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Personal as Public in Radha Poudel's *Jumla: A Nurse's Story*

This research project makes an attempt to examine how personal life experiences count as a social phenomenal representation in Radha Poudel's memoir *Jumla: A Nurse's Story*. It also investigates how an autobiographical writing, becomes the objective representation of the history and the historical knowledge of the particular society and the zonal group. Radha Poudel, a nurse, health worker, writer and a social activist, in her memoir *Jumla: A Nurse's Story*, chronicles a series of events, incidents and an unpleasant war memories that she witnessed as well as experiences during her stay in Khalanga, the headquarter of Jumla District. The author and/or the narrator recollect the then socio-political, cultural and economic sensibilities and bare realities of the society. More precisely she depicts pathetic, impoverished and backwardness of the crossfire between Maoists and Nepal Army, and Armed Force in Khalanga and its devastated picture and the backdrop of the war.

The memoir sets in the backdrop of Maoist insurgency during the late 1990s. There was burning civil war going on across the country. Radha Poudel, the author and narrator grownup in Chitwan District, despite being a woman, decides to give up her government job in Bharatpur Hospital in Chitwan devotes her life in serving the people in Jumla. She destines herself to Jumla for Safe Motherhood Programme as it was her desiring place to serve from her early childhood days. Her father, a farmer, in Chitwan once visited Jumla district approximately thirty years back witnessed a very

miserable and extreme poverty in Jumla. As she grew up in his shoulder, he always asked her to serve the people in Jumla being a well educated woman. When she was in Khalanga, the Maoists launched a massive attack on 14 November 2002. She witnessed and experienced the thirteen hours cross firing be seated in a hotel nearby Nepal Army Barracks and the devastated Khalanga bazaar. She works there for the Safe Motherhood Programme appointed by DFID, an INGO working in the remote areas of Nepal like Jumla, Jajarkot, Rukum and the likes. She after the termination of the contract with DFID, founded Action Works Nepal, a non-government organization committed to improving the lives of the people in Jumla, among the poorest in Nepal. She never leaves Jumla and Jumli people. She was also awarded by many national international awards in recognition of her passionate and courageous role. Her constant engagement with the NGOs in serving and carrying out the programs for social welfare establishes her as the NGO activist although she was indirectly after her individual career for the sustainable life through the financial advantages that were promised in the NGOs that she joined. Only following father's encouragement to serve jumlis was not key to her service in the jumlis. If she was genuine humanitarian and social activist, she would not get confined to the jumlis community because there are several remote areas where people have suffered a serious crisis of different kinds. It must be the promising economic career in the NGOs programs that played implicit roles in changing her mindset. However, the dedication in the face of conflicts and empathetic involvement towards trying to bring little change in a deprived place like jumla is rewarding.

Instead of being merely a literary work, the book *Jumla: A Nurse's Story*, as a genre called memoir gives us the objective reflection of the traumatic and turbulent circumstances that the people suffered by the help of representative experiences of the

author herself. A person, inescapably, is an inseparable part of society. What happens in one's life has a great deal to do with the happenings in the society, its system and structure that every person is bound up to follow. This bonding of person to public is seen when one goes through the text where the author Poudel records her private experiences of economic conditions in Jumla, patriarchal thoughts on women, cultural life in remote parts of Nepal and more importantly, the devastating consequences of physical properties and the mentally damaged traumatic experiences during the dangerous period of civil war.

Jumla: A Nurse's Story encapsulates the pictorial description of the war-affected Jumla and the devastated and traumatized mental state of the people with the help of her private experiences and the memories. Through her personal experiences, she accounts the public story or public experiences and sentiments. She represents the relationships between herself and her contemporary circumstances and social phenomena as an individual mirrors the public reality.

Initially, the book covers the devastated scars of Khalanga after the Maoists' attack on 14 November 2002 and the ruined picture of the Tila River, which was swollen up with human bodies and blood. The author, with some administrators, went to investigate and inspect the river and found one after another dead body. She initially gives such a horrific and decayed picture of Khalanga bazaar and the Tila River in order to postulate the destructiveness of war and also its devastating mental condition of the civilians. This also shows her prime concern of exploring her war experiences and its physical and mental consequences as her personal memory directly or indirectly connects with the society and the social sentiments. In this line of arguments, eventually, she says that Radha Poudel's story is not merely her private but rather the representation of the collectivity or the conditions and consequences of the war.

affected people.

The author, secondly, recollects her childhood memory and her father's recurrent motivation and warm guidance to serve the society and needy people the world in general and the Jumli people in particular. It is also a story of a lower/working class family, as it chronicles the hardships, struggles, sufferings or the experiences of firm and farming and their economic conditions of the author, as daughter of a country man. This is not her merely personal experiences but rather the story of almost eighty percent Nepali children who belongs such economic status. Therefore, a reader undoubtedly assimilates himself/herself with the narrator.

Likely, the memoir recaptures the actual disaster that took place during the Maoist Insurgency period though it was written and published after the end of the war. Since it is a memoir, it makes a specific focus on the tragic devastation of the Maoists attack on Khalanga while the author was there at her community health service. She experienced almost 13 hours of continuous cross firing and lives a new life as she says 'she has got her incarnation'.

This book as a memoir contemplates the author's memories incorporating socio-political, economic and cultural aspects and issues. Many have interpreted the memoir as genre; a subjective writing that has the influence of ideas on certain objects and productions of knowledge. However, the researcher hereby tries to argue that memoir as an autobiographical writing does not necessarily suffer from subjective construction of the knowledge but it, to a large extent, contributes to exposing the actuality of the certain aspects of social spectrum.

Poudel's *Jumla: A Nurse's Story* is a memoir based on the technique of self-revolution through intense introspections. The author observes her past memory of war and the surprising impoverished condition of the people in Jumla, is carefully and

beautifully described in language that is sure and searching. She recollects every minor detail of her witnessed events and experiences where a reader certainly feels like witness to the events even though s/he sees them through Poudel, the narrator's eyes exclusively. Therefore, this is a memoir of self-reflection, and of self-observation. Instead, there is extracting observation of others and the drive for mutual revelation as she shares the collective groups.

Radha Poudel, even though writes a memoir, a memory work, does not account merely her private 'self' rather she recaptures the socio-politico, cultural, psychological as well as the contemporary social ways of living, thoughts and behaviors. In this extent, her personal memory of the war and her service in Khalanga, as a social worker represents the public issues and memories. The autobiographical act *Jumla: A Nurse's Story*, therefore, is able to capture the public issues and experiences through the eyes of a person.

Radha Poudel, a war witness, suffers from the war trauma for a long time. She was psychologically clearly states and traumatized due to the deaths and destruction. She tries to heal her trauma through the script recollecting and remembering her hallucinating events and experiences indelibly masked in her memory. As she helps her trauma through writing about her private 'self' this memory in long extent serves or a public memory as they had to suffer from same condition like the author. This memoir also works as a commemorating document for those who lose their nearest and dearest in Khalanga attack in particular and in the Maoist insurgency period in general it captures the psychology of people like during the war.

At the one hand, the author publicizes herself to a wider range of readers/audience as she shares the college experiences of the people during the Maoist insurgency period in Nepali and on the other hand, Poudel records he unheard,

unspoken and unrecorded public plights, pity, suffering and the social grim of the people live in Jumla district, and even in the Karnali region. She records the plights and pain of Karnali people who are destined to endure poverty, starvation, lack of transportation, education, health and electricity other fundamental infrastructures of development for decades.

This means to say that as we view an autobiographical writing from the textual basis we see the close tie up between the text and context in order for the articulation of public reality from the eye of the individual experiences. Therefore, the researcher hereby tries to prove an argument that the exploration of the author's 'self' and its articulation of the social reality provokes the fact that to be personal is to public at the same time political as a person inescapably is an inseparable part of the whole structure of the society and social relation. Here, the being political doesn't refer to the particular understanding of power politics. It doesn't mean the government, institution, power etc. But rather, the political here means the intention or motive towards revealing something. Poudel's personal experiences reveal the challenges of all kinds prevalent in the jumlis society. These problems such as illiteracy, diseases, lack of health facilities, transportation do exist in other parts of the country but her personal experiences particularly frame and unfold the social, political, educational and cultural challenges. It is at this exposure of the public picture of the jumlis society where we can see the operation of personal becoming political. In this memoir Poudel's accounts of various places, people, socio-political and cultural practices do not emerge from the air of vacuum but significantly from the social artifacts and social practices. The researcher precisely an earth the argument that any kind of personal writing is bound up by the time and place s/he belongs to.

Radha Poudel's autobiographical act *Jumla: A Nurse's Story* demonstrates the

pictorial description of the death, and devastations occurred throughout Nepal due to the Maoists insurgency or the 10 years of civil war through her personal account/memory. Even though it is a memoir which generically supposed to be entirely personal revelations, it at the same time, exposes the social-political, cultural phenomena of the time collectively. This book is English version of her original book *Khalanga Ma Hamala*. In "Khalanga Ma Hamala: the Review" published in *Hamro Aawaz*, a national newspaper, the critic views that:

Khalangama Hamala is based on the attack during Maoist period in Khalanga, the headquarter of Jumla on 14th November 2002. *Khalangama Hamala* is published by Nepalaya Publication. Poudel witnessed the poverty that everyone talks about in the Karnali zone. The book is largely about the night of the attack but also on the injustice that poverty wrings, the inequality between the capital and Karnali and the vast difference between policy makers and people in Jumla. (n. pg.)

Jumla: A Nurse's Story accounts both the horrific attack in Khalanga bazaar and the social issues like poverty, insecurity, injustice, illiteracy and decayed health conditions and facilities. The other at the same time compares Karnali with the capital of Nepal and sees rest inequality in every see for like health, education, transportation and the effects of war on people's daily lives. Poudel, through her personal memory and experience depicts the objective reality of the then Nepali society.

Poudel, in her war memoir, recollects her sorrowful memories that how she endure the Maoist Insurgency and the continuous threats and dangers from both Nepali army and the Maoists, and more importantly how she survived from the crossfire between Nepal army and the Maoist soldiers in Khalanga and its devastating consequences. Roshan Gurung in a national magazine *Information Nepal*, views:

The book starts with a conversation between father and his daughter. "Father how *poor* we are?" "No my dear, the people of Jumla are poorer than us." The answer inspired her to work as a health worker/nurse in Jumla (one of the poorest, rural and undeveloped area of Nepal). The book let us know how Jumla is, what was it like during civil war in Nepal especially in rural area. It is kind of war memoir which tells us how she survived during Maoist attack on Khalanga Bazaar and what were the aftermath of the attack? Author has successfully illustrated the conditions of women in Nepal back then and the social challenges they faced in past and facing today. (3)

Gurung views her memoir as a record of the socio-political conditions of Jumla during the war period. This memoir, objectively, accounts the public sufferings took place from the years back due to lack of fundamental infrastructure of development, negligence of the Nepal government and also the Maoist Insurgency took place for a decade of late 1990s. She also encapsulates the miserable conditions of women in Jumla, the Karnali region and as a whole in throughout Nepal with a critical view on Nepalese patriarchy.

Radha Poudel, as an active NGO activist participating in social welfare NGOs programs, plays a significant role in the field of development and with her autobiographical endeavour *Jumla: A Nurse Story* in the Nepali literary world. She receives so many awards with recognition of her significant role as a humanitarian a social activist along with the prestigious literary award the Madan Puraskar for *Khalangama Hamala*, the original Nepali version of *Jumla: A Nurse's Story* in 2014. As she is the third woman laureate, who receive Nepal's most recognized literary award, the 'Madan Puraskar'. Poudel, in the wall of her official page, "The Radha Poudel Foundation" argues, "The space for women authors in Nepali literature is

growing and I am glad to have played my small part in helping effect that paradigm shift" (1). She hereby desires to contribute something better even in the field of literature. She, moreover, mentions that, "the award helped bring the stories of the people of Khalanga to limelight. It became a call for all stake holders to act towards the systematic poverty, injustice and exclusion in Mid-western and Far-western region. I am glad that the award was not just a personal feat but also beneficial for Khalanga's residents" (4). Poudel claims herself to be a part of the whole community as she gives credit of award to the all readers and the people who faced such a destructive and denigrating situation. On the other hand, she is glad became the unheard and unspoken stories of poverty, illiteracy, war trauma, insecurity, inequality, starvation, malnutrition and the like are recorded in her memoir and heard by the government and many of the civilians. Thus ultimately publicizes herself and her elevation contribution, passion as well as her war memory and its trauma to a large group of audience/readers. As she claims that helps her to support uplift her mission of public health and humanitarian world. In this sense, she rightly explores the public voices through her personal story and experience.

Kunda Dixit, a Nepali critic, with a humble praise illustrates her contributions to the society for the social upliftments, states, "In the book, Radha Poudel relives minute details of the battle of Jumla and how that close brush with death motivated her to continue to work for the upliftment of the people of this remote part of Nepal" (n. pg.). Dixit, valorizing her contribution, further mentions that "She teared up during a recent interview and said in a chucking voice, "I had to go back to Jumla and help the people I went there to help" (n.pg). She is emotionally and physically attached and devoted for the betterment and upliftment of Khalanga, and the whole Karnali regions a whole.

Similarly, Nitisha Raymajhi in "Radha Poudel: A Change Maker" praises Paudel's contribution in the social field. She focuses more on her contribution in the health sectors and even in the women empowerment and considers her as a change maker, rather than her memorial descriptions and depictions of the attack in Khalanga as well as her struggle to make herself alive. Nitisha argues:

Radha travels back and forth from Jumla but prefers spending more times there as she considers it her second birth place. In spite of constant struggles, she has never let anything bring her down; in fact, with each obstacle she has come out stronger. She believes that she still has a long way to go and is persistent in her drive to uplift the condition of the rural people. No matter how much is said about her good deeds, it always be less. She stands as a true example of rebel but with causes. (2)

Raymajhi also insists that along with the contributions in health sector Poudel more energetically fights for peace, security, social justice and equality and for the women empowerment. Raymajhi states that, "she strongly supports the statements that, "Absence of war is not peace," and until women are educated and treated equal, there will be no peace" (3). Though these reviews attempt to form her image as a change maker, it still feels odd to conclude that way. She was only trying to fulfill her responsibility as a member of the NGOs program she was associated with but being an agency of change wasn't her primary mission. Yet, there is no doubt that her programs and participation through different programs did contribute a great deal in trying to speed up the change that was bound to happen sooner or later.

Jumla: A Nurse Story, as an autobiographical act, to bestow a message that what you determine to do that you deserves. She, even though, an ordinary girl plays as a role model for social change as well as peace, justice, equality and the

humanitarian values throughout the world. Her life story reenergizes even an ordinary reader and emotional force him/her to the social welfare. Nitisha Raymajhi strongly comments that:

Her life story is not an ordinary one . . . "I was born twice," says Radha who choose to walk the difficult way in life though aware that the journey would never be easy. Born in Chitwan, social worker Radha Worked in Jumla even during the Maoist Insurgency decade, where she *faced* near death experiences every day. She even survived horrific hours of crossfire and constant bombings, making her believe that she was given a second chance to live far reason. Her connection with Jumla dates back many years and her life story is not an ordinary one. (6)

Raymajhi regards Poudel's life story as an extra ordinary one she strongly high lights Radha Poudel's contributions is the socio-political cultural field rather playing little attention to her war experiences that is her private 'self'.

The Kathmandu Post reviews Radha Poudel's *Jumla: A Nurse's Story* with a dew emphasis on the disastrous consequences of the fiercest time of Maoists insurgency on the remote area through an objective account of Jumla district and mentions:

The English edition of author Radha Poudel's Madan Puraskar winning memoir *Khalangama Hamala- Jumla: A Nurse's Story* hits the shelves nationwide Poudel recently unveiled. Poudel, a nurse by profession, travelled to *Jumla* to work under Safe motherhood Programme. part reportage, part memoir, her book chronicles the authors stay in Khalanga at time when the Maoist Insurgency was its peak and the settlement lived through one of the fiercest skirmishes of the entire insurgency. (n. pg)

Poudel went Jumla taking risk of the fiercest period of Maoist insurgency positioning herself as a senior post for Safe Motherhood Programme. She, even after the termination of the contract period, returns back to Jumla and continues her earlier efforts and plays an important role to uplift Khalanga's residents as she succeeds to establishing a hospital with all the facilities for safe motherhood.

Since, the researcher goes through readings of the predecessors and finds no significant studies on Poudel's *Jumla: A Nurse's Story* from the perspective autobiography and autobiographical tools. As it does not have sufficient readings as how this memoir shares the collectivity and how Poudel's personal memories and experiences are regarded on the public memory and experience. Therefore, the research aim to locate the significant events and experiences of the writer to find its connections to the contemporary social life, it basically deals with the text itself. So, the textual analysis of the memoir *Jumla: A Nurse's Story* is its primary method for the research. However, various ideas and concepts concerning the debates on the importance of memoir; its ability for objective representation of reality as well as society or the contemporary history will also be brought in to the discussion.

Radha Poudel's *Jumla: A Nurse's Story* is autobiographical memoir taken interview for defence about this book is mirror of Jumla's people's suffered from Maoist insurgency, patriarchal thought, poverty and impoverished condition represented by this writing. Here, Radha Poudel inspired by her father's story, her father had gone to Jumla (Khalanga) and he catches the picture during his serving time at Jumla.

Me: what about you want to say yourself, Khalangama Hamala is autobiographical memoir in literary genera? (My Interview)

Radha Poudel, this book is about autobiographical memoir because its defence different article become published this book. Likewise, Roshan Gurung,

Hamro aawaz, Kunda Dixit and Nitisha Raymajhi. Who critics I have noted they are talk about theme of autobiographical memory along with real images of jumla and jumlis peoples, and furthermore Nitisha Raymajhi also talked about the woman's empowerment by the several articles. And other hand , its my life experienced from childhood to since now, its also my real story whereas I feel and experience along my grown-up I have witnessed and participated in significant events and incidents in whole life being as author. Regarding yours question this book is autobiographical memory. (My Interview)

Me: madam! you got one of the huge Madan Bhandari national award, at that time, what did you feel yourself about when you were receiving award from the book "khalangama Hamala "

Radha Poudel: as being human or social being of course I had glad along with expanding my social duty and responsibility, insightly I encouraged moreover I can't express my happiness of that moment, because each and every human being can feel very energies and love to owns contribution in societies. When I got that prize more and more encouraged to serve the people as health worker and social activist I recognized. And I feel I should totally devoted in society for long time however I served the jumlis people as save motherhood program, after termination the save motherhood program I established "action work Nepal "its also serve the jumlis people, whereas dominating by patriarchal thought, like "chhaupadi" due to chhaupadi system many menstruation women untimely death in Chhau Ghar due to raped and snake biting and so on. Still I have been working in karnali, Bheri and Seti region about with awareness to chhaupadi system. And still I remembered my father who provided a lots of idea of jumla because he visited jumla and show the very poor

people, discrimination between male and female cause by chhaupadi system and saman system in the name of patriarchal thought.

Me: you want to change the society like you have seen change maker but how could you count the autobiography? (My Interview)

Radha Poudel : I don't know about nature of autobiography but I can defense it is not my personal property, its the property of jumlis people, because the writing resources are poverty of jumla , impoverished state of jumla , moist insurgency in Khalanga, social injustice between Kathmandu and jumla or Karnali Region and chhaupadi and saman system . So here, I have written the jumlis people and their pathetic condition. It totally represented the real images of Khalanga bazaar and show the society through my long story.

Me : How you inspired to go jumla and serving jumlis ? (My Interview)

Radha Poudel: when I was child my father told the story of jumla and jumlis people, regarding my question : father how poor we ? and father replied me along with compared 'no daughter we are good than jumlis or jumla' . Really I was astonished to hear father. And another part of inspiration is when I have to be nurse because I remembered to the father's story I feel I need to jumla and serve there people. Later I resigned nurse job in Bharatpur and joint DFID. First time I reached in Khalanga airport I show small child without warm cloth and sandal for receiving bags and luggage for life serving. So, that is my scene who make changed me.

Me: ma'am at last any opinion about the book? (My Interview)

Radha Poudel: um! yes brother ! It has encouraged to me more and more to serve the societies. Continuing I have been involving with woman empowerment such as, to band chhaupadi and saman system its totally related with conservative thought, women are right less, untimely death by raped and

snake biting in Chhau Ghar , I have been visiting this case in Karnali zone , dailekh and achham. Therefore I should to change the conservative thought to give right to living in peace owns shelter. At last I hope this book helps to change the chhaupadi and saman system, jumla and other backwarded regions got opportunities to make change and develop, loss of poverty and gained justice. (My Interview)

According to the reliable interview about justification and provable this research paper, Radha Poudel is human being whenever she growing up child to now because at that child era how she want to know curiously about the jumla by her father ? Its become the answer this question to know Radha Poudel is public, objective and social activist. Her intention is very huge for service in jumlis people supposed to the health worker, chhaupadi and so on. Much important evidence is fact for witness the autobiographical memoir.

Here, author announced to the people who need to help by different aspect . Most deficient and poor people need to them help by sharing the knowledge of justice and human right. Human get an opportunities equally not to say jumlis and Kathmandu. Government should not have bias to jumla and other regional areas.

I always say that, no one can choose birth-place. Somebody is birth into rich family of rich country so he becomes rich. That is not contribution of his nation. Someone birth in poor family of his same country may nothing his faulty as name of poverty. Wherever we born, wherever we growth. We have to live together. We have to contribution to the nation on the basis of birth. We have to help to them who have not capable and deficient people as we capable and resourceful human being to the contribution for overcomes. Question is that, how did we utilize our capability for deficiency people? (My Interview)

'Friendship Village-living together 'is question to seek the answer this effort.

(124)

So, Radha Poudel speaks the public voice. Still who suffered the injustice, poverty and inequality of human right. And she tries to motivate the people through her book, 'Radha Paudel's jumla: A nurse story'. In this autobiographical memoir her voice transformed into society. She is inspirational person to people.

Autobiographical memoir is bounded by whole significant memory of life. Some significant memory can making change maker in certain society and there thought.

Radha Paudel's autobiographical memoir, Jumla's a nurse story is social phenomenon. It has announced the children's curiosity, how is the condition of health's infrastructure in Nepal? How traumatized the Maoist insurgency at that time ? And how suffered the woman in the Karnali, Bheri and Seti zone name of the patriarchal or conservative thought? At last what is the perception of government to develop the jumla and capital city? Therefore this autobiographical memoir is the literary mirror of back-wardness, cultural thought and disadvantage of war. Here we meet the transformation of individual to social, subject to object and self to other.

For the very purpose, the researcher draws some theoretical parameters from the autobiographical theorists Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's *Autobiography: a Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* and some other theorists and critic's ideas on autobiography and memoir will also be brought in order to support the claim.

Jumla: A Nurse's Story, generically as a memoir, through the eye witness of the protagonist or the narrator testifies the collective, was experiences as it chronicles the horrific period of civil war took place during the late 1990s in Nepal. A memoir, as a mode of life narrative, is not only personal account rather it is more related to collective memory. A memoir has traditionally been treated as a more documentation

of a personal past experiences. So, the relation between the subject, and its interconnection with public was simply divorced, but modern theorization on memoir and autobiography explores the transformation of autobiographical subject form 'self' to 'other'. In modern theorization the memoir and autobiography are taken to be the same kinds of genre. Sidonie smith and Julia Watson in their theoretical endeavors, *Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* argue that, "In contemporary parlance autobiography and memoir are used interchangeably" (198). As they argue, memoir as a mode of life writing shares same features of an autobiography. But at the sometime some distinctions are relevant as Lee Quinby in "The Subject of Memoirs: The Woman Warrior's Technology of Ideographic Selfhood," argues:

Whereas autobiography promotes an 'I' that shares with confessional discourse *and* assumed interiority and an ethical mandate to examine that interiority, memoirs promote an 'I' that is explicitly constituted in the reports of the utterances and proceedings of others. The 'I' or subjectivity produced in memoirs is externalized and . . . dialogical. (299)

Quinby views that an autobiography simply accounts subject's memories and captures private issues and stories rather than the public events and incidents whereas a memoir captures both private as well as public stories collectively. For him a memoir is more social than the autobiography. However, memoir is a sub-genre of autobiography as it is about the 'self' and its experiences. Thus both the genres are byproducts of the author's private 'self'. They share collectivity as individual memories and experiences are bounded up with the shared culture, and community as the author inescapably is a social product. Therefore, an individual story eventually is public story. Radha Poudel's memoir, contemplating her private journey of suffering, trauma and struggles explores the social issues of war, war trauma, social injustices

and inequalities, poverty, lack of health facilities, education and other infrastructures of development eventually turns out to be the public issues and experiences.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, defining memoir state that memoir is, "a mode of life narrative that historically situates the subject in a social environment, as either observer or participant, the memoir directs attention more toward the lives and action of others than to the narrator" (198). As Smith and Watson define, memoir is an autobiographical genre which evokes the shared memories of specific time place and collectivity through an individual eye. Poudel's memoir, as they argue, delineates the objective details of Maoist attack in Khanalga and its devastating situations with her personal endurance, experience and memories. It records the real events, actions and incidents that took place during the Maoist Insurgency period unlike the chronological history of the nation.

Radha Poudel, exploring her 'self' textualizes contemporary historical events, actions and incidents that basically took place due to Maoist Insurgency in Karnali and Jumla specifically. She witnessed and experienced the civil war vividly and encapsulates her private self. Her private story thereby turns to be the public story.

Nancy K. Miller, in *Bequest and Betrayal*, defining memoir states that, "memoir is fashionably postmodern, since hesitates to define the boundaries between private and public, subject and object" (43). Memoir, in the present day world, situates personal story in social circumstances. The modern memoir more concerns with the societal and circumstantial phenomena rather than mere depiction of the subject's memories. Memoir, in this sense, is an autobiographical act closely interlinked with the subject's society, culture and the circumstances.

Memoir, as a mode of life writing, is a memory work. The other remembers his/her past experience and postulates through language the collectivity shares.

Remembering is also historical the inflected phenomenon it situates the one in the historically specific time and zonal space. Poudel, likely situates herself in the remote district Jumla and encapsulates the historical events and experiences of the Maoist insurgency that she had to endure while she was in Khalanga for the safe motherhood program. Poudel's autobiographical act *Jumla: A Nurse's Story*, postulates the vivid picture of Khalanga attack on 14 November 2001 along with the psychological devastation of the people around her. As she depicts the horrific scenarios of war and Khalanga attack, it is not truly her only private story rather it is a collective memory and endurance of Jumla in Karnali region and throughout Nepal as a whole.

Poudel's account of her war experience coaxes the one remembering the past endurances that she had to insurgency period lasts for almost ten years. Memory and remembering is historically specific and regionally emulated and culturally discursive. Talking about memory, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, argue that, "If remembering is a historical inflected phenomenon, it is also a situated one. Much memory is contextual, as Susan Engel's context is everything. The natural of memory suggests. Acts of remembering take place at particular sites and in particular circumstances" (18). As memory is influenced and situated in particular historical, cultural and social circumstances, one's memory eventually explores collective/common experiences. This means to say that memoir, as an autobiographical act locating the author/ the subject with specific historical and cultural situation, evokes the public story through personal story as the author does with the help of her memoir *Jumla: A Nurse's Story*. Her past memory hereby serves as a subject to this autobiography.

Memory as a process of recalling and reinterpreting one's past endurances or events recollected in one's mental cognition, Poudel reveals her past memories at the present in this memoir. Memory can be personal as well as collective. To some extent,

personal memory bounds with the collective memory as one share the collectivity in a particular zone as Anne Whitehead argues, "Memory is a specifically social phenomenon" (123).

Jumla: A Nurse's Story reveals author's personal memory of the past but ultimately turns to be the public memory of the shared collectivity. The subject's journey in life is the journey of the shared community that is her re-memorization of the Khalanga attack is now no longer remained her sole experience but of all the people who live in Khalanga in Jumla during the Maoist Insurgency period. Anne Whitehead, similarly, argues that, "any given society is composed of a number of different groups. Each group, be it a social class, an association, a corporation, or a family, has its own distinctive memories, which its members have constructed, often over long period of time. Social memory is constantly transformed along with the groups themselves" (128). Memory is socially articulated and formed with a certain cultural and customary practices over a long period of time.

Memory is not an isolated phenomenon rather it is the collective and social issues and subject as one's memorization bounds up with his/her surroundings and circumstances. Avishai Margalit, in the same vein, argues that, "we usually care about our parents, children, spouses, lovers, friends, and by extension about some significant groups to which we belong" (32), as result, memory is, "the cement that holds thick relations together" (8). Memory, therefore, is socially, culturally and historically articulated and framed in one's mind which is transformed with the collective artifacts shared by the family, community and society.

Autobiography as a meaning making process the author identifies himself or herself for the sole purpose of bestowing some positive message. Poudel, through the autobiographical endeavor *Jumla: A Nurse's Story* not only tries to identify herself as

a successful social worker, peace maker and human right activists but also a common Nepali girl raised around the poverty and starvation, and a war victim as she had to endure 13 hours cross firing in Khalanga. Likely, the autobiographical theorist, Linda Anderson in her book *Autobiography*, states:

[w]hat the author of an autobiography is to try endowing his inscription within the text with all the attributes of face in order to mask *conceal* his fictionalization or displacement by writing. Autobiography thus procedure the fiction of figure in the place of self knowledge they seek on which both the subject and autobiography's identity and dependent. (9)

Anderson hereby talks about the purposes of writing about the self and argues that an autobiographical act inescapably involves in to the author's motives or politics behind exploring and articulating the 'self'. Poudel, as Anderson argues through this memory work tries to explore herself as a person with struggling past and as an inspirational figure ever in the world. This autobiography with merely personal experiences creates her 'self' identity as a writer and also involves into the self knowledge and the essence of articulation of her past life.

An autobiographical act explores the private self and encompasses specific historical situations as it has situated in associations. Smith and Watson state that, "the memory invoked in autobiographical narrative is specific to the time of writing and the context of telling. It is never isolatable fact, but situated association. (18). In *Jumla: A Nurse's Story*, Poudel explores her past childhood days and indentifies herself as a working class child reared in Chitwan district and later a nurse at Bharatpur Hospital and eventually a social worker and activist determined to serve the poverty stricken, illiterate, under privileged, backwarded and war affected people in Karnali region. She writes:

I decided I *would* live in the community and do communities work. I felt that just treating disease alone was not providing a true health service. It was the responsibility of a health professional to help people think rationally and remove superstition, as well as dealing with diseases at the grassroots level. My presence or absence would make no difference in a city, whereas a village needed me. I decided I would go to Jumla, the Jumla of my father's stories, after i finished my studies. (19-20)

She explores the horrendous attack in Khalanga and, its deteriorations as a form of remembering which creates the collective story of the people generating desire for belonging in that large family of Jumla, and/or more precisely of Khalanga.

Radha, remembering her own impoverished childhood experiences, sees server poverty in Jumla and says, "Seeing impoverished children in Jumla, I always recall my own childhood" (150). The impoverished Jumla coxes her remembering past and energizes to serve for this betterment. She re-examines her childhood experiences in present and compares with the children in Jumla. Memoir, as a remembering process, the subject's memory is linked with the self's past memories. Memory, whether public or private, is both the subject and the source of an autobiographical act. Smith and Watson argue, "The writer of an autobiography depends on access to memory to tell a retrospective narrative of the past and to situate the present within that experiential history. Memory, thus is both source and authenticator of autobiographical acts" (16). As they argue for the author her past memories of the childhood days are articulated with the grim image of poverty in Jumla. Here memory serves as a subject, source and authenticator of an autobiography as Poudel's writing process reinterprets and rememorizes past memory.

Rockwell Gary in "Autobiography Now" states, "Autobiography is a manner

of presenting, understanding, and experiencing oneself" (33). He, furthermore, states that as autobiography makes the author, "enter into and, shape discourse, behavior, self-protection, and political activity" (Gary, 33). The author reevaluating her past in Chitwan, compares miserable life in Jumla and destined herself towards her goal of serving the needy people in the society, and she writes:

I used to go to school barefoot and plant paddy in other people's fields for minimal wage. Many times I had to skip dinner as my parents didn't have enough to feed us all. I used to think it was only my family who lived like *that* until, at the age of 27, I came to Jumla and realized that wasn't true. The two *dalit* Boys whom I met as soon as my plane touched down in Jumla really opened my eyes. (150)

She finds distinct figures of Jumla from her imagination since her very first step in Jumla and "made a commitment to do something significant for Jumla and its people" (150) even though she had already decided to serve in Jumla. *Jumla: A Nurse's Story* not only postulates the author's war experience but also the social, cultural and political issues. Poudel, along with the issue of war and its physical and psychological effects, contemplates on the socio-economical issues such as poverty, superstition, illiteracy, women suppression and miserable and struggling daily livelihood due to lack of infrastructures of development prevalent in the Nepalese society.

She explores deeply rooted superstitions that people prefer Shaman than doctor patriarchal beliefs through this book in order to illuminate it and empower women. She mentions, "Later I understood that all the mother in the village who didn't have a son felt cursed. People said, "They can only cross the *Baitarani* River if a son lights their funeral pyre"" (135). She, moreover postulates her own mother's story that, "my mother didn't got to visit most of the neighbors to avoid hearing such

evil things. She also didn't visit her mother's home that often. She became very angry inside but didn't say anything out loud" (135). This is not only a story of her mother but also of almost all Nepalese women. This issue at the same time is a public issue that is to be changed accordingly.

Likely, she raises the issue of Chhaupadi prevalent in the Mid Western as well as Far Western regions in Nepal in order for making people aware about menstruation as it is a physical cycle occurred once in a month and is a necessary process. She says that people, "prevented menstruating women from touching the base of the home. This meant, in practice, that they were not allowed to stay in the house. They, however, were sent to live in Chhaupadi-a shelter outside the house in seclusion for some days. There were a plethora of such practices" (38). Moreover, she, as a nurse, comments:

Leaders, officers, journalists and nurses who talked big outside still practiced and followed Chhaupadi, a practice of periodic ostracisation whereby women were not supposed to eat *rice*, milk, or meat during menstruations. They were not allowed to meet their friends they couldn't touch plants or vegetables and fruits or go near pregnant women or children. Not to mention temples. They kept a distance from the temples and didn't even look at them, as if it were as a sin. (39)

Her account of Chhaupadi, a common practice prevalent in Mid Western and Far Western regions, helps to develop a positive conscience that it is a monthly cycle occurred in every woman and it does not harm anymore for their religion and cultural practices. So it should be taken positively for that we should make ignorant people be aware about it. Even though she did not experience *Chhaupadi*, practice, explores the social causes and consequences. In this light, her memoir, along with her private self,

speaks about the society and social phenomena. as Ellen Peel, in "The Self Is Always an Other: Going the Long Way Home to Autobiography" argues, "It's impossible to write autobiographically or give always found it so It's impossible to have an experience that other people haven't had, or aren't having"(6).

Poudel, with the help of her memoir *Jumla: A Nurse's Story* makes herself publicized and creates an identity of writer as she wins the most recognized Madan Prize a most recognized literary award/prize in Nepal, a social activities, health worker, peace maker, and human right activities as she is acknowledge as a woman peacemaker by the university of san Diego in 2012, in the same year the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) honored her with the N-Peace Award for her contribution to peace building. Furthermore, she receives the Youth Talent Award from the Government of Nepal in 2014 in recognition of her role as a humanitarian and social activist. As Margo V. Perkins in "Autobiography as Political/Personal Intervention" views, "In writing their lives, activists seek to document their experiences, to correct information, to educate their readers, and to encourage the continuation of struggle" (70), Poudel, as an activist, aims to encourage and educate the people. Through her personal endurance and experiences and more importantly she tries to delineate the impoverished, illiterate, underprivileged and war affected people's life and livelihood.

This memoir documents the endurance and fortitude demonstrated by the narrator along with the other people in the midst of terror, insecurity and recurrent fear of facing charge as well as assault wide spreading during the Maoist insurgency period. The Nepalese people were charged innocently from Maoists and the Nepali security force. The social workers and professionals couldn't do their assigned task properly as they had to face the security threats. There was fear and terror everywhere

as the narrator narrates:

I have seen security personnel throwing Jumlis' goods away. The hotel where I stayed was just 50 meters from the district police station. I saw everything from the windows—the police on security alert and the oppressive treatment of innocent citizens in the name of security. Also for security reasons we were *unable* to send medicines to health sub-posts in the districts. The fear that the Maoists might use them prompted a ban on bringing in the essential medicines. (50)

The author accounts the true picture of the then terrific and unsecured Nepalese society due to bursting Maoist insurgency. People had to fear from both sides as they, "were not allowed to walk or meet in groups" (54). The innocent people were more affected by the civil war even though it is/was said that all the deaths and dangers took place for the marginalized and excluded people in the Nepalese society.

This autobiographical endeavour as a memoir accounts her private experiences of the civil war that took place in the Nepali history, but it, at the same time, articulates the unheard and unwritten stories and trauma of the people in Jumla. She commenting on the very situation comments that "it felt as if all the people in Khalanga Bazaar were walking on hot coals. We were counting every breath and heartbeat. . . . dying second by second was much more painful" (54). This shows the very panic and pathetic situation people had to face not only in Khalanga but also throughout Nepal. At that time people even trusted no man at all. She writes, "there was the fear of death in everyone's eyes. No one trusted anyone. New faces were regarded with suspicion" (56). This was the common situation of the then Nepal. Thus this memoir by means of the 'self' accelerates the true history of the excluded and marginalized people in Jumla as well as the Karnali region in order to consolidate the

people those who compelled to lose their nearest and dearest.

Radha Poudel in *Jumla: A Nurse's Story* vividly describes the crossfire between the Nepali Army and the Maoists in Khalanga on 14 November 2002 and the aftermaths objectively as she herself had to endure the cross firing throughout the night. She was in Everest Hotel with the owner Sunil *dai*, his wife, children, his old mother as well other guests. They face 13 hours of continuous cross firing near them.

She along with her personal story rightly postulates the picturesque description of the death, devastation and destruction as she presents tattered and barren Khalanga bazaar. As she went out next morning she sees, "The District Police Office, Education Office, agriculture Office and the administration Office were all burned to the ground. The airport was still on fire. . . . Blood was everywhere. In just a single night, my lovely Jumla had been burned to the ground. But I was still alive. It was my rebirth" (82). She hereby accounts not only the physical destructions but more importantly the mental devastation due to the war trauma and fear. The narrator/ author with her personal experiences rightly explore the collective sufferings of the people throughout Nepal in general and the people in Jumla and some other remote areas in specific.

This research project strongly persuaded to us by personal life experiences count as social phenomenon represented in Radha Poudel's memoir *Jumla: A nurse's story*. And it also examine and prove that autobiographical writing become transformed by the objective representation of the history and historical knowledge of the significant events of the society and the zonal group. However, author and narrator recollect the socio-political, economical and cultural sensibility and bare realities of the society, it help to autobiography is attempt to the social phenomena. More precisely this research project is strong by the several book's critic and theoretical critic on autobiographical memoir. So that autobiography is not only

subjective it become objective, public, social and other through history and historical knowledge and there significant social phenomenon.

Written in the form of autobiographical memoir, this memoir is based on the events experienced by Radha Poudel. It might be her journey filled up with the ups and downs along the way but it simultaneously depicts the reality of the Jumla from its political, economic, educational and cultural dimensions. Going through the memoir informs anyone about the existing conditions and challenges that the Jumli must undergo. As a personal experiences experienced by Radha Poudel, it documents the particular picture of the social life in the remote and backward community of Jumla. It presents the poverty, backwardness, poor health, lack of education and the vulnerable effects of war in the innocent lives of the Jumlis people. This memoir narrated through the retrospective style through the channel of memory by the author chronicles all the painful memories and hardships the author went through during her service in Jumla. Her account reflects a great deal of reality on the turmoil and turbulent that Jumlis face. It seems to challenge and contradict the conventional dichotomy between private and public space.

Conventionally, private has been isolated from the public and is placed to be inferior to public dimension. The private experiences were simply taken to be of no value for public life. Private realism was limited and confined within the domestic reality of the individual. Memory was taken to be a mere act of remembering the past. But Radha Poudel's private experiences have gone far than being limited to the domestic space. It might be her personal experiences faced by herself but her experiences embody the particular picture of the social life of the Jumlis in the form of Radha Poudel's impression and observation. Whether it holds the authenticity or not can be another matter of research but the textual evidences lead us to the picture

of jumlis social life as it comes to us through her personal observation. When one reads the memoir, they not only get familiar with the difficulties of her journey but also get to know how the Jumlis have suffered from poor infrastructure, poor health facility, no education, severe impact of war, epidemic diseases and so on. Her memory channels the readers back to the times when she endured all these troubles. Her act of remembering combines her experiences with the life of the Jumlis and establishes her identity as an activist. Act of remembering is not neutral but political but it intends to serve certain purposes. One of the purposes Radha Poudel intends to fulfill to bring the plight of the Jumlis social life in the attention of the all readers. She succeeds in exposing the reality of Jumlis life through her personal experiences powered through the vehicle of memory. While doing it, it seems to reveal the disparity of the development between the remote place like jumla and the central city, Kathmandu. Besides, her personal exposure of jumlis life serves the implicit observation of ignorance and negligence towards the people of the corner from the state. Thus, the memoir as an account of personal experiences establishes Poudel as a NGO activist who strives for social welfare and it reflects a larger public picture of Jumlis channeling social life.

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