

## Representation of Regional Marginality in Buddhisagar's *Karnali Blues*

The present research based on Buddhisagar's *Karnali Blues* is an attempt to explore how the writer has collected the stories of Karnali and its periphery to counter the hegemonic mentality of the center, i.e. Kathmandu. It deals with the writer's effort to make Karnali stand and speak in front of Kathmandu and other places of Nepal. This research studies how the novel helps Karnali to establish distinct identity among other places. It also studies how the novel helps to dissolve the distance and gap between center-margin, i.e. Kathmandu and Karnali. It shows how the novel gives new perspective to see Karnali by challenging both the mainstream politics of Nepal and the mainstream literary writing of Nepal.

In the novel, the writer has spotted the light on the life of subalterns. The characters, languages, locations and events presented in the novel represent the life of subalterns. They are marginalized in terms of caste, region, class, gender, etc. in the Nepali society. Like the characters, the places presented in the novel are also neglected by the center. The novel revolves around the places of Karnali and its periphery, which are neglected by the mainstream politics of Nepal. Not only the characters, settings and events of the novel, but also the language used in the novel represents ordinary people's day-to-day life. It makes clear that the writer has given lot of spaces for Karnali, which is always ignored in the socio-political context and literary writing of Nepal.

Generally, people creates border between two places in the name of development and modernity. In other words, the places are categorized from center to periphery in terms of development of modern technology. Is it correct to categorize a place as marginal and center, only based on economy and development? Is not the cultural and geographical factors determine the value of a place? Does a particular place determine the suffering and pain of people? What is the significance of giving central space to Karnali in the novel? Have the novel become successful to make Karnali speak loudly in front of Kathmandu? How the

novel become successful to establish its distinct identity in front of Kathmandu? How the novel helps to make a balanced relation between center and margin? Based on the novel, this research goes through such questions, which are related to center-margin relationship.

*Karnali Blues* is one of the examples, which helps to give a new way in Nepali literary writing. The writer has made the subject of the novel to those people and places, which were always put in the position of the object in the mainstream Nepali writing. It is a good initiation in the history of Nepali fiction writing. The novel brings the readers into the world of Far-Western region of Nepal. A reader can know the very tiny things about the everyday life of people. It can create a vivid picture of the culture, people, society and language of the Karnali region in readers' mind. It can also make the readers feel about the physical, environmental and social condition of the Karnali zone. The novel is very successful to take the readers into the beauty of life and hardship of the people living in the Karnali and its periphery. It has made the readers who are in the central position to think about the life of marginalized people. It can create curiosity in the readers' mind about the life of Karnali. In other words, the novel is a mirror of Karnali and its periphery, which reflects its image to Kathmandu and other places.

The term 'subaltern' stands for those people who do not have a proper voice and lack of agency to speak their own voice. It refers to the people and places which are in a subordinate position and are neglected by the center. Their voices are not recognized or listened. The mainstream politics always see them as Others. They are in the position of object not the subject. Gyan Prakash, one of the scholars of Subaltern Studies mentions, "The term subaltern, drawn from Antonio Gramsci's writings, refers to subordination in terms of class, caste, gender, race, language, and culture..." (1977). It makes clear that any person or any group of people who are marginalized in one way or another are subaltern. Those people and the community are subaltern, whose voice is muted and they cannot raise their own voice.

Ranajit Guha is the founder of the subaltern studies group. Giving idea about subaltern politics, he argues, "in spite of such diversity one of its invariant features was a notion of resistance to elite domination" (4). This shows that from the beginning the subaltern studies main concern is in the resistance of domination. Along with Guha, the other subaltern scholars like Shahid Amin, Dipesh Chakrabarty, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman, Gyanendra Pandey focus on the importance of rewriting the historiography of the nation to give voice for the voiceless and bringing them back to the mainstream activities of the society. For this, they emphasize the own value of those who are marginalized by the mainstream politics. In case of *Karnali Blues*, the writer also emphasizes the local values and local context of Karnali, which was always in domination of mainstream politics of Nepal. Thus, this research adopts the theoretical perspective of subaltern studies, which gives importance to the local context to represent the marginal places and people.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is another name, which cannot be forgotten while talking about subaltern studies. In her world famous article "Can The Subaltern Speak?", she raises so many questions. She accuses the subaltern studies because it failed to give voices for those who are in double marginalization. She criticizes the western intellectuals who try to hegemonize the non-west in the name of knowledge. According to her, "...animating an effectively heliocentric discourse, fills the empty place of the agent with the historical sun of theory, the Subject of Europe" (69). In the name of knowledge, the West or Europe always tries to secure the position of subject, whereas the East is always put in the position of object. She criticizes those who try to get benefit by raising the poor conditions of subalterns. Therefore, to analyze how the novel represent Karnali, which was always dominated by Kathmandu, this research makes the idea of Spivak and other subaltern scholars as useful reference.

In subaltern studies, many scholars have discussed about the regional marginality. They are like Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak Chakravorty, Gyan Prakash, Dipesh Chakravarty. While discussing about regional marginality, their focus is on the relationship between the West and the East. According to them in the name of knowledge, development and modernity, the West always dominates the East. Thus, they try to destroy the hegemonic relation between the West and the East and try to establish the reciprocal relation. On the other hand, the subaltern scholars focus on the local values, local culture and local context to make visible the places and people who were put in the position of marginalization. Likewise, in the relation between Kathmandu and Karnali, Kathmandu is in the position of center and Karnali is in the position of margin. Through the novel, the writer is trying to dismantle the unbalanced relation between Kathmandu and Karnali. To do so, the novel focuses on the cultural and natural values of Karnali. Therefore, to analyze how the novel deconstruct the hegemonic relation of Kathmandu-Karnali, this research adopts theoretical perspective of subaltern studies, which particularly focuses on West-East relation.

In the novel, the narrator travels from Karnali to Kathmandu for the further study after SLC, because Kathmandu had established itself as the center of the country. Along with the narrator's movement from Karnali to Kathmandu, the writer brings so many cultural and geographical issues, which help the readers to know about Karnali. It can create a vivid picture of Karnali in readers' mind. Michael Hutt is one of the scholar who is working in the field of Nepali literature and language for many years. According to him, "For the central protagonist of *Karnali Blues*, however, it is Kathmandu that is foreign territory, and the novel charts a journey towards the center from a geographical and cultural location that a Kathmandu perspective constructs as marginal" (27). It becomes clear that Karnali is geographically and culturally distinct from Kathmandu, and Kathmandu always construct

discourses to show Karnali as marginal place. In other words, Karnali was always given the position of object.

The writer has reversed the position of object of Karnali through the novel. All of the characters, events, settings, languages, which were always neglected by the mainstream politics and mainstream writings, are given the position of subject in the novel. The novel gives a distinct identity to Karnali, which was always in the position of object. According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The declared aim of Subaltern Studies was to produce historical analyses in which the subaltern groups were viewed as the subjects of history"(7). Although Dipesh Chakrabarty has focused on historical analysis, his main concern is to give the position of subject to them who are always viewed as object. Like Chakrabarty's idea, the writer through the novel makes us to change the perspective to see Karnali from the position of object to the position of subject.

In the novel, the writer has picked the issues of subaltern. The characters, languages, locations and events presented in the novel represent the life of subalterns. Nobody can deny that the novel is not a collective story of subalterns. The entire characters presented in the novel are in the position of marginalization and suffered in one way or another. The narrator's father is major character of the novel. He struggles throughout his life to overcome the sufferings, but he never get success. Other characters in the novel are marginalized in terms of caste, region, class, gender, etc. Batu is a Tharu girl. She is in double marginalization. She is forced to marry with an old Tharu man. Chandre is suffered, because he feels that his father does not love and care him like the father of the narrator. Mamtadidi is a victim of being a girl. She was expected as a son, but finding as a daughter her own father and mother started to neglect her. Finally, she dies from a minor disease because of carelessness of her family. Bhagiram belongs to Tharu community and he is in his old age. Because of that, nobody listens to him. Jarilal is a porter in Far-western region of Nepal. He is an innocent victim of

Maoist insurgent period in Nepal. Some of other characters like Shibhashankar, Saddam, Ekraj, Mandire, Chhotku are also suffered from different reasons. It makes clear that the writer has collected the stories of all people who are subordinated in terms of caste, class, gender, ethnicity and other socio-political factors.

Along with the issue of class, caste, gender, ethnicity and other socio-political factors, the novel also raises the issue of regional marginality, which is one of the important aspect of subaltern studies. Especially the subaltern scholars are concerned on First World/Third World and West/East division while discussing about regional marginality. Such division creates the hegemonic and discriminatory relation between two places. In the name of knowledge, development and modernity, the First World and the West always dominate the Third World and the East. Western view to see the East should be thrown away to dissolve the dominated relation between two places. One of the subaltern scholar Gyan Prakash argues,

It is important to note that "Europe" or "the West" in Subaltern Studies refers to an imaginary though powerful entity created by a historical process that authorized it as the home of Reason, Progress, and Modernity. To undo the authority of such an entity, distributed and universalized by imperialism and nationalism, requires, in Chakrabarty's words, the "Provincialization of Europe" (1485).

Same as Gyan Prakash's idea, the writer forgets the domination of Kathmandu while representing Karnali. Gyan Prakash with the idea of Chakrabarty, suggests that to dissolve the distance between the West and the East, the universalized view of the West to see the East should be forgotten. In other words, the East cannot be represented properly through the framework created by the West. Likewise, while spotting the light on Karnali, the writer focuses more on its own value and culture rather than the framework created by Kathmandu based on development and modernity.

As we know that the novel is "fictionalized autobiographical account" (Hutt, 25) of the writer. The writer in his teenage goes to Kathmandu from Karnali. Kathmandu is taken as the center of the country, whereas Karnali is marginalized and neglected place by the center. In Kathmandu, he struggles for survival. After some years, he publishes the novel. Through the novel, he exposes the stories of Karnali. He writes about the vivid details of his experience about Karnali and its periphery. All of the stories, characters and events are in one way or another connected with the place; i.e. Karnali and its periphery. If we try to separate the stories and Karnali, then the novel becomes only the collection of stories to entertain the readers. There is no meaning of the novel without the connection to Karnali. In other words, it is the result of the writer's way of thinking spatially. If the writer had not given priority to the place, the stories would be different. Giving information about the term 'subaltern geography' Tariq Jazeel mentions, "I use the term to refer to ways of thinking spatially that may be considered lower ranking..." (96). Karnali is a place, which is considered as a lower ranking, or marginal in the mainstream politics of Nepal. It makes us clear that by writing the stories of Karnali, the writer has raised the issue of 'subaltern geography' in the novel.

In one of the interview with *The Kathmandu Post*, the writer accepts that "The places I grew up in were a huge part of my life and I express my longings for those places through my work." Living in Kathmandu, the writer is still expressing his longings for Karnali. This shows that something is missing in his life. Therefore, through the novel he is trying to cover those missing parts of his life.

The writer brings the natural beauty and healthy climate of Karnali as its power, which is lacked in Kathmandu and in many other cities. Along with the difficulties created because of lack of development, the writer brings nature and climate as the wealth of Karnali region. While he was in Katase, the narrator describes, "The greenery would spread while the trees were covered by newly grown leaves. In the jungle of Chhattiwan, the jujube-tree would

bear bunches of fruit. The cuckoo bird would sing 'ko ho' ko ho" (my trans; 164). While the narrator was climbing the hilly way to Kalikot, he was very tired. At that time, he saw the beautiful hill in front of him, which makes him forget his tiredness. He describes,

The hill had worn the cap of snow. The light of sun setting was spreading all over the hill like vermillion. The pieces of clouds were colorful. From the chest of the hill the glacier was flowing, which was seen like the small line on a paper. In the navel of the hill, roofs were shining like the small and bright heap of sand. (my trans; 296)

After seeing such beautiful view of nature, the narrator forgets all of difficulties and tiredness of walking the hilly way. This shows that Kathmandu has the wide roads, but Karnali has such a beautiful scenery of nature, which can give energy to live. After getting the different experience of different weather in Kalikot the narrator says, "Gradually I started to enjoy the living of Kalikot" (my trans; 309). The narrator's father focusing on the healthy weather of Kalikot says, "Weather is cool. My stomach was cured after eating the water of Kalikot for seven days" (my trans; 286). The pure water and uncontaminated weather, which have power to cure the diseases, are lacked in Kathmandu and city-centered places. All of these examples shows that the writer's intention is to focus on the local and natural resources, which are the possibilities of Karnali's prosperous future.

Another strong aspect, which helps to identify Karnali, is the language presented in the novel. Some of the languages spoken in Karnali region are presented without translation. For example, the Tharu language spoken by Bhagiram and the Khash Aryan language of Jumla spoken by Jarilal and other porters are presented without translating in standard Nepali language. This makes the readers of Kathmandu and other places to stop and research about the language and culture of Karnali. Like the territory, the language and culture of Karnali is also presented as its precious property.

The writer not only raises the issue of geography, he is also aware about the cultural and traditional aspects, which come along with that territory. Along with landscape, climate and physical environment of Karnali and its territoriality, a reader can get information about the language and lifestyle of people, which is neglected by the center for long time. It shows that the writer is very conscious that the territory only cannot represent a place properly. For this, cultural aspects of a place should come together. Walter D. Mignolo argues, "The sensibilities of geo-cultural locations have to do with a sense of territoriality... that encompasses language, food, smells, landscape, climate, and all those basic signs that link the body to one or several places" (50). Like Mignolo's view, in the novel we can find the description about the rivers, roads, jungles, weathers, houses and other environmental and physical issues of Karnali and its periphery. Another important aspect of the novel is the writer has presented some languages, which are spoken in Karnali region without translating. This is one of the strong part of the novel that shows the writer's sensibilities of geo-cultural locations, without which a place cannot be represented properly. In other words, the novel is a compact package of geographical and geo-cultural information, which helps to identify Karnali among the people of Kathmandu and whole Nepal.

The novel's focus is on those cultural and natural aspects, which are typically connected to Karnali. These are the means of giving identity to Karnali and the people. By focusing on those things, which are typically found and located in Karnali, the writer has broken away the center-margin mentality. In other words, the writer has broken away the view that always look Kathmandu as superior and prosperous and Karnali as inferior and backward. Vinay Bahl argues,

...the subject should be engaged in the formation of their own categories. According to him, this can be done by looking at the primordial values of the people based on the power relations in their day-to-day lives...It is only then, according to Chakrabarty,

that we shall be able to break away from master narratives and European influence and thought, which always "peripheralise non-Western pasts and universalize them" (1335).

Vinay Bahl giving reference to Chakrabarty's idea accepts that the non-West should look their own values, which are located to local place and local context of day-to-day life of people to break the European and Western domination. Also in the context of Kathmandu-Karnali relationship, we need to look the day-to-day activities of people that are typically connected to Karnali and its periphery. It helps to break away the universalized and dominated view of Kathmandu, which always see Karnali as incomplete place. Giving emphasis on the language spoken typically in Karnali and the natural beauty found in Karnali, the writer has broken the hegemonic relation between Kathmandu and Karnali.

Living in Kathmandu, the intellectuals and people make the view about Karnali. Without knowing the reality, people make perspective about Karnali and show Kathmandu always in superior position. People construct discourses about Karnali living in Kathmandu. In other words, people create framework to analyze the life of Karnali living in Kathmandu, which only helps to secure the superiority of Kathmandu. In "Can The Subaltern Speak?", Spivak criticizes Western intellectuals, who have projected Eurocentric knowledge for the Third world countries. According to her, they have used knowledge to dominate the Third world countries and to secure the superior position. She argues, "Some of the most radical criticism coming out of the West today is the result of an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject" (66). Like the intellectuals of the West, the people of Kathmandu also construct discourses, which always put Karnali in marginal position. It is necessary to deconstruct the Kathmandu constructed view of Karnali.

To deconstruct the Kathmandu based discourses and writings, the writer has presented the real picture of Karnali and its periphery, which represents the socio-cultural life of people.

According to Vinay Bahl, "The emphasis of Chakrabarty as well as the subalternists on 'culture' is fundamental to their writing in their effort to reject meta-narratives" (1335). Like the subaltern scholars' focus on culture to reject meta-narratives, *Karnali Blues* also play an important role to reject the partial descriptions of Karnali region. Karnali is known as a marginalized place from long time in Nepali history. Because of this, many people have a generalized view of Karnali. Almost all of the articles, stories, novels and other forms of writings are written based on this generalized view, i.e. Karnali is a weak and incomplete place to live. People make a perspective about Karnali through those articles and stories, which emphasize more on the weaknesses and less on the strengths of Karnali region. Based on the Kathmandu constructed discourses, people think that the life of Karnali is very hard and difficult. The novel helps the readers to rethink about the life of Karnali by giving the examples of positive aspects of living in Karnali. For this reason, the novel has fulfilled the vacuum, which can help to correct the perspective of people to see Karnali that is made through hearsay.

If we analyze the novel subtly, we will find there is conflict between two ideas. The characters can be divided in terms of these two ideas. One group of characters think that they should migrate to city and city centered places to escape from their sufferings. Another group of characters thinks that they should live in the places, which are known as marginalized and try to find out the possibilities within it to escape from their sufferings. In other words, one group is guided by the city-centered mentality and another group is opposite to city-centered mentality. In the former group, the characters like the narrator's mother, Mamtadidi, the narrator, Chandre, Ekraj and some of other minor characters can be included. In the latter group, the characters like Bhagiram, the narrator's father, Saddam can be included.

The narrator's mother does not like her husband's decision to migrate towards Kalikot. Instead, she wants to migrate towards Surkhet, which is a developed and urban area. When her

husband asked her to migrate to Kalikot she reacts by saying, "I will not go. Why do not we go to Surkhet directly" (my trans; 286)? Her husband asked her to go there only for six months then only she convinced. In Kalikot, she recurrently complains her husband's decision to shift towards the backward place. She frequently asked her husband to purchase some land in Surkhet and shift towards it. She is not satisfied living in Kalikot. She always wants and forces her husband to shift towards Surkhet. She says; "We should go down to Surkhet" (my trans; 321), "purchase a site for building a house in Shurkhet" (my trans; 323), "did you purchase a site for building a house?" (my trans; 327), "how should we live here! Let's go to Surkhet" (my trans; 338). These are some of the examples, which shows that the Mother's mind is guided by city-centered mentality.

Another character who is on the favor of city-centered mentality is the narrator himself. Although his nostalgic and sadistic tone of present time shows that he is not satisfied with the life of Kathmandu, he was very stubborn to go to Kathmandu while he was in Kalikot. When he passes his SLC examination, his parents request him not to go to Kathmandu. They suggest him to do his further study in the institution, which is near their place, but he never convinced to stay there. He threatens his parents if they do not allow him to go to Kathmandu, he will run away. He says, "No I will go to Kathmandu" (my trans; 363). While his father tries to convince him by saying "there are good colleges in Surkhet", he threatens, "I will run away" (my trans; 363). Finally, he goes to Kathmandu for further study. The narrator is an example who represents the trend of Nepali society where the youths want to go to Kathmandu for higher education. However, his sadistic and nostalgic tone of present time and his longing for the past shows the narrator's maturity.

Along with the narrator and his mother, Mamtadidi also wants to move towards city-centered places. She chooses a boy for marriage by herself. She elopes with him and settle their life in Surkhet. Some other characters who are doing small businesses in Katase also

migrates to the city-centered areas. Some of them are Ramesh's father, barber Pankag who moves to Rajapur, Sharma uncle, Bhakte and Ome Shahu who moves to Lamki, Hajurko Sahu who moves to Chisapani. These characters moves to other places while the market of Katase gradually decreases.

To counter this city-centered mentality, the writer has presented two characters who are strongly stand opposite to this mentality. Bhagiram is one of the strong character through whom the writer is conveying the message that we should love and live in our own place even there are some difficulties to live. Bhagiram sits beside the Amaurikhola and always be busy with the bamboo work. He enjoys living there. In every season, he sits there. According to the narrator "In every winter or summer he would always beside the Amaurikhola...while he would see us, he would smile" (my trans; 25). He speaks very little to others. However, when he feels that the people are coming from outside and invading his place, he becomes angry. He thinks that they are destroying his place coming from outside for the business and other purpose. Once a man who had come from Dailekh started a shop near the tree where Bhagiram would sit. After this Bhagiram reacted very strongly. In Tharu language he cried, "This tree is mine. The goddess of jungle has given it to me. You do not have any right to this tree" (my trans; 67). Unfortunately, no one listened to him. Thus, he shifted to the bridge of Amaurikhola. However, he did not give up and continue to live there doing the bamboo work. Through this love and deep relation of Bhagiram to his own place, the writer is giving importance to the local place and local people.

Another character who also strongly stand against the center-margin mentality is the narrator's father. Although he migrates from one place to another for the betterment of the life, he does not choose the place, which is city and city-centered area. While he decides to migrate to Kalikot, his wife opposes his decision. She asked him to shift to Surkhet instead of Kalikot. However, he does not change his decision. According to him, "Weather is cool...

after the road is built and vehicles are reached, Kalikot will be heaven" (my trans; 286). This shows that how far-sighted he is. Through the father's decision of migrating to Kalikot instead of Surkhet, the writer is focusing on the possibilities of marginal places. While the narrator wants to go to Kathmandu, the father not allows him. The father says, "There are good campuses in Surkhet... if you went to Surkhet, it would be easy to travel to meet you" (my trans; 362). While he is in Matera, the people would say, "The doctor has lived in such an undeveloped and solitary village. Really he is a messenger of god" (my trans; 70). These are the evidences, which show that his thought is not like others, who think that Kathmandu is everything. Through the father's bold decision of rejecting city-centered places and giving emphasize to local places, the writer is dismantling the center-margin mentality of people.

Symbolically the writer is raising so many questions about the city-centered mentality by the presence of these two characters; Bhagiram and the narrator's father. While his son is not ready to change his decision to study in Kathmandu, the narrator's father asked to his son, "What do you do in that Kathmandu? The place does not matter for the good student, so study in Surkhet" (my trans; 363). This question symbolically criticizes the legacy of Kathmandu. According to Sumit Sarkar, "The critique of colonial discourse involves a questioning of the power relations embedded in the location of the still predominantly Western..." (239). Like the subaltern scholars who question the power based on Western location, the writer also questioning the legacy of Kathmandu through the presence of the narrator's father and Bhagiram.

To show the conflict between center and margin is not to accept the established view of seeing Kathmandu as center and Karnali as margin. It is not only the conflict between center-margin and Kathmandu-Karnali, but also the conflict between domination and subordination. Kathmandu is in the position of domination and Karnali is in the position of subordination. They are seen as opposition to each other. The conflict in the novel between

two ideas shows that the writer is not accepting the established position of Kathmandu and Karnali as domination and subordination. According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The semiotics of domination and subordination were what the subaltern classes sought to destroy every time..." (10). The writer has also given the platform to Karnali and its people to destroy the relationship of domination and subordination between Kathmandu and Karnali. In other words, the writer as a representative of Karnali is seeking to destroy the relation of domination and subordination between Karnali and other places.

Furthermore, Gyan Praksah mentions, "Oppositions as East/West and colonizer/colonized are suspect not only because these distort the history of engagements but also because they edit, suppress, and marginalize everything that upsets founding values" (1486). In the relationship between the West and the non-West, the West is always seen as subject and the non-West is always seen as object. In the name of such division, the West always suppress and marginalize the East. Likewise, in the relation between Kathmandu and Karnali, Kathmandu always sees Karnali from the eyes of domination. People accept Kathmandu as center and Karnali as margin without questioning. However, by showing the conflict between center and margin, the writer is not accepting Kathmandu as center and Karnali as margin. Instead, he focuses on those things which are lack in Kathmandu, but available in Karnali. He has broken away the universalize view of Kathmandu, which always analyzes Karnali as incomplete place to live. Therefore, presenting the conflict between two groups of characters based on two opposite ideas has very important to deconstruct the hegemonic relation of Kathmandu-Karnali.

Furthermore, the novel is structured in past life of Karnali versus present life of Kathmandu. In the present time, the narrator lives in Kathmandu and he has come to Kohalpur Teaching Hospital to see his father. Every chapter of the novel begins with the present time and the narrator goes to his past. When he is in the present, we can find very

sadistic tone in his description. While he goes to the past, we can realize that even in the suffering he can enjoy and be happy. The narrator mentions, "While we would live in Matera, my father's face was bright and healthy. I remembered that face" (my trans; 18). After saying that, he started to remember everything, which were happened in his life when he would live in Karnali zone. He says, "Before leaving to Kathmandu, my father's voice was clear. Face was also bright. But now he is sick..." (my trans; 6). This shows that the tone of description of present is not only sadistic, but also nostalgic. His father's memory is not only about his father. Along with his father, everything comes in his mind, which he misses in his present life. Rameshor Bohara in *Himal Khabarpatrika* writes, "...the writer has become really nostalgic. Especially this nostalgia catches very strongly to those readers who have come to city from village" (my trans). This shows that the novel not only describes the nostalgia of the narrator and the writer, but it can make the readers to think about the places of their origin. It can arouse the longing for village to those who are living in city.

Along with Bhagirma's and the father's strong presence, the sadistic and nostalgic tone of the narrator's description of present situation and the very joyful and exciting description of the past memory of Karnali, the writer is trying to give new perspective to see Karnali. The past memory of Karnali is used as the remedy for the present situation of the narrator who lives in Kathmandu. This symbolizes that even in Kathmandu there are sufferings and pains. Karnali can cure those sufferings, which Kathmandu cannot. Before moving to Kathmandu, the narrator had so many dreams, which he thought Kathmandu would fulfill. The narrator would think, "I will come back after completing study. I will take care of my father and mother. I will do job after completing study" (my trans; 370). Now, the narrator is not satisfied with the life of Kathmandu, because he could not complete his I.A. on time. Sometimes he feels regret and asks himself why he came in Kathmandu, who had passed SLC by cheating in the examination. This shows that Kathmandu is not a place, which has

magic stick to give happiness in people's life. Thus, it makes clear that the particular place cannot be the main reason for the sufferings and happiness of people. It is people's perspective who see a place as easier and difficult to live. This novel helps to change the perspective of people and gives new vision to see the life of Karnali.

Focus of the novel on those things, which are typically connected to Karnali and its periphery, shows the privilege of Karnali. By doing this, the novel reverses the perspective of seeing Karnali as incomplete place to live. It helps to dissolve the distance between Karnali and Kathmandu created by the center-margin mentality. It makes the people to think the relation between Karnali and other places from new perspective.

The novel not only helps to change the perspective of people to see Karnali, but also helps to introduce the new trends in Nepali literary writing by giving the central space to marginalized people and place. According to Michael Hutt, "Before 2002, more than half of the Nepali fiction and poetry in print was published by a single publisher... Apart from a handful of notable exceptions, its authors were male, either Brahman or high-caste Newar, and based in Kathmandu, Nepali literary criticism was the preserve of a small circle of scholars with very similar profiles" (19). Although Buddhisagar is male and from high-caste family, he has broken the tradition of Kathmandu based writing by giving lot of spaces to the stories of Karnali. The novel has contributed to widen the circle of Nepali literary writing. It has established the trend that the very tiny things of people's life like, brother-sister fight, betting, pissing, mischievous childhood, informal in language, etc. can be the central subject for writing.

The writer has begun the alternative way of fiction writing. He not only decentralizes the dominant characters, also raises so many issues like, gender, class, caste, region, language. In other words, he has established the new trend in Nepali fiction writing.

Analyzing five novel, including *Karnali Blues* Michael Hutt asserts, "In these novels readers

will find articulation of minority, gendered and regional perspectives that have only rarely been found in this genre of Nepali literary before" (28). Hutt makes clear that the minorities could not get enough space in the Nepali literature before. In the fictional writing of Nepali literature, this way of centralizing the oppressed group of people and places was rarely in practice. In other words, the writer has filled the vacuum space in Nepali literature, which has helped to bring Karnali and its periphery to the surface.

The characters, languages, places, events presented in the novel shows that the writer has ignored the dominant ruler class of society. We cannot find any traces and symbols of the privilege group of society in the novel. He has centralized the places, characters and language, which are neglected and marginalized. He has brought those day-to-day activities of ordinary people, which were given less importance in the dominant writings of contemporary time. By doing this, he rejects the dominant way of writing in which central position was always for the dominant group of society. In other words, the writer has broken the traditional pattern of fiction writing in which the suppressed group of people in the society were always marginalized. One of the beginner of Subaltern Studies, Ranajit Guha argues that we have to break the traditional way of history writing and rewrite to show the importance of subalterns' role to make history. According to Guha, "elitist historiography should be resolutely fought by developing an alternative discourse based on the rejection of the spurious and unhistorical monism..." (6). Although Guha's focus is primarily on history writing, his major assertion is on developing alternative discourse by the way of rejection. It can be seen that through the novel the writer has created an alternative form of writing. Through which, he has rejected the traditional way of Nepali fiction writing. He has presented the local and regional language without translation. He has given central space to those unknown places and tiny events, which were taken as unimportant in Nepali fiction writing. He has not only taken the day-to-day activities of ordinary people as subject, but also

made the language and structure very simple. Because of that, a reader does not need the degree of higher education to understand the novel. Through this alternative way of writing, the writer has challenged the legacy of Kathmandu in Nepali literary writing.

The novel does not present the imaginary view of Karnali. Although it is fiction, it is based on the real experience of the writer. The writer grew up in Karnali and he experienced both the sufferings and happiness of living in Karnali. The novel revolves around Karnali and its periphery, which is written by a person who has grown up and experienced the hardship and happiness of living in Karnali region. Commenting on the novel Hari Adhikari asserts, "*Karnali Blues* is completely regional novel...Karnali region and its lifestyle was almost absent in Nepali literature. Buddhisagar as a son of the land of Karnali tried to fulfill the gap" (my trans; *Sahitya Sangrahalaya*).

In the context of absence of Karnali in mainstream politics and in Nepali literature, many people try to get benefit in the name of representation of Karnali. Many NGOS/INGOS and development workers enter into Karnali with the intention of getting profit. Even if someone from outside tries to represent with good intention, there is possibility that he/she may not be able to collect the tiny activities of day-to-day life of Karnali. In other words, for the outsiders it is very hard to represent Karnali perfectly. Thus, only a person who has grown up and experienced all the hardship and happiness can represent Karnali properly. In the context of recovering Indian history, which was dominated by the British colonial rule, Ranajit Guha suggests, "I argued, it was up to the Indians themselves to try and recover their past by means of an Indian historiography of India" (1). Guha suggests that Indians themselves should try to recover their history, which was snatched by the British government. In the context of Karnali, it is limited in the small circle in the name of center and margin. Thus, like the suggestion of Guha, the people of Karnali themselves should try to break the circle created in the name of center-margin. As a son of Karnali, Buddhisagar has tried to

represent Karnali through the novel. Therefore, the work of representing Karnali through the novel is more effective to bring out Karnali, which was enclosed in the circle of center-margin.

The writer is not intending to say that development and other modern technologies are not needed for the prosperity of Karnali. In the novel, many incidents makes clear that Karnali also needs development and technology. After the bridge is built over Karnali river in Chisapani, many people becomes happy. A local merchant of Katase express his happiness by saying, "Now, business in Chisapani will be flourished" (my trans; 222). While the narrator's family is in Katase, Ome brings generator. After that, people gather in Ome's house to watch TV. The narrator mentions, "People started to gather in Ome's house to watch TV" (my trans; 224). Another thing, which shows need of development, is the incomplete road that would connect Katase and Tikapur. According to the narrator, "The road which would come along Mahendra highway and would connect Katase and Tikapur was incomplete...People's hope about the road was broken" (my trans; 228). Likewise, when the branch of bank is transferred from Katase, people become sad. The need of development can be found in the narrator's father's words. He argues, "After reaching vehicles and road, Kalikot will be heaven" (my trans; 286). All of these incidents of novel clarify that the writer intends to show that Karnali also needs development for its better future.

On the other hand, the writer presents some incidents, which shows the negative effects of introducing development from city to village. Motorbikes and other modern vehicles would rarely come in Matera. Once a motorbike came in Matera. After that, Matera was covered by dust. According to the narrator, "Dust would come ahead and the trees beside the road would be lost...motorbike stopped in front of the teashop. After that, the teashop was covered by dust...to save our face and head we pulled the shirt's collar and hid our head like tortoise" (my trans; 73). When the number of shops increases in Matera, its effect on the

environment started to be seen. The narrator mentions, "With increase in the number of shops, the cover of noodle, biscuit and tobacco started to spread in the bank of Amaurikhola...While swimming in Amaurikhola many people's legs were started to cut by the broken glasses...I also stopped to swim in Amaurikhola" (my trans; 100). This shows that along with the shops, pollution also introduced in village. After increasing the numbers of shops in Matera, not only the pollution but also the illegal activities introduced in the peaceful village. The business of illegal drugs was started. Playing cards and drinking alcohol became common in the village. According to the narrator, "the seven lane of market were covered by the old shoes of the salespersons who came from outside. Under the trees, near the market, there would be pile of stool or the old shoes of salespersons" (my trans; 140). These are the examples, which shows that development has not only positive aspects. Along with development so many negativities can be enter. Development has become the means to introduce negativities from city and contaminate the pure village. In other words, in the name of development there is possibility to enter the people from cities and invade the cultural, environmental and natural aspects of villages.

Along with the needs of development, the writer presents the possible negative side of development. This shows that the writer is very much aware about introducing development program in villages. We should introduce development program, which does not harm the local culture and local environment, because they are the wealth of the particular place. Through this, the writer makes the reader aware about the negative side of city and city-centered places. In other words, in city there is not only facilities and developments, but also the illegal and harmful activities.

In the relation of Kathmandu-Karnali, Kathmandu always secures superior position in the name of development of modern technology. The people of Kathmandu always think that there is lack of modernity in Karnali, which make life uncomfortable. However, they forget

about culturally how modern the people of Karnali are. Like in Kathmandu and other cities, people do not involve in illegal and bad activities. The environmental pollutions, which are the by-product of modern development, is not in Karnali. In this sense, culturally and naturally Karnali is also modern. About the relationship between third world and Europe Gyanendra Pandey argues, "The societies of the "third world" were contemporaneous with those of "Europe", not a relic from the past, produced in tandem with the advanced industrial west, productive of it" (4736). In the relationship between third world and first world, first world dominates the third world in the name of modernity. Pandey does not accept that third world is backward and traditional. It is not the shadow of west. Likewise, in the relationship between Kathmandu and Karnali, Karnali is not the shadow of Kathmandu. Kathmandu is technologically rich and Karnali is culturally and naturally rich. Thus, by showing both the needs of development and negativities of development the writer is trying to convey the message that there should be reciprocal relationship between Kathmandu and Karnali, not the hegemonic. Only after that, future of both places is prosperous, because one place will fulfill lack of another.

The narrator presents some incidents, which shows the difference between Kathmandu and Karnali in terms of behavior of people on others sufferings. While the narrator's house is burning, many people come to help to put out the fire. According to the narrator, "From nearer villages people gathered. They had carried bucket and water-pots" (my trans; 102). After the narrator's house burn out, the villagers helped the narrator's family to live and eat. The narrator mentions, "I do not know who gave clothes, but food was provided by Magarmama" (my trans; 104). This shows that when the narrator's family was in crisis, all of the villagers helped them as their own problem. At the moment of leaving Matera, many people came in the narrator's house to express good words in the time of farewell. Every person who was met on the way would express some words of goodbye to the narrator's

family. The narrator mentions, "The cart reached at Palbazar. Stretching their neck, the people of Palbazar were looking towards us" (my trans; 138). This shows the love and respect of villagers towards each other. When the narrator's father was sick in Kalikot, people helped the mother to bring him into the helipad. After helping them to get in the helicopter, people assured them not to worry about the house and their property. According to the narrator, "After helping my father to get in the helicopter, many people said 'we will take care of your house'" (my trans; 11). All of these incidents makes clear that people in villages are very kind and they are ready to help each other at the time of suffering and crisis. These incidents add the value of Karnali region where humanity is still alive.

On the other hand the writer mentions some events in the novel, which shows not only money minded nature but also the lack of humanity in city, especially in Kathmandu. While the narrator's father became sick in Kalikot, many people came to see and help. Opposite to it, in Kathmandu, the narrator gets information about his father's sickness by a small piece of paper hanging on the door. In the paper, it was written that "Immediately go to Kohalpur teaching hospital. Father is sick. The phone was received on 2:30" (my trans; 379). Nobody was there to express sympathy on the narrator. According to the novel, the relationship in Karnali and its periphery is based on love and respect, whereas in Kathmandu it is based on money. The narrator mentions, "The house owner was grumbler. Every first day of the month, he would ask for the rent...If the people telephoned, who has brought money from my home, then the house owner would call me with smiling face. Otherwise, he would not care other phone calls for me" (my trans; 374). By showing the money based relation of Kathmandu and humanity based relation of Karnali, the writer tries to show that culturally Kathmandu is very poor and Karnali is very rich.

After seeing the writer's effort to show that Karnali is culturally and naturally rich, the readers may think that the writer has tried to put Karnali in center by replacing Kathmandu

from center. In other words, the readers may think that the writer does not dissolve the distance between center and margin, but only replace the central position by Karnali. However, it is not true. The writer by focusing only on Karnali, is not trying to give central position to Karnali. It is not the obsession of the writer towards Karnali. Instead, he is making a ground, on which the people of Karnali can stand and speak of their own voice. According to Gyan Prakash, "The notion of third world writing its own history seems to reek of essentialism. Seen in another way, this formation can be construed as positing that the third world has a fixed space of its own from which it can speak in a sovereign voice" (163). Gyan Prakash does not see writing their own history by third world as essentialism. Instead, he think that it makes a space, which gives freedom for the third world to speak on their own voice. Likewise, *Karnali Blues* also makes a separate space, standing on which, the people of Karnali can speak freely.

By expressing Karnali through its own language, culture and life style, the novel gives different identity in front of Kathmandu and other places. The novel does not try to show Karnali is equal to Kathmandu and other places. It established Karnali as distinct entity and it has its own value in the country. If the writer had tried to show Karnali as equal to Kathmandu and other developed places, then there would be possibility that Karnali would not be seen in the eye of center. By showing Karnali as distinct entity, the writer has made Karnali visible in the eye of Kathmandu. This different existence of Karnali helps to know the cultural and ethnic diversity. Gyanendra Pandey argues,

For 200 years and more, the struggles waged by the oppressed and subordinated, i.e., the subalterns, were seen as struggles for recognition as equals. The history of these efforts appeared as a history of sameness. However, in the later decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this struggle was extended to encompass another demand- the demand for a

recognition of difference- the existence of variety of difference that explained the diversity, density and richness of human experience. (4735)

Like Pandey's description of changing struggle of subalterns, through the novel the writer also struggling to show Karnali is different from Kathmandu and other places. It has helped to identify Karnali as ethnically, culturally and naturally rich. Karnali can be easily identified among the crowd of many place.

The novel begins with the nostalgic and sadistic tone of the narrator, who is trying to escape from the suffering of present time by remembering the past, which he has experienced in the place of his birth. At the ending part of the novel, while the narrator's father does not become cure they decides to bring him into his birthplace. The father in his deathbed wants to go to his birthplace. The doctor also suggests them to bring him to his birthplace. The doctor suggests, "Fulfill the wish to go to ancestral place. Sometimes the sick person can fight to the disease if they get homely environment" (my trans; 354). In the adulthood of his life, the narrator wants to return the place of his childhood. On the other hand, the father at the end of his life wants to go to his birthplace. Both the father and the son are trying to escape from the present sufferings by going to the place of their origin. It show that no other places are valuable in front of our birthplace or the place of origin. A person is emotionally attached to the place. Therefore, the places are not superior and inferior in the name of knowledge, development, modernity and any other factors.

From the beginning to the end, the novel revolves around Karnali and its periphery. All of the stories, characters, languages, and events are connected to Karnali and its periphery in one way or another. Through the novel, the readers can feel the beauty and hardship of the life of Karnali. In other words, it is a compact package of geographical and cultural aspects of Karnali. It is a mirror, which reflects the clear image of Karnali to Kathmandu and whole Nepal.

Along with the distinct environmental and geographical information, the writer brings out the cultural diversity of Karnali and its periphery. He presents some of the languages, which are spoken in Karnali without translating. With the day-to-day informal language of ordinary people, the novel has become very easy to understand. Even the person who does not have degree of university can easily understand and analyze the novel, because of its simplicity in structure and language. By giving central space to the day-to-day life and informal language of ordinary people, the writer has begun the new trend in Nepali fiction writing. It has broken the legacy of Kathmandu based writing in Nepali literature.

Can the subaltern speak? It is a question asked by Spivak and it is the question, which is repeatedly asked in subaltern studies. In case of the novel, it also can be asked; is the novel able to make the Karnali stand and speak in front of Kathmandu? Giving the answer to Spivak's question Vinay Bahl argues, "To Spivak's rhetorical question 'can the subaltern speak?' we may answer in the following way. 'The subaltern can speak in Suheli, Bhojpuri, and so on, if the theoretician has the capacity to listen' (1343). According to Bahl subaltern can raise their voice if they get chance to speak in their own language. Through the novel, Karnali also get chance to speak in its own language. The novel gives central space to Karnali and its periphery, through which the local language, culture, nature and day-to-day life of Karnali is expressed without modification. For this reason, through the novel, Karnali is producing loud sound and reflecting clear picture to Kathmandu. Now it depends on Kathmandu whether it listen the voice of Karnali or not.

In the novel, we can find the implicit conflict between center versus margin, i.e. Kathmandu and Karnali. If we analyze the novel subtly, then we will find the characters are also divided into two groups in terms of center-guided mentality and opposite to it. The behavior of the people of Kathmandu and Karnali is also presented in the novel. Through the novel, the writer has presented humanity based relation of Karnali as its wealth. Likewise, the

fresh environment and natural beauty of Karnali is presented as possibilities for the better future of Karnali, which is lack in Kathmandu. The writer also focuses on the need of development in Karnali. At the same time, the writer makes the readers aware that along with the development the negativities can enter from the cities and contaminate the cultural, environmental and natural purity of the villages. At the same time by giving importance to the development of city and to the cultural, environmental and natural beauty of village, the writer destroys the hegemonic relationship between Kathmandu and Karnali. Instead, he tries to build the reciprocal relation between Karnali and Kathmandu.

In conclusion, the writer breaks the hegemonic way of seeing Karnali by shading light on Karnali and its periphery. Karnali is not only dominated by the mainstream politics of Nepal, but also by the mainstream Nepali literary writing. Along with difficulties and hardships of Karnali, the writer has presented Karnali as culturally and naturally rich. The novel makes the readers, who are in Kathmandu and other places of Nepal, think and research about Karnali and its periphery. It can create curiosity about the life of Karnali. Finally, it helps the readers to make new perspective to see Karnali. On the other hand, by giving the central space to those tiny things of ordinary people's life, which are taken for granted as unimportant in mainstream literary writings, the writer has established the new trend in Nepali literature. In this way, the novel has broken the hegemonic and unbalanced relationship between Kathmandu and Karnali. It also helps Karnali to stand and make a loud voice and reflect clear image by itself. In other words, the novel has helped to create new perspective to view Karnali, both in mainstream politics and mainstream literary writings of Nepal.

In the novel, all of the focus of the writer is on Karnali. From the beginning to the end, the writer talks about Karnali and its periphery. After reading the novel, some questions may arise in the mind of the reader. Is it only the Karnali, which is dominated by Kathmandu

or center? Is not the writer trying to see Karnali in center by replacing the central position of Kathmandu? Obviously not, there are so many other places in Nepal, which are facing discriminatory behavior from the center, i.e. Kathmandu. If the novel had given space to other places, which are in the position of marginality, then it would be better. However, as a reader we need to understand that it is just a sample, which we can apply to other places, which are the victim of center-margin relationship. The important thing is through the novel, the writer deconstructs the hegemonic relation between center-margin and develops the new perspective, which emphasizes on the reciprocal relation between the two places.

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