

I. Representation of Female Characters in Abhi Subedi's *Bruised Evenings*

The present thesis tries to problematize the representation of women characters. No doubt, the playwright brings to the fore the heritage of Newari culture and highlights it. The basic thrust of the playwright is in his representation of women. He asserts agency to the women who attempt to lead their life on their own. However, the playwright becomes ambivalent in endowing cultural force to women to disrupt the edifice of patriarchy. In *Bruised Evenings* the serpents that sprout from Mayaju's nostrils and kill the groom she weds, represents her repressed desire to overthrow the patriarchal regime set by the males. But she is ultimately dominated by the patriarchy. Initially, the playwright, Abhi Subedi, seems to be representing Mayaju as a bold, uncompromising and brave woman, giving her agency. She resists patriarchy that dominates her in different forms day after day. She wipes out all the marks of patriarchy by killing its agent: groom. But at last patriarchy comes violently and trickily in the form of a groom with 'sword'. Tricky and violent use of power by the groom compels Mayaju to accept patriarchal regime.

The play is written in the backdrop of the culture existing in ancient Bhaktapur city of Kathmandu valley. The playwright assumes the city's ancient heritage of myths, folklores, architecture, festivals and performance arts as the main crux to represent the tradition of Bisketjatra. He takes the help of a myth of Bisketjatra where the princess of Bhaktapur gets married with a youth everyday. But the youth dies every other morning bitten by two serpents those come out from Mayaju's nostrils. Mayaju does not want to marry any new youths. She does not want to kill any more youths. Her father, the King insists that she should marry. Finally, a youth comes as a traveler in city of Bhaktapur and marries with her. He kills two serpents with his sword and saves life. And the Bhaktapur folks hang those two serpents from top of

two poles and celebrate the Jatra known as Bisketjatra. Since then on folks of Bhaktapur hang two tapestries as symbol of snakes from top of the two poles and celebrate Bisketjatra every year.

In spite of Subedi's will to represent Mayaju's character with feminist make of mind, he fails to do so. Here his dilemma in representing Mayaju comes out vividly. Though he wants to present Mayaju rejecting patriarchal domination, he could not do so. He comes to support Manu's notorious dictum that there can be no independence for women at any stage of her life, that before marriage she must remain under the tutelage of her parents, after marriage under that of her husband, and in the event of her widowhood, under that of her children (Desai, 197). Mayaju does not have any children that is why Subedi is constructing a female continuously searching for a man whom she can depend on.

Similarly, the playwright initially, tries to represent Bhadrakali as a stubborn and haughty character. She is unwilling to grant any power to human beings. She shows strong disagreement with Bhairab's proposal to grant freedom to human beings. But she ultimately becomes a victim of a trick played by the male folks of Bhaktapur town. She agrees to give freedom to human beings. In return of this she agrees to live inside the four walls of a temple in Lysingkhel and during festivals and other occasions she should be carried around the town sitting in a chariot. Folks of Bhaktapur promised to the Goddess not to let her be bored sitting alone in the reliquary. Moved by this persuasion she leaves her haughty behavior. Here, the playwright represents her as a character with poor will power, and seems to be saying that women themselves chose to live inside the four walls of the house. Here also Subedi's dilemma in representation comes out.

Subedi is also not sure whether man has created the God or the God has created the man. He says gods are dismayed to see the human power that is spilling everywhere and is able to create the divine image as well. Human beings capacity to create has raised questions about God's sole right to creat. The Elder puts it as:

ELDER. . . . They have understood the human power
 These stone figures of this ancient
 city carved out by these human beings.
 These small images of the world and the universe
 have raised questions about their sole right to create.
 Divine consciousness does not work for them.
 They feel dismayed to see thye human power
 spilling all over, in the courtyards, lkanes and paddy fields
 like the morning sunthat breaks out of the fog
 in this Bhaktapur town under Kathmandu sky. (3-4)

The play also tries to represent the culture of Bhaktapur city. The play is set in a Bhaktapur temple, Lyashangkhel—a cremation ground, and palace of Bhaktapur King. Pagoda temples of Bhaktapur town and lanes, temple bells, masks and other cultural items are introduced during the play. It also shows the ancient musical instruments like Dhime drums, flutes, and others. It also introduces cultural form of dance—Laakhe dance and dance of creation. The personae of the play are mythical god Bhairab, Goddess Bhadrakali, ancient Bhaktapur King, his daughter Mayaju, The Elder, Traveller, and folks of then Bhaktapur city.

The Bhaktapur folks are worried. The main cause of their worry is the death of Mayaju's one night groom. Mayaju is fed up with this monotonous life of being married everyday. She decides not to marry again but her father, The King, insists that

she should marry so that he can perpetuate his dynasty. She agrees to marry again, for the last time in The Elder's request. She weds with a Traveller who comes in the city of Bhaktapur carrying a sack-- bearing a book and a sword. The book mentions, "two snakes will rise to bite you, and you'll kill them with this sword. A great change will come in your life after that" (23). Fortunately or unfortunately, the traveler really becomes Mayaju's last honeymoon, survives the other morning. Here, at this point the uninterrupted death of youths stops but Mayaju goes under a permanent subjugation of male regime. The Traveller kills the two snakes, Naag and Naagin that sprout from Mayaju's nostrils with his sword during night time.

Notably, Mayaju and Bhadrakali are the two vibrant women characters of the play. Both of them seem to reject patriarchal rule and regime, initially, but ultimately, they have to surrender in front of it, tricked by its power.

Human beings are born equal and that is why, naturally, there remains no obligation to accept other's domination. Gandhi regarding the relation between men and women writes: "Man and woman are equal in status but not identical. They are a peerless pair being complimentary to one another; each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived; and therefore it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that will impair the equal ruin of both" (Desai, 5).

Bhadrakali accepts Elder's proposal and becomes ready to be enclosed inside the four walls of the temple from where she can no more move voluntarily. Males have made rules for her when she will come out in public place. And that coming out is also not on her own but inside a chariot pulled by males. Here, the playwright shows the dependency of Bhadrakali on males. Mayaju's condition is not better than that of Bhadrakali. She is also presented living inside the four walls of royal palace and her bower, except in third and fourth scene in front of the palace that is in the yard. Her

activities can only be realized in the shadow-play. She is living under the tutelage of her father. She is in search of a competent husband who can give her security, love and whom she can depend on. So here also the playwright is unable to give freedom to female character.

Abhi Subedi represents Mayaju coming out of the palace only after her last marriage. She is free only when she is accompanied by her husband. Here the question rises whether a woman is free without a male companion or not. Subedi makes the Elder a character in search of freedom of human beings from tyrannical rule of gods and goddesses but the women are not given freedom without the support of males. Here, his dilemma about the definition of freedom comes out.

The Elder is in search of human dignity and human victory over god's tyrannical rule. Bala in *Kantipur Daily* dated December 27, 2008 writes:

Jatra is the movement and God is the king or emperor or any ruler holding power in his hands. . . . but the drama is upon the myth of Bhaktapur; among the sharp music of Dhime and other musical instruments, scenes keep on changing. Princess marries everyday but becomes widow every other moning. This play of marries and death makes the city youthless. (4)¹

The play is about the struggle of human beings to get freedom from the duties and responsibilities laden upon them by divine beings. In response to this duty and responsibility they get nothing. Phulman Bala in "Rangamanchama Sanskriti" writes:

In *Bruised Evenings* men fight against the culture constructed by those having power, and win. Power centers wreck. Human beings rise finger to the God and warn them to live in their place. It seems like the

¹ My Translation

fresh victorious story of our politics. Subedi has explained today's men through hundreds of years old myth of Bhaktapur. After watching the play it is realized that human being are not the slaves of God, human beings constructed God. (6)²

The struggle of men to get freedom is described in the play. Today's men's consciousness is the result of a long process of struggle and confrontation with the power holders. Here men fight against the tyranny of gods. He further writes:

These myths used in the theatre are the stories of struggle against the power, which men have come fighting since long ago. Abhi Subedi relates myth and culture with temporality. Compares with life. In his plays there are two time spans: one of myth and other of men. In Bruised Evenings men's time is strong. Men win. (6)³

Laakhe dance performed during the play along with the music of Dhime drums and other ancient musical instruments can be seen as an attempt to make use of traditional art form in modern medium. *City Post* quotes Shiva Rizal as:

. . . we are incorporating traditional dance and music forms into a modern medium. We talk about festivals and dances but the artist who perform mostly go incognito. Moreover, our culture is being defined through the lectures of ministers and academicians. There is hardly anyone who talks about the artists who perform Laakhe Naach or play instruments in Bisket Jatra. We have gotten used to the talk of the "performers from Bhaktapur" or the "dancers from Kirtipur" which shows how little credit they get for what they do. (II)

² My Translation

³ My Translation

Phulman Bala quotes Shiva Rizal in “Bisket Jatra Aba Natakma” saying, “the play does new explanation over the myth and culture of valley” (4)⁴.

Regarding the pitiable condition of women the play presents Mayaju who is being victimized by her father’s male ego. Her father plays with her sentiments and insists her to marry again and again. Phuman Bala in “Rangamanchama Sanskriti” writes:

Bruised Evenings seems to be the other story of courtier’s boast. King has only wish of continuation of his dynasty. As a result, princess’ marriage takes place every day. But the groom found dead every other day. Princess is fed up of changing grooms—indifferent to marriage. But marriage goes on, as if she is the machine for perpetuation of dynasty. She has to marry for others and celebrate honeymoon unwillingly. (6)⁵

Bisket Jatra is a part of Newari culture. But why this Jatra is being celebrated since time immemorial is an unanswered question for most of Newar people. This play gives a mythical basis to Bisket Jatra. Bala Rai says, “play, based on Newari culture, tries to show the importance of Bisket Jatra in which a shadow play named *Jhyalechha* is performed which is staged in Chyasal of Patan on the day of Indra Jatra where the honeymoon night of King and Queen is shown” (16)⁶.

The playwright, Abhi Subedi, was born in a Brahmin family of Tehrathum district in 1945. His multidimensional personality helps to construct characters with different moulds. His knowledge about the Newari culture plays a remarkable role in this play. Along with this, his knowledge about different cultures, different languages

⁴ My Translation

⁵ My Translation

⁶ My Translation

and different literary theories and philosophic schools are notable in production of this play. His scholarship can be seen vividly in the dialogues of the characters who sound very philosophic. No doubt his wide knowledge about theatre certainly gives twist to the story of the play.

By presenting different characters without a definite make of mind, Abhi Subedi shows his dilemma in representation. He shows his dilemma in representing Mayaju, Bhadrakali, definition of freedom differently for man and woman. Thus without a research work on dilemma in representation in *Bruised Evenings*, the study of this play remains incomplete. So this researcher takes this subject as his subject of research. To complete this work, this researcher takes the help of feminism as well as representation as theoretical tool.

II. Feminism and Feminist Literary Theories

Feminism is a social theory and a political movement primarily incepted by the experience of women and fuelled by it in the course of its development. It can be taken as a doctrine which advocates equal rights and dignity for women with regard to men. Feminism acquired a more or less concrete set of beliefs in the nineteenth century inaugurating the thesis that women are inherently equal to men in every way conceivable. As a concerted social and political movement that went global, feminism got momentum in the later part of the twentieth century. The aim of this movement, however, can be designed as spiritual as it seeks to establish a human society based on the mutual understanding and respect between two sexes.

Feminism seeks to change society's prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak, passive and dependent who are less rational and more emotional than men. Feminism raises the important issue of gender equality. Feminism questioned the patriarchal claim that women are naturally inferior to men. Feminism premised that patriarchy has oppressed women economically, politically, socially and psychologically; woman is othered in patriarchal regime; sex is nature but gender is culture; patriarchy has created a mindset because of which women's domination seems natural to women and they accept it as their destiny.

Concern for women's rights started from the enlightenment period, when the liberal egalitarian and reformist ideals began to be intended from the bourgeoisie, peasants and urban laborers to woman as well. The period's nascent ideas concerning women's rights were fully set forth in Marry Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* published in England in 1792, which, for the first time in the recorded human history, challenged the ideas that women exist only to please men and proposed that women receive the same position and opportunities as men in

education, work and politics. In the nineteenth century, however, the awareness of women's need for equality with men crystallized in the movement to obtain women suffrage rather than in any fundamental or far reaching reevaluation of women's social status, roles and their place in the economy. In the later nineteenth century a few women began to work in the professions and women as a whole achieved the right to vote in the first half of the twentieth century. But there were still distinct limits on women's participation in the workplaces, as well as a set of prevailing notions that tended to confine women to their traditional roles as wives, mothers and homemakers.

The role of women in the society changed as the change in social order after World War II. The growing sectors of working places opened way for women to work outside their house. Women have changed their mindset by rejecting their identity given by men, which they had internalized there before, because of which they were conditioned to derogate their own sex and were cooperating in their own subordination.

In literature, feminism seeks sexual differences and privilege in the production and reception, in form and content, and the critical analysis and evaluation of works of literature. Thus, feminism is as successful as literary theory as it is political movement. It analyzed canonical writings in the light of its premises and brought forth non canonical women writers. In short, the following characteristics can be seen in feminism as a literary theory: voices against canons sexual exclusiveness, rejection and marginalization of all women, disregard to culture as patriarchal culture, examination of the experiences of women from all areas and classes, and study sexual, social and political issues once thought to be outside the study of literature (Tyson, 90-91).

Thus, feminism represents one of the most important social, economic and aesthetic revolutions of modern times. Feminism tries to become all inclusive terminology examining the experiences from all races and cultures including African-American, Asian-American, American-Indian Lesbian and the Third World subjects. The major feminist critics generally agree that their goals are to expose patriarchal premises and resulting prejudices, to promote discovery and reevaluation of literature by women and to examine social, cultural and psycho-sexual contents of literature and literary criticism.

Mary Wollstonecraft calls for women and men to be educated equally. Her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* suggested that the betterment of women's status is possible only through such political change, which radically reforms the national educational system. She attacks sentimental novels of her time for their pernicious influences on women's intellectual development. Everything women see or hear in sentimental novels serves to fix impressions that call forth emotions giving a sexual character to the mind: "the reading of novels makes women and particularly ladies of fashion very fond of using strong expressions and superlatives in conversation" (399). She says due to the traditional educational system, women are compelled to study such novels, which aren't intellectual but sentimental. Due to the impact of these novels, women cannot exercise their intellectuality but are trapped in the sentimentality which leads them to a concept that a knowledgeable man is nothing in comparison to a brave rake. These novels have baneful effect on them. So they want to marry a rake. A woman chooses a rake that easily rouses her emotion that she learns from the sentimental novels:

Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feelings and adopt

metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which leads them shamefully to neglect the duties of life, and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice. (398)

They read such novels and make an ideal picture of male and female in their mind.

They were not taught how to appreciate or how to tackle with society. So they cannot make good decision and choose a rake, luxury and brave person.

Against such practices of digesting sentimental novels, women casted cry for freedom and against stereotyped identity in 1960s. Because of this cry women's rights movement came out. Behind this movement there are so many causes. Inequality of gender, prejudices, deception, and isolation are some of the terminologies that these women right activists brought forth. Regarding this Valerie Bryson writes, "The harmony and consensus of the period were in fact deceptive, the discontents and protests were isolated and silenced rather than eliminated and that women's liberation has been in part a reaction against that silence" (149).

After Wollstonecraft, there came some other feminist writers like Virginia Woolf, whose *A Room for One's Own* is a celebrated essay in the field of feminist writings. In this book she put forth the thesis that women can be free only in the domain where there is not any presence of men. "No man's land" is a well known catch phrase of her essay. Following Woolf a groundbreaking feminist writing came in France in the form of *The Second Sex* (1949) by Simone de Beauvoir. This book, for the first time, scrutinized women's position in the society and how women are given identities by patriarchy. She put her thesis as "one is not born but rather becomes a woman." She has discussed different ways in which girls are forced into certain paths and denied expression of their identity. She discussed about the experiences of menstruations and sexuality. Bryson summarizes de Beauvoir's ideas

as, “the most important obstacle to a woman’s freedom was not her biology, or the political and legal constraints placed upon her, or even her economic situation; rather it was the whole process by which femininity is manufactured in society” (151).

Beauvoir raised feminist consciousness by appealing to the idea that liberation for women is liberation for men too. Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949) was a wide ranging critique of the cultural identification of women as negative object or “other” to men as the dominating subject who is assumed to represent humanity in general. The book also deals with the great collective myths of women in the works of many male writers:

We have seen women as flesh; the flesh of the male is produced in the mother’s body and recreated in the embrace of the woman in love. Thus woman is related to nature, she incarnated it; value of blood, open rose, siren, the curve of a hill, she represents to man the fertile soil, the sap, the maternal beauty and the soul of the world. She can hold the key to poetry; she can be mediatrix between this world and the beyond: grace or oracle, star or sorceress, she opens the door to the supernatural, the surreal. She is doomed to immanence, and through her passivity she bestows peace and harmony—but if she declines this role, she is seen forth with as a praying mantis, an ogress. (994)

While talking about myth, she has brought transcendence and immanence. According to her, every man asserts his freedom and transcendence and considers women doomed to immanence. Man’s dominance has secured an ideological climate of compliance: legislatures, priests, philosophers, writers and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position of women is willed in heaven and advantages on earth. Beauvoir says that women are in the best position to evaluate the true

existential possibilities of womanhood. She is a woman of formidable courage and identity; her life supported her thesis that the basic option of an individual must be made on the premises of an equal vocation for man and woman founded on common structure of their being, independent of their sexuality.

Kate Millett is one of the modern feminist in America. Her *Sexual Politics* (1969) is a widely read book of feminist literary criticism. Millett focused upon gender as biology and as culture simultaneously. She concludes her analysis of reading male texts as Wilfred L. Guerin and et.al. say “literature as a record of male dominance” (223). Millett critiques capitalism, male power, crude sexuality, and oppression of women in her work. Her argument is male writers distort the image of women by associating them with male or deviance. She summarizes that the internal colonization of women by men is far more traumatic than any other form of segregation such as class. For Millett the essence of politics is power, and the task of feminist critics and theorists is to expose the way in which male dominance over female contributes the most pervasive ideology and provides its power. So, feminists have politicized existing critical method for female identity and feminist criticism has emerged from the new avenue of radical ground like other political radicalists.

Millett, in giving the theory of patriarchy, argues that in all societies the relationship between two sexes is based on power and therefore these relations are political. This power turns to be male domination over women. Thus, Bryson says, “sexual domination is so universal, so ubiquitous and so complete that it appears natural and hence becomes invisible” (185). Hence patriarchal power of men over women is behind the functioning of all societies and its domain stretches far beyond formal institutions of power. According to Millett, patriarchy begins with childhood socialization within the family which further gets nurtured with education, literature

and religion to the extent that women themselves led to self-hatred, self-rejection and acceptance of inferiority. Deconstructing the notion of history as record of men's brave deeds she says that history is a record of men's inhumanity to women. Men take control of women using threat force or trick.

In recent years, postcolonial studies gave a new twist to the feminist theories. This approach looked at the condition of women as that of colonized subjects. As colonization oppressed and suppressed the people of colonized country, patriarchy has always colonized women. Postcolonial writers see the similarity in the canon of literature which excludes women as well as colonized people's writings. Those postcolonial writers look at the relation between the language and culture. They claim that language and culture were used to colonize us and we should make use of these tools in process of decolonization. As a result colonized subjects have violated the standard use of language culture. Women writers' ways of resistance differs from that of male postcolonial writers. Their difference is because of their class background, education, political system and tradition. Ketu H. Katrak puts:

Women writers' uses of oral traditions and their revisions of Western literary forms are integrally and dialectically related to the kinds of content and the themes they treat. Women writers' stances, particularly with regard to glorifying/ denigrating traditions, vary as dictated by their own class backgrounds, levels of education, political awareness and commitment, and their search for alternatives to existing level of oppression—patriarchy that preceded and continues after colonialism and that inscribes the concept of womanhood, motherhood, traditions such as dowry, bride-price, polygamy, and a worsened predicament within a capitalist economic system introduced by the colonizers.

Women writers deal with the burdens of female roles in urban environment (instituted by colonialism), the rise of prostitution in cities, women's marginalization in actual political participation....
(240)

Women's marginalization was practiced before colonization as well as after colonization equally. Because of patriarchal institutions like family, nation, women have internalized their role of motherhood, womanhood etc.

In third world context feminism was understood as a western phenomenon. Feminism necessarily seeks to end the patriarchy and establish the institution of equal rights for women. So, this notion of feminism, for the third world nationalists, is the westernization of femininity. Chandra Talpade Mohanti criticizes western feminism as it ignores the experiences and conditions of third world women. She says:

Western feminist writing on women in the third world must be considered in the context of the global hegemony of western scholarship—i.e. the production, publication and distribution and consumption of information and ideas. [...] one such significant effect of dominant 'representations' of western feminine is its conflation with imperialism in the eyes of particular third world women. (243).

Thus Mohanti talks of the political implication of the western feminist discourse in the context of third world women's condition. She makes a distinction between women in representational discourses and women as "material subjects" as, "the relationship between 'woman'—a cultural and ideological composite other constructed through diverse representational discourses (scientific, literary, juridical, linguistic, cinematic, etc.)—and 'women'—real, material subjects of their collective histories" (242)—is one of the central questions the practice of feminist scholarship

seeks to address. This connection between historical subjects and the re-representation of woman produced by hegemonic discourses is not a relation of direct identity, or a relation of correspondence or simple implication. It is an relation set by particular cultures.

Since 1960s there has been an explosion of feminist writings with Elaine Showalter who displays the urgency and excitement of a religious awakening. Elaine Showalter is one of the most influential Gynocritics who wants to make a minute survey of the development of female consciousness, attitude and their role in the society which were always overshadowed by the male chauvinistic society and male centric social ideology. She wants to alter the mode of history of women's conscious, their contribution to the whole human civilization and after all the development of female conscious expression in literature.

One of the major assumptions of the Gynocriticism is that writing by woman is always dominated by a gender consciousness. Gender is a cultural construct. There is no distinction between the experience of man and woman. The aim of the Gynocritics is to read the literature written by woman and to show what characterizes the literature of women as women. The book *Theory for Beginners* discusses that the subjects of Gynocriticism are: "the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and evolution of laws of a female literary tradition" (151). They try to establish their own canonicity of literary writing and criticism by excluding males so that the female issues such as households, pregnancy, abortion, gestation, delivery, mother-daughter relation and so forth can be highlighted. The assumption of gynocritism is the woman' text by nature is bisexual, a double leveled.

In giving her theory Gynocriticism, her book *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), she divided feminist criticism into two distinct varieties: woman as reader and woman as writer. Woman as reader considers the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions of misconceptions about women in criticism and fissures in male constructed literary history. She says, “I call this kind of analysis the feminist critique, and like other kind of critique it is a historically grounded inquiry which proves the ideological assumptions of literary phenomena” (1226). Woman as a writer considers the history, style, themes, genres and structures of writing developed by women. It includes the psycho-dynamic of female creativity and the problem of female language. She assumes though there are a profound difference between women’s writing and men’s, the female tradition is overlooked and undervalued by male critics. To make the literature of women different and especially there is a need of reconstruction of its past rediscovery of women writers. She advocates for the female language to express and interpret women experience and to create female identity. Feminism seeks to analyze a text in two different ways—woman as a writer and woman as a reader. While tracing the history of feminism it can be divided into two waves. The first wave dated from about 1830 to 1920, and the second wave dating from 1960s to present day. The struggle for women’s rights remained crucial to the second wave. Some powerful slogans such as ‘Equal pay for equal work’ came strongly in second wave. This type of feminism is known as ‘equality feminism’. This type of feminism is related with the American feminist Betty Friedan. Her book the *Feminine Mystique* exposed the frustration and psychology of women of 1950s in America. She spoke for the legal equality of women and men, and she encourages women to fight against discriminations and stand on a equal ground with men. But some other feminists oppose her idea of legal equality. They say, as Fiona Tolan puts:

...oppose her belief on two main points. First, they argued that mere legal equality could not redress the ancient imbalance between men and women; women's confidence in their own capabilities had been so entirely reduced, and the culture of male supremacy had become so deep rooted, that women will be ill equipped to grasp opportunities for their own advancement, even if they should suddenly become available. And secondly, many felt that Friedan was encouraging women to enter into a male oriented social system, and failing to recognize that the system itself was corrupt, founded on male principles of value and worth that were alien and destructive to women. Equality feminism cured the symptoms of sexual inequality and ignored the disease. (320)

Thus feminism was attacked on its ground of legal and social equality and its acceptance of male superiority in one way or the other.

Beside this other feminists look at the religion as a biased institution. They talk of 'Father God' which is constructed in order to dominate women. This is in case of Christianity. Mary Daly talk of this issue in her book *Gyn/Ecology*. Similarly Hinduism also talk about the trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh—all males. Though there are other goddesses, they are presented as performing a assigned task given by these male Gods. So, religion is the main and the most ancient institution of patriarchal society.

Feminists believe that literature is a powerful means to create and perpetuate belief systems. Feminist critics examine the representation of female characters in male authored works. As de Beauvoir analyzed patterns of female domination in the works of five male authors. This practice of approaching male authors from a feminist

perspective is known as 'phallogocentric criticism'. After de Beauvoir Kate Millet looked for the construction of woman within male writing. She put forth the idea that the relationship between men and women is "deeply embedded power structure with political implications" (Tolan, 326). Literature is a tool of political ideology because it recreates sexual inequalities and fortifies the patriarchal values of society.

In the course of time, feminism is severely criticized as representing the views of a privileged minority. The will to position women as a unified, strong political group, fails to consider the differences that existed between women. Black feminists put forth the idea that all oppressions are not reducible to sexual difference and there was more than one identity battle to fight. Similarly the 'Third World' feminists also contested the idea of a singular Feminism. Chandra Talpade Mohanti says that the image of Third World woman is unfit in that singularity. She argues, "Just as men reduced women to the other, so the white woman had constructed the Third World woman as the other to her self. Consequently, there existed an image of the 'average Third World woman' as uneducated, poor, religious and victimized" (Tolan, 331).

Patriarchy is an ideological thing that operates differently in different countries: there are significant differences between patriarchy in the United States and patriarchy in India, Mexico, or Iran, or Nepal or between western patriarchy and non-western patriarchy. Furthermore, even within the border of a single country, cultural differences affect women's experiences of patriarchy. It means that according to the women's experience feminism differs. In the United States, for example, the experience of patriarchy for women of color is inseparable from their experience of racism. And in India the experience of patriarchy for women of different cast is inseparable from their experience of cast system. Bio-feminists raise the issue of bodily experience. They believe that females are richer than males because they have

stronger unique experience of menstruation, pregnancy, etc. Such type of experience is never had by men. Cultural feminists think the culture they are living in is the culture of male. They say- since all behaviors, traditions and rituals are male centric, women should form their own culture which can lead them to the path of emancipation. In the context of non-western society or third world society, patriarchy rules through cultural power. Culture is extremely biased in the third world countries. Gayatri Spivak Chakravorty, a post colonial feminist, opines that eastern women are suffering from two problems—they are women and they are non-westerners. So, there is double domination of non-western women. Non- western women in general and third world women in particular don't have anything to claim as their own and private self-desire, self-dignity, self-respect, self-identity and even their own self is the matter of grace by men. In this regard, Ketu Katrak, in *Politics of Female Body* says, “female body is an state of exile and self-censorship, outsidersness and unbelonging to itself within indigenous patriarchy” (376). She further says:

... literal and metaphoric connotations of exile, as well as the concept of internal exile of the female body from patriarchy, and external exile as manifest in migration and geographical relocation necessitated by political persecution, material condition of poverty, and forms of intellectual silencing in third world societies. Female protagonists undergo what I term “Intellectual Exile” when the body feels disconnected from itself as though it doesn't belong to it and has no agency. (378)

The expression ‘female body’ carries a metaphoric meaning. It metonymically means female education, career, property and land, desire identity, choice, expectation, marriage and other things. Except the metaphoric meaning the phrase ‘female body’

literally also means many things of women like sexual freedom, right to bear child, accessories, sexual partner, etc. women are not given the right to be sovereign of their own body. They have to wait for other's decision on their body. So, we can say that female body has been the site of oppression of patriarchy in non-western society, too.

In his book *Turning Point*, Fritjof Capra talks about how on our culture women have traditionally been portrayed as passive and receptive, men as active and creative. He further says:

This imagery goes back to Aristotle's theory of sexuality and has been used throughout the centuries as a 'scientific' rationale for keeping women in subordinate role, subservient to men. The association of yin with passivity and yang with activity seems to be yet another expression of patriarchal stereotypes. [19]

This domination through culture and even through religious weapon is pervasively prevalent in Indian society. Indian women have limited options to extend their role outside the domestic domain. They are often subjected to presser from high cast ideology, and male domination. Even Gandhi was of the opinion that women are companion to men who are with equal capacity. But instead of knowing this truth, males considered themselves as lords or masters of women, rather than taking them as their friends. In her book *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, Kumari Jayawardeena says:

Gandhi believed that every men and women had a duty to perform in the interest of self-realization and social well being [...] even the most ignorant and workless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have. (95)

Uma Narayan argues that the third world feminism is not just a copy of European or western feminism. It has its own unique experiences of Indian women. She says, “Third-World feminism is not a mind less mimicking of “western agendas” ... , Indian feminism is clearly a response to issues specifically confronting many Indian women” (13). The growth and development of feminism in third world is hampered by the media of the growing capitalistic age. The media, which is primarily of the male for the male and by the male has not given proper and lustful place to the women writers or women issues. Here, Charlotte Bunch’s ideas from Uma Narayan’s book are relevant to mention:

Feminism has been ridiculed and stereotyped worldwide, and the issues we have raised have usually not been taken seriously by the media. But, remarkably, despite this bad press, feminism has continued to grow. Women’s groups all over the world, but especially in the third world are taking up issues ranging from housing, nutrition, and poverty to militarism, sexual and productive freedom, and violence against women. (192)

Feminist movement in various parts of the world developed when historical and political circumstances encourage public recognition that many of the norms, institutions and traditions which form women’s personal and social lives are detrimental to women’s well-being and enable political contestation in which the status quo is criticized and alternatives searched. Third world feminism looks for the unfamiliar issues like dowry system, arranged marriages, forced marriages, bride-price, etc. western feminism is unknown about the consequences of these system.

Despite the varieties of feminist criticism or feminism, there is a single ultimate target of all. After all, different versions of feminism are only different

expressions of diverse experiences of women or of the pleaders of women freedom. According to the geographical and cultural locations; economic, political and social conditions, there are different experiences of women which have been categorized with different terms for the convenience of academic purpose. But what lies at the heart of each category is female experience, women's position in patriarchal society, literature, politics, religion, etc; and ultimately women liberation. The common goal of all is to resist sexism and female essentialism. All feminist share the premises that entire culture is dominated by essentialist thought of patriarchy. This pervasive impact of patriarchy is omnipresent in society as a power in Foucault's term.

Feminism is related with postmodernism. Feminism raises political agendas of resistance. Both feminism and postmodernism come from the crisis of authority. Feminism raises voice against male authority and challenges prevalent notion of gender that came from issues of representation. Regarding this Linda Hutcheon writes:

it is certainly demonstrable that both feminism and postmodernism are part of the same general crisis of cultural authority as well as part of a more specific challenge to the notion of representation and its address, there is a major difference of orientation between the two that cannot be ignored. We have seen that postmodernism is politically ambivalent for it is doubly coded—both complicitous with and contesting of cultural dominants within which it operates; but on the other side, feminism have distinct, unambiguous political agendas of resistance. Feminisms are really either compatible with or even an example of postmodern thought, as a few critics have tried to argue, if anything, together they form the single most powerful force in changing the

direction in which (male) postmodernism was heading but, I think, no longer is.

Representation

Representation is presently a much debated issue not only in academia, but in the larger cultural milieu. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines representation as "the act of presenting somebody or something in a particular way, something that shows or describes something the act of having representatives who will speak or vote for you or on your behalf" (1082). Representation is a process by which we can know something that is absent before us. For this process, language works as a medium. The actual rituals of a culture may not be known to the people of other culture but through language that can be presented.

Of course, the word representation also has political connotations. Politicians are thought to 'represent' a constituency. They are thought to have the right to stand in the place of an other. So, above all, the term representation has a semiotic meaning, in that something is 'standing for something' else. These various yet related definitions are all implicated in the public debates about representation. Theorists interested in feminist studies, by closely examining various forms of representation, visual, textual and otherwise, have teased out the different ways that these images are implicated in power inequalities and the subordination of "women".

If there is always an element of interpretation involved in representation, we must then note who may be doing interpretation. Ella Shohat claims that we should constantly question representation. She again says, "each filmic or academic utterance must be analyzed not only in terms of who represents but also in terms of who is being represented for what purpose, at which historical moment, for which location,

using which strategies, and in what tone of address”(73). This questioning is particularly important when the representation of the subaltern is involved.

The problem does not rest solely with the fact that often marginalized groups do not hold the “power over representation” (Shohat, 170); it rests also in the fact that representations of these groups are both flawed and few in numbers. Shohat asserts that dominant groups need not preoccupy themselves too much with being adequately represented. There are so many different representations of dominant groups that negative images are seen as only part of the “natural diversity” of people. However, “representation of an underrepresented group is necessary within the hermeneutics of domination, over charged with allegorical significance” (170). Since representation of the marginalized are few, the few available are thought to be typical, sometimes not only of members of a particular minority group, but all minorities in general.

Representation, however, is related with culture. Everything that is represented is directly related with a particular culture. Regarding this relation between representation and culture Stuart Hall writes—

Representation connects meaning and language to culture. But what exactly do people mean by it? One common sense usage of the term is as follows: ‘Representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent the world meaningfully, to other people.’ You may ask ‘Is that all?’ Well yes and no. Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things. (15)

Representation is the process of formation of meaning. In this process of production of meaning signs and images work as vehicle carrying that meaning. In process of

formation of meaning we form some concept of abstract and obscure things. In this process of formation of concept we use many different principles of similarity and differences, comparison and contrast etc. Regarding this concept formation, Stuart Hall writes:

But we also form concept of rather obscure and abstract things, which we can't in any simple way see, feel or touch. Think, for example, of our concepts of war, or death, or friendship or love. And, as we have remarked, we also form concepts about things we never have seen, and possibly can't or won't ever see, and about people and places we have plainly made up. We may have a clear concept of, say, angels, mermaids, God, the devil, or of Heaven and Hell or of Middlemarch (the fictional provincial town in George Eliot's novel), or Elizabeth (the heroin of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*).

We have called this a system of 'representation'. That is because it consists, not of individual concepts, but of different ways of organizing, clustering, arranging and of establishing complex relationships between them. (17)

This 'system of representation' is not a random collection of concepts, but rather it is a collection of organized, arranged and classified concepts into relations with one another. This 'system of representation' develops our conceptual system which Hall names as "mental representation" (8).

Regarding the representation through language Hall has three approaches towards representation—"the reflective, the intentional and the constructivist or constructionist" (25). Reflective approach lies on the ground that meaning lies in object itself, "language functions like a mirror"(25). Intentional approach believes in

“it is the speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language” (25). And constructionist approach takes the stand that “neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Things don’t mean: we construct meaning using representational system—concepts and signs” (Hall, 26). Thus representation is a process of construction or production of meaning, using language. We can say that meaning lies not on materials rather it lies on symbolic function.

Representation is a political term as well. It includes social, political, individual and cultural attitude in it. While we talk about representation, we no more think it is merely an imitation of something. *The Politics of Postmodernism* quotes Roland Barthes saying “where politics begins is where imitation ceases” (3). While we represent something, politics certainly enters in it that is why it is no more imitation. Representation, sometimes, blurs the boundary between fiction and history. It, sometimes, is difficult to differentiate race, class and nationality. Representation is “an exploration of the way in which narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and how we construct our notions of self in the present and in the past” (7).

III. Ambiguity in Representation of Female Characters' in *Bruised Evenings*

The play tries to foreground equality between male and female in many respects. Whole play has highlighted human beings as the most powerful creatures in the earth regardless of their sexes. Human beings celebrate their victories over the tyranny of gods and goddesses. But the play focuses on the irony of this victory that though human beings got freedom from the hands of gods and goddesses, women kind got the oppression from the hands of their male counterparts. The play in a way encompasses the whole era of evolution of female consciousness. Up to scene IV the women characters are victims of their male counterparts but after that they got the knowledge that they are also in equal footing with men. In the play women characters are presented in a state of confusion. Once they are seem to be orthodox at other time they seem to be ferocious, other time obedient, other time obstinate, other time very ignorant and other time very wise.

In this play the analogy between the struggle of men against gods and struggle of women against men can be observed. The human beings get freedom from the tyranny of gods and goddesses as women get freedom from the tyranny of men. As human beings make agreement with gods and goddesses, women make agreements with men. In the very beginning of the play in scene I, Bhadrakali and Bhairab make a dance of creation. This dance of creation shows the inevitability of women that the act of creation is not possible in absence of women. In the next step the voice bestows transcendence upon the men that is the 'Elder' while describing him. The voice mentions "this Elder, this timeless sentient being moves all over the places carrying floods of light in his eyes (scene I, 3)". Bhadrakali, though she is goddess, normally assumed as merciful, wise is represented as obstinate and merciless. The politics of Subedi can be seen here in representing her. As Ella Shohat says representation also

rests on the fact that who represents whom. Here also a male is representing a female. In the dialogue between Bhairab and Bhadrakali when Bhairab talks of human desire to get freedom and questions gods' rule over human beings, Bhadrakali opposes it and expresses her orthodox belief.

BHAIRAB.... To see human beings' struggle of this scale I want to ask myself—do the gods ever look at themselves to find out who and what they are? I think it is time they asked this question to themselves.

BHADRAKALI. Bhairab, Oh Mahaakal, the great lord of time! I want to solicit your response to this question of mine—why are you so worried today? A god should not talk like this. (Scene I, 4)

Here Bhairab is presented as a liberal, democratic personality but Bhadrakali is given the characteristics of an autocrat. In the play Bhairab tries to maintain a balanced posture giving equal credit of creation to Bhadrakali but Bhadrakali is presented as obstinate. For this we can take following dialogue:

BHAIRAB. You and I control the seasons, but the human beings make best use of them. We give punishments and they take them as a challenge to their power. The crux of the problem is this—they suffer and call it life and make that the art of their existence. We create rules and create knots; human beings loosen those knots. We create singular number in divine grammar; they change it into plural. We give them one; they receive that as many. We make the dance of creation; they take that before free men and women and stage it with all freedom and vigor.

THE ELDER....

BHADRAKALI. OH Bhairab, power of drunken divinity! Think
before what you say, my lord! Human beings can't be so free. They
must accept the rule of gods.

(...)

I'll finish those who don't obey me.

BHAIRAB. Oh, Kali! That's the wrong use of power. A kind of vulgar
show of strength, and it is timidity to kill the helpless creatures.

(Scene-I, 5)

Here the text represents that if power and authority is given to women they cannot make use of it correctly and there is the possibility of misuse of power. Here the politics of representation comes to the front. Subedi being a male has misrepresented Bhadrakali. But Bhairab is too much democratic and knowledgeable. He knows what is right and what wrong use of power is.

The analogy that gods "become insensitive after being massaged by the human devotees for so long", is also seen in human beings (Scene I, 4). Men are intensely cared by their wives in Hindu religion but they never think about their wives. In this dialogue, Bhairab is attributed with philosopher like qualities and Bhadrakali is presented as bewildered by the wise logic of Bhairab. So here Bhadrakali is presented as she has very weak understanding or she has only the capacity to understand mandatory affairs of daily life but not the very important and wise things.

BHAIRAB. I know. Gods do not want to look at this problem with a
free mind. They have become insensitive after being massaged by
the human devotees for so long. Human beings become useless
once they are charged with divinity. And gods become coward
once they come close to the human beings. Kalike, such is the

cycle of creation! Human interpret divine actions according to their consciousness. That makes them strong. A man who has the strong sense of freedom does not accept the control of gods. Only human beings know what it means to become free. Gods don't know.

BHADRAKALI. Oh, ferocious! I could not follow your logic. (Scene-I, 4-5)

To stop Bhadrakali use the power wrongly, Bhairab threatens her by saying he will not give her company. Though he look ferocious he is not in the mood of terrorizing human beings but Bhadrakali is trying to. As Bhairab threatens her, Bhadrakali is afraid of this serious declaration and shows her fear that how she will see the festivals alone in absence of him. Bhairab's comment that she can make many agreements, many promises displays the stereotypical image of women that they can make many promises and agreements to live their lives. But to look at it from another side of the coin that to make promises and agreements is democratic trend. So here Bhadrakali also seems to be democratic.

BHADRAKALI. If so then why should I see their festivals alone? Oh lord of dance! Why do you compel me to see the human festivals alone?

BHAIRAB. Because you can make many promises with them. You like agreements. That is your karma. You must see the festivals alone. Enjoy the fruits of your agreements. Why should I come here for that?

BHADRAKALI. If so, listen oh mighty! I shall make you see the human festivals in Bhaktapur..., human beings must abide by the rules I have given them.

BHAIRAB. I'll see how you can bring me to see the festivals. Next time, I'll come to hold you like sun holds water. I will hold you up to the sky and then sit with you on stones entwined in the dance of creation under the first rays of sun. ...Never. (Scene-I, 5-6)

Here Bhairab stereotypes women as making agreements and promises. But Bhadrakali boldly declares to make Bhairab come beside her. Bhadrakali's will to stand in equal footing with Bhairab is a general woman's will to get position of equality with her husband. Again Bhairab shows his power by saying Bhadrakali will not be able to bring him together to show festivals. And he shows his superiority as if he is an omnipresent being. But Bhadrakali is limited to a specific space. Though Bhadrakali doesn't need Bhairab's help or protection Bhairab forcefully tries to protect her. This is the patriarchal misunderstanding or patriarchal chauvinism to underestimate women. Thus, first scene justifies Beauvoir's theory that women are soul of the world and men assert their transcendence.

The analogy of condition of human beings and condition of women continues in second scene also. In the Elder's monologue he speaks about the condition of common people under power of god and king as "we have to make your picture of earth and sky to make a living; our fingers are cut if we make good statues and if we refuse to do so, get all properties confiscated and exiled by the state" (Scene-II, 8). Similarly if women give birth to child she has to suffer a lot in the society and if she refuses or fails to do so her identity is in danger. She is treated as if she has no women like qualities.

Bhadrakali ignores the call of the people in this scene. This is her obstinate behaviour with the people. She believes in the karma. She says all should be driven by their karma. Here also Subedi's politics of representation is seen in the following.

THE WOMAN. You are stupid human beings. You even don't know that one member of your group disappears every time you come to perform funeral rites. You should know about that karma.

ELDER. Listen everybody! This woman is no other than goddess Bhadrakali. But you need not to fear her. We have done nothing to fear the gods. But today it should be finalized here. It's not ethical for the powerful to bully the weaker ones and play on their lives. We are being used in the hands of gods. Even gods and human beings can have dialogues to settle problems between them. We all believe in dialogues. The deities like to play with our existence because we are mortal human beings. But they should understand that death is not our ruin. Let this be understood by all! (Scene-II, 9-10)

Here in Elder's speech a balance is seen in process of representing male and female. Bhadrakali is a powerful goddess for human beings but she herself is bullied by Bhairab.

At other place in the play Bhadrakali is given the characteristics of motherly figure:

BHADRAKALI. I have noticed everybody here. I love all my devotees (Scene-II, 10).

In the next step Bhadrakali is dissatisfied with the power or consciousness provided to human beings. She seems as if she wants to centralize the power which Bhairab has decentralized to common people also. Though she is dissatisfied with the power given to human beings she easily makes agreement with those human beings.

ELDER. Oh goddess! No member of the funeral procession shall die any more. In return for that we shall make a temple for you at Lysingkhel. Putting you in a chariot during festivals and other occasions we shall take you around the town. We shall not let you get bored sitting alone in the reliquary. Deities wait impatiently for the human beings to come and touch them. I understand that pain! We shall not leave you alone in that condition, oh mother!

BHADRAKALI. Listen oh human beings! I accept your proposal. I shall see how you keep your promise. (Scene-II, 11)

In this dialogue, uniqueness of third-world cultural practice is seen. In Hindu religion, people also worship goddesses to settle down the matter. Here Bhadrakali is persuaded by the people. In Hinduism women are worshipped in the form of the goddesses. They are attributed as goddess like qualities. Some examples of such unique cultural trend are Laxmi, Sarswati, Uma, Kali, Bhadrakali, etc.

Charlotte Bunch says that the feminism has stereotyped worldwide because of the bad media; not taking it seriously by media. In scene iii, the window play or Jhyalechha is performed. This performance takes place according to the narration of the Elder. Here the Elder is the director and Mayaju is the actor. The action takes place according to the narration of the Elder. So the Elder is like a sole media, who publishes the actions of Mayaju's life by interpreting them in his own way. So the interpretation of this 'male' media is not exact and justful for female. Here Elder seems to be dominating Mayaju. Though Mayaju performs the actions but the agency of her actions is not under her control. Agency is given only to Elder, the male. Mayaju performs the drama inside the curtain from where her actions are, only

realized, not observed. She acts as Elder directs. So, the agency of words is snatched from her. In his monologue, the Elder says-

“The King of this country decided

to perform the marriage of his daughter with fanfare” (scene-III, 14).

Here, decision of Mayaju is not taken by Mayaju herself but it is made by her father.

She has no free choice whether she has to marry or not and to whom she has to marry.

This type of forced marriage is uniquely the third- world experience. Such

experiences are not had by western women.

Gayatri Spivak says third world women in particular don't have anything to claim as their own and private self; everything they have is the matter of grace by men. In these lines Mayaju is presented as a woman living for others'.

“The beautiful princess lived

looking at the fleeting pictures of her father's dreams about her in a

secluded beautiful wooden building” (Scene-III, 14).

Here Mayaju is living as if she has to live for others. She is assigned the traditional

role of women that she has to live for her father before marriage and after marriage

she has to live for her husband and in-laws. Here, she has to live for her father's

dream to come true. Here also Mayaju is represented passively that she has no goal of

life on her own but rather she has to live accomplish the goal of her brother.

The elder describes about the marriage of Mayaju beautifully. He describes about the marriage as if it is a great public event and the entire town or the country is involved in it. Elder compares Mayaju with the time. As time have only two aspects that are day and night or light and darkness. This comparison shows that the life of Mayaju is a very common process of life and death. This is a ridiculous thing. A girl

marries every day and her groom turns in to a corpse the every next morning is an unusual act. But elder has given this action a common process of time like qualities.

Kings vanity of power and his ignorance because of the power he holds is represented in the given lines.

The king didn't know
 what end of the tragic times
 was hiding in the self of his own daughter.
 He was foolishly drunk on his illusion of power.
 He was an arrogant person who thought
 day and night would meet if he gave orders
 and he was the master of all events. (Scene-III, 14)

Kingly power is powerless in the face of the power of will of women to be free. Here king has the ego that he can give order to change the order of the world but irony that he cannot change the fate of his own daughter. He never thinks about the psychic condition of his daughter and exercises his power over her in such a way that she has no feelings and she is like a non living object. Whenever he makes decision to marry his daughter again and again everyday, he has undermined her feelings. Here we can realize the king's tyranny over his daughter.

Bio-feminists say that females are richer than males because they have unique experiences. The next description of Mayaju's actions inside her bower with her groom has most important meaning. Here the climax of the play is observed. After the marriage of Mayaju as the bride and bridegroom are involved in their honeymoon experiences, as they are being one in one another arms, a disaster comes there.

Soft sound of breathing was heard slowly
 from the nostrils of Mayaju

like soft wind that runs over rose flowers.

Did the *naaga* and *naagini* come through the same passages?

Did any props of the gods' sports come out of the nostrils?

Well the creation games like this

man creates myths out of battles with these *leelaas*.

I know not all that there is in this story.

What I know is-

the two serpents that emerged

rose over the youth with their fangs widened wildly.

He was innocent

He had loved his bride on the wedding night

become one with her

and was floating like lily over water.

The creatures struck him

unleashing flames of *kaalkut* poison all over his tender body.

He departed from life like a fleeting shadow

in the game of light and darkness

emerging from Mayaju's body.

The snakes entered through the breathing motion

back to her body made of sun and shadow,

through the same nostrils. (Scene-III, 15-16)

Here the body of Mayaju is represented as the residence of poisonous *naaga* and *naagini* those can kill the whole humanity. So here she is represented as an ogress defiler witch. She is innocent in the act of emergence of snakes from her nostrils. But this act of emergence of snakes can be interpreted as the snakes are the symbols of

Mayaju's inner hidden desire to overcome are domination of patriarchy. That is residing in her subconscious state of mind such a action cannot be taken as a right way to overcome the patriarchal regime such activity not only harms the males but rather it affects the whole of humanity. Mayaju wants to destroy the rest of patriarchy by killing its agent. But instead of doing so, she can take another way to change the behavior of its agents. As Mayaju has no courage to face patriarchy in her conscious state, she wipes away all of its dangers in her subconscious state of mind. The wrong feminist consciousness is seen in Mayaju. She accepts the rule of her father and agrees to marry but destroys another agent of patriarchal rule. This is the wrong understanding on the part of Mayaju.

In the very next monologue of Elder, he denies the idea that the serpents in the body of Mayaju are the manifestation of Mayaju's desire to wipe out the signs of patriarchy. Here, patriarchy is respected as an egoistic thought. It cannot suspect that women have the courage to raise their head against patriarchal regime because patriarchy has spreaded its roots through each and every corner of society. So the Elder says;

“The creatures that inhabited the body of Mayaju
were perhaps the game plans of gods.” (Scene- III, 16).

Stuart Hall says that representation is done by organizing, clustering, arranging and of establishing complex relationships between different concepts. In the next lines of his monologue Elder presents the body of women as the one residence of two rivalry brothers—love and hatred or death. Mayaju loves her groom forgetting everything but at the same time when she realizes the domination she has to bear her children's desire beats him and kills him.

To play on the life of an innocent girl

and make death dance upon the young man,
 to lurk in the body of the women like shadow
 and to strike the lover after the moment of love is finished
 and wait for the next victim
 again hiding in the body of the same women
 where the tides of love undulate
 like waves in the lake,
 oh, that is too much!
 Several youths lost their lives
 in the king's resolve not to let his daughter
 become a widow even for a moment.(Scene-III, 16)

Mayaju in her dilemma once accepts the company of a male. But the other times she realizes her condition under male domination and struck the groom. Here the two different moods of women are represented. Women are the conduit of love and at the same time she is destroyer as Kalika also. Both of these characters are planning hide and seek in the self of Majayu. She is playing the game of love (life) and death. She loves her groom forgetting all the hardships of life but at the same time another self that is in the form of two serpents kill him to destroy the root of patriarchy.

The next monologue of Mayaju is her realization of her measurable condition. As she knows she is being the battlefield for her father's dreams. She becomes bold and takes agency herself and speaks. Though she is confused, she announces her freedom. She declares that she is free from making decision regarding her life and her marriage. She no more, is ready to marry with any new youths. She compares her condition with that of other girls and wants to be as free as others are. Along with this declaration, Mayaju unfolds her multiple shelves here. She has many identities as

every woman of world has. She is bride as well as a widow. She compares herself with a river, where people dive for recreation but sometimes they may lose their lives in a whirlpool. Others look at her for getting their identity. She is like a mirage where people can see beautiful dreams but none of them come true rather those dreams postpone for eternity and people lose their lives in search of those dreams come true. This description of Mayaju by herself seems very wise. She caste away her identities which is identified by the words like creation, apocalypse, love, life and death. These identities are as said by Beauvoir forced into her by denying expression of her own identity. These identities to her “are manufactured in society” through a long process (Beauvoir, 151).

MAYAJU. I walk over this twilight zone of my life where a bride and widow cross each other. I don't know why my youthful guests, my husband like the tremulous evening come to spend their last nights in my permanent bower of a bride. And why do they melt away? Some say their death is in my body. Something comes from my person and strangles them. Then they die. This is a great punishment. No, no! I shall not marry again. I am going to announce my final decision to my father today, Right now. I am a girl like the others...

(...)

Am I a river where

People dive again and again?

A river flows on

carrying light that break into waves.

If river is the mirror of the sky,
 I am the mirror of Bhaktapur state.
 I am a mirror—
 where everybody looks for one's image.
 ...

If life is a wedding celebration of each day
 And death the journey of each morning,
 I don't want it!
 Everybody lives life very easily.
 Then why should I alone continue to live a life
 That gathers only words
 Like creation, apocalypse, love, life and death?
 I will talk to my father, the king about it.
 Why should I suffer to fulfill my father's vow?
 Final decision will be mine now. (Scene- III, 17-18)

Mayaju contemplates on her present condition that she gets married everyday for nothing good. She questions her present existence and says why she should live a life that has no better meaning. Here she casts away her stereotypical identity and becomes bold to confront with her father. In the next dialogue as king sees Mayaju in front of him to talk with him face to face he gets surprised.

KING. Why did you want to see me, my child?

MAYAJU. I want to talk with you about an important matter, feeling

KING(*Little surprised*). What about, my child? (Scene-III, 18)

This surprise of king is because of Mayaju's courage to talk with the king face to face.

Feminisms premise that women are othered psychologically is observed as King overlooks the psychological condition of his daughter, who gets married everyday, and become widow every next day, and says marriage is a natural process. But Mayaju rejects the king's interpretation of marriage and questions his proposal.

KING. Why are you so worried, child? Marriage is a natural process. It happens. I have sent people to find a suitable groom in and around the city. I have decreed that a suitable young man should be brought here for marriage to my daughter.

MAYAJU. Are you looking for a bridegroom or a new prey for the god's father? (Scene- III, 18)

As Valerie Bryson says that the harmony and consensus in fact is deceptive. Mayaju seems to be submissive to her father and she accepts all the orders of her father but the reality is that she is killing the groom sent by her father in her bower. Seemingly the relation of her with her father is smooth but it is not so. The relationship of Mayaju and the King seems harmonious but it is not exactly so. It is obvious from this speech of Mayaju:

MAYAJU. When the world wakes up in the joys of morning,
 when the day soars in up in the sky on its light wings,
 when women go giggling to the *hiti* to get water,
 when the happy women stretch their bodies
 and wake up in the courtyards in the mornings
 and go ringing temple bells,
 I for one wait to receive those
 who come to perform the last rites of the groom.

No, no! that is enough.

I will never marry again.

I have come to tell you all about my decision. (Scene III, 18-19)

By this remark of Mayaju King is stunned and threatened. This threatening of the King is the threatening of the patriarchy by the emerging consciousness of female. Here traditional beliefs of patriarchy that female are 'submissive' and 'ignorant' are challenged bitterly. Mayaju is not ready to accept the orders laden upon her by her father. This is a rise of feminist consciousness in part of Mayaju.

In next step Mayaju ridicules the patriarchal belief that they can change everything in the world. This can be seen in following dialogue between Mayaju and the King:

KING. My child, please don't leave this space like this. Give me some time to think!

MAYAJU. Time was all yours, father. Entirely yours. Now its all finished.

KING. No, child, time is not under my control. Somebody handed this from behind the curtains, Mayaju!

MAYAJU. The time behind the curtains was mine, not yours, father. Your time was like open bright day. You lived with it in whatever way you liked it. My time was behind the curtain. I lived with its mysteries and fears. My time became a strange contact zone of my youthfulness and the deaths of men. My story was a visual narrative, a *jhyalecha* drama. People gathered in courtyards outside and saw it acted out in the shadow of half-light on the screen. But I

didn't know they were watching the drama of my life. (Scene-III, 20)

As King tries to persuade Mayaju saying her to realize her existence as a woman, she denies it. Mayaju is convinced to reject the rule of her father. Here her idea that a woman is a character in the drama created by men is very convincing from the point of view of women. Fiona Tolan's idea about the patriarchal system that the system itself is corrupt, founded on male principles of values were unknown to women is accepted by Mayaju and she denies to live in such biased system anymore. This is seen in the given dialogue.

KING. You are a woman, Mayaju.

MAYAJU. Yes, I am a woman who lives her time out as character in the story you create. They live behind the curtains and men make fun of them watching their stories projected on the screen in the murky lights. Now I am getting out of that story. Please don't try to stop me. (Scene-III, 20)

But here Mayaju's mission is not ended. As patriarchy is deep rooted in our society, she could not escape from it easily. She has to face next agent of it—Elder who entangled her in the snare of patriarchy. So it can be said that the network of patriarchy is omnipresent in patriarchal society which is very difficult to escape. As Ketu Kartak says women are not given the right to be sovereign of their body. They have to wait for other's decision on their body. Here also Mayaju had to wait for the decision of her father on her body, now she has to wait for the decision of the Elder.

ELDER...., your body is a great theatre where the true drama of the unseen forces' defeat is going to happen soon. You are not ordinary woman....Be prepared for the last marriage. A show of strength

between deities and human beings has been going on here for some time. This is a silent battle. Our victory is certain.

MAYAJU. All right, I'll accept your proposal for the last time.... I'll accept no proposals concerning my freedom after this moment. This will be my last acting. Goodbye, father! From now on I'll speak for myself. If a woman cannot decide for herself, she will be caught in the merry-go-round of marriage and widowhood like the Mayaju's myth. She will not be able to get out of this circle, and will not reach anywhere. (Scene-III, 21)

The speech of elder at the end of scene III is against the western view of marriage where it is taken as a private affair. This view of Elder says that marriage is a public affair. Mayaju has not married for herself. Though marriage takes place daily but none of them is for her. Her marriages are initially for her father and the last one is visually for the Elder but it is ultimately for whole Bhaktapur city.

ELDER. Oh king, listen to me! There will be only one marriage now. That will not be for your aggrandizement, but for showcasing the victory of the common people. That last wedding of Mayaju will be for us, not for you. All the people of this land will see new hopes and they will live with fresh energy. (Scene-III, 21)

The unique experience of forced marriage in third world is not always for women, it is, sometimes, for men, too. As the Traveller enters in the city of Bhaktapur, he was forcefully married with Mayaju. On the other hand Mayaju is also unknown about who is going to be her groom. Mayaju, though, is anti-patriarchal could not overcome her new groom and she accepts her existence happily. So, here, Mayaju seems to be realizing the importance of existence of both the sexes.

Symbolically killing of snakes is killing of extreme anti-patriarchal thought of Mayaju. Though the writer could make the traveler kill the Mayaju herself, he doesn't do so to maintain the greatness of patriarchy. So he makes Traveller kill the extreme anti-patriarchal thought of Mayaju. To do so, the writer trickily takes the help of supernatural. Instead of doing the action on his own the Traveller takes the help of the 'book' to perform the task of killing anti-patriarchal whim of Mayaju. Here the writer wants to make the patriarchal superiority natural as it is also supported by the god or supernatural. Here the writer seems to be fortifying Beauvoir's blame that writers have striven to show that the subordinate position of women is willed in heaven. To make the reader convinced that even the god himself has not liked the anti-patriarchal whim of Mayaju, Traveller makes use of the supernatural 'book' and 'sword' to kill the symbolic of serpents.

TRAVELLER. That's a different subject, Mayaju. To come here was not my choice. I'm glad I came. I got married to you. I can't say I'm overwhelmed with happiness. I read a book and used a sword. I kept a vigil after you went to sleep. It is written in the book. I read the book naturally. It says snakes will come. They came and rose to strike me. I am not a coward. I had no idea whether the snakes who had killed people like me were demons or deities. To me they are the same. They came from your body. It was a terribly strange scene! I felt what it was like to see love and myth in one place.

(Scene-V, 27)

In this extract the sentence "It was terribly strange scene!" has a metaphoric meaning. It means to revolt against patriarchy living within its regime is a strange thing. The very next sentence spoken by Mayaju reveals a great change in patriarchal society.

The sentence says that the mythical feeling of women to be totally free became a reality and reality for men to be superior to woman is collapsed and the myth of equal footing for women also became a reality. She says, “My life of myth became a reality, and your reality became a myth” (Scene V, 27).

The stereotypical image of woman that they have fixed roles to be performed is challenged in the dialogue between Mayaju and the Traveller. The new life of Mayaju is not identical with her previous life.

MAYAJU. Absolutely! But I don't understand life. Though I'm married many times, you are the only groom I have seen in the morning. To see your groom in the morning light is to see the start of a new life.

TRAVELLER. Has the new life begun?

MAYAJU. Yes, but many men came and went.

TRAVELLER. Are you surprised about that?

MAYAJU. This is not a matter of surprise. This is matter of life.

TRAVELLER. What kind of life? Mobile like mine or fixed like yours?

MAYAJU. You'll see who moves and who stops now. You brought a great change here. You did a good thing. Now, it is the turn of the human beings to take control of their own destiny.... Now, gods can no longer play nasty jokes hiding in the bodies of human beings. Gods killed many men in my chamber through their drama.
(Scene-V, 28)

Here, Traveller's traditional notion that the life of a man is always mobile and that of a woman is always fixed is challenged by Mayaju. She now is not going to accept the

fixed identity. She, now, is going to start a mobile and free life. Her strong desire to kill the agents of patriarchy dies and a new sense of equal footing seems to appear in her. She accepts the patriarchy to the extent that she also can enjoy her life freely without interference from any male members. This definition of freedom is also acceptable for the Elder.

ELDER. *Taremam!* Everybody should know this! Today is the day of victory for the human beings. We have become free from today. We don't consider any event that kills people a victory. But we should be clear about one thing. People should not be the victims of crazy and power-mongering people. (Scene-V, 28)

Freedom is not an absolute term it is relative. Freedom for men only cannot be freedom for all. So when women also get freedom then only the freedom in true sense is realized. Only in the society where there is equality for both male and female, freedom is realized. This is further clear by following sentences of Elder.

ELDER.... Those who are in power should not keep illusions about their strength is the message of our festival. A culture of freedom harms no one, gods or men alike. But there is a need to respect each other. My salute to all! (Scene V, 29-30)

Mayaju challenges the notion of western feminism that marriage is the traditional institution that enslaves women. This idea of marriage is against Woolf's idea that women can become free only in "no man's land." Here Mayaju feels free after she got married with the Traveller. She could come out in the open ground after marriage only. Third world in general and Hinduism in particular takes marriage as a spiritual bond between male and female against the notion of marriage in first world where it is

taken as a technical bond. Though the traveler goes away from Mayaju, he says he is bounded with her throughout his life.

TRAVELLER. What am I? A myth or reality? Honestly, I have no idea.... Deep down I feel I have given my entire life to her. She is all over me. It seems to me, I'm struck not by the serpents but by Mayaju's love. I see her everywhere and will continue to see her wherever I go. I am the first and last groom of Mayaju. But there is no point in waffling like this. I must go. (Scene-VI, 30)

This concept of the Traveller is also accepted by Mayaju in this:

MAYAJU. That was my last marriage.

It's just over.

I could not come out of my bower

because of the successive grooms' deaths. (Scene-VI, 30)

Thus, from above concepts related to marriage it can be concluded that in Hindu philosophy marriage is not only a technical bond between male and female but a spiritual one. Mayaju says that her marriage made her able to come out in the open ground. Mayaju's acceptance that women cannot be completely free because the responsibility of creation lies upon her also challenges the western feminist feeling of freedom. The emancipation of women is related with marriage here. Mayaju gets freedom after marriage only. At this point Mayaju's continuous marriages are interpreted as her strive to get emancipation which she gets ultimately.

Mayaju recognizes the weapons that make man superior to woman—sword and book. Those weapons are not allowed to be touched by women. The following lines from the monologue of Mayaju are relevant to mention here.

He was out on a good mission.

He was carrying a sword and a book.
 He wanted to do many things with those two things.
 I was like a magic princesses waiting for him
 in some magic palace of haughty king once upon a time.
 He was a victorious warrior. Swords and books are men's weapons.
 They don't allow women to touch those things.
 With these weapons they feel they change the world,
 save women, earn reputations and write the narratives.
 And women read those narratives sitting in their well guarded bowers.
 (Scene-VI, 31)

Here Mayaju gets the knowledge that if women are provided with those weapons they can also change the world, save themselves, earn reputations, and write narratives which are seen in present day for many of the women.

Beauvoir says that women are in the best position to evaluate the true existential possibilities of womanhood. The rejection of the dictates of others on the part of Mayaju is the emergence of existential angst in her. She declares herself the hero of her life. She has declared to leave away the life guided by others and comes out from the closed bowers in the open ground from where she is free to move in any direction she likes to.

Now I want to live my life in my own way.
 I may not be able to live a new life with everything
 that I have until this moment.
 I want to slough this completely like a snake's skin.
 I may not need this very existence,
 this very rhythm as it is now.

But I will not act at others' dictates from now on.

I will not wait for gods, king and men with my dreams

packed in bamboo shoulder baskets. (Scene VI, 31)

This realization on the part of Mayaju is, in fact, the realization of importance of equal footing with men. Here Myaju realizes the modern need of the women that instead of refuting with men it is wise to seek equality and equity in different walks of life.

Mayaju begs the women to cast away the uniformal identity given to them by men and create their own. She rejects the identity given to her by her father. This event in the text can be related to the Simon de Beauvoir's idea that if identity is not created by 'ourselves then life has an unbearable burden'. The following lines from monologue of Mayaju speak about her appeal. "To see woman's drama on the screen becomes your indulgence. I want to break into multiple pieces like sun and do something in life. This is my last meeting with you all. Goodbye! (Scene VI, 32)".

Mayaju ultimately leaves her father's house and comes outside in a open ground from where she can move in any direction she wants to. Here leaving her father's house is symbolic of leaving her traditional identity.

Fritjof Capra's view that women are given the traits like passive receptive and men active and creative are seen in the earlier scenes of the play as Mayaju always receives the actions acted upon her but the actors are King, Traveller, Snakes, etc. In the whole play representation is done in two ways as Stuart Hall says one is intentional and second is constructionist; writers construct women characters by using different language sign and concepts.

The liberation of women is liberation of men also. In this play also people of Bhaktapur town struggle too much to get freedom from the tyranny of gods. But

strives are in vein until they are ready to accept the equality for the females. At last when Mayaju gets freedom, whole Bhaktapur town celebrates it and liberation in true sense is realized.

IV. Discourse of Equality

The play represents its women characters trying to get absolute freedom from male dominated society. In case of Mayaju she becomes able to get freedom after her marriage only but in case of Bhadrakali she has to struggle much to make a situation of equal footing with Bhairab. The play has highlighted different mental conditions of women under male domination through various textual evidences. The researcher sees three conditions of women's mentality: hatred towards patriarchy, realization of importance of males and acceptance of existence of male and female both. Most of the events present women rejecting the patriarchal rule by using some hidden means but some of the events show them realizing the necessity of males also. Initially women were not allowed to come outside their bowers but after they got the support from their male counterparts, they became able to do so. The action of Mayaju to come out in an open ground leaving her father's house is a giant step towards creation of her identity on her own.

Mayaju is the main victim of tyranny of patriarchy. She could not deny the decree of her father. So she becomes ready to marry everyday. But she kills the grooms every night. Her anti-patriarchal whim comes on the surface and she dares to tell about her decision to her father that she is not going to marry any more. Her encounter with the Elder shows the network of patriarchy is enormous and it is very difficult to cheat it. Her concept of freedom is changed with her last marriage. She becomes free only after she married with a powerful youth who kills her anti-patriarchal whim. The writer Abhi Subedi is in dilemma that whether to represent Mayaju a radical feminist or a compromising one. He first tries to make her a radical and later on changes it and makes her a compromising. Here the western thought that marriage is an institution that dominates women is challenged and it is made as an

institution that emancipates women. Mayaju comes in a open ground and challenges the patriarchal notion that women have fixed life and men have mobile one.

What clearly emerges from this play is the fact that the will for freedom was there in women from the very ancient time but it was in a suppressed condition which later on came to the fore. As Abhi Subedi is representing the women of ancient time it becomes very difficult for him to represent then women radical. His play accepts the necessity of both sexes. Forced marriage is represented as the dominating tool here but it is not only for woman but also for man. In the text the voice of the female characters is inaudible initially but in latter part it is heard. So the text is neither masculine nor feminine. It tries to be neutral. However most of the actions of Mayaju are realized on the screen of *Jhyalechha* except last scene.

Actually woman is not born demure neither is she substandard, fragile or dependent by nature. There is no natural and inevitable connection between feminity and masculinity; and their respective definitions. Only what is natural to male and female is that they have been given some bias less biological differences to run the world. But these definitions and designations are merely the constructions of the prejudicious process of so called socialization, which are pervasive and natural for women race. These types of imposed definitions of men about women would have been proved false; and equality and equity rule in society if nature had been given its genuine position. If any male character would be in place of Mayaju, he would not have to struggle to the extent Mayaju has. The entire play would take a different course of action.

To sum up, the play *Bruised Evenings* by Abhi Subedi represents women characters struggling to get freedom from male domination. During this process of representation, the writer reveals his dilemma. Sometimes he makes them very bold,

some other times submissive, weak, and compromising. Mainly he makes Mayaju revolutionary woman initially and latter she is represented as a compromising woman. At the top of all these things the play declares that the emancipation for woman is emancipation for man also.

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