of a freedom people grant themselves to rule themselves. Therefore, power should not be the main domination. It is the give and take we experience in everyday life as we come together to construct a better community, a "good life" as Aristotle put it. If we ask people why do they obey even when it is not for their good, we are asking about the conditions in which power is exercised as domination. Edward Said admits in "Culture and Imperialism" that as there has always been colonial literature, a literature of opposition and decolonization started to appear reflecting opposition to the empire in the center as well as nationalist resistance in the peripheral. He believes that "Here, too, culture is in advance of politics, military history, or economic process...Just as culture may predispose and actively prepare one society for the overseas domination of another, it may also prepare that society to relinquish or modify the idea of overseas domination" (As quoted in *The Empire Writes Back*, 2000). Thus, the critical task of literature and humanity in general is to ask how we might free ourselves from the constraints of domination to engage more actively and freely in the creation of community which the novelists Asit Rai, Prakash Kovid and Indra Sundas were able to do in their novels.

Choosing these three novels meant excluding more than what is included from the long history of subversion. This is more or less a classificatory construct: the attempt through the study of these novels was to more or less present how these writers used the tradition of the resistance literature to talk about pressing problems of their times. The fiction of a sidelined community is a collection, much like an archival collection. Despite its investment in perpetuity, a good work of fiction depends on changing standards of perceived needs for inspiring the next generation. A study where fiction can be culled and arranged is a political proving ground where it uses shifts according to the rhetorical and reading audience.

In his article “Postcolonial Criticism”, Homi Bhabha, assures that despite all attempts of repression,

“it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking...These peoples have had the chance for the first time to write about themselves, to speak of themselves outside the frame they have for long been put into and given an image which is no more than a fabrication imposed on the them by the powerful empire. In response to the colonial discourse, these writers show that the natives did have a culture and a language before colonization, and, like all human beings, they had their strengths and flaws.” (As quoted in *The Empire Writes Back*, 106)

This statement holds true even in relation to these Nepali writers like Asit Rai, Prakash Kovid and Indra Sundas who have perfectly blended the form to perfection to exhibit and narrate the life stories of Nepali community under the imperial rule. According to Paolini, “postcolonial writers ‘rehabilitated’ the self against European appropriation. In fracturing imposed European master narratives and perspectives,

postcolonialism replaces them with an ‘alternative vision’. This is particularly the case for ‘indigenous peoples’ (India, Africa) who are able “to challenge European perspectives with their own metaphysical systems.” (Paolini 1999: 79)The Nepali novelists Asit Rai, Prakash Kovid and Indra Sundas has also tried to paint in a similar way an “alternate vision” by exposing the postcolonial perspectives in their novels. Our sense of what is literature by the diasporic Nepali community should be a product of ideological struggles for a selective tradition at work. We have selected novels of subversion and revolution so as to mark that these works have remained relatively unshaken amid the influx of other traditions. Perhaps that stasis says something about the isolation from the discourse that engages the larger literary culture.

As long as the discourse about literary canons of Indian ethnic origin continues to be dominated on the one hand by the rhetoric of liberal representation and the social utility of art and on the other by the irreproachability of Western cultural monuments, there will continue to be space for a perspective that is neither pragmatic nor idealistic, neither conventionally political nor politically aloof. Despite its own shortcomings, and the historical and material conditions working against it, India’s ethnic diaspora provides such a perspective. If the study of these Nepali diasporic novels helps academic pursuits to move beyond the limited terms of the debate of Indian national literary canon it would be a worthwhile task. Also, the perspective and prospect of subversion that is being discussed here may be extended to larger meanings where histories and canon-making as such may be questioned.

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CHAPTER-6

Chapter 6 is the **Conclusion** which summarizes all the chapters:

Chapter One which is the Introduction opens up with a history of some major changes witnessed in the world. Foremost amongst them seen around is the decolonization of many nations thereby bringing an end of the colonial era. Literature is a mirror of life and the writers of the post-colonial period have faithfully voiced the oppression and subjugation they were subjected to in the literary works. A plethora of ideas have permeated into the discourse of post-colonial literature through the postulation of a host of leading post-colonial theories from nations that were colonized erstwhile by the British. The meaning of home within various disciplines as sociology, anthropology of being at 'home' or being 'homeless' has been brought to light by writers like Ginsberg in 'Mediations of being Homeless' who enunciates on the importance of 'home' as being fundamental life. Continuing in this line, the introductory chapter has explored further dimensions to show how the concept of 'home' and 'ideal home' sheds light on the predicament of the Indian Nepalis who are often born in a country but have often moved to other locations to live as Nepalese Diaspora. The problem becomes manifold when the second generation is born in the host country and the country does not accept them as their citizens. It is due to such conditions that millions of Gorkhas have led to face an identity crisis.

The chapter traces the history of the Indian Nepalis through the historical evidences provided by the wars fought like the Anglo- Gurkha war after which the treaty of Seagauli was signed between the Maharja Bir Bikram Shah and the Hon'ble East Indian Company in 2nd Dec 1815. Seeing the topography of the places and the

climatic conditions favorable to build a sanatorium, Darjeeling was taken on lease from the Chogyal of Sikkim and annexed to India.

It is followed by the Statement of Problem and in the case of this thesis it is regarding the ambiguity of the identity of the Indian Nepalis or Gorkhas. It is due to the several unexplored dimensions regarding their origin which remains an under researched terrain.

Next it gives a review of literature where important papers of Bidhan Golay ('Rethinking Gorkha Identity: Outside, from *Indian Nepalis, Issues and Perspectives*, 2016, Concept Publishing) was reviewed. As per the researcher's understanding of his views expressed in this paper is the ambiguity of the identity of the Gorkhas by lack of narrative regarding their history and appropriation of traces, if any regarding their origin?

Another paper which comes under the ambit of literary studies with the title 'Where is the Home for an Indian Nepali writer?' written by Michael Hutt in *Indian Nepalis, Issues and Perspectives*, 2016, Concept Publishing) was reviewed which showed the displacement and dislocation of the migrants from Nepal or India or to different parts of the globe to constitute the Nepali diaspora.

After reviewing some more works the research has shown the 'lacunae' in their works, so as to trace the Research Gap. The researcher places herself in a vantage position of being a bi-lingual scholar possessing this capability by virtue of her mother tongue being Nepali; the language in which the original novels were written, to read and bring out the subtle literary nuances of this rich body of literature to the fore. Delving deeper to discern the gap the researcher has found that the contribution of the Gorkhas in the freedom movement which has not been given its due, when

discussing the freedom movement in India. Either their contribution has been fabricated or totally ignored by the academia. This gap has been fulfilled by this research.

Next the objectives of the study has been stated in the chapter which is to explore the identity crisis viv-a –vis the longing for ‘home and identity’ as projected in some of the novels. Along with this it also intends to bring to the fore the lived experiences of the socio – economic conditions of the tea garden workers. The oppression endured by them under the British was meant to be projected to the larger masses who are unaware of the marginalization of these simplistic rural folks. It is also meant to be a study to show the contribution of the Gorkhas in the Freedom movement followed by it is the scope of the study in the research which is a reading of all the thirteen novels in Nepali under the postcolonial theoretical framework in which issues of migration, displacement, diaspora, memory, nostalgia was explored.

The methodology that was applied in this work is descriptive and analytical. The novels taken up for study were read and analyzed using the theoretical paradigm of major post colonial theorists like Homi K Bhabha, Edward Said, Franz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, Bill Ashcroft, Benita Parry, Leela Gandhi and many more.

Side by side another methodology was also applied to delineate the double colonization of women through the theoretical premise of post colonial feminists like Gyatri Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanty etc.

Lastly, the chapter gives an overview of all the five chapters which is likely to follow the first chapter which is the Introduction.

Chapter Two explores the various dimensions via which Nepali diaspora has broken its silence. An in-depth analysis of some of the novels like *Muluk Bahira*

(*Outside the country*, 1948), *Naya Kshitijko khoj*(*In the search of the Horizon*, 1979), *Brahamaputrako cheu chauma* (*Close to river Brahmaputra*, 1986) and *Sahara* (*Support*, 1970) were done. It has explained the etymology of the word ‘diaspora’ and also stated various definition of the term by different scholars. It has explained five types of Diaspora as propounded by William Safran such as Victim Diaspora, Trade Diaspora, Labour Diaspora, Imperial Diaspora, and Cultural Diaspora. It brings to the categorization of Diasporas into first, second and third generalization to the fore. It examines the notions of the term by a host of other theorists like Veena Noble Das, Anand, Jasbir Jain etc.

Coming to the novels taken up for study it starts with a record of the first wave of Nepali diaspora as has been stated in *Nepali Diaspora in a Globalized Era* by (Subba and Sinha, :Routledge, 2006)..Next it tries to state the cause and the condition for migration which was mainly due to the prevailing economic, political, social conditions of the Nepalis in Nepal and India. The novels *Naya Kshitij Ko Khoj* (*In Search of the New Horizon*, 1979) and *Brahmaputra ko Cheau Chau* (*Close to rive Brahmaputra*, 1986) are viewed through the diasporic lens and diaspora sensibilities such as issues to displacement, dislocation, hybridity, interstitial spaces. Mimicry, ‘in-betweenness’ (‘third space’) has been brought to the fore in all the novels.

William Safran in ‘Diaspora in Modern Societies’ *Myths of Homeland and Return*’ has shown six categories of Diaspora, the Nepalese populate can be grouped under some of them. Since the first category demands dispersal from the original centre to two or more peripheries, we can find in dispersal as portrayed in *Muluk Bahira* (*Out of Country*, 1948). Some characters like Ranay, Mahila Bhujel, Sherba buro migrated to India (Darjeeling) and lived as wood sawyers to cut planks of wood and carry uphill above the river Teesta. The second category of diaspora was seen

when the dispersed people retain a collective memory or visions or myth about their homeland. This is discerned in the novel *Naya Khistijko kho* ((*In search of the New Horizon*, 1979) when Sahila Gurung and Lamichaney Gurung in entering Darjeeling asks ‘Whose land is it?’ To this another character says ‘It is the land of the *Rongs* or *Lepchas*. There were hundred families initially with a *Gumba* (or *monastery*) on top’. This refers to the history of Darjeeling being a part of Sikkim where the Nepalis of Sikkim along with Lepchas were Buddhist. Another category of diaspora are those which regards their ancestral homeland as their true home this is seen in the short story *Kancha Mizarko Nepal Yatra* (*Kancha Mizar’s Journey to Nepal*, 1973). Another category of diaspora is interested in seeing to the safety of their homeland. This is evident in the historical novel *Balivedi* (*Sacrifice*, 1970) where the Gorkhas are seen to be fighting all over the world, especially in WWII.

Different theorists have classified diaspora into different groups ‘Robin Cohen’s categorizations of Diaspora into 5 groups such as – 1) Labour diaspora 2) Trade Diaspora 3) Victim Diaspora 4) Imperial diaspora and 5) Cultural diaspora.

- 1) Labour diaspora – is evident in most of the novels taken up for study as people, were encouraged to migrate to work as labourers in the construction of roads, railways in Darjeeling. Besides they worked in the tea gardens of Darjeeling and Doars.
- 2) Trade diaspora is very much visible in the novel *Sahara* (*Support*, 1995) as a Chinese family had come to Darjeeling and had to open a shop to sell watches.
- 3) Victim diaspora is discussed in some novels – like *Balivedi* (*Sacrifice*, 1970) where there was a large exodus of Gorkhas from Burma after Japan bombarded Rangoon. Most of them were families of those in the army. Besides there were some who worked in Burma oil Refinery.

- 4) Imperial Diaspora is seen in some of the novels where the staff of the East India Company most of whom were Whites were employed in the Tea Gardens.
- 5) Cultural Diaspora is discerned in novels like *Brahmaputra ko cheu chau* (*Close to river Brahmaputra*. 1986) where they were a minority amongst Assamese society. They made a school where Nepali was taught as a subject. A library was made as well.
- 6) Different diaspora theories are posited by different theorist. The evolution of diaspora supports the claims made by Edward said that it travels and gets new semantic magnitude. "Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travels from person to person, from situation to situation, from period to another" (p226). There are some theorists who opine for an observance of the term beyond what it was to mean during the classical phase. For such theorists: its changed meanings offer a new and exciting ways of politics" (Cohen 1997, p6). Others feel the necessity for a re-conceptualizing 'diaspora as per the new context of its dispersals. For eg Reis prefers a shift from the classical idea of diaspora to a 'broader conceptualizations where it permits the 'inclusion of immigrants communitiesdiaspora' (p-42)

Reis further considers that it would be apt to include cases "in the...pursuit of work" as they too provide "sufficient----process" (p49). Amidst the categorization of different types of Diasporas, it brings to mind the movement of expatriate writers. Veena Noble as classifies expatriate writes into two groups. The first group consists of those who are born in India and settled out of country. The second group consists of those who are born out of India but settled out of India. The commonality discerned between the 2 groups is that both write on themes relating to Indian culture and loss of identity. Delving deeper into the problems of the diaspora's subject, sometimes they

suffer from the guild of being disloyal both to its original homeland (for having moved out in search of a better opportunity) and also the new land of stay, whose benevolence and comforts he accepts. Yet he fails to return the love he has for his original homeland. It is mainly due to this fact the immigrants mostly remain confined to their own areas. On seeing the people of the same community it give them a feeling of being in their own land. In the new land the diasporic subjects often face a problem if they are not acknowledged by either of the countries as its citizen. However, not all diasporic subjects face this situation. For this too class plays a major role in shaping the experiences of the individuals. Those placed in the lower rung of the society with very little recognition due to illiteracy, poverty, being downtrodden face a lot of crisis. However, those who are considered as elite masses falling within the high income group do not have such experiences.

Edward said too considering himself as a diasporic subject and further a humanist in exile...he was always 'out of place' (Said, Out of place 54).

Another such example of a diasporic subject who is often viewed from different perspective is that of Gayatri Spivak. She is "sometimes on anomaly, American academic life" (Seldon et al. 233) citing various types of diasporas finally Asian diaspora he been explored in the chapter, out if which the Nepalese diaspora is complicated and heterogeneous. The history of Darjeeling being a part of Sikkim makes the Indian Nepalis or Gorkhas an integral part of Indian Diaspora.

Few Nepali novels like '*Brahamaputrako Cheu Chau*' (*Close to river Brahmaputra*, 1986) has been explored through the diasporic lens which discusses viewsas accommodationist in the host country where they are minority amongst the Assamese citizens. Most of them are migrants and try to retain the

memory of the homeland. When the second generation in the host country they have no memory of an imagined community as posited by Benedict Anderson.

Similarly in *Muluk Bahira* (*Outside the Country*, 1948) the characters are dislocated from their land of stay in Darjeeling to go Assam and do diary business. When the second generation is born in the host country they occupy the interstitial space on third space, which according to Bhaba other diasporic sensibilities such as displacement, mimicry, surveillance, uprooting has been explored in another novel *Naya Kshetjko khoj* (*In search of the New Horizon*, 1979) also.

Chapter three tries to recapitulate and tries to understand the idea of feminism, gender and patriarchy as applied to some Nepali novels. A host of feminist texts such as *Basai* (*Inhabitation*, 1950), *Juneli Rekha* (*Lines of the Moonlight*, 1979), *Maitaghar* (*Parent's Home*, 1950), *Bholiko Pratiksha* (*In Anticipation of Tomorrow*, 1990), *Madhayantar* (*Interval*, 2007) and *Nirgaman* (*Abandonment*, 2006) has been read in depth. It has been viewed through the prism of the feminist theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Betty Friedan, Virginia Woolf, Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Kate Millet, Helen Cixous etc. issues such as gender inequality, subordination of women, double colonization of women which is the leit motif in all the novels shall be explicated through the paradigms of the feminist theorists.

Chapter Four evinces the bravery of the Gorkhas as seen in the chapter *The Novel as History: A Reading of Balivedi* (*Sacrifice*, 1970) by Samiran Chettri. Written against the backdrop of WW2, it portrays the valour of the Gorkhas, including women in different parts of the globe. Initially the Gorkhas were fighting for the British in the British army. Later when they met Subhash Chandra Bose in Singapore in 1942, Bose being aware of the valour of the Gorkhas appealed to them as well as the rest of the

Indians who were kept as POW to join the INA as 'Mother India' was in distress. Only the brave sons of the soil who were ready to make sacrifices could liberate her from the yoke of the British rule. The speech of SC Bose had a deep impact on the simple minded Gorkhas and they joined the Azad Hind Fauj. They participated actively in the Non-Co-operation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, Quit India Movement, in Guerilla warfare and gave many martyrs for Indian Independence.

Chapter Five exemplifies resistance literature is *Tara Kahilay? (But when? 1993)*. It embodies the fact that the workers of the tea garden need to be conscious about their lives which is one of domination, subjugation, exploitation in various forms. The novelist has explained the various dimensions which evince their oppression but the innocent folks fail to realize it. The plot revolved around the lives of two people. One group consisted of the migrants from Nepal like Kirtiman and Mrigay who were employed under the Imperial masters. Kirtiman along with his sister Seema worked in Badamtam Tea estate. Mrigay was a hunter employed by the white masters as he was familiar with the topography of the local population when they went on a hunting expedition.

The other group comprised of the tribal lepchas who are the original inhabitant of Darjeeling from the time it was a part of Sikkim. After the British took it on lease and annexed it to India the Lepchas refused to accept the offers given up the British. This led to the expansion of the areas of the tea garden and reduction of the land of the Lepchas. The resultant aftermath of such circumstances was that those who were migrants lived in the tea garden while the indigenous population who were the rightful owners shifted to the bottom of the tea garden. This is exactly in line with what Bill Ashcroft had posited in *The Empire writes Back*,

“A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement.” (p8)

The chapter further throws light in the way the migrants who are working under the East India Company are oppressed but are not conscious of the fact. The Lepchas on the other hand raise their brows and often ridicule them.

A Lepcha lady called Luksom tried to drive home the fact that the migrant have become slave and lost their identity. They were addressed with numbers allotted to them by the Imperial masters like as if they criminals. Therefore, she replies to Kirtiman with arrogance saying ‘We will neither sell our names nor exchange it a number’ (p-12)

This statement does not hurt the self-esteem of Kirtiman. Yet in order to compensate for the insult inflicted upon him and the likes he retreites that the pangs of hunger are taken care of unlike the uncertainty of their meals. Luksom defends the attitude of the Lepchas by saying ‘We eat what we grow...we don’t get whipped like you’ (p12)

This brings to mind what Bill Ashcroft has said in *The Empire writes back*,

“A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or ‘voluntary’ removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model.” (p8, 9)

Kirtiman further says that house was made for them to which Luksom makes mocks at it and calls it a cage instead of house. As for the Lepchas they may be living in a house made of bamboo with thatched roof of straw. Yet they could say with confidence that it was their own home.

As years roll by and the lived experiences of Kirtiman and other migrants often make them wonder whether they did the correct thing by coming to India in search of greener pastures. Or was life in Nepal much better as it was their own country. There were many reasons which made them harbour such feelings of them being hours to slog throughout the day. Another being lack of medical facilities in the tea gardens of then makes worker die of a snake bite also. There were no provisions for drinking water and women after completing their domestic chores till later at night had to wake up sharp at 5am the next morning due to their need to walk long distances to bring water before they reported to work at the exact time.

Their minds are constantly seeped with the fear of being thrown out of work which made them muted. Then Lucksom raises an important point which the migrants barely gave a thought to. The fact that the company reaped profit out of the hard labour of the tea garden workers but never thought of their safety and wellbeing. On hearing her talks Kirtiman often thinks what the Lepchas have done could be correct. After being tired of exploitation of various forms he thinks if only they had done the same amount of hard work in Nepal then would have got the values of gold from the products of their own land. He feels that the migrants gave been treated unjustly and to endure such injustice is also a sin. Among the various types of exploitation the biggest of all is the exploitation of women which is clearly vindicated in the novel. That is why Spivak had said,

‘there is no space from where the subaltern (sexed) subject can speak.’ (Spivak 1985c:122)

The colonial mindset possessed by the Imperial masters made them assert their superiority even there, marginalized section of people who were at the mercy of the whites. One such instance of this can be discerned from the fact that Kirtiman’s sister

Seema was asked to be a “Chokri” (mistress) of the Chotta sahib. The innocent woman folk of the tea garden were to satisfy their casual pleasure as most of them had left their families back in England. She was expected to go to the Manager’s bungalow whenever she was called. Seema refused to go, yet Chotta Sahib had sent acquiesce to his demand. He even sends for threatening messages saying that the wages of both Kirtiman and Seema would not be accounted from the next day. According to Ashcroft,

“Women in many societies have been relegated to the position of ‘Other’, marginalized and, in a metaphorical sense, ‘colonized’.

Yet, Seema was adamant. Finally Chota Sahib himself turns up on their courtyard.

The colonial mindset possessed by the Imperial masters made them assert their superiority even there, marginalized section of people who were at the mercy of the whites. One such instance of this can be discerned from the fact that Kirtiman’s sister Seema was asked to be a ‘*chokri*’ (*mistress*) of the chotta sahib. The innocent woman folk of the tea garden were to satisfy their casual pleasure as most of them had left their families back in England. She was expected to go to the Manager’s bungalow whenever she was called. Seema refused to go, yet Chotta Sahib had sent messages to acquiesce to his demand. He even sends for threatening messages saying that the wages of both Kirtiman and Seema would not be accounted from the next. Yet, Seema was adamant. Finally Chota Sahib himself turns up unexpectedly to their courtyard and asks the reasons the reasons for defying his order. There was a whip in his hand with which the Chota Sahib starts whipping Kirtiman till he falls unconscious. Seeing his condition Seema joins hands and asks for forgiveness. She would agree to whatever had been told. In the meantime Mrigay had gone to renew the license of his gun. On his return he gets the news of the ultimatum given by *Chota Sahib* or

Manager. Seema should agree to be a chokri of the Manager or else Kirtiman shall be done ‘*hatta bahar*’ (eviction) on the grounds that he was the person who had instigated the Lepchas not come within the folds of the East India company and give up their lands. So putting a *khukuri* on his waist, carrying bullets and gun he goes to Kirtiman’s house. This time too, the Chota Sahib had come to say that Seema has to go to the bungalow. Seema pleads her brother Kirtiman to let her obey his orders as both of them would lose their job and be thrown out from the gardens with no place to go. While this was going on Mrigay stands between him and Seema. Saheb asks him what his actions was supposed to mean. Was it to threaten him or stopping him from implementing his actions? He tries to whip Seema. Before it fell on her body Mrigay pulled the whip and starts whipping Chotta Sahib till he falls unconscious.

This brings to mind what Davis Huddart in *Homi. K Bhabha* has said, “The returned look of the colonized native makes the white man native” (p39). Such instances show the beginning of subversion of those in power until they are completely thrown out. The novel ends with the author pinning hopes on many more Mirgays being born in the future generation to bring an end to hegemony.

Yantrana (Agony, 1979)

The novel *Yantrana (Agony 1979)* by Asit Rai shows a revolution that prevailed in the tea gardens of Darjeeling which winces the reasons which the birth of trade union. The emergence of the trade union saw the end of the monopoly of the capitalist. According to Lesley Brown, the term ‘subversion’ in the literal sense means According to Lesley Brown, the term “subversion” literally means,

“to overturn, overthrow, undermine, weaken or uproot, especially by covert action, structures of authority and order pertaining to a country, a government or a

political regime.” (The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, ed. Lesley Brown, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, 3127)

Various interpretations have been given for the term ‘subversion’ by many scholars. Yet the commonality shared between them in the idea of ‘subjugation’, ‘domination’ ‘subaltern’ and that of ‘power which finds place in exploring works of literature in subversion’. The novel *Yantrana (Agony, 1979)* revolves around the oppression and subjugation of the people working in the tea gardens. The protagonist of the novel is Chandra Bahadur, who an educated youth working in the tea garden. His mother too was an employee of the garden and all faced the same miserable plight of living in the gardens. However, these innocent folks failed to realize that they were under the hegemonic control of the Imperial masters who wielded power. There were other workers like Gurung Babu, a sycophant who wanted to remain in the good light of those same people who were subjugating them. With the coming of the Trade unions they were conscious of their rights. Deprived of basic amenities like hospital and medical staff, schools, bonuses, quarter or housing rents etc it calls for a mass movement to voice their opinions. Finally it leads to a revolution and a toppling of the hegemonic centre.

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