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Female Agency in Manjushree Thapa's Selected Stories from *Tilled Earth*

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Letter of Recommendation

Mrs. Bina Dhakal has completed her thesis entitled “Female Agency in Manjushree Thapa’s Selected Stories from *Tilled Earth*” under my supervision. She carried out this research from 3rd July, 2023 to 5th July, 2024. I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for the final *viva voce*.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Female Agency in Manjushree Thapa's Selected Stories from *Tilled Earth*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Bina Dhakal has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

Manjushree Thapa's Tilled Earth includes the stories of different characters that have directly or indirectly encountered gender discrimination and women exploitation and vigorously raise the voice of underprivileged women in the Nepali Society. Women empowerment, social and cultural transformation are the major issues. This thesis further analyses the degree of deprivation and isolation of women from mainstream of the state on the basis of theory of female agency which reflects an account of their capacity for individualized choice and action. In this thesis, for the study five short stories are selected from the Tilled Earth such as "Soar", "Nineteen Years His Junior", "The Student in Love", "The Newly Appointed Chemistry Professor" and "The Girl of No Age". In this thesis qualitative method has been used where content analysis is the main approach used to articulate the female agency. Women need protection and equitable right and justice to enrich their capacity regarding public decision making. How literary work could support for the gender equality with empowerment in the existing society is the major issues of this thesis. More importantly in this thesis, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ketu H. Katrak and Aletheia Donald et al. theories are being used. This thesis concludes that in the selected short stories Thapa's virtuosity has been found to use the female agency marvelously.

Key words: gender discrimination, cultural transformation, underprivileged, deprivation, empowerment, virtuosity, marvelously

This thesis analyses the aspects of gender self-determination and status of Nepali women, achieving triumph for equality in the continuous process of struggle. The five selected short stories of *Tilled Earth* by Manjushree Thapa are "Soar", "Nineteen Years His Junior", and "The Student in Love", "The Newly Appointed Chemistry Professor" and "The Girl of No Age". Female characters are trying their level best to raise the voice of gender equality in all aspect of life including equitable privileges in social, political and economic sectors which would helps to foster the holistic enhancement of both individual and society.

The major problems and issues of this thesis are; How female agency is included in the selected short stories? , How female agencies encourage the gender equality?, What are the common issues of Nepali women?, and What are the theoretical method uses in this thesis?

The main goal of this research work is to examine and explore the issues related to female agency. Raising the issues of female agency, literary work would encourage the gender equality identifying the issues of common women which could motivate the larger section of the society and more democratic and equitable.

Across Nepal gender inequality results in unequal opportunities and while it impacts on the lives of both genders, statistically it is girls that are most disadvantaged. There are many risks, violations and vulnerabilities faced by the girls because they are just being girls. Most of these risks are directly connected to the political, economic, social and cultural disadvantages that the girls go through in their daily life. In the selected short stories from *Tilled Earth*, female characters are the sufferers, and they suffer not because they are incapable of accomplishing certain task due to patriarchy, subjugation of women, irrespective of their mutual interest and reciprocal relationship. The major issues of this research are to find out the solution of the question why do women not secure the same rights and privileges in the existing system? How both men and women could subjugates the female in their

narratives. To what extent a woman can sufficiently free herself from the patriarchal regime that is given and transmitted from the past in order to claim agency?

Manjushree Thapa is a Nepali - Canadian eminent writer of this era. She was born in Kathmandu in 1968 A.D. Dr. Bhekh Bdr. Thapa and Dr. Rita Thapa are the father and mother respectively who belongs to very rich and elite family and connected with Nepali politics. She had studied in St. Marry's School in Kathmandu and Cateral on National Cathedraw School (Washington D.C) and the Rhode Island School of design where she did her major degree in photography. She had also obtained M.F.A in creative writing from the University of Washington getting full bright scholarship. There are many non-fiction books and biography and editorials including reportage on Nepal's Maoist war are published by Thapa. She wrote *Forget Kathmandu: An Elegy for Democracy* (2005) and this book was short listed for 'Lettre Ulysses Award; in 2006. *Mustang Bhot in Fragments* (1992) is her first book. Her novel is *The Tutor of History* (2001). Thapa is one of the multi-dimensional personalities. She is fiction writer, essayist, translator and editor. Being a woman she has raise the voice of voiceless women and girl through the medium of writing in her book of *Tilled Earth* (2007).

Tilled Earth is a collection of short stories. In the selected stories sentences are poetic and deeply evocative and perfectly crafted beautiful micro-stories related to Nepali perspectives. These stories depict the daily life of Nepalese people in the early 2000s. Stories also showed the adverse impacts of globalization, from which people are suffering a lot and that is unnoticed to many who are taking it positively. Worldwide influence of multi cultural parameters dismantled the bond of local rituals, culture and tradition in the name of liberalization, modernization, privatization and economic enhancement. It can be notice that there is significant coherence between the narrative techniques and reality shown in the stories because the circumstances with which the country is moving is full of political instability and social ups and downs. Hence this kind of narrative technique helps to digging

out dynamic aspect of Nepali Society in a time of great transition. The stories smoothly explore and analyze the different issues of the country such as loss of culture, tradition change in life style and so on due to Urbanization. However at the same time the society is no more bound within the clutch of feudalism and now in the process of changes with good virtue.

Women of Nepal have been repressed or subjugated either partially or mainly by the patriarchal structure of the society. The major issues raised by this paper are to analyses the uneven practices that discriminate the women and men. It focuses on gender equality, social status and ethnicity. Female agency mainly focused on empowerment of women which is equally important as a means of establishing equality between male and female. In the selected short stories of *Tilled Earth* issues of women agency and specific discourse on women agency along with their consciousness are examined. Women agency has been closely connected with the women empowerment as well as holistic development of women. It can be achieved, only when there is improved educational and employment opportunity for women, when there is increasing gender equality in political and social participation and have access to resources within the house and outside the house. In this book some of the women characters portraits women in rural areas are more vulnerable than those in urban areas due to lack of better economic, health, education, empowerment and opportunities.

Khagendra Acharya's, 'Women's Consciousness and Agency in Manjushree Thapa's *Tilled Earth*' argues;

The rationale behind Katak as theoretical frame work lies in proximity phenomena i.e., applying Katak's theory due to its ontological base on third-world sounds more logical than borrowing any of the west-centric models to examine the nature of writing from non-western location. In other words, as Katak's writing stands on the

experience of third-world writers, it proves to be the most appropriate perspective when any alternative based on Nepali location is not formulated. Setting the reading of female agency against Katrak's postulation, the paper concludes that Thapa, through the production of three categories of female characters, presents dynamic nature of female agency instead of instantiating writer function as advocacy job as popularly argued in feminist discourse (cha. iv - vii).

Thapa has created different categories of female characters present the dynamic nature of female agency and argued in feminist discourse. Acharya has pointed on the basis of Katrak's theory which is based on ontological analysis; third world speaks more logically than the west centric models. Similarly in the Thapa's writing some of the female characters strongly emerge with brawny justification indicating exposure of female agency.

Nepali people have habitual to enjoy in pressure and tension and easily deal with families, friends and society keeping normal relations. It is clearly found in the Thapa's stories. Regarding this Chandrahas Choudhary in his review says:

Many of Thapa's characters are low or high-level government servants or else workers at NGOs-people who could have made a difference to what they know is a poor, developing country but who have succumbed instead to careerism or sheer apathy. The pressures of life and love lead her characters to experience the tension between traditions – the way of “families, friends, and society”, of caste hierarchies and unequal gender relations – and modernity, with its idea of the individual as sovereign over his or her own life, free to choose the course that seems best (1-2).

The characters of the selected short stories belongs to middle income class or government servants or workers at NGOs having always tensions among the females and friends. This has been remarked by Choudhary.

Thapa's writing seems to be more interesting which explores live issues of the Nepali society. In this context Tiku Gauchan in "Breaking New Ground *Tilled Earth*", rightly remarks:

These stories, explore the issues that we live with, are written in a wide array of narrative forms that Thapa seems to have employed for the sole purpose of making the stories read better. Many of the issues explored in the stories are particular to a society that's still feudal in its psychic make up, but at the same time, battered by changes (21).

Gauchan opined that Thapa wrote her story in such a way by which readers get more and more entertainment. At the same time she has capacity to blow the feudal system by changing time and circumstances.

Likewise, In the Thapa's stories reflect reality of Nepali people is full of hardships and complexities but the writer expresses the situation in very simple and precise language. Reeta Sinha says:

Not a single story in this collection disappoints. The writing is simple and uncluttered, unlike the lives of some of Thapa's characters and in contrast to the changes Nepal has experienced in recent years. What appealed most to me was Thapa's ability to permit me, the reader, to slip into the room unobserved, to listen to the conversations of her characters, to get in their head so to speak (1).

Sinha absolutely reflects the reality of a real reader. Indeed almost all the characters of selected short stories spoke out uncluttered and clear connection so that it easily allured the readers.

In the Thapa's short stories selected from *Tilled Earth*, a significant research gap has been precisely observed. It has been found in "Consequences of Globalization" by Keshab Prasad Gautam and "Cultural Inbetweenness and Double Vision" by Pratibha Khanal in their

research work selecting other aspects than the female agency. However, different characters in the stories portray the female agency too. It is apt to quote the view of Gautam in his thesis as;

Thapa, through the stories, attempts to analyze the consequences of globalization which is hovering in the country resulting effects in the traditional culture and life style of the country in great magnitude (3).

Along with the explanation, Thapa also highlighted the common issues raise by globalization.

There are different characters in the selected stories who are directly affected by the post colonial activities in an around Nepal. Therefore, the issues raise by the writers through the characters who are directly or indirectly suppressed by the outside force by the colonizers.

Pratibha Khanal argues:

Post colonial discourses are scattered here and there in the stories of Manjushree Thapa. Each of the stories is set in the backdrop of Kathmandu and is the whole mental-set and ideological enclosing of the society existing specifically. The author indirectly explores the essence of postcolonial values. Despite the fact that Nepal had never come under any colonialist's grip but it is inherently suppressed from the outside force of colonizers. There are several issues in our society that ultimately nourished the postcolonial trend in Nepal (55).

In the selected five short stories, feminine issues of inequality, gender discrimination etc. are encountered through the female agency and give guidelines to get rid of the plight of women in Nepali society.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her rewriting of 'Under Western Eyes' suggest that;

...transnational feminist practices towards anti-capitalist struggles, by examining feminist pedagogies and scholarship on globalization and by exploring the

implications of the absence of racialized gender and feminist politics in anti globalization movements (12-13).

In her first part of her writing western feminism is criticized. Feminism of under developed countries includes illiteracy, ignorance, and involvement in revolution to establish basic rights which is not progressive but traditional too. Mohanty pointed out the third world feminist discourse in six ways: visualizing: familial system, religious ideology, victims of male violence, victims of colonial process, dependent and powerless. Most of the female characters found in the Thapa's stories are third world women and girls and they are the victims of either factor.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explains, "If in the context of the colonial production, the Subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the Subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (287). In Thapa's selected stories also female are not in able to raise the voice strongly because most of the female are more deeply in shadow. In most part of Nepal due to patriarchal gender ideology mostly driven by traditional cultural value and practices, there is higher gender discrimination in Nepalese society. Most of the female characters in selected short stories are affected by the role of culture, patriarchy system, income level, educational condition, social perception etc. Therefore, views of Spivak absolutely related to Nepalese society.

In the selected short stories some of the characters portray the gap between reduced for the overall progress of the society. In this context Donald et al., rightly says; "Improving women's agency is crucial for shrinking these gender disparities and advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women" (2). Improvement of women agency is very important in Nepali society to overcome from the plight of the Nepali women.

More precisely, female characters of the selected short stories encourage the gender equality making it as common issue which is anti-capitalist voices. The major theoretical method is qualitative analyses of the female agency. Ketu Katrak remarks,

A politics of the female body includes the construction and controls of female sexuality, its acceptable and censored expressions and its location socio culturally, even materially in post colonial regions. Third World women writers represent the complex ways in which women's bodies are colonized (8).

Women's Empowerment Principles by Anna Falth and Diana Ronola remarks;

Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality, Treat all women and men fairly at work-respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination, Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers, Promote education, training and professional development for women, Implement enterprise development, Supply chain and marketing practices that empower women, Promote equality through community initiative and advocacy, Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality (1).

At the most general level, there is widespread agreement level, there is widespread agreement that the ideal society would be one in which gender inequalities were ended and women were enabled to realize their full potential in all areas of life. Women represent half of the world's population and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet. Until women are given the same opportunities that men are, entire societies will be destined to perform below their true potentials. The greatest need of the hour is change of social attitude to women. The dream of women empowerment shall not be fulfill unless they are empowered to play equal decisive and appropriate role in the family, which is the basic unit of empowerment.

At a minimum, a feminist theory of agency must explain how it is possible for women in male dominated societies to live in ways that reflect their genuine needs and concerns, and it must explain how it is possible for women to develop critiques of sexist social and political institutions and to mount active resistance (Meyers 1).

Women and girls in Nepal are disadvantaged by traditional practices like the dowry system, early marriage, son preference, stigmatization of widows, seclusion of women, family violence, polygamy and the segregation of women and girls during menstruation. Issue of third gender is another type of gender inequality prevails in Nepali Society. However, post conflict government has been legislating for more gender equality. Traditionally girls have the responsibility of helping their mothers with house while men and boys are generally not expected to assist with domestic works. In general, women do not participant in decision making for their families or communities which is a man's responsibilities. Nepalese men are expected to an income and support their family although how they do that and the view of manhood will often be linked to cast. Due to increasing economic pressure, many Nepali men have lost their tradition occupation and have been forced to migrate abroad in order to maintain their breadwinner role.

In fact the major components of women agency are decision making leadership and collective action. Mere precisely, woman agency means the ability of women to define and act on goals, make decisions that matter to them, and participant in the economy and public life. Therefore, the ultimate objectives of woman agency are to empower the women. The major components of women empowerments are; Women sense of self worth, their right to have and determine choices, their right to have access to opportunities and resource, their right to have power to control, their own lives, both within and outside the houses, their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a move just social and economic

order nationally and internationally. In the selected short stories of women characters have female agency.

The question of women's agency was salient for feminist philosophers because women's identities took shape in settings that were in some respects inimical to their interests (Meyers 1).

The major problems of women's agency are inextricable from the theme of voice. In the selected short stories some of the women characters are speaking in their own voices regarding the issue and doing what they really want to do. Therefore, it can be claimed that there is existence of theory of women's agency. Diana T. Meyers claims that epistemic community was never quite as exclusive as western philosophy and science imagined;

The feminist philosophers Sandra Harding, Lorraine Code and Helen Longino noted that experts "community of knowers"- those recognized as experts in some field of inquiry- where remarkably homogeneous, not only with respect to sex but also with respect to race, ethnicity and sexual orientation" (Meyers 1).

According to inequality theory of female agency, in patriarchal social structure, men hold primary power which is the root of gender inequality. Gender inequality disproportionately affects women such as lack of access to education, domestic violence etc. Many female characters are the victims in the selected short stories of *Tilled Earth*.

Feminist theories of violence state is a gender issue which is subtle and can't be understood without gender analysis. System theory and sub-culture of violence theory are short sighted. They have applied methods while ecological theory proved to be deep rooted in studying the development of violence. Some of the characters in the selected short story either women or girls are the victim of violence.

Therefore, this thesis tries to explore and analyze the female agency included raising voice of the women regarding the gender equality in the selected short stories. This thesis is

done on the purpose of uncovering the fact that reveals the female agency where third world feminism is pre-eminent and perspicuous in the society. Whether female characters of the stories are striving hard for gender equality in all aspect of life or ready to compromise with some better off so that life could be quite easy and rid off from extreme torture, gender violence, discrimination and many more inequalities. On the other hand some of the female characters are sophisticated and high standard. They claim for the equality in the society regarding decision making, ownership of property and security of life.

Female Agency refers all action oriented theoretical aspect through which women could achieve rights and live dignified life as male people in the society mainly there are three dimensions of women agency such as Decision making, Collective action and Leadership. All these selected short stories on the basis of aforementioned principles, female characters of Thapa's short stories somewhere seeks the way to reach the place to make decision, somewhere seeks group action oriented activities and somewhere female characters getting ready to take the leadership. Therefore, all the five stories we have selected here for the study, give roaring sound that could be effective, influential and way designer in the existing society of Nepal.

The dimension of women agency- Leadership, Decision making and Collective action is developed by Alison Evans and Divya Nambiar in their gender equality and development;

Commonly, collective action refers to the act of mobilizing people around common or shared concerns but still women have limited influence in political decision making and are much less likely than men to belong to political party (2).

Correct Decision Making helps to motivate the agency into Collective Action and who rightly give ways to achieve the rights and further progress, achieve Leadership. Therefore, these dimensions of women agency work effectively for the women

empowerment, social transformation and effective participation in good governance to improve the status of women. According to Bill and Melinda;

Agency is at the heart of our model of empowerment. It refers to the capacity of women and girls to take purposeful action and pursue goals free from threat of violence or retribution. The three core expressions of agency are decision making, leadership and collective action. These are not simply ingredients for agency, rather they are ways that women and girls can exercise agency in their lives. There are three dimensions of women agency. They are: Decision making, Collective action, Leadership (5-6).

In fact, Decision making is the process of selecting one purposeful goal out of many corresponding to ability of skills, knowledge, capacity and resources.

Decision making: Women and girls express agency in decision- making when they influence and make decisions and when they establish and act on goals. Key decisions that affect women and girls' lives and futures occur in both the private and public spheres and often entail a process that includes negotiation and compromise. A woman or girl exercises empowered decision- making when she uses her voice to influence key decisions and is aware of, and can act upon, a full array of choices (5-6).

According to theory, there are three tips measuring collective action and leadership they are – use quantitative and qualitative measures – to capture the strength of women and girls' organizing and mobilizing, include both membership in groups, and the influence and achievements of collective action and mobilizing.

Collective action: Woman and girls engaged in collective action when they stand together in solidarity and exercises voice to transform institutions and power relations.

Collective action is a powerful tool for social transformation and is fundamental to

women and girls' empowerment on a societal level. Many factors can contribute to a woman's ability to participate in collective action, including social capital through her network and her ability to move safely and freely throughout her community (5-6).

Include measures that capture the extent to which women and girls experience substantive and transformative leadership – rather than just their presence. Use participatory methods to capture those areas and decision making bodies that matter for women and girls lives, or those spheres that are male dominated and in which women and girls' leadership is unconventional.

Leadership: Leadership can be a powerful expression of agency when women and girls lead and inspire social change and effectively participate in governance to improve the status of other women and girls as well as themselves. Women's increased participation in leadership is positively associated with a multitude of benefits for society as a whole (5-6).

Female Agency is the guidelines in which female have resisted the male dominated structure of the society and instead their feminism that has changed and has shaped the composition of literature. In fact, with this power they can question the socio-cultural norms or even establish new standards for themselves.

In the selected short stories of Manjushree Thapa's *Tilled Earth* voice of the female agency is being ample significant. For instance, in "Soar", Nadia is a female character portrays the role of Nepali woman however her character seems to be full of Diaspora actor. Likewise, "Nineteen Years His Junior", "The Student in Love", "The Newly Appointed Chemistry Professor" and "The Girl of No Age", have female agencies. When different women have different agency then 'Agency' in this case is the ability to act to make independent decisions. Someone with 'agency' to act has authority to make decisions without

having to have those decisions approved or disapproved by anybody else. They are a 'free agent'. They have 'agency'.

At the most general level, there is widespread agreement that the ideal society would be one in which gender inequalities were ended and women were enabled to realize their full potential in all areas of life.

In some of the selected short stories of Thapa, voice of female agency has been significantly spurred to raise the voices for gender equality. Most of the female characters seeking equality and in some cases male characters are also clamming for their rights in the society. Either male or female are deprived in the society, should be given equitable justice and there should be no discriminations on the basis of gender.

In the writings of Thapa's short stories, no significant and radical voices are being raised for woman empowerment. However, dissatisfaction of the female have been shown in the short stories such as the "Soar", "Nineteen Years His Junior", "The Student In Love", "The Newly Appointed Chemistry Professor" and "The Girl of No Age".

In the story "Soar" Narrator pointed out the problems faced by Nepali women very clearly.

Then she went back to re-reading *The Kathmandu Post*. The local news was in fine print on the third page. Woman, she read. Woman considered Witch forced to eat faeces by villagers. She put the paper aside and gulped down her coffee (14).

In the story Narrator seeking appropriate person to speak in a seminar regarding women violence, trafficking, child prostitution, domestic abuse etc. Therefore, protagonist posse's female agency that seems very clear and call attrition to the readers.

Nadia seems to be quite forgetful however she is a person of Nepali society to face sturdiness and buoyancy without crying. In the statement we have outlined, Woman Considered Witch Forced to Eat Faeces by Villagers. She put the paper aside and gulped

down her coffee, it means Nepali women are still facing the problems of social evils created by illiteracy supported by ignorance, nourished by backward society. Women have to face various hardship including violence, trafficking, rape, child prostitution, domestic abuse, etc.

In the Mohanty's book *Feminism without Borders* decolonizing feminism, demystifying capitalism, and reorienting feminism are examining. It has been found demystifying capitalism in the story 'Soar' by the following lines.

At lunch Nadia flipped through brochures for package holidays to Pattaya, Colombo, Goa, blue waters, white sand. She thought: one gets so wrapped up in the woes of this country, one forgets how easy it is to leave. An hour's flight to Delhi, three to Hongkong and eighteen to the apartment she had given up in Brooklyn eighteen months ago (14).

The nature of the female character is western centric and it reflects the need for more nuanced analysis. In fact it may be the affect of globalization which is behind the capacity of common women in the developing country. For this as rightly remarked by the Mohanty in her book is absolutely applied in the "Soar" story;

...transnational feminist practice toward anti capitalist struggles, by examining feminist pedagogies and scholarship on globalization and by exploring the implications of the absence of racialized gender and feminist politics in anti globalization movements (12-13).

Female Agency has been shown by the various characters in the selected stories. In the 'Soar' Nadia is the female character who acts like a social worker in Nepal. She was busy in domestic domain. Although, she has leadership quality, in the story, she remembered to call someone more seriously about something but she could not remember exactly. Her confusion increases roaming thoughts on many things like regarding trafficking, rape, and

child prostitution and so on. The issues, reflects that Nadia, is a girl having capacity to make bold voice in the society for the backward women.

It refers to third world women and men, working class people or those disenfranchised and marginalized by the western culture. How agency is related to identity formation and how to understand actions that reproduce social structure, has also been found in the female characters in this story.

Physical violence against women (rape, sexual assault, excision, infibulations, etc.) is thus carried out “with an astonishing consensus among men in the world (Mohanty 24).

Here Nadia is seeking own identity through her leadership and social actions. She seems to be in a position who can give awareness to large number of uneducated people. She has feeling of all the social problems that we regularly observed regarding women and girls trafficking, rape, child prostitution etc. Due to lack of basic rights and opportunities women in Nepali society remain significantly backward. How to ensure all the fundamental rights is the major concern of the society. Nadia possesses a leadership quality which is one of the influential elements of female agency.

For instance in the story “Soar”,

Nadia remembered that she was supposed to call someone about something, but she could not remember who or about what. Was it gender specialist for next week women’s rights seminar? About trafficking, rape, child prostitution, domestic abuse, the lack of rights for Nepali Women? This hangover was killing her (13).

In the story, leader is not exactly belongs to downtrodden or sufferer’s class. The situation of the story reflects that Nadia has only theoretical feeling to rid off the Nepali women, from dark side to bright one.

However, the word faeces itself envisaged her to gulp down her coffee. No real leader should be like this perhaps Nadia intend to be the leader of discriminated and deprived women, having some selfish motto. It figures out the real picture of Nepali society. Hence, it signifies existence of realism with the foundations of female agency.

"Nineteen Years His Junior" is also another story where gap between the age of husband and a wife is Nineteen years where wife is younger than husband. There is nothing sexual attachment between husband and wife. Marriage becomes possible simply because of the membership of same political party. In the name of caste, religion or political ideology, various issues of individual lives of women have been adversely affected. No personal decision no right to choose the life partner and such 'common sense' is commonly uncommon in the society. Writer is raising the voice of women who is nineteen years junior to her husband. There is a generation gap between husband and wife. Only artificial affection and love would not be enjoyable rather it gives too many tension. It would be the reason for being panic for a woman. Only a pugnacious women would achieved or establish her rights in the family or society. She would not be the quarrelsome physically nor would get serenity in the mind. Therefore, it would be the right platform to the female characters having ability to have control to make such decisions over the course of their lives, economically, politically and culturally.

This is a story where there is existence of masculinity psycho analysis. Feminism and psycho analysis are on the surface, at odds with each other because of the strongly patriarchal nature of Freudian psychology, related to human sexuality according to a masculine model. In the story Urmila is the main character who was a liberated woman before her marriage. She has got married with a political leader who is nineteen years senior than her age. After that she confined in the domestic domain sacrificing all her desires related to romance. Although she could be happy with gardening, decorating, cleaning, brooming and growing

flowers at home whole day. It could not discourage her to be unhappy. Psychologically she could be disappointed, dissatisfied and disgusted severely. There may be psychology that there is a life after death. If she could perform right at present tolerating all kind of obstacles and dissatisfaction god will give justice. It has been portrait in beautiful words:

She sprinkled liberal handfuls of water into the indigo night. Then she felt about for the rusty scissors, crouching in the dark till she found them on the floor. By the time she found them it was nine, and she was tired and no longer agitated that dinner had long since cooled again, tonight, exactly a year after her marriage to the party's central committee member nineteen years her senior (41).

Being nineteen years junior than her husband her sexual desire become like object or machine which work for the further production of the product to the owner. In this context Spivak opined -

Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the subject that is lacking desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject except by repression. Desire and its object are a unity: it is the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is machine, the object of desire also a connected machine, so that the product is lifted from the process of producing and something detaches itself from producing to product and gives a leftover to the vagabond, named subject (68).

Urmila remains busy in whole day despite of having active in district politic Urmila reveals the extent to which fears of female power and agency transcended boundaries of gender and politics, causing depoliticizing. Therefore in the story there is prevalence of psycho analysis along with female subject agency and repression has been clearly pointed out.

Female Agency exclusively refers to the ability of the female characters to have control to make economic, political and cultural decisions independently. In the story Urmila

seems to be victim in the sense that she has obligation and compulsion and tolerate the male domination silently. Agency would raise the voice of such voiceless people taking the responsibility of its role.

In the essay of Spivak *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Question the voices of Subaltern's groups in the third world. In the story Urmila is a character of third world woman facing all kind of hardship.

In next story "The Student in Love" the narrator tries to portray that in the story, economic crisis and love affairs of a student. The protagonist of the story is Nirmal Bhattarai, represents a very common name. A young man Nirmal Bhattarai seems to be quite crazy to meet his girlfriend. He walked and crossed the bridge (bridge of immaturity to Maturity), clambered over the fence and skirted a heap of refuse at the crossroads.

In twenty minutes, he reached the campus road where he spotted his girlfriend and duked into an alloy. He was in no mood for small talk. His neck was hot and his mouth parched so he stooped a while at the new foot of bottle brush tree. The morning was torrid but the shade of the bottle brush was touched by almost cool winds. (118)

Spivak deconstructs the idea that in a patriarchal society, men are dominant and privileged, pointing out the flaws in this system. This is an example of mistreatment of post colonial of third world countries by more dominant nations. Therefore, post colonialism includes the issue such as Subaltern, Racism, Orientalism and Diaspora. According to Spivak third world men women of working class or marginalized people are highly affected by the western culture. Protagonists Nirmal Bhattarai and his girl friend Meena are the character of such marginalize and influence by the western culture.

Here writer has explained about the apricot tree but not about other tree. It is because this tree has metaphorical meaning. Symbolically, an apricot tree represents the hope for luck, happiness and loyal love. The yellow apricot blossom symbolizes nobility and luxury of the

feudal kings. Apricot blossom brings luck, plentiful health, prosperity, wealth for the New Year. Although the protagonist of the story has not been bother to chase after them. Instead, he went up to the apricot tree and fingered a silken white bud. It would be hours before Meena got back from classes.

He ran a hand along the tree's trunk. There was no point in waiting here. But it was too hot to walk all the way home. He had no money for bus fare. So, Nirmal sat in the shade of apricot tree and lulled by the heat fell asleep (119).

The short story beautifully expressed the love, hope and good luck of a student having low income. Symbolically, a beautiful dream of a young boy has been denoted by Apricot tree. He is not in able to meet Meena his love one easily. He could not use means of transportation to go back his home due to his penniless situation. He ran a hand along the trunk of apricot tree. In these tough buds of his beautiful dream would be caught by his hand. Again, more beautifully, writer added that due to lack of bus fare, Nirmal sat in the shade of apricot tree and fell asleep. It could not deny expressing the economic status of unemployed youth, but they have beautiful dreams as symbolized by the apricot tree where new hope, aspirations and good luck were package gift in the coming days for prosperous healthy and fruitful life. Dreams of love and happiness and many more things of attractions give pleasure of feeling asleep.

Only boy like Nirmal could express his feeling of love directly. Girl like Meena has no open expression regarding love and other beautiful part of life. She is in deprivations of her needs but for the beautiful future, she is more serious in her studies. Both of them were dreaming for beautiful future in their own ways. Nirmal is authorized by the society to meet a girlfriend regardless of many difficult situations. However, Meena being a girl she is quiet and could tolerate every situation that she need to faced in her life. Women agency for the rights and opportunities of the woman like Meena, has been seriously concealed in the story.

Symbolic meaning of apricot tree and the situations faced by the Nirmal and Meena would reflect the unconditional feelings with conditional love of the students. Although Thapa's writing in both fiction and non-fiction has great image, besides that there are some loopholes which can be highlighted in the following points related to critical appraisal.

This is the story we have selected from this book for the study. Nirmal Bhattarai is the main character who falls in love with a girl both of them were college level student. Nirmal impel to meet his love in the college anyhow. He had tried his level best to meet his girlfriend Meena. However, when he went to meeting place she was not there due to her own work. A symbolic apricot tree has been explained in the story which is all about good wishes, happiness and prosperity. Symbolically about sexual desire and alternative way of satisfaction is being explained in the story in an artistic way.

But he could not be bothered to chase after them. Instead he went up to the apricot tree, and fingered a silken white bud. It would be hours before Meena got back from classes. He ran a hand along the tree trunk. There was no point in waiting here. But it was too hot to walk all the way home. He had no money for bus fare (119).

Meena is not in able to meet Nirmal in a specific place it may be due to restrictions in participations which would reflect manifestation of agency. It is aptly remarked by Donald et al.;

In the respondent not involved in a specific decision or decision-making process because they do not care, or because they face restriction in participating?

Alternatively, does the respondent's nonparticipation in decision-making in fact constitute a manifestation of agency? (5-6).

In the "Newly Appointed Chemistry Professor" a young female lecturer is almost harassed by the young boys and back bencher of the class. Although she felt calm while taking shelter with such boys and walk behind them. It means, in the name of security,

everywhere male people have extended trap. No any alternative or options have been left, except to walk behind the silly boys and protect herself. She has capacity to grasp the economic freedom on the one hand but on the other hand, there is inability to speak directly against the activities done by the boys. There are no any tools to measures the degree of derogatory to the dignity of women.

On the one hand there is obligation to be economically profound and thus new female professor is working in the University, on the other hand there are several challenges like backbenchers and some young guys smirk at her which adversely affects the psychology of new female professor. Therefore Mohanty has rightly opined “Women are affected positively or negatively by economic development policies” (30).

A large section of our society has been facing the problem of gender inequality. Gender inequality is the root cause of under development which would undermine human civilization of our society. When on the way to the campus, the newly appointed chemistry professor took shelter behind men. She followed them as they walked through crowds, slipped behind them as they shoved past students, took the space they made for her with the wide berth of their shoulders. She swerved when they swerved, stopped when-seeing a friend across the street-they stopped. She was thankful for the protection they gave. There was no serenity in the mind of newly appointed female professor despite of having deep fear of showing darted eyes and smirked lips at her by backbenchers in the class.

Third world women are insecure which has been remarked by following statement.

Fear was imprinted in her flesh. Measure, measure. She tried to keep her fears in check. A woman once raped is not exposed to all. She tried to breathe in calmly as she walked through the campus sheltering from men by hiding behind other men (170).

This statement clearly reflects that there is nothing left in favor of woman for her safety. However, women have also feelings that why woman do could not be the fearless

partner with man? Feeling of insecurity would raise the issue of equality. It would be the better to establish women agency which could spewing out the black clouds of injustice, inequality, inhuman and unparalleled demarcation of rights opportunities and equality on ownership of properties and wealth. Probably a bloody revolution, a drastic and far reaching change in ways of thinking and behaving is required.

In the story a young female lecturer is almost harassed by the young boys and the back benchers of the class. Although, while walking on the road boys' student saw her and she felt that eyes were boys were darted, smirked at her. However, she felt calm while taking shelter with such boys and walk behind them safely.

Female agency is the capacity of women and girls to take purposeful action and pursue goals free from the threat of violence. The story is connected with the male domination against the women. Professor has fear in the mind but the obligation and circumstances envisaged her to tolerate and continuously go ahead with full of courage and enthusiasm. It is apt to code the story as,

She followed them as they walked through crowds, slipped behind them as they walked through crowds, slipped behind them as they shoved past students, took the space they made for her with the wide berth of their shoulders. She swerved when they swerved, stopped when -seeing a friend across the street-they stopped. She was thankful for the protection they gave. (170).

In the story she has capacity to recognize the problems. So, here Spontaneous flexibility is found in the capacity of the chemistry professor which has been remarked in above lines.

Likewise, in the story "The Girl of No Age" writer has raised the issue of a small girl who was killed in Maoist insurgency. How old was the girl become the issue of the story. Father of that girl said she was of ten years her mother said she was of Nine years; villagers

claimed that she was of twelve years. However, she was studying in Grade two which may give the correct idea about her age. Her age was behind the innocent death vested to the political interest of some of the section of the society. It reflects that women are tolerating some, sacrifices of innocent people particularly women and girl, by which inflammable movement would emerge soon in future. A big hostility may emerge between two genders between powerful and powerless or between masculine and feminine gender all over the world. It has issues to establish the women agency with strong arguments for equality and justice. In the story the writer pointed out the polygamy and also reflects the then Maoist insurgency where an innocent girl was killed by Nepal army. Army personnel said that the girl who was studying in class two involved in armed Maoist fighter. They caught her from her own house, taken far away, asked her to run, while running they shot and killed and some people said the girl was about twelve years. Father said she was of ten years and mother said she was of nine years.

As the fundamental rights of girl has been lost forever, directly or indirectly the whole society is responsible for injustice and ill treatment to the deceased girl. In this context Mohanty appropriately points out the situation as

Instead of analytically demonstrating the production of women as socioeconomic political groups within particular local contexts, this analytical move limits the definition of the female subject to gender identity, completely bypassing social class (31).

This statement and confusion regarding the age of a very small girl brutally killed by Nepal Army in the name of insurgency, would have no right to claim for her rights to live neither she could be recognized by the family member or by society and nation by the whole. It's damn carelessness. While analyzing the society indirectly in the fiction, narrator rightly remarked the subjugation of the woman by the entire society. Here, Mohanty's lines shows

that, family, society and nations are not clear about age so it shows the loose of identity of a girl.

In the story writer has raise the issue of a small girl who was killed in Maoist insurgency. Here, a girl is a victim and the then Maoist rebellion is the perpetrator. It reflects barbarity, inhumanity, as well as ruthlessness against human being. Writer has just raise the issue of victim and perpetrator and left it for reader's analysis. Some of the issues raised by the writer reveal that pain and sorrows are relatively effective rather than in absolute term.

In the story a character called Rabindra, also involve in polygamy and women exploitation. It has been clear from the following statement-

I stopped meeting Rabindra when-upon the failure of his first wife had refused to sign the divorce papers. He had two daughters by that marriage. He left them all and moved in with Rashmi, legalizing their bond through the tricks and loopholes of our legal system (216).

It reflects that on the one side men are free to live their personal life crossing the legal restrictions and on the other side women are striving hard to get their basic rights in the society. Since, decision making, leadership and collective action is the core meaning of female agency, a need of capacity development of women is being noticed, the existence of female agency. In this context Ketu Katrak says;

Female resistances are undertaken with self-consciousness and remarkable creativity that decides to take risks and confront domination selectively and strategically in the interest of self preservation (3).

In some situations, human being seems to be very happy and in contrary, in bad situations disappointed and disgusted, heart broken or even commits suicide. The protagonist of the story is almost unknown to real world. Father claimed about her age was ten years, neighbors' said about twelve years and mother said, she was of nine years. A daughter lost by

her parents, between father and mother also deepness of love on their daughter slightly differs. Mother thinks after crossing years also her kids are very small. Thoughts of a father in a traditional feudal society also think about responsibility of a father for education, marriage and so on. Neighbors damn care about age of any others' daughter. She was studying in grade two, reveals the real age of the girl. Guess of age of that victim girl, is also based on relative term rather than absolute. In conclusion, thought of father may be guided by burden of responsibility; mother's love is unwavering too. Neighbors love may be selfish love to some extent.

According to Ketu Katrak most of the third world women are marginalized, victimized and go for the war and often very subtle to understand their hardship. In the story "The Girl of No Age", actual age of deceased girl who was victim of Maoist insurgency, set by proximity phenomena. This is the theoretical framework use by Ketu Katrak seems to be more logical in our society than burrowed west construct models to examine the nature of writing from non-western location.

In conclusion, all the selected short stories directly or indirectly endorse female agency. In the "Soar" story, Nadia is the protagonist who raises the voices of downtrodden women and also raises the question of gender inequality. Similarly, in "Nineteen Years His Junior" Urimila is a victim where ability of the female character is being concealed by her husband's dominations silently. In the case there is prevalence of psycho analysis along with female subject agency and repression. Therefore, Urimila is a character of third world women. In the next story "The Student in Love" reflects Nirmal is a male character, crazy to meet his girl friend but that girl could not meet him showing her reservation. It includes the existence of female agency. In the similar way "Newly Appointed Chemistry Professor" a young University teacher was about to harassed by young boys, she was afraid on the one hand and also takes shelter of boys to protect her on the other. It reflects importance of both

gender is inevitable for the common welfare. It portrays female agency. Similarly, in the last story “The Girl of No Age” the girl becomes the issue where a very small girl child was killed reflecting politics in female body. It reflects the issue of female agency.

In this thesis theorist of Mohanty demystifying capitalism, reorienting feminism are examined. Similarly researcher has used the Subaltern theory of Subaltern in feminist perspectives significantly. Spivak also make connection with agency regarding identity formation and to understand the position of women in existing social structure. Making conscious to the women Ketu Katrak highlighted regarding the self consciousness and taking risks to confront the domination selectively and strategically for the personal protection and security. Besides this theorist the ideas of Donald et al. is being used for the textual analysis and other theoretical perspectives. Female characters of the selected short stories strongly advocate in favor of equitable women rights where female agency is being included in all the selected short stories. In the selected stories there is no strong advocacy on feminism rather it raise the voice of socially fragile people regardless of either gender, reflects female agency. More importantly, all the argument and views of theorists and researcher identified that Thapa has deliberately advocate the female agency throw her selected short stories in the *Tilled Earth*.

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