

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Representation of Female Subaltern in the Mainstream Nepali Print Media**

This study explores how the mainstream Nepali print media represents women's images especially in the daily English newspapers *The Kathmandu Post* and *Republica* and the women's monthly magazine *Nari*. Only after the restoration of democracy in 2046 B.S., Nepalese media gained autonomy and started booming tremendously. Though media attained freedom, media's role has not been found without prejudice. Theoretically, media can and should mean that the diverse voices, images and opinions from around the world are heard and seen by everyone. In fact, this is not so. Current trends in communication and information world-wide conform to the larger trend in globalization. Gallagher (1995) opines that, although the presence of women in media has increased, real power is still a male monopoly. The power to shape and influence media, therefore, continues to elude women.

Further, media mergers have concentrated power in a selected few mega corporations and more importantly, blurred the old boundaries between information, entertainment, production and distribution, and other aspects of global information/communication processes and culture (Gallagher, 1995). Media conglomerates present a worldview that not only reinforces their power in the global system but also reflects that system (Schiller, 1989). As a consequence, the dominant news agenda often does not include the perceptions and experiences of women and marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Therefore, any analysis of the media including the considerations for gender portrayal has to consider the larger issues of the political economy of communication.

The voice of the voiceless has not been given adequate space in media and the representation of female subaltern is negligible. Analyzing the representation of women in media, Anderson argues that “Mass media portray women in sex-role stereotypes in which only the good looks and youths are emphasized” (217). The young, beautiful, educated and economically sound women are given special preference and they have extensive coverage in media to allure the readers and enhance circulation whereas illiterate, economically deprived and marginalized women are discarded and they are given negligible space. Their voices are unheard and their pains and sufferings are muted. It is the social responsibility of media to treat all women equally irrespective of their levels, ways of life and financial status. It is widely recognized that media should abide by the ethics. Sometimes it is noticed media is advocating for the right of subaltern women but in reality the elitists are benefitting from it. Democratic system believes that, media hears the voices of all classes, communities, gender and sexuality including women subalterns but in practice it is not found so. “In the context of marginalized people, Nepalese mass media do not show their interest over them” (Wanta and Parajuli 30: 2001). The main stream Nepali print media are silent and do not show their interest to capture the images of subaltern women and publish them in the magazines and newspapers. The issues of sufferings, pain and anguish of the subaltern women are not raised properly in the print media and they seem to be in the shadow.

In recent years the circulation of the Nepali print media has been increasing tremendously and its readership is growing rapidly in comparison to the past. Mass media has become the part of human life. To allure the large mass of people, it disseminates the items that have power to attract more and more readers. Nepali mainstream print media try to snap mainly the images of the sophisticated and high

profiled women and are not enthusiastic to capture the photos of the discarded women who are entitled as “subaltern women” from sociological point of view.

Subaltern studies began in 1982 and it has marked the emergence of a new mode of history writing in South Asia with its emphasis on ‘history from the below’. Subaltern means the class which exists of the so called auspicious class in the elitist historiography. This term refers to the bottom class people who have long been dominated and subordinated to the colonial and nationalist hegemonic rule. According to the subaltern group, subaltern signifies the entire people that hold subordinate position in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office, in any other way.

The New Penguin English Dictionary defines the term Subaltern as “low in rank or status; subordinate” (1401:2000). Ranajit Guha defined the term subaltern as an operational definition first. He gives a valuable account of subaltern history’s genealogy and legacies. He further gives its purpose and accomplishments with its empirical and theoretical base. He includes rural gentry, impoverished landlords, rich peasants and upper middle class peasants into the category of subaltern classes but, in his view, they can under certain circumstance be the agents of the upper dominant group and can act for elites.’ It does not remain in the present day world as it was in the past. People talk about inclusive structure of the society ignoring the real structure. In practice marginalized people are further ignored and their seminal activities do not get space in media too. Guha contrasts "politics of the people" to elite politics. For Guha, “politics of people means politics of subaltern classes”. He thinks that it "was an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics, nor did its existence deepened on the latter" (4). Subaltern means the oppressed subjects whose voice has been silenced and unheard. They are given less priority and are deprived of state facilities. Spivak suggests that “its own subaltern in claiming a

positive subject position for the subaltern might be victimized as a strategy for our times" (345). This would allow them to use critical force of anti-humanism.

However, this consciousness must be used in a narrow sense, as self-consciousness, if they really want it to be a fruitful strategy.

Guha claims "the elite groups mobilize their politics through adaptation of parliamentary institutions whereas subaltern classes carry out through traditional organization of kinship and territoriality or class association" (5). The representation of subaltern in media has been widely discussed. The term 'representation' according to the Webster dictionary, is "an action of speaking or acting on behalf of someone or the state of being so represented or the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way or as being of a certain nature." (993:1997)

Representation is presently a much debated topic not only in postcolonial studies and academia, but in the larger cultural milieu. Representation is primarily a presence or appearance. Representations can be clear images, material reproductions, performances and simulations. Representation can also be defined as the act of placing or stating facts in order to influence or affect the action of others. Of course, the word also has political connotations. Politicians are thought to 'represent' a constituency. They are thought to have the right to stand in the place of another. So above all, the term representation has a semiotic meaning. If there is always an element of interpretation involved in representation, we must then note who may be the interpreter. Subalterns stand in favour of other subalterns but it is nothing than the politics of the media to present a few marginalized people only to make them silent.

When we talk of the origin of image, humans have been creating it at least since the cave paintings of some 20,000 years ago. Photography has fascinated a great many debates and discourses. It is often argued that photography is free from the

photographer's biasness and perspectives. It is regarded as a neutral recorder that records the things and events that are in its view. Invented by Fox Talbot and Daguerre in the year 1839, photography has drawn various criticisms. Valorizing its neutral position, Derrick Price and Liz Wells argue, "it was celebrated for its putative ability to produce the accurate images of what was in front of its lenses: images which were seen as being mechanically produced and thus free of the selective discriminations of the human eye and the hand"(20). The social convention divides the entire humanity into male and female, attributing the former with the positive images and the latter with the negative images. This demarcation has conventionally subordinated women to the men. For a long time photography has been used as the medium to "validate that inequality "(Stephen 255) But the changing course of time has assigned photography a different function. With the invention of photography, a realistic image that would have taken a skilled artist hours or even days to draw could be recorded in exact detail within a fraction of a second. Today, photography has become a powerful means of communication and a mode of visual expression that touches human life in many ways. For example, photography has become popular as a means of crystallizing memories.

Photographs are well suited for use in the mass media. They can be the sources of study in terms of given problems and issues can be analyzed and talked. Today they are reproduced by the billions, and they can be found everywhere: in the pages of newspapers, magazines, books, catalogs, and brochures; on display in billboards, shop windows, and posters; broadcast over television; and organized into slide shows and film strips. Photos can convey different layers of meanings.

Subaltern and mass media are interconnected. Mass media is the medium to convey the real pictures of subalterns to the audiences.

The term subaltern derived from the work of the Italian born Marxist theorist, Antonio Gramsci, in the 1970s, began to be used as a reference to colonized people in the South Asian subcontinent. Marxist historians had already begun to view colonial history from the perspective of the proletariat. Subaltern Studies Group emerged in 1982 and it was set to undertake empirical study on various aspects of subaltern people irrespective of caste, gender, colour, profession, space, and class. While pointing out the vulnerable points of Subaltern Studies, Spivak made it clear that Subaltern Studies, as a discourse to speak on behalf of marginalized groups, has not paid as much attention to women as it should have. She is amazed at its "indifference to the subjectivity, not to mention the indispensable presence of the woman as the crucial instrument" (358). Spivak's main concern is the objective representation of subaltern women. Spivak has tried to swerve the direction of Subaltern Studies towards feminist issues through her influential write-ups. As far as the women of the colonized space are concerned, they are doubly subalternized, according to Spivak. On the one hand, the women, like their male counterparts, are suppressed as colonized subjects, and on the other hand, their own male counterparts also dominate them. However, it falls short, in its tendency to draw the subaltern as exclusively male. The subaltern woman is effaced in these texts. In Spivak's opinion, the identity of woman is erased in the very process of rewriting subaltern subjectivity:

It is rather, that both as object of colonialist historiography and as the subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keep the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern

has no history and cannot speak, subaltern as female is even deeply in shadow. (82-83)

The researcher is of the view that it is due to the patriarchal set up and notion that always see women inferior to men as Aristotle claims, “ Economics states that men are stronger, women are weaker, men encourage, women cautious; men outdoors type, women domestic; men educate children, women nurture them”( 1968-1969).

Under a patriarchal regime, women are, by definition, excluded from positions of power and authority except where that power and authority works to support individual man or the social system as a whole. In this connection John Berger says,

Men act and women appear, men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The survey of women themselves is male, the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object - and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. (47)

Patriarchy always wants to see women confined within the boundary of stereotypes designed and imposed upon women. Defining stereotype Stuart Hall says, “Stereotyping is part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the normal and the deviant, the normal and the pathological, the acceptable and the unacceptable, what belongs and what does not or is other, between insiders and outsiders, us and them”(258). Print media, as it claims, should be able to bring out the discriminatory treatment of the society through its issues but it seems to be ignoring to address marginalized women’s voices. It is because print media and media houses are still under patriarchal pressure. They are not able to break the patriarchal thread that has always bound and confined the

women in a narrowly designed space. Thus, the feminists try to break the silence of women that offer equal status and rights for women. Defining feminists in terms of their work Maria Mies says, “Feminists are those who dare to break the conspiracy of silence about the oppressive, unequal man-woman relationship and who want to change it” (6). Moreover, she talks in favour of women autonomy. Mies is keen on seeking the feminists who can break the boundary of inequality.

Many researchers concentrated their efforts on different aspects of subaltern women in course of their research works, but none of them have tried to conduct research on the politics of print media in alienating them from the mainstream. Thus, the present research work analyzes how print media of Nepal has cornered the subaltern women in raising their issues through their photographs and why they opt this strategy. It has been found that rural women who are deprived of various opportunities provided by the government are also being treated differently than that of urban women by print media in Nepal.

The present research analyses some selected photographs of women published in *The Kathmandu Post* and *Republica* from September 1 to 30, 2010 and *Nari* from August 16 to September 15, 2010. The rationale behind the selection of photos is the maximum circulation of the above mentioned newspapers and magazine. Their coverage in terms of subaltern women is often questioned publicly and to bring the fact is my effort in this study. The present study only concentrates on the subalternity especially of women.

The research has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the research problem, analyses the views of the critics on the issues like subaltern representation along with the hypothesis and point of departure. Moreover, efforts clarify the terminologies used in course of study. The second chapter analyses the

factors involved in making women subaltern being based on Chris Beasley, Spivak, Chakravorty, Partha Chatterjee, and Ranajit Guha and so on. The third chapter analyses the selected photographs with the help of the theoretical modality prescribed in the second chapter. The fourth chapter, the final chapter, draws the conclusion with some recommendations of the entire research work to facilitate further study in the same field.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Subaltern Study and Women's Representation

This chapter discusses on Subaltern Studies as a theoretical approach to analyze the selected photographs published in the main stream Nepali print media. The term 'subaltern' originated for the first time to address the British Military post which was a commissioned officer below the rank of captain. 'Subaltern' was taken from Gramsci's euphemism for the proletariat in his *Prison Notebooks*. However, the Subaltern Studies collective used it as a catch-all term for all groups they viewed as oppressed - the proletariat, the peasantry, women, and tribal people. During the time of 19960-1980 there emerged a new thought in Indian academy which raised the issues of common people who were suppressed by the elite. To address such people the term subaltern is used by those Indian writers and critics in their writing. In this regard, E.P. Thomson argues, "Subaltern Studies began with the rejection of European master-narratives", (2) that have only seen derivations, little challenge or denial. The European supreme self-confidence made it clear in the Hegelian proposition which declared India an intellectually sterile land bereft of any history"(2). The Subaltern Studies series has established itself as a touchstone for research in South Asian history, society and culture and media representation. Indian scholar show there critical mind through the subaltern studies groups which compel west to correct their past mistake. Dipesh Chakrabarty one of the members of subaltern study group discusses about chronological development of the studies and its nature of thought. In this context, he asserts:

It was 1982 when historical narrative begun tasting a new side under the editorship of Ranajit Guha, who gathered a bunch of aspiring young historians and went to extract history out of the "colonialist",

“elitist” and “bourgeoisie nationalist” discourse and establish the autonomous realm of the “popular” or “subaltern mobilization” in order to rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work. (24)

Subaltern studies intervened in this situation in 1982. Intellectually, it began on the very terrain in the contest of historiography which had its roots in the colonial education system. It started as the critique two contending schools of history, the Cambridge school and that of the national historians. Both these approaches were declared in Ranjit Guha’s statements that inaugurated a series of subaltern studies. The definitive accessibility of subaltern consciousness is counterpointed also by situating in the place of difference rather than an identity. In this sense Spivak argues, “The term people and subaltern classes have been used as synonymous throughout this introductory note. The social groups and elements included in this categories represent the demographic differences between the total Indian population and all those whom we have describe as the elite”(82).

The Subaltern Studies collectively projected history at the heart of colonial teaching and acquiring of knowledge- the colonial archives. The procedure was “reading the text against the grain”, that is to point out the significant ambivalences, paradoxes, contradictions in the detailing out of history, which can alone single out the voice of the subaltern that has been so calculatedly silenced by the bourgeoisie narratives and claims. Thus, both semiotic and textual (novels, biographies, essays written in the regional language) notations were used so that the difference can be shown. And the long meticulous researches in coming volumes were enough evidence for its back-up. It was a very difficult task because the South Asian working class people had left little traces of their problems, unlike their European counterpart who

was conscious of the difficulties and noted them down in diaries. So the 70s European movement of history from below had better acknowledgment of writing desk history than providing any original voice. So it lies at the heart of reading things anew, and in introducing new strategies. Thus, history became a textual study, as any effort at exploring the “invisible” demands meticulously reading and counter-reading of the archives that have been so boastfully thrown at the colonized territories.

The Subaltern Historians originally started as an Indian version of “History from below” approach of the west as a counter to “History from the above” (Shrestha 5). Subaltern historians aimed to study the general attribute of subordination in South Asian Society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age and gender or in any other way. They offer a theory of change which reverses the colonial outlook of Indian culture, history arts and mass media and nexus them with the broad term of nationalism. One of the pioneers of subaltern studies Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues:

The work of subaltern studies group seems to me to revising this general definition and its theorization by proposing at least two things: first that the movement(s) of change be popularized and plotted as confrontations rather than transition they would thus be seen in relation to histories of domination and exploitation rather than within the great modes of production narrative and secondly, that such changes are signaled or marked by a functional change in sign systems. Most important function changes from the religious to the militant. There is, however, functional changes in sign systems indicated in these collections from crime to insurgency, from bondsman to worker, and so on” (96).

The Subaltern Studies Group is a group of scholars in India, interested in the postcolonial and post-imperial societies of India in particular and the developing world in general. Although they are, in a sense, on the left, they are very critical of the traditional Marxist narrative of Indian history, in which semi-feudal India was colonized by the British, became politicized, and earned its independence. In particular, they are critical of the focus of this narrative on the political consciousness of elites, who, in turn, inspire the masses to resistance and rebellion against the British.

There are three broad areas in which subaltern studies are different from the history from below approach. Subaltern historiography necessarily entailed a relative separation of the history of power from any Universalist histories of capital critique of the notion and an interrogation of the relation between power and knowledge. But the impact of 'History from Below' collided in the Indian academy with another import from the west - post-structuralism and post-modernism. After the collision a new and specifically Indian synthesis – produced as the Subaltern Studies group. Spivak, regarding the process of redefining of Indian history, claims:

The subalterns weren't simply interested in illustrating the 'bourgeois' nature of India nationalism. They argued that movements from below had been hijacked by elite nationalism and subordinated to the nationalist project. When they wrote of combating 'grand narratives, it was the 'grand narrative' of anti-colonial nationalism they were targeting. Undoubtedly, there was a very important core to their argument - essentially the 'nationalist leadership' had attempted to use 'highly controlled' struggles of the Indian masses in order to confront and then replace the colonial masters. In order to do so, they sought out

both new sources and attempted to reread the traditional archives 'against the grain', all with the aim of recreating the mental world of the peasant insurgent (21).

However, the subaltern group methodological trackers of representation cannot follow that route. Barthes after the situated semiology turned to large measure to autobiography and celebration of fragment. Not only because of their devotion to semiotics, but also because they are trying to assemble historical biography of those whose active lives are only disclosed by deliberately fragmentary record produced elsewhere, the subaltern studies group cannot follow. Subaltern Studies deconstruct the historiography which can only have been intended for the committed critical theorist or for those familiar with the jargon and literary style of critical theory, is a slightly revised version of her contribution to Subaltern Studies .

Ranjit Guha published series of books entitled subaltern reader which highlights the different issues of subaltern and published in 1985 which attempts more explicitly to make the post-structural connection by examining the ideology and discursive tactics of writing history, namely, who is doing it, why, how, and to what political purpose. Each volume is ensured its loyal readership that has expanded beyond the horizons of students of (subaltern) history, which was where it all began many years back. In recognition of this shift or broadening, the more recent volumes have brought together essays that are no longer confined to the discipline of history, displaying, as the editors of this collection describe it, the Collective's engagements with more contemporary problems and theoretical formations.

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, studied and analyzed the term subaltern in social theory to denote the people in the margin as opposed to those in the centre. Later on, Subaltern Studies group aimed at promoting a scientific discussion of

oppressed groups in terms of new historiography. Since then history started to be rewritten from below. In this context Ranjit Guha claims,

[. . .] the general attribute of subordination in South Asian Society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way [. . .] Subaltern Studies group sketched out, its wide ranging concern both with visible history, politics, economics and sociology of 'subalternity' and with the occluded attitude, ideologies and belief system-in short, the culture informing that condition (Guha vii).

Ranjit Guha presents the contradictory politics of the people with elite politics, and he stands in favour of the marginalized, the socially ignored and suppressed people. In this context, Marx argues that media and communication are the means of mental production. Thus, who lack the means of mental production is subject to suppression. McQuail says, "Marxist theory posits a direct link between economic ownership and the dissemination of messages that affirm the legitimacy and the value of a class society" (77).

McQuail reaches the conclusion that while Karl Marx only knew the press before it was effectively a mass medium; it is still possible to analyze modern media according to his ideas, even when Marxism is widely thought to have failed as a guide to social change. He elaborates his conclusion as following:

The media as an industry conforms to a general capitalist type, with factors of production (raw materials, technology and labour) and relations of production. They are likely to be in the monopolistic ownership of a capital-owning class and to be nationally or internationally organized to serve the interest of that class. They do so

by materially exploiting workers (extracting surplus labour values) and consumers (making excess profits). Media work ideologically by disseminating the ideas and world-views of the ruling class, denying access to alternative ideas that might lead to change or to a growing consciousness on the part of the working class of its interests. They also hinder the mobilization of such consciousness into active and organized political opposition. (76)

Baran and Davis discuss Marxism with media perspective. They state, "Marx argued that the hierarchical class system was at the root of all social problems and must be ended by a revolution of the workers or proletariat." According to Baran and Davis Marx believes that elites dominated society primarily through their direct control over the means of production (that is, labor, factories, and land) which he referred to as the base of society (221). Marx considers the control over the culture or the superstructure of the society is also crucial. In this regard Marx concluded that the only hope for social change was a revolution in which the masses seized control of the base-the means of production. Control over the superstructure-over ideology-would naturally follow. He saw little possibility that reforms in the superstructure could lead to social evolution, or if it could, that transformation would be very slow in coming. Elites would never willingly surrender power. Power must be taken from them. Little purpose would be served by making minor changes in ideology without first dominating the means of production.

In every country the elite groups mobilize their politics through an adaptation to parliamentary institutions whereas subaltern classes do so through traditional organization of kinship and territoriality or class association. The media too did not remain far from discrimination. The elite historiography of India claims "that Indian

nationalism was primarily an idealist venture in which the indigenous elite led the people from subjugation to freedom" (2). Similarly, the national narrative of Nepal also could not speak against discrimination. The Indian National Movement of the first half of the twentieth century challenged the imperialist notion of India in so far as it conceived of India and Indians as active and sovereign whereas imperialism saw only passivity, otherness, and dependency. But the movement, which was dominated by the upper-and middle-class people, also imbibed the premises on which the imperialist notion of India was built. The result was that the voice of the majority of the Indians-the subalterns remained under erasure in both discourses. The Subaltern Studies historians seek to recover this "erased" history. Nepal too is not far from the Indian history and its influence.

As a result subaltern studies tried its best to establish the subalterns as an autonomous domain. It emerged as a theory of change. It sustained vigorous political commitment. The academic atmosphere was undergoing a sea of change. Post structuralism and post modernism had swayed the academic world. Cultural studies were gaining more and more attention from all sides. Subaltern studies included the writings of two theorists Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Bernard S. Cohn, brought cultural perspective in subaltern studies. Spivak rendered linguistic as well as cultural mode to subaltern studies with her seminal essay "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" (SSIV, 1986).

Slowly and gradually, subaltern studies were moving towards representation, critical theory, and cultural studies from subaltern politics. Spivak in her essay announces, "The subaltern studies... generally perceive their task as making a theory of consciousness or culture rather than specifically a theory of change" (330).

Subalternity is changing on the basis of socio- political and economic condition.

Subalternity means a condition of subordination brought about by colonization or other forms of economic, social, racial, linguistic, and/or cultural dominance. A subaltern study is, therefore, a study of power. Who has it and who does not? Who is gaining it and who is losing its power is intimately related to questions of representation? Such representations have cognitive authority and can secure hegemony. John Beverley examines the relationship between subalternity and representation by analyzing the ways in which that relationship has been played out in the domain of Latin American studies. He further relates the ideas with the intervention of colonial historiography. In this regard, he argues:

While detractors would admit that, the subalternist intervention in colonial historiography and cultural studies was both important and influential, ardent acolytes will concede that there's been a decline in both interest and interesting new work in the field. Thus, subaltern theory will be subjected to a discourse study, the assumption being that its reception and reproduction, both complex discursive processes, are (mis)appropriations of power/knowledge in globalised space. (233)

To advocate the issues of subaltern or working class people a company "The Industrial Newspaper Company" with a capital of £1,000 ("International Workingmen's Association") was established during Karl Marx's period. During the establishment of the print media Marx signals the Marxist idea on media. The Declaration states, "It is a fact that amongst the thousands of daily and weekly newspapers existing at the present day, those that advocate the interests of the working class and defend the cause of labour might be counted at your fingers' ends. Nor is this to be wondered at when you bear in mind that, almost without exception, they are the property of capitalists, established for their own use, either for political

party purposes or as commercial speculations" ("International Workingmen's Association")

Croteau and Hoynes add that the key theoretical concept that animates much of the contemporary study of the ideology of media is hegemony. Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, developed the notion of hegemony which connects questions of culture, power and ideology. Gramsci argued that ruling groups can maintain their power through force, consent or a combination of the two. Croteau and Hoynes explain Gramsci's notion of hegemony as following:

Consent, then is the key to understanding Gramsci's use of hegemony, which is exercised through a kind of "cultural leadership." Consent is something that is won; ruling groups in a society actively seek to have their worldview accepted by all members of society as the universal way of thinking. Institutions such as schools, religion and the media help the powerful exercise this cultural leadership since they are the sites where we produce and reproduce ways of thinking about society.

(166)

Croteau and Hoynes quote Stuart Hall, for a British sociologist's version in their words to analyze the role of media for society in Marxist view-point. According to them Hall argues that mass media are one of the principal sites where the cultural leadership, the work of hegemony, is exercised (168).

Schramm figures Marx as the dreamer of freedom of expression and free flow of information. He writes, "Marx undoubtedly dreamed of the press as free of the state, serving as a real spokesman of the people. And if the state had withered away, as predicted, after the revolution, perhaps his dream might have come true "(121).

However, in their own way to follow Marxism, Leninism and his predecessors

consider "Mass communication system is as much an instrument as a typewriter or a megaphone" (121). After 1917 up to the late 80s, according to Schramm "The media are designed specifically, not only to inform the people, but also to serve the agitators who are organizing the masses, the Party leaders in the communities, the industrial groups who use the papers for oral readings, the schools who use them on many occasions as textbooks" (122-123).

Communication media affect the exchanges of information through which people decide how to think and act in politics. Newspapers, magazines and television talk programmes created public sphere for the discourse on burning issues. It had been the saleable subject matter for the media. Bennet and Entman say, "Mediated communication, from news programmes to entertainment fare, serves important functions in the contemporary public sphere. It provides good or bad information offers engaging or stupefying perspectives on social issues, stimulates conversations among friends or between strangers on trains, and offers a selection of political, scientific, and socially authoritative or dubious sources that audiences may accept or reject in thinking about social issues" (5). But the principle of the media could not remain as it was thought by Marx and his fellows.

For Valerie Bryson, "feminism is based upon the belief that women are individuals possessed of reason, that as such they are entitled to full human rights, and that they should, therefore, be free to choose their role in life and explore their full potential in equal competition with men" (159). Valerie advocates for equal space for females in a male dominated society. In spite of many efforts in uplifting subaltern women critics and scholars are somehow unable to incorporate women in the mainstream. It is a patriarchal set up that always stands against the mission. The roots of patriarchy are not easily shakable as they have expanded their grip beyond the

reach of the society. Due to the presence of the reminiscences of patriarchy women are unable to stand them independently. It has compelled to use them as their walking stick. In this connection I .M. Young argues:

The patriarchal social structure refuses to give a subject position to the woman. Referring to the subdued agency of woman as object, as a mere body and that in existing society women are in fact frequently regarded by others as objects and mere bodies (172).

Young further argues that “the society presents her as the potential object of another subject’s intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention” (172). Young’s arguments suggest that a woman can empower herself, if she manifests her actions and intentions, breaking the oppressive cage of patriarchy. Critics have admitted that women have begun to invade into the public space, the space of creativity, innovation and the self, where the women can assert their worth.

Stereotype is a term frequently used in printing culture to define multiple copies of the same thing repeatedly. In printing press a metal, known as stereotype, is used to make exact and multiple copies of any particular matter. Such stereotype is a poured metal which can’t be changed. "Stereotypes", says Francis et.al, "function by simplifying, by reducing classes of people to a few characteristics by which they are generally said to be identifiable” (140). Giving the best example of the icons used on the toilet doors as a stereotype Francis et.al, argues, “the reasons the icons on the toilet doors function- a woman in a skirt/ a man with a trousers- is that it is assumed there is a visible and identifiable difference between men and women”(140). This distinction between two sexes is imposed upon by the authority as a form of stereotype.

Male and female stereotype is creating its empire almost all over the world and it is very difficult to dismantle the very foundation of the social stereotype. The skirt stands for the secondary sex features, breasts and sexual organs that are usually invoked as the obvious signs of difference between men and women. “A stereotype is a radically reductive way of representing whole communities of people by identifying them with a few characteristics. Individuals from the group who don’t fill that stereotype are then said to be atypical” (Francis et.al 141). It is true that an individual can’t produce and circulate the stereotypes alone. “Stereotypes function within groups of people as knowledge which is shared, a kind of databank, importantly they are usually produced by people who are positioned to circulate their ideas widely, so that even the group stereotyped may then come to take on this simplified bit of visual shorthand a kind of fact” (Perkins 1979).

Men and women have been assigned different stereotypical images. Women, as Francis et.al argues, are seen naturally nurturing, sensitive, emotional and differing, men are seen as removed, rational and authoritative”(141-142). By constructing such contradictory images, patriarchy manages to subordinate women to men. The primary target to differentiate the women is to sideline them from mainstream social set up. In this context David Glover and Kaplan Cora argue, Women get described as unfeminine when they expose the “supposed coldness, aggression, ambition, neglect of children or high intelligence” (3). In this regard, the stereotypical images set up by patriarchy has, no doubt, subdued women’s agency.

It is obvious that once the patriarchy constructs the stereotypes it imposes on women. It is the women’s job to dismantle or question those stereotypes that are making their lives uncomfortable and burdensome in terms of discrimination and inequalities. Taking the risk of being social outcast women, nowadays have shown

their innermost desire and ability to resist the stereotypical images imposed upon them. Patriarchy wants to deprive women from their rights and make them independent on the mercy of men for the economic and social existence which according to Wollstonecraft is, a domestic tyranny and imposition of men's authority over women is destructive. She claims, "If women are not free, then no one is" (40). The mission of stereotype is to alienate women from the main stream social set up, Stuart Hall calls, " a strategy of splitting"(258). Stereotypes create symbolic boundaries in between the normal and the abnormal and the acceptable and the unacceptable that people use to distinguish one group from the other. Relying on this fact, Hall further asserts:

Stereotyping [...] is part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal', and the 'deviant', the 'normal' and the 'pathological', the 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable', what 'belongs' and what does not or is 'Other', between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', 'Us' and 'Them'(258).

If we base our study on the generalization, men and women have been assigned to different stereotypical images. Women are seen as naturally caring, sensitive, emotional soft natured and sentimental whereas men are observed as rigid, rational, reasoning and authoritative. By constructing these contradictory images, patriarchy has managed to subordinate women to men. David Glover and Kaplan Cora claim, women get described as the unfeminine when they expose the "supposed coldness, aggression, ambition, neglect of children or high intelligence" ( *Femininity and Feminism* 3).

All groups in the society receive stereotypes be it negative or positive. A marginalized one receives negative stereotypes where as powerful receives positive

stereotypes. Marginalized groups get more suppression and discrimination but the powerful one is benefited by the stereotype. Patriarchy regards women as naturally nurturing, submissive, shy, meek, sensitive, weak, emotional and deferring. In this context Hall opines, “Women are seen to be natural mothers in the sense that by having womb they are also possessed with patience, a natural predisposition towards children, a nurturing, affectionate and nature and so on” (143). Society constructs stereotypes to divide humanity rather than unite them. The researches have shown that these stereotypes are the arbitrary constructions, having nothing to do with the human organisms.

In this context, Janet Saltzan Chafetz argues:

It should be clear that when the terms masculine and feminine are used, it is assumed that the characteristic in question are socially prescribed and individually learned and hence changeable, phenomena; they are not innate to the organism. Since they are not innate, they cannot be directly related to the sex in any necessary fashion (4).

Women have occupied masculine spaces and with occupation of males’ space their identity has been subverted and the subversion has paved the way to empowerment. Stereotypes are usually maintained and developed by people who have little contact with the group being stereotyped. Contesting or going against stereotype in a society is not an easy job. However, women are trying their level best to dismantle the patriarchal boundaries that have sidelined them from main stereotype. But while doing so it is not far from conflict. When the question of representation comes they ignore the poor, uneducated, helpless, handicapped and marginalized sector of the society and women have been victimized more than men. In this context, their identity blurs. The act of blurring their identity somehow encourages them to struggle against

social injustice and discrimination. As a result, the patriarchal boundaries and the so called social pillars no longer remain as strong as in the past and the shaken pillars and the cleft foundation can't support the stereotypical norms and values. It is true that Nepalese masculinity still demands a faithful, submissive and uncomplaining wife. Regarding the features of women Costa and James assert:

All women are housewives, and even those who work outside the house continue to be housewives...[it] is precisely what is particular to domestic work...as quality of life and quality of relationships which it generates, that determines a woman's place wherever she is and to which ever class she belongs.(102)

As Costa and James claim that women can't get out of the domestic space even after they get outside job, it has been proved false in the case of twenty first century women who have become quite clever and in a sense rebellious like. Due to 'Cultural Revolution', women have succeeded to outsmart patriarchy. Juliet points, "the struggles against patriarchy must take the form of a cultural revolution," (414). Women are trying to handle masculine activities but the society and its machinery is bias in incorporating subaltern women in the mainstream along with the elite women.

The subaltern as female, as Spivak argues in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" cannot be heard or read, "even if her subalternity is sought to be transcended at the mythical level" (104). So they are necessarily misrepresented. Many writers, with a help of dramatization of myth and exaggeration, have attempted to depict the women as subaltern class that can speak on its own. A feminist historian of the subaltern must raise the question of woman as a structural rather than marginal issue in each of the many different types and cultures that Partha Chatterjee invokes in "More on Modes of Power and the Peasantry." This kind of representation is not rooted in the socio-

cultural reality. Instead, it tends to give false impression about the represented subaltern class: women. The matter of fact is that the writer, as privileged elite, manipulates the subaltern group he/she represents. Therefore, the representation, which depicts the women as the class that can speak itself, is nothing but sheer manipulation of subaltern women at the hands of the elite writers. This kind of representation brings the elite writer to the limelight at the cost of the represented subaltern women.

As we know, the concept of women has led Spivak to such a serious discussion on the position of the subaltern classes. The subaltern woman, therefore, emerges as an epitome of subaltern. In the same volume, Ranajit Guha also contributed his moving essay “Chandra Death”, which attempts to demonstrate the nature of women subordination with patriarchy. In the same manner, Kamala Visweswaran says: “Women are not accepted as proper subjects, but it does register and seek to contain their agency” (124). She however believes “that it at the point of erasure where the emergence of Subaltern is possible” (124). Here, she counters Spivak’s argument that Subaltern cannot speak. It oscillates between nationalist agency and subaltern agency. She says: “It is in this tension, this moment of oscillation, I would argue, that we recognize the effect where the gendered ‘subaltern is felt, woman as a subaltern, subaltern woman” (*SSIX*, 125). In the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and can not speak, subaltern as female is even deeply in shadow. So, Spivak posits women in the role of the subaltern questioning the male constructed voice of women within the patriarchy society since both the spaces of colonized and colonizer are male-oriented society.

The question of empowerment of women is frequently raised in every walk of human life and in social mechanisms like print media. No doubt, media has a great

role in empowering women through awareness building campaign and encouraging them to be involved in income generating activities. Empowerment refers to a multi-dimensional process which should enable individuals or a group of individuals to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. It consists of a greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making to enable them to have a greater ability to plan their lives and to make them free from obstacles imposed on them by customs, beliefs and practice. A woman becomes empowered only when she builds confidence and confidence is built up if the stereotypes are broken. Unless a woman is known to her rights she can not achieve anything from the society because the structure of the society is patriarchal. Women have been ignored by the society in terms of their independent life. They should be given certain power to be independent but power should be acquired, exercised and preserved.

The struggles against patriarchy must take the form of a cultural revolution. Otherwise, it can't function in favor of the marginalized. Socio- economic and political oppression against women create gender gap that compels women to be dependent on males. The patriarchal social structure of Nepali society has always treated women as second class citizens. As a result, women are compelled to accept a low and subordinate status in society. Media can break the chain that paralyzes women if it works keeping ethics to the center. Nowadays media, especially print media in Nepal seems to be dancing in tune with the capitalism. Its camera always tries to capture the beautiful picture of the elite women.

Since subaltern women do not get proper space in the media, the society and its mechanism is busy in trapping subaltern in their net and it is very difficult for the marginalized to get rid of their grip. "Gender" is a set of roles and cultural meanings acquired in course of ego formation within the family set up. Likewise, the term "sex"

refers to the anatomical composition as male and female. The term patriarchy is a male dominated social agency that always wants to rule over women through certain stereotypical roles. Similarly, the term “subversion” is used to mean the incompatibility inherent in those stereotypes. “Empowerment” has been used to indicate how the women have questioned the patriarchal demarcation and occupied the position, traditionally reserved for the women.

The issue of Gender discrimination in our society is intensely seated and efforts to eliminate it have been unsuccessful. Gender is a socially constructed phenomenon whereas sex is a biological construction. Biology of a person defines his/her sex but sexuality is defined in terms of the performance. Media is found to be ignoring the fact that a person can be a woman or man on the basis of the activities he/she performs.

In general, photographic representation can be motivated by the politics of empowerment, especially when the women are shown outside the kitchen space. Women nowadays have defied the stereotypical social norms. They are no longer interested to marry and bear children even after their marriage; rather they seem to join business and professional jobs that help them in their empowerment process. They are seen to be dancing freely, singing freely and responding every activity without any sort of hesitation and fear. This is the clear indication of their effort in securing their location in society challenging the age long social power relation.

There is a stereotypical failure or stereotypical conflict constantly working in the society. The dynamics of power relation changes along with the change in stereotypes. Realizing the rupturing of stereotypes, Chafetz claims that women can be empowered and liberated through this mode of social change. Changing social roles would make the females “more rational and psychologically and intellectually

confident and competent” (257). For him, empowerment lies in the subversion of gender roles. But print media in Nepal is seen to be against marginalized women.

Print media plays a significant role in making women independent and free from patriarchal bondage. Regarding women’s independence and liberty British traveler, Massie claims, “At no point of life, in no condition of society [...] a woman is affirmed, is never fit for independence or to be trusted with liberty” (157). But Massie fails to notice the gradual changes in the status of women due to the presence of increasing educational institutions and the women’s involvement into them. But as the gradual extension of educational institutions pressurized women to join educational institutions, their level of awareness and intelligence have grown beyond their expectation.

Media too has claimed to be working in favour of marginal people but in practice it seems to be bringing the elites in front space ignoring the marginalized. New subaltern women are emerging in the society due to survival threat. By hook and crook they are compelled to work under capitalistic notion and pressure. Capitalists view it merely as a politics. This era, in Spivak’s view, “centre less centre of financial capital, the subaltern woman is the target of credit –bating without infrastructural involvement, thus opening a huge untapped market to the international commercial sector” ( Discussion: An Afterward on the New Subaltern 322). The new subaltern does not have any involvement in the infrastructure of capitalism but media tries to show their involvement as a step to their empowerment.

In fact, it is their politics to present them involved in it. Then the question arises: Does the consciousness of a ‘new subaltern’ have any thing to do? In this context, Spivak is of the point that their consciousness can be made knowledgeable data and the will that the subalterns show can be used for the justification of the

policy adopted by the global capitalistic approach. The connection between the center and new subaltern definitely paves a paradoxical way. The new subalterns may or may not have an access to the center simultaneously. Because of all the aforementioned logics and views, new subalterns have been able to draw the society's attention whether to rethink about the term 'subaltern'. Truly speaking the word 'subaltern' has become the property of Capitalism. Presenting his views on this issue Spivak claims:

The new subaltern is produced by the logic of a global capital that forms classes only instrumental, in a separate urban sphere, because commercial and finance capita cannot function without an industrial component . Postfordism had taken away the organizational stability of the factory floor and thus taken away the possibility of class consciousness. International labor [...] has no class solidarity as such. (Discussion: An Afterward on the New Subaltern (325)).

There is a considerable pressure of global media in regional, national and local level and no media can stand on its own stance. However, the claim of media is seen to be adverse. Institutions should validate the action and thought of women subaltern. For the agencies like democracy and development politics and economics are to use to enable subaltern in expressing their feelings and performing according to their will. But Spivak sees global capitalism as an obstacle in course of subaltern's move. That is why media, as an agent of capitalism and change in the society seems to be following the capitalistic approach. There lies a constant possibility of being used in commodity market. As a result, tycoon of global market formulates tactful policies to manipulate subaltern women beyond their recognition.

That is why Spivak pleads the feminists of the world to monitor the market activities and the role of new subaltern in order to minimize the victimization of women subaltern. Spivak sees the need to bring “structural change” (Discussion: An Afterword on the New Subaltern (322)). Spivak’s concern seems to be the recovery of agency of new subaltern in the capital market. The women today are the new subalterns. That is why Spivak claims that “new subaltern” is a global model of such a subject, yet it is always and necessarily tried out on local scenes. The new subaltern has become the victim of international network of capitalism so far. Media is also not far from making women new subaltern. In one side it valorizes the essentiality and importance of women and ignores the essentiality to make their proportional representation in another side. It brings out the elite women on the front where lies potential of opportunities. Subaltern women can dance as it is their compulsion, in tune with any sorts of agency if it temporarily pleases her.

There lies a chance of being used differently as per the situation demands. Our society manages to subordinate women this way or that even by refusing to represent their mentality or consciousness. All the selected images from newspapers and magazine aimed at presenting the real position of women are not able to come out of their age long societal confinement. Are we really thinking about subaltern mentality? Do they have their own consciousness? These questions obviously demand to be addressed sooner or later. For the elite women, subaltern women can not think and act collectively. It means they do have collective consciousness and collectively but not individually they can perform and act.

Elite people can act individually and collectively better than the subaltern. They can prove and show their individual and collective efforts to settle any sorts of issue. It is appropriate to examine the subaltern consciousness at this juncture. The term

subaltern consciousness has become a much debated terminology. Since theorists like Gramsci, Chatterjee, Bhadra and Spivak have found contradictory nature of subaltern consciousness. For Javeed Alam it is quite different. For him, “Subalterns remain immune from the manipulations of the dominant groups. The ruling classes may control the themes and content of politics or the sources of history, the subalterns or the people will always manage to make themselves heard”(44). However, Alam does not try to analyze the socio-economic barriers and limitations from which subalterns are adversely affected. Naturally, economically unprivileged groups are compelled to rely on elite class for their survival and subsistence. Subalterns are not free to think and act freely.

Gautam Bhadra sees subaltern consciousness differently. Bhadra is of the point that subalterns sometimes speak autonomously and other times they act as a subordinate to the elite. Realizing this contradictory nature of subaltern consciousness Bhadra asserts:

Defiance is not the only characteristics of the behavior of subaltern classes. Submissiveness to authority in one context is as frequent as defiance in another. It is these two elements that together constitute the subaltern mentality. It is on the account of this combination that the poor and oppressed have, time and again and in different histories, made voluntary sacrifices in favor of the rich and the dominant, at least as often as they have rebelled against the latter. (54)

In conclusion, Media, in spite of its claim, has been unable to represent all women in its activities. Theoretically media is for all and there is no question of inclusion and exclusion. But in practice it has failed to materialize the claim. It pays maximum attention in capitalistic approach as profit relies on its activities that are widely

welcomed. Most of the time media works for the elite women and the issues of rural women who are deprived of state benefits and services. The fundamental reason behind it is the domination of elite people over the functioning of media as Marx has claimed earlier. The photographs selected for the study reveal the fact.

Superficially media seems to be working for the people who are marginalized socially, culturally and economically. The elite always want to make hold over power in all sorts of areas, be it media, education or business and apply power in making profit ignoring its fundamental ethics. The representation of the women subaltern has not been taken seriously in the media.

As the time changes, the issue of the representation of women subaltern is coming to the core. Moreover, the representations of simple and ordinary women and their issues very poorly exist in print media, which might be because of their ignorance, poor financial background, etc. The coverage of the subaltern women in print media is very limited and their contents are not focused because they are found inside the newspapers where the readers' eyes hardly fall. Actually the women are presented with romanticizing or exposing their vulnerability. It justifies that these medial workers and personnel hardly take these women's issues seriously. Even though the voices are raised in favour of the subaltern women time and again, they are in margin and their representation is very nominal in print media.

Photographs in the mass media have made the faces of political leaders, popular entertainers, and other celebrities familiar to the public. When a newsworthy event occurs photojournalists are there to record it. Photojournalists sometimes spend months covering a story. The result of such labor is often a powerful, revealing picture essay that probes far beneath the surface of events. In its efforts to sell a product, attractive photographs of the item are used. Photography is also widely used

in education and training within the academic world, industry, and the armed services. Priority or focus has not been given on the issues of subaltern women. They have been marginalized even in media, particularly the print media by offering very less space in the pages of the newspapers. The representation of subaltern women is rare in print media because of having rare representation in higher ranks; lack of conscience; less knowledge; lack of language command and education. If they had those deserving qualities, they might have good representation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Representation of Subaltern Women in Nepali Print Media: A Politics of

#### Exclusion

Photos published in media function as a medium and they have a great power to reach the readers and viewers and attract their attention. Two prominent daily English newspapers *The Kathmandu Post* and *Republica* and one women oriented monthly magazine *Nari* have been taken for the analysis in this chapter. The rationale behind the selection of these two daily English newspapers is to explore the coverage of the subaltern women in the mainstream Nepali print media. The magazine has been selected only because it captures women's photo to a greater extent. Further, the exploration of representation of subaltern women is relevant to these Nepali newspapers and magazine published by the mainstream media houses such as Kantipur Publication and Nagrik Publication and they represent the ideology of the urban based patriarchal, young-to-middle-aged elite people who, though smaller in number, have a considerable influence on the construction and perpetuation of that ideology. The focus of the study is on media coverage of subaltern women, whether they are represented in advertising, some other paradigms of the newspapers and magazines are also taken into account. In this connection the selected images of the women have been analyzed to demonstrate how the newspapers and the magazine contribute to construct subaltern women through the visual images.

This study further analyzes subaltern women's access to media and media's role in presenting them in pictorial form. The question of representation of subaltern women in print media is in itself a grave one because media has been frequently attacked by the external world for its unequal treatment. Subaltern women are marginalized and the elites have cornered them from the mainstream socio-political

and cultural matters. And the general expectation from the media is to see the considerable space given to marginalized sector of the society. The aforementioned mainstream newspapers and women oriented magazine are found offering far less space to the subaltern women. To have proper coverage, the journalists have to show their close and keen observation upon them. Then only it is possible to cover their issues. In most of the issues of both the newspapers and the magazine, priority has been given to the elite women whereas the subaltern women have been cornered. The visual representation of subaltern women is much less in the print media as they are away from the mainstream.

Representation usually refers to stand for another. It has been adopted by new historicists who use the meaning in regards to the symbolic construction of a particular society at a particular period in time. In literary theory, 'representation' is commonly defined in three ways. They are: to look like or resemble, to stand in for something or someone and to present a second time to re-present. Representation began with early literary theory in the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, and has evolved into a significant component of language, Saussurian and communication studies. Especially in mass media, representation refers to the construction in any medium of aspects of 'reality' such as people, places, objects, events, cultural identities and other abstract concepts. Such representations may be in speech or writing as well as still or moving pictures. The ability of the representation to become a form or a tool for media relates to its reproducible character. Regarding the painting of the Mona Lisa, most people have some ideas as to what this painting looks like. This is to say that most people have come to know about Mona Lisa through representations (i.e. reproductions or copies) of the original painting of Mona Lisa. In this sense, we can understand representation as a medium because of its ability to be copied or

reproduced; the representation becomes more accessible to be communicated on a mass level.

The contents in print media are important texts and images to represent a particular person or community in the periphery of certain socio-economic and political surroundings. In the name of equal representation, both the mainstream English dailies *The Kathmandu Post* and *Republica* and the monthly magazine *Nari* seem to be prioritizing the elite and sophisticated women whereas the case of the subaltern women is just reverse.

In this study some selected photographs published in the above mentioned print media have been taken for critical analysis. Since Teej, the Hindu women's festival falls during this period, the researcher found it useful to include the selected images of this festival since diversities of characters are taking part in this festival and their representation seems to be unequal.

The photograph enlisted in fig. no. 1 taken from *The Kathmandu Post* has presented semi-elite women in Nepali society. People are emerging as new elite in Kathmandu due to the increase in their income. The new elite people are in between the modern trend of marketing and traditional way of shopping their goods. They are neither in the position to leave the tradition nor are able to adopt the modern way of life totally negating the age long tradition. They organize weekend parties; go for shopping at newly established shopping malls and department stores to be seen elite. Due to the societal as well as their personal psychological reason they are squeezed in between. New concept in consumer culture has emerged in the society and that culture has pushed the subaltern to further victimization.

Media's politics in this image is to help consumer capitalism to widen its grip. The more it widens its grip, the more it victimizes the subaltern.



**CHANGING  
LIFESTYLE**

*Female shoppers at a department store in New Baneshwore in Kathmandu on Tuesday. More and more middle-class shoppers are turning to department stores these days for convenience and quality products.*

Fig. 1. Customers shopping in the supermarket: *The Kathmandu Post*. Sep.1, 2010: PP 14.

The question comes why media has tried to snap the semi elite people. The women seen on the photograph do not seem to be from subaltern class. In fact, women from all classes and means visit the department stores due to the change in their shopping culture. The media's focus is on the elite class women as though it is their mission to highlight the capitalistic notion not to secure the space for the subaltern or marginalized group in the society. Rather than representing subaltern women, media is concerned with presenting superior class women and their shopping culture only to extend their horizon.

The newspaper is indifferent to the identity of low class women though it claims that it provides equal spaces to all. It has helped to create new elitist personality on the periphery of subalternity. The following photo is one of the examples of such traditions set by the media. Media is seen to be deviating from its usual and principal course ignoring its very ethics and the question of representation. The photos resemble the housewives of elite families who are found to be shopping in the supermarket. In reality low class people can not go to the supermarkets for shopping but through the above mentioned image we can reach in the conclusion

that media has tried to highlight the reflection of the shopping habit of the elitist women.

Fig. 2(A) has presented a photograph of Madhav Kumar Nepal, the political player of Nepal, conferring reward and token of love to a woman whose get up, general outlook, and confident smiling posture prove that she is an elite class woman. The question comes why *The Kathmandu Post* published this photograph and ignored other peoples' photographs. Madhav Kumar Nepal offered rewards and credentials to other staffs of the maternity hospital so far on the occasion but media ignored the presence of low profiled workers in the hospital. The reward conferring ceremony in his presence totally discards the notion of inclusion and gender equality. The question regarding the media's interest in capturing Nepal's image along with the director is obvious. Amidst many participants the presence of a cute baby, director and the then Prime minister depicts elitist representation. The questions comes do the media behave the same if there was a woman from rural set up.



Fig.2 (A). Conferring a memento to a woman at Prasuti Griha. *The Kathmandu Post*. 2 Sep 2010: PP 2.

Patriarchal notion and the politics of media constitute a kind of strong unity through which the process of subalternization gets energy and encouragement. Media

as the powerful means to make voiceless people speak has been under a perpetual ambiguity in taking a bold step. Through its articles and image media tries to bring out the reality in front of the society and the society expects impartial treatment from the media.

From above generalization we come to know that media too opts high profiled women and men sidelines the subalterns. The question of representation comes in this context too. The public think that media focus on inclusive activities and minimize the discrimination prevailing in the society but in practice they are unable to materialize it

Marginalized people get the chance to come to the center if they are assisted by agencies like media and social pressure groups. But the very process of bringing the elite and high profiled people to the center always deprives subalterns of their fundamental rights and the feminists' emancipator project and its mission will be meaningless in this sense.

The image of a woman, who has given birth to a baby at the hospital, is the counter image of fig 2(A). The subaltern girl posted in fig. 2. (B) is sitting on the bed of a hospital in course of her delivery. Though *Republica* has given a little space, the intended meaning or purpose is not clear to the readers. If we compare both images and media's role, *The Kathmandu Post* has highlighted the baby and the director lady in such a way that they are the most valuable figures of the society. But another baby born at another hospital has been ignored. No one can be seen taking care of her. Hospital staffs are seen to be ignoring her. In Fig A the photographer has highlighted the woman whereas in fig B the mother of the baby is shown in her ragged and tattered clothes as if she is under a pressure. We can't make any comparison between the two innocent babies. The media seems to be biased because the first image is

much larger and attractive whereas the second one is much smaller it is published in such a location that readers' eyes do not usually fall there. Had it compared with the *Kathmandu Post's* image and baby's vulnerable condition, it could have been positive.



Fig. 2(B). A subaltern woman with her newly born baby at maternity hospital.

*Republica*. Sep.8, 2010: PP 2.

If she was a beautiful girl, the case would be different and the image would have been used for other purpose too. Such type of discrimination shown by the media should be of serious concern to all. Media is expected to prioritize subaltern women and raise their issues like, their miserable condition, and their sufferings. All media houses have a version that their newspapers give equal preference to all whether they are elite or non-elite but it is not found so in reality. The main objective of media should be to have an access to all sectors of the society and to equip the audiences with the newsworthy matters. They should be aware of giving space to those aspects which are waiting to be displayed. It is said that media is the mirror of the reality. Due to nescient phase of the development of the media and their commercial unfair race make them less research based and more commercial based.

Posting the image of subaltern women in their pages does not guarantee that they are fighting for the equality of women; instead they have to raise cases based on

everyday issues so that the concerned authority may be compelled to look into the matter. Moreover, the facial expression of the mother seems quite frightened and the photo seems to be artificially depicted. The photojournalist's intention is not directed towards inclusion and literature is silent to expose her real condition. Had the journalist given full literature regarding her family background, socio-economic and cultural background and her voice it would have been different for the general readers like the author. Simply publishing a photo does not guarantee that it has included the voices of the marginalized people.



Fig.3. Miss Nepal Sadichha Shrestha (Center) with first runner up Sahana Bajracharya (left) with second runner up Samyukta Timilsina. *Republica*. Sep. 2, 2010: PP 1.

The image above represents the young and beautiful women most probably competent of Miss Nepal. If we keenly observe the very setting of the photograph we can claim that media gives a special platform to women who can attract the attention of its readers. The presence of subaltern women, in media's perception, discourages the investors to increase their investment for the betterment of their business. This simply suggests that media houses' ignorance towards the inclusion of marginalized people is guided by their business ethics.

No doubt media has highlighted the above photo and given space on the front page, it has raised multiple questions. 'Do the media organizations give the same preference and importance when the question of rural marginalized women's case is concerned? Do the marginalized and socially ignored sections of society get equal treatment in their coverage?' The answer is definitely negative.

We can have opportunities to capture photographs of rural women who are deprived of state facilities and media access. Incidents and events of adventurous and heroic activities of such women can be found in the nook and corner of our society but media's presence in such sectors is negligible. The author does not intend to denounce the media for its above mentioned coverage but wants to urge media houses and concerned photojournalists not to turn the deaf ears to the sufferings of the subaltern women.

There is a wide spread violence against women across the country but they do not get proper space. They are being discriminated, tortured, discarded and thrown out by their males. Sexual violence and suicidal cases of women in the Terai and other regions are really pathetic and horrible but media's coverage in such cases is quite negligible. What we expect from media is to bring out the social evils found in every sphere of human life so that the same may not repeat time and again.



Fig. 4. Chepang subaltern woman seeking justice in the District Administration Office, Makawanpur. *The Kathmandu Post*. Sep. 2, 2010: PP 3.

The image of this Chepang woman depicts her sufferings. Her look and get up signify that she is from a very poor background and deserted by her husband. Chepang is one of the indigenous groups of Nepal and a great majority of this tribe falls below the poverty line. Because of her illiteracy and weak financial status she can not get access to state machineries and power. It should be the role of media to shed light on such a woman and compel the concerned authority to hear her problems and claims. As a jobless woman she has to work hard as a household labourer to feed her little baby. She can not afford balanced diet, both her and her baby's health can be ruined due to malnutrition. She is seeking justice in the district administration office but there is a doubt whether her pain and sufferings will be heard properly and she will be given justice. Though *The Kathmandu Post* published this image, it was not prioritized properly. Moreover, neither other newspapers nor the magazines published and elaborated the marginalized Chepang woman. In fact, all mainstream media houses have to properly address the Chepang woman's sufferings to draw the attention of the concerned authority and to build the public pressure. Media claims that it is giving space to the voiceless people but in fact, it is indifferent when the case of subaltern people like Chepang woman aforementioned.

Media has been found running an unfair commercial race in the present day world. By raising the issues of public sufferings, media can play one of the most important roles as assistance or mediator but this role has not been fulfilled properly. The subaltern women are thought to be low graded persons. A serious study with new perspective seems to be essential for the critical reading of misrepresentation. Media is supposed to create representation of the issues rather than misrepresentation. The

foremost reason that causes misrepresentation of subaltern women in print media is associated with the difficulties journalists face while collecting news and capturing photos. A journalist is not free from collecting the news and writing critically for publication.



Fig.5. J.N. Khanal participating in the Teej Programme, *The Kathmandu Post*.  
Sep. 3, 2010: PP 3.

The image in fig. 5 shows that UML supremo Jhala Nath Khanal participating in women's programme and dancing before a group of elite looking women in connection with the Teej festival. Organized at Kathmandu based Padmakanya College, the function seems to be less inclusive in terms of gender and class. Apart from camera crew, no one except Khanal can be seen in the programme. Moreover, all women participants seem to be from a well to do class of the society. Parties claim that they are greatly conscious about inclusion in every activity in the society but the reality is just opposite to their claim. Media's attention is focused on Khanal and other elite looking women and is ignoring the very ethics and norms. The question of inclusion remains a matter of slogan and joke.

Khanal's presence naturally raises the questions like, 'Why did he dance before the ladies since he is not a good dancer? Why didn't the other men dance

there? Why did the media only photograph Khanal's?' Since Teej is related to women 'Why did Media decide to include the image for the publication?' It is simply because Khanal is the top most leader in his party and his image does have meaning to the society ignoring that there are many subalterns being ignored by the media. Had a rural folk danced with Mr. Khanal, it would have been different in meaning. Women are seen to be playing the role of subordinates. 'Why did media ignore their dance?'

The women present in the function seem to be accepting the dominant role of the male. In theory they cry for the equal opportunity but in practice they accept the male hegemony. They would derive the term equality from the idioms of their everyday lives so that they could not make their struggles of their own. This tendency too, depicts their assertion of freedom, self-identity and acceptance of male hegemony. Meanwhile, we should not forget that "defiance," as Gautam Bhadra says, "it is not only the characteristic behavior of the subaltern classes but also "submissive to authority" is equally important feature of their behaviors 963). In short, "defiance" and "submissiveness" constitute the subaltern mentality. In fact, the subaltern mentality has worked a lot in this context too. Media provokes that party chairman's involvement in the women's programme is the milestone in eliminating gender discrimination. We should analyze the presence of women in terms of inclusion. The women gathered in the program do not belong to the ordinary women. They are somehow interlinked with the high profiled women politically, socially and economically.

The discriminatory treatment of media does not ease the knot entangled to bind social injustices. Further, it prolongs and deepens the discrimination in the name of gender and class. Had a passerby danced in the programme it would have given different message. There had been many dancing postures of students from rural

background. But media ignored their presence and did not provide space to them. In fact, Khanal occupied and encroached females' space as well as subalterns' space. The women by his side seem to be singing and clapping their hands to encourage Khanal's dance. This approach is somehow directed by feudalistic psyche that is underlying in women's brain. Women are letting men encroach their space and deliberately accepting it. It is then failed politics in diplomatic terminology.

The representation of the low level women seems to be lacking. The posture of the women involved in this programme is not of the subaltern women. The photo does not reflect subaltern women's dresses and gestures. Image of subaltern personality is hardly found in Nepalese media. Media highlights the elitist women in different names but real subaltern women are under the shadow. What Spivak claims is, "Subaltern and elitist both depend on politics".

The image in fig. 6 represents a group of young bachelors gathering at a hall organized by an institution that runs MBA classes. All are actively participating the meeting, a counseling programme, and seem to be conscious of their lives. Five boys and eleven girls are seen to be presenting their views. The media has highlighted their presence. All are aware that it needs a lot of money to complete the MBA course. Only elite class students can meet the cost and afford the higher education. There are many young boys and girls who are deprived of basic education. They are unable to think about their future. Most of them leave the school before completing +2 or even SLC. The question arises, 'Why do not the media include the pathetic experience of the subaltern students who are far from government's facilities? Why do media not expose the bitter reality before the public and the government?' The answer is simple: it is their politics to encourage the morale of the elite and sideline the subalterns from the mainstream education. It is their strategic politics in further

marginalizing the subaltern. Media claims for the equal opportunity in receiving education but does the opposite. This is the tragic aspect of media that does ignore the very presence and space of the subaltern in the society.



Fig. 6. Students of high class family participating in the discussion of MBA Courses.

*The Kathmandu Post*. Sep. 3, 2010: PP 15.

Unless and until students from low income group get opportunity to study the chosen subjects the slogan of equal opportunity and access to education remains merely a slogan. There are students in rural areas of Nepal who have not got opportunity to join even the +2. Many girl students are deprived of higher studies simply because of their low economic status. They are not in the position of joining even government run colleges and universities.

Media should create a pressure in favor of the economically handicapped class of the society but it always focuses on the elite class people. The image shown above does not represent the subaltern students. It has covered the issues and concern of the elite class students who don't have any financial problem. Their concern is to get admission in expensive institutes. The caption suggests that the students are discussing about MBA course. To admit in MBA level one should have sufficient money. It means the poor students have no excess in costly institutions and as a result, they are deprived of quality education. Media does not touch about the issue of the

students who are unable to continue their study after SLC. It is the politics of the media to cover the elite students and their issues and interest ignoring the fundamental rights of the students.

The image in Fig. 7 depicts a beautiful airhostess employed under Thai airlines. The woman in her late twenties is in the pose of greeting the passengers. Advertising is a very powerful form of social communication in modern society. It offers the most sustained and most concentrated set of images everywhere in the media system. Gender is only one aspect of human individuality: political, occupational, educational, religious, and spiritual. These aspects are also equally important in our lives.



Fig. 7. A Woman Advertising Thai Air. *Republica*. Sep 4, 2010: PP 7.

In advertising everything else is defined through gender. Thousands of images surround us every day in our lives that address us along gender lines. Advertising seems to be obsessed with gender. There are two reasons for this obsession. First, gender is one of the deepest and most important traits of human beings. Our understanding of ourselves either as male or female is the most important aspect of our definition of ourselves as individuals. It reaches deep into the innermost recesses of the individual identity. Second, gender can be communicated at a glance (almost

instantly) because of our intimate knowledge and the use of the. The greeting posture of the airhostess and the jet plane on the back ground suggests the very representation of an elite class woman who earns handsome money. The question arises regarding the partial treatment of media in terms of representation and inclusion. ‘Why did media not capture a photo of a rural lady who has a simple get up and make up?’ It is no more than its politics to uplift the elite and sidelined the subalterns.



Fig. 8. Advertisement. *The Kathmandu Post*. Sep. 6, 2010: PP 9.

The image of a model presented in fig. 8 represents a high profiled woman who has neither faced nor known the real problems of women. She does not know the difficulties underlined to be a female in rural areas. She has been presented glamorously in a sexy pose and it seems that the only motive of the newspaper is to valorize the elite woman. The question comes why the newspaper chose such a woman almost in naked posture. The answer is obvious, it is simply because it emphasizes on elite's representation. Many women in rural setting achieve awards and prizes but they are not brought on the front. Media ignores their presence and does not think necessary to publish the image. It is the clear indication of media's politics in excluding the marginalized people. Naturally, ethical questions emerge regarding the actual motif of media in presenting the opposite. Women are used as

the commodity and are treated as objects in the society and the media supports the very capitalistic notion. Since they are used as a means of commodity the identity of the women seems to be in crisis.



Fig. 9. Home or abroad: Where to study? *Republica*. Sep. 13, 2010: PP 5.

Fig. 9 represents a group of young students in their early twenties. All students seem to be from upper class family background. Their dresses, postures, facial expressions suggest that they do not represent subaltern class. There are students in our country where maximum students do not get reading and writing materials. They have to work and help their parents and going to school is optional. Had the media raised the issue of those who are deprived of school education, it would have been its praiseworthy work. Subaltern students do not fall in media's priority.

Media representation is the main issue in Nepal because of its nature and discourse. Multiple issues come once at the time although the main demarcation is between the elitist and subaltern. All the young students, (two male and three female) are in tip top posture, smiling and happy. They don't have to share any problems generally faced by the students in rural areas. 'Why does media not select rural boys

and girls in their activities? Are the students from rural area not fit for their campaign?’

Media houses in Nepal are not free from biasness. They always try to catch the attention of the elite group ignoring the marginalized part. It is their politics to claim that they are inclusive and impartial. In theory they provoke different sorts of freedom, justice and equality but in practice they do the opposite. The double standard is their politics.

## FILM FESTIVAL STARTS



Fig.10. A glimpse of gathering in annual film festival *The Kathmandu Post*. Sep. 6, 2010: PP 2.

The image in fig. 10 shows women’s participation in the film festival. This photo does not represent the subaltern women. They are sophisticated and are beautiful in appearance. In the film, subaltern women are not given any important roles and their presence is neglected. Those who can allure the large mass, have attractive get up and are young are given space and media also prioritizes such women. The photo of the film stars does not have subaltern character although media is provoking the women’s participation in the film making sector. We can see celebrities on the front side of the hall. Chairs are empty but no subaltern women got the chance to seat on the front side. The image does not resemble the subaltern women because it reflects the photos of rich high class women.

While analyzing the issues of gendered subaltern the question comes into our minds. Do all the women fall under the category of low class people? According to the claim of the gender perception, all the women are said to be subalterns. In this regard, Spivak says, as we know, the concept of women has led to such a serious discussion on the position of the subaltern classes. The subaltern woman, therefore, emerges as an epitome of subaltern. In the same volume, Ranajit Guha also contributed his moving essay “Chandra’s Death”, which attempts to demonstrate the nature of women subordination with patriarchy. In patriarchy foundation all women are found under the category of subaltern. That preconception appears in the media and presents the photos in the name of subaltern which is not the real subaltern. The photo posted above can be taken as an example of misrepresentation of subaltern.

Fig. 11 below shows subaltern women reaping paddy harvest. This image was published in a very small form and in the inside page. This reveals that the poor and economically deprived women are cornered and they are not prioritized. The representations of subaltern women and their issues very poorly exist in print media. The main task of the mass media is to represent all types of women in newspapers, subaltern women have been found giving much less priority than the elite women.



Fig.11. Subaltern women reaping the paddy harvest. *The Kathmandu Post*, 10 Sep. 2010: PP 6.

Media claims that it gives a proper coverage to the subaltern women as well, but it is difficult for the readers to understand the intended meaning of this. The mainstream Nepali print media *The Kathmandu Post* published this image in a small form in the inside page where the readers eyes usually do not fall. Media advocates that all are equal in its eyes and there is no discriminatory treatment, but the reality is just the opposite. The women who are poor, uneducated and those who are dominated and subordinated socially, politically, economically, and culturally have not been found giving adequate space in print media. If they were educated, beautiful looking and were in the high post, they would be given special focus in the print media. Though the image was posted in *The Kathmandu Post* there was not an article relating to this image.

The image in fig. 12 represents a group of women in a dancing pose which depicts their pleasure during Teej festival. There seems to be the solidarity among the women. But the question arises whether maximum of the women represent the otherwise part of the society. 'Do they represent the marginalized part? Are the voices of the unheard heard? Do the songs enchanted during their performance belong to rural women who are deprived of her husband's love? Have the songs raised issues of a newly married girl who has been tortured by her in laws simply on the issue of dowry?' There are multiple questions related to the group dancing. But a greater number of the ladies presented in the picture belong to a high class family. Their long Tilhari and Pote reflect their representation. There are a number of subaltern women who celebrate Teej, but they do not fall on the priority of media because they do not have good and expensive clothes and jewelries to allure and

attract men. In fact, the image exhibits misrepresentation of subaltern women despite media's constant claim of being inclusive.



Fig. 12. Women of different age levels participating in the Teej Festival. *The Kathmandu Post*. Sep. 11, 2010: PP 6.

In this image media has failed to incorporate the unheard voices that are made silent. The image presented has been purely motivated to assist consumerism and image selling process only to assist market economy that always ignores the problems and adversities of the subaltern. ‘How can we claim that the photo represents subaltern women? Does she represent the rural folks?’ Obviously she doesn’t share any similarity with our Nepali rural women except her sex. Theoretically media claims to be impartial and liberal in depicting the social phenomenon but in practice it is absolutely incorrect. Media always stands in favour of high profiled people and ignores the suppressed and muted voices. The image above represents Nepali women of different ages enjoying Teej festival. The photo of female, according to the title, reflects the subaltern position of women although the coverage has only highlighted high class Hindu women living in urban area. The photo visualizes urban women participating in the Teej festival. Although media always claims that it stands in favour of subaltern characters, it has reflected the problems of representation in media.

Similarly, the image in fig. 13 also shares the same chemistry. The women, most probably officers' wives or businessmen's wives are celebrating Teej quite differently than the other women presented in above images. If we analyze the very setting of the dancing stage we can understand its level.



Fig. 13. Women from high class families participating in the Teej Festival in Biratnagar. *Republica*. Sep. 6, 2010: PP 2.

The stage has been made by a company that provides tent, carpet and food facility to the customers. For it the women have to pay certain amount that exceeds general women's capacity. All the women are from the highly capable family by means of financial state. Women are in sophisticated dress and expensive jewelleiries. There are many women in our society who have no excess to the expensive market and beautiful ornaments. The image of women does not represent subaltern women. As Kamala Viswesaran claims, "Women are not accepted as proper subjects, but it does register and seek to contain their agency" (124). She, however, believes "that it is at the point of erasure where the emergence of Subaltern is possible" (124).

The image signifies the cultural performance which plays a vital role to establish social recognition of people which is also related with the issues of subaltern. In the photo the women are getting involved in cultural dance on the occasion of Teej festival. The image of the women in dancing pose depicts that they

are having a pleasure of Teej festival and there is the solidarity among the women of the elitist family. The photo visualizes a group of selected women living in the city area of Biratnagar although media claims that it is a glimpse of subaltern character. Moreover, if we look the setting of the gathering, no one can claim that women dancing or taking part in Teej festival represent the marginalized women. They are dancing inside a tent which is beautifully decorated. 'How can a rural women dance under such sophisticated environment? How can such women sing pain and anguish of the socially sidelined women?' Theoretically, media claims to be impartial and liberal in depicting the social phenomenon but in practice it is absolutely incorrect. It is simply because media always stands in favor of high profiled people and ignores the suppressed and silenced voices.

It reflects the problems of representation in media which Spivak claims, 'Can the subaltern speak?' 'Can a poor woman appear in media?' The answer is obviously negative. It is the rhetoric of elitist representation. The women clad in red blouse and sari, long green beads and gold ornaments are entertaining Teej in festive mood. There are thousands of subaltern women even in urban areas who are ignored and marginalized in every sphere of socio-cultural, political and ritualistic life.

There is a considerable difference in performance too. Rural women from subaltern set up can not enjoy their freedom in the full extent. They can not vacate their anguished heart through their narratives in the form of song. Teej is basically known as the festival of sharing joys, happiness and sorrow but the above photographic setting juxtaposes the claim. Elite women are singing about their dresses and romantic love like a song says 'Hai mero sari, Jhan mathi saryo jhan tala sarchha.'

But the rural folk's song represents their true life. They sing their pain, anguish, sorrow and happiness. Like the song goes, 'Barsadinko Teej ma Bhaiya lina aaeko Pathaenen sasule gaina barilai'. The woman says her brother came to invite her and take her to his home but her mother in law did not send her. Even the songs they sing have failed to represent them in the sense that subaltern women's pain and a compulsion are not understood by the elites. Both of them sing their class songs. Women in the above figure are not able to represent all women in the society. It means media only captures the photos of well off women who are not under any sort of social pressure and bondage.

Had media snapped photos of the Teej festival in rural areas and presented as it were snapped, it would have heralded hopeful message to those who are working for the elimination of discrimination. In this connection feminists and the gender experts seem to be advocating for 'gender bonding' and class emancipation of the women. However, the subaltern studies nullify the possibility of emancipator plans targeted for the whole gender and class.

In contemporary societies sexuality is commonly understood as being a personal and private matter set apart from the public world and the workings of the society. There are, of course, many theoretical approaches to sexuality along the essentialist-constructionist continuum. A common view is that sex is determined by biology and not by society and sex is fundamentally pre-social.

The woman in fig. 14 depicts the image of different taste and significance. The motive of this image is to attract its readers. In the photo a lady from a different nationality has been presented in a beautiful red sari and blouse around Pashupati Nath Temple premises. She is holding a camera and trying to capture some of the remarkable scenes that she wishes to.

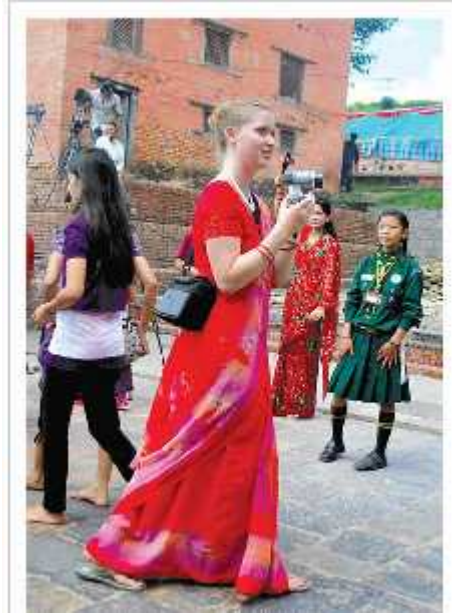


Fig.14. A woman from abroad in traditional Nepali dress. *Republica*. 12 Sep. 2010: PP 8.

It is obvious that Nepali women have dismantled some traditional patriarchal boundaries that have been sidelining women from mainstream politics and other activities. They have joined the army and other security agencies and even gone abroad to earn their bread. They have defied the patriarchal set up. But media does not think to bring them in the front. Media houses do not want to present a pathetic life story of a rural woman who has lost her family during the ten year long insurgency. It neither thinks nor raises any issues but sometimes it does so in order to be safe from international blame. ‘Why did the photo journalist choose a foreigner to be snapped and presented in his paper?’ The answer is simple. It is because her posture can increase their sale. There are other Nepali women around her but the journalist’s eyes only saw her. It is his discriminatory attitude that he has achieved from the newspapers’ schooling. The schooling does not let him cross the boundary. That is

why women are getting sidelined despite their claim of inclusion and equality and representation.

*Nari*, the women oriented magazine has published the posture of the elitist urban women in attractive get up as presented in fig 15. There is a question to raise, “Can’t the image of subaltern be published on the cover page?” Though the answer is ‘Yes’ media houses ignore this idea because they want to run their business by representing the elitist women and the subaltern women are discarded.



Fig. 15. Women from the well off family posing on the occasion of Teej Festival. *Nari* . August 16 to Sep.15, 2010: Cover Page.

The image depicts that they are the women from the sophisticated family. The posture of these young and beautiful women published on the cover page of the magazine is to allure the readers and increase its circulation. If we deeply observe the four women in the page they do not belong to the subaltern class. Their sitting posture is artificial, preplanned and motivated. The media’s concern seems to be aimed at promoting jewelries and expensive linens as well as their commoditization of their beauty and glamour exactly opposite to what the media ethics claim.

The question comes, ‘Do the readers always want to read only sexy, glamorous and erotic appearances?’ No doubt beautiful, glamorous and erotic pictures entertain readers to some extent; media should not forget the fact that there are still large numbers of readers who want to read pathetic, vulnerable and victimized appearances. ‘How many women can have such expensive ornaments and clothes and sufficient time to enjoy each and every festival? Are not there innumerable women in our society who are unable to set fire to their hearth on the very day of Teej?’ These days Teej festival is found celebrating for a month and it has turned to be extravagant and expensive. There is a filthy competition in exhibiting the jewelries and clothes, and it is the duty of media to discourage by pointing out the bad practices being carried out in the name of celebrating festival.



Fig. 16. Women watching dance on the occasion of Teej Festival. *Nari*. Aug. 16 to Sep.15, 2010: PP 28.

The posture of young beautiful and attractive women in fig. no. 16 ignores the very tradition of Nepalese Teej festival and women’s representation. It is as though all the women are from abroad and they are really giving a negative message about the festival and its motto. None of them represent the subaltern women. There are lots of women of this age category. Since the subaltern women do not have attractive pose and look they are not given any coverage.

By publishing such an image it indicates that media is prioritizing and motivating such erotic scene which has to be demotivated. Instead of publishing the images of the women who perform the Teej festival following the traditional norms and values, media seems to be going beyond the ethics and inspires the women who are westernized and not in the national attire like Cholo, blouse, sari etc. The get ups of the women in the above image show that the way of observing this festival has been modernized and traditional norms have been contaminated. By publishing such an image in *Nari* magazine Kantipur publication seems to have forgotten the cultural values. It is a fact that *Nari* magazine's prime duty is to address women's issues of all classes but it is only highlighting the elitist women.

No media house has ventured to bring out the heart rending cases of the subaltern women. There are a number of such women who have been the victim of household violence, sexual abuse and all sorts of disparities and discriminations in the country but media hardly publishes their images. This example is more serious one as it has not been able to prove that it does according to its motto. This image published in "*Nari*" seems to be mocking at the objective of the magazine. Though Teej is a joyous festival of Hindu women; it is shocking that many women are knowingly or unknowingly adulterating the way in which the festival is celebrated. Teej, particularly for city women, means nothing more than donning expensive clothes, enjoying delicious meals and dancing until they get exhausted. But that is not really what the festival stands for.



Fig. 17. Miss Nepal Usha Khadki and Reshma Shrestha in their own styles. *Nari*. Aug. 16 to Sep.15, 2010: PP 43.

The photojournalist captured the posture of Miss Nepal Usha Khadki and Reshma Shrestha, and published it in *Nari* magazine on the occasion of Teej festival. They are depicted in the stylish pose with the aim of attracting the readers. *Nari*, a women oriented magazine has not been able to represent the subaltern women and the pages are covered by the images of well off, young and beautiful ladies. There are a number of subaltern women who celebrate Teej, but they do not fall on the priority of media because they can not wear good and expensive clothes and jewelries. The image exhibits misrepresentation of subaltern women despite media's constant claim of being inclusive. This image in *Nari* has failed to incorporate the unheard and muted voices. The image presented has been purely motivated to assist consumerism and image selling process only to assist market economy that always ignores the problems and adversities of the subaltern. 'How can we claim that the photo represents women? Does she represent our rural folks?' Obviously they don't share any similarity with our Nepali rural women except their gender.

The image presented in fig. 18 represents the scene of women's involvement in Rishi Panchami's ritual, a part of Teej festival. In Rishi Panchami women take a holy bath using different sorts of soil, herbal plants and creepers. They take a bath in a secret place and men are not allowed to see them. The rural women have different traditions. Actually, the motive of the following image is to reflect subaltern identity but it has failed to materialize the claim. By publishing such a photo the print media has unveiled its real nature. Had the image been taken from a rural setting it would have meant different. The image seems to be predetermined as if the photo journalist already informed a group of elite women to have their photos taken. This sort of business always creates a kind of confusion and uncertainty in practice and theory. The women gathered in public place of the Bagmati River are not like living in a remote area. So the image posted in figure does not represent the subaltern women.



Fig. 18. Women performing rituals during Rishi Panchami on the banks of the Bagmati River. *The Kathmandu Post*. Sep.13, 2010: PP 1.

Moreover, media is silent on the other side of those women who are taking a ritual bath during Rishi Panchami. During their bath they are observing ritualistic approach. The other side of the women like Pooja ceremony, fasting and reverence to their husbands has been hidden and the women do not seem to represent the low profile women.

Media claims this issue as subaltern but actually the photo has misrepresentation. The posture having a holy bath on the front page of the newspaper is to allure the opposite sex and make them buy the newspaper. Subaltern women also take a holy bath but they are not snapped because media organizations think that they will have adverse impact in the business and the circulation of the papers will be collapsed. Though the photojournalists can have an access to snap the photos of the subaltern women, they do not capture the scenes of subaltern women and turn the deaf ears.



Fig. 19. A young woman participating in Fashion Carnival. *Republica*. Sep. 14, 2010: PP 2.

The above mentioned photo presented in fig. 19 shows the style of carnival 2010 which is semantically related with subaltern idea but the photos capture the scene for elitist purpose. So this is also one of the best examples of elitist representation. The women from the rural societies are not taken in the fashion show. The advertisement depicts a female participant. This is the scene image of fashion technology held at Soaltee Crown Plaza Kathmandu. While analyzing the photographic representation of subaltern characters it seems media's failure to reflect the reality. The image above is an exhibition of the fashion show. The image in a

newspaper plays a vital role to use subaltern character for capitalistic purpose. Media uses politics of visualization while using the photos of women.

The media simply chose her having purely a business motive. It did not pay attention to its principle and norms. Principally mass media is for all and it should honour and listen to marginal voices. The space it creates and provides should be given to the subaltern. No doubt women are thought to be subaltern this way or that but the photo used in the advertisement does not represent a subaltern woman. National television has publicly published the advertisement as a public notice. It is going to have some say through the mouth of a beautiful lady. The media has double benefit in this context. One it claims that it has included a woman and claims to be inclusive and on the other side it earns a lot through other advertisements that are played during the talk show. But it has cheated the true spirit of the media in terms of representation.

For promotional purpose, it can use a rural lady who puts on national dresses prescribed to the women. But the media did not do so and chose a celebrity instead. Even national TV channel ignores the ethics of media. It does not try to invite a rural folk and listen to their voices. It means that it does not want to listen to the pains and anguish of the subaltern women. Unless it listens and makes all listen to the suppressed voices publicly, the claim of inclusion remains only abstract.

Fig. 20 presents different celebrities of Nepal. To a simple onlooker they do not seem to be Nepali Cheli. Their dresses, get ups make ups and facial expressions are similar to the ladies of abroad.



Fig. 20. Stylist Nilima Sharma, Mahima Bhattachan and Abhaya Subba in different get ups and postures. *Republica*. Sep. 17, 2010: PP 12.

They have coloured their hair in different styles and get ups seem to be western. They are used in the newspaper to promote business of certain products. The motive of the media behind these ladies presence is really biased and discriminatory in the sense that none of them represent the sidelined mass of the society. By presenting them in a sexy and glamorous posture the media is further victimizing women using them as a commodity. Their beauty has been commoditized to enhance the circulation of the newspaper. One can claim that it has included women at least but in fact this sort of inclusion does not guarantee the representation of all marginalized women. Photos play a vital role to reflect fact and reality.

The photo in fig. 21 reflects the elitist woman Manisha Koirala, a film actress. She appears in the advertisement of music album recently to be released. It is in fact a promotional activity of a product and the media has played the role of a mediator in this context. But the question one can ask anyone why the media does not try to counter-comment on such issues.

‘Is it sure that the sale of the music album goes up only because of the presence of Miss Koirala? Why did media publish this image with high priority? Did it do the same if that sort of album was released by village women?’ These questions

seek genuine answers as all are affiliated to the question of representation. It is a fact that media uses celebrities and famous personalities in promotional activities but why does not it try to capture activities carried by rural women?



Fig. 21. Actress Manisha Koirala releasing the soundtrack of her movie Dharma.

*Republica* Sep. 21, 2010: PP 13.

The content analysis above suggests and proves that Nepali media, despite its claim of inclusion and representation, has failed to represent the marginalized sector of our society. Media has been rigorously trying to present elite women in its front page and valorizing their beauty and sexuality but ignoring the sidelined sector. Most of the images analyzed here before are the example of media's prejudice.

The image in Fig. 22 represents promotional photographs of three celebrities of Nepal along with the shortest man in the world, Khagendra Thapa Magar. The photograph intends to allure international tourist to visit Nepal during Tourism year 2011. No doubt Thapa's presence has, somehow, represented subaltern figure but the presence of three ladies ignores the very ethics of inclusion. If the media had used

three women from rural sector of Nepal to visit their respective places, meaning would have been different in terms of representation. The notion of media is always against its ethics. It has fear to bring the reality amidst the so called modern readers. It fears to present traditional attire like 'Sari, Choli and Pachheuri' among the readers who adore traditional dresses. The thigh, miniskirt and hair style are thought be the essential components in alluring the visitors. Moreover, three ladies seem to be ridiculing the small posture of Magar.



Fig. 22. Advertisement of Tourism Year. *Republica*. Sep.25, 2010: PP 1.

They are directly looking at him and talking about him. The journalist might have ordered them to place him in front of them. He seems to be Lilliputians and like the king of Lilliput in 'Gulliver's Travel', the ladies are making him a matter of fun. They are shown in a sexy, glamorous fashion whereas he has been presented in the national dress, 'Daura, Suruwal and Nepali Dhaka Topi' better recognized as the set of national dress. The readers do not pay attention to the small miniature like boy but to the ladies. A common view is that sex is determined by biology and not by society and sex is fundamentally pre-social. This image shows the elitist figure in the name

of subaltern representation because cultural performances and rituals are related to low class folks. The media gives space to such a woman instead of low class labour women. If we study the posture of the lady it can not be entitled as a subaltern. She belongs to a high profile woman. The media's eye is concentrated on her transparent clothes and bodily attraction. Had this image an attachment with Nepali woman the media would not venture to publish publicly.



Fig. 23. Lady Gaga being crowned queen of the MTV Video Music Awards. *The Kathmandu Post*, Sep.14, 2010: PP 9.

The image posted in fig. no.23 represents a film actress who is receiving the best video music award. Her get up and facial structure clarifies that she belongs to an elite class and our media, '*The Kathmandu Post*' provided a considerable space to her and valorizes a foreign born high profiled lady ignoring many beautiful ladies in rural areas of our country. Women from rural area can come to the street in order to compete the women from high class in urban area. The agencies like media should try to encourage the rural ladies to make them able to survive amidst the rush and flow.

The question comes naturally to one's mind, 'Why did the media focus on the lady? Why did The Kathmandu Post select the particular photo?' The answer is quite controversial in the sense that a woman is regarded herself as a subaltern but within that framework certain number of women have come out of the codified space and occupied a new space.

In this juncture they always expect support from media society and the state. This study claims that within women there is a mass of women who are being subalternized and are ignored their existence and freedom. Our media never tries to bring rural subaltern in the main stream role position. Media has different roles to perform apart from financial aspects. It seems that media is ignoring to bring the marginal to the center. Unless they are brought to the center the slogan of the press and all media houses would be meaningless.

Lady Gaga's transparent get up, hair style, her eye postures etc. do not match with subaltern women. We shouldn't forget that society has created a kind of distinction in between men and women and the main course is the negligence from responsible sector. In contemporary societies sexuality is commonly understood as being a personal and private matter set apart from the public world and the workings of society. There are, of course, many theoretical approaches to sexuality along the essentialist-constructionist continuum.

The image in fig. 24 reflects a middle aged woman from the poor family washing sand for construction work. She has a story of her poverty. She is bound to work to feed herself and her family members. Though media has portrayed this issue, it is not properly focused and its literature is silent on her pains and troubles. Merely her photograph does not mean that media has included a subaltern. Media should try to make the readers aware of the underlying mysteries of a person.



Fig. 24. Middle aged subaltern woman washing the sand. *The Kathmandu Post* Sep.17, 2010: PP 2.

The woman might have high dreams to drive a car and live a sophisticated life but her penury derailed her dream and led to the labour market for her survival. It was mentioned in one of the corners of the inside page where the readers do not easily fall. In the name of advocating the subaltern's voices, media is ignoring the subaltern women. If she was from a rich and sophisticated family, she would have been presented in a different way. Her presence in the paper should bear meaning and purpose that future generation may opt for but simply the image can't fulfill the target. If she were the woman in attractive appearance and sophisticated get up, photojournalist would give a special space along with a wonderful article. *The Kathmandu Post* is lagging behind to give the proper space to the subaltern women because the image of the above mentioned woman was little in size and it was published in one corner of the inside page. It was published just to exhibit that it hears the voice of voiceless people. It does not depict her sufferings and pains to disseminate to the public.

The image in Fig. 25 shows the elitist image of society although newspaper published in the page which represents the elitist women attending the Expo and buying things. There is no representation of the women from the backward and

economically sound communities. This is the common ground for the elitist women. Poor women can't go to supermarket and buy necessary commodities.



Fig.25. Women consumers in the Dashain Expo at Tripureshwor, Kathmandu. *The Kathmandu Post*. Sep. 23, 2010: PP 16.

It is the image of elite class ladies who do shopping in modest departments. In such departments there is no provision of bargain and the customers are compelled to buy goods. The presence of women in the department store is quite unique in the sense that the women are seen to be curious in buying expensive goods ignoring the cost. Subaltern women cannot afford to buy things in the department store. Media person's eyes fall to snap the pictures of elitist ladies and publish them in their print media. Subaltern women are always away from this kind of scene.

The images in fig. 26 reflect elite personality of women. Their dresses and facial expressions are no longer similar with the faces of subaltern personality. Comparatively these two women are from the same socio-economic status and their difference lies in their get ups. One is in our national dress whereas the other is in modern get up. Their hair style and overall facial expression remain a matter of attraction to the media.

There are women entrepreneurs in our society who do not belong to the elite class. But media's eye does not see them only because their images are not saleable in the market. The pose of the two women shows that newspaper has published their photos giving preference to the elitist women. Their body postures, their look, get ups depict that they do not represent the subaltern women.



Fig. no. 26. Women executive Raveena Joshi – General Manager of Megha Bank LTD and Barsha Shrestha – General Manager of Clean Energy Development Bank LTD. *The Kathmandu Post*. Sep. 26, 2010: PP 15.

The two women managers are certainly not from a simple family background. The very reason of their presence in high profiled job is their educational background as well as their family status. Banks do not entertain a woman or a man from a socially, economically and educationally weak background. Poor persons do not get access to any sorts of government or non government organizations and institutions. When we simply look at their postures, their hair styles, get ups and facial expressions we can conclude that these two women are from elite class. No doubt media took the issue of women representation in this sense but what compels us to think is its

disinterestedness in incorporating marginalized sector of people. Media should bring rural women engaged in farming and other business. The story of their struggle cannot be an issue for the media. If it aims at bringing the margins to the center the media should try to include the story of the sufferings and pain of marginalized people, especially women, and prioritize them in mainstream activities.

Representation does not mean the quantity of the news and images in print media. But in a real sense, it means those published news and images should reveal the sufferings of the oppressed women. The reality of the women subaltern should be exhibited in media which can help to solve their problems. Media houses have a version that their newspapers give equal preference to all whether they are elites or non-elites but it is found in reality. Media should make the people aware of the happenings and give space to those aspects which are waiting to be publicized. It is said that media is the mirror of the reality.

The indifferent nature of the newspapers and the journalists is not a new and current problem. This is the product of the tradition that follows and obeys the capitalistic central and influence in newspapers and news writing. Capitalism always aims at profit and gain and journalists are trained to concentrate on the attractive issues to enhance circulation and have a big volume of advertisement so that media organization can have a tremendous profit. The journalists need to be free themselves from the claws of the capitalism and should try to have an access to all sectors and disseminate real information. Then only they can publish the news and articles along with photos related to the subaltern women.

By raising the voice of the voiceless, media can play one of the most important roles as assistance or mediator but this role has not been fulfilled properly. The subaltern women are thought to be low graded persons. A serious study seems

essential for the critical reading of misrepresentation. Media is supposed to create representation of the issues rather than misrepresentation and new perspective of critical study is required.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusion

Communication is the powerful means of bringing about social changes. The revolution in the media of communication has helped to accelerate the pace of social change during these few decades. Radio, television, newspapers and other mass media have not only made this world 'shrunk' but also have revolutionized the values. Mass communication has opened many challenges and creative doors which lead to the path of glamorous world. Mass media is one of the important stars of creativity in the universe of mass communication. Mass media means the communications or information regarding the events of the day through written words, sounds or pictures and it is a mirror of the reality. The media person acts as a spokesman of mankind. He/She must therefore, provide a truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the events. A media person's act is to observe the events, transmit facts about the events and act as an interpreter of these events. He/She also explains the significances of the facts and offers opinions on contemporary issues. Media should hear the unheard voices and disseminate them to the audiences without prejudice. This research work has analyzed the images of women from the view points of subaltern studies in the mainstream Nepali print media. The term subaltern has been used to describe those women whose voices are muted and media has not duly exposed their agony and sufferings. Therefore, the present study has analyzed the status of gendered subaltern especially in the photographic representation in the Nepali print media. Nepal's prominent print media like *The Kathmanu Post*, *Republica* and *Nari* claim themselves that they give equal space to all the people. The researcher has concentrated on 'Are media conscious about subalterns?' The answer has been explored and analyzed through the aforementioned English dailies and a women

oriented monthly magazine published during the time of one month. Some selected photos have been critically examined and drawn a conclusion that the claim of media is wrong. They have created a new image of the elites and presented in media in the name of subaltern. This research work has proved that the coverage of the subaltern women in the mainstream Nepali print media is far less than that of elitist women.

In the interpretation and analysis of the complex and dynamic variables such as “advertising,” “gender” and “sexuality” with many actors operating together, the study aims at offering an interpretation and exploring the meaning and significance of their representation. Although the study analyzes its data taxonomically, it does not adhere strictly to the spirit of the quantitative research. Rather than relying on the quantity of the data, the study concentrates on effect, significance and quality of the data under scrutiny. Print media works as per the sentiment of its readers and to satisfy them it presents suitable contents.

Media always sidelines the subaltern population in terms of mainstreaming them to nation building campaign and so on. As we know, the concept of women has led Spivak to such a serious discussion on the position of the subaltern classes. The subaltern woman, therefore, emerges as an epitome of subaltern.

The functions of media are to inform, to educate, to persuade and to entertain. Besides these, media should maintain the social responsibility. Media reaches to the places where other means can not reach. It has an access from subaltern people to the powerful and prominent figures. It has a capacity to explore and find out the hidden truths and make them public. Regarding photos, they are a very powerful form of social communication in modern society. It offers the most sustained and most concentrated set of images everywhere in the media system. Thousands of images surround us everyday in our lives that address us along gender lines. But their

presence does not guarantee the representation of the subaltern women. The author is of the conclusion that print media in Nepal is unable to represent the subaltern women in spite of its claim. The author has found very negligible number of photos related to subaltern women and has analyzed them in course of his research. But the found photos of subaltern women are only to cover the shame of the media. They are not given appropriate space and even the literature on them is silent to raise the issues. The purpose behind representing them is basically guided with profit earning and popularity gaining interest. The role of the journalists and publishing houses has to be concentrated on representing the real scenario of the women. The journalists should not differentiate people in terms of their race, caste, religion, sexuality, gender and socio-economic status. But such could not be found in course of the research.

Due to the interest of the elite capitalistic ideology, confined space is offered to the subaltern women. It is hard to find the subaltern cases in the newspapers. Subaltern women are excluded from the mainstream with no basic human rights. Moreover, they get misrepresented in media. Print media seem overlooked their issues. The subaltern women are compelled to survive under acute suppression, distinction and partiality and it is the role of media to give them proper coverage and disseminate the information to the public. To uncover their issues media should be free from biasness and materialistic notion.

To sum up, mainstream Nepali print media is incapable of providing considerable space to the subaltern women and it has failed to raise burning issues related to them. The coverage of subaltern issues in print media is very negligible and its main cause, in author's opinion, is a politics to exclude them from the mainstream. Their ethical ground has been questioned and future generation will demand true application of their slogan of inclusion.

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