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Transformation of Self in Ani Choying Drolma's *Singing for Freedom*

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Letter of Approval

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Abstract

The research entitled "Transformation of Self in Ani Choying Drolma's Singing for Freedom" illustrates autobiographical subjectivity and transformation. On the foreground of its forms, functions, and relation with narratives of Drolma, it investigates essence and constitutive process of identity in this text. This paper, however, digs out the process of transformation and autobiographical self. Drolma narrates a model of identity, discursive and intersectional identity and its heteronymous nature through autobiographical tools. Drolma's identities revolve around historical, cultural, ethnic, ideological formation, consumption and transformation. Similarly, her identities are casted through selected events, experiences and memories. She attempts to assume identity to interrogate on patriarchal society but fails to carry fixed identity. Her identities are discursive, relational, contextual, mediated, and interest based. So, identity is an ever changing process and it is a matter of formation, transformation over different sectors through lens of public identity.

Keywords: autobiography, identity, memory, discursive, transformation

This research concentrates on the issue of the transformation of self in Ani Choying Drolma's *Singing for Freedom*. It presents staging life in written form through the ground of experience that reflects the identity of the life narrator. One's life is connected to multiple other subjects such as identity, society, and so on. Besides, this research focuses on the way how innocent women can build up their public identity rejecting the imposed identity given by patriarchal society.

In common discourse, the term 'self' often refers to a warm sense or a warm feeling that something is about 'me' or about 'us'. Reflecting on oneself is both a

common activity and a mental accomplishment. It requires that there is an 'I' that can consider an object that is me. Life in the monastery, home to several dozen nuns, has its charm as well as its challenges. Ani Choying was raised under the love and shaded of her spiritual master, a very kindhearted man. Knowing Ani Choying's sore past, he led her to the path of Buddhism. She didn't turn out to be like other Tibetan Buddhist nun, though. When an American jazz guitarist visited the monastery and heard her sing, he invited her to record an album with him. Soon, she became an internationally well-known figure, spending much of the year abroad, enchanting and inspiring audiences with her spiritual music. This she continues to do even now.

Drolma was born in Kathmandu, in 1971 to Tibetan refugee parents as emigrants. From the age of 5, she did not have a day end without getting beating of her parents. Seeing lots of suffering and pain in life, in order to get rid of the tragic destiny of women in male dominated society which she saw vividly in her own family and community, the 13 years Ani Choying Drolma decided to leave home to join a Tibetan Buddhist nunnery named Nagi Gompa on Shivapuri Mountain in the northern slope of the Kathmandu Valley. She was well-trained in Buddhist meditation, chants, rituals and ceremonies performance, and was quickly advanced to the position of chanting master in the nunnery.

Nuns' Welfare Foundation of Nepal (NWF) was established in Seti Devi VDC, Pharping in 1998. This project is dedicated to the rural women of this region for whom the duty of carrying loads of water every day from nearby water resources has been terrifically reduced. Recently, she has become a board member and trustee of the Lumbini Development Trust.

Drolma experiences a violent social structure during her childhood. After entering the nunnery world, she finds that no peace is possible without knowledge.

So, her childhood experiences knowingly or unknowingly motivated her to transform herself from an ordinary girl to a renowned person. She acknowledges Buddha's idea to set up life. Some extent, the society, family and circumstances compelled her to feel the transform identities and the economy norms are also responsible to be a nun.

Drolma identifies herself with some readers and then tells her past experiences with central point. How author focuses issue like identity. Identities are conditional. So, identity is constructed, discursive, contextual, performed, unpredictable, and flux in nature. To support the claim, the researcher draws theoretical insights from Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narrative*. Their central concern is about self-presented identity and narrating life story of author through presentation of identity under different forms like identity as difference and unity, identities as discursive, identities as historically specific models, and identities as intersectional. In this regard, reflection of all life events through retrospection is not easy and possible. Narrating life is closely related to internal and external life of the narrator. As Scott notices, "challenges the foundational status of experience as a ground of analysis and a ground of knowledge about the world and ourselves. . . . cautions that talking about experience as either internal to an individual or external to the individual the material upon which consciousness works" (24). What happens to us from outside leads us to take the existence of individuals for granted. This is taken-for-grantedness of the relationship between individual experience and the claim to unique individuality is what Scott calls into question. For experience, so for identities they are constructed. They are in language. They are discursive. They are not essential born, inherited, or natural though much in social organization leads us to regard identity as given and fixed.

The term 'self' includes both the actor who thinks and the object of thinking.

Moreover, the actor both is able to think and is aware of doing so. As the philosopher John Locke famously asserted, "I think, therefore I am" (21). By understanding the subject matter, while we focus on the structural aspect of self-concept (e.g., individualistic, collectivity), much of the literature focuses on content and form to judge by asking and describing about the people. How positively they evaluate themselves. This focus on content plus evaluative judgment is quite common in research on children and adolescents, and typically involves certain criteria and regional impress on people.

Writing life story involves with the subject matter of life in Ani Choying Drolma's *Singing for Freedom*. The common people cannot make a road map without making struggle in life. A role model of identity development has focused on via exploration and commitment is compulsory. E.H. Erikson has used the term 'identity' in ways synonymous with what others have termed self-concept. However, the term 'identity' can also be conceptualized as a way of making sense of some aspect or part of self-concept. The social psychological and sociological identity literatures contrast personal and social identities; also termed collective identities. Social identities, as defined by Tajfel, involve the knowledge that one is a member of a group. One's feeling about group membership and knowledge of the group's status is compared to other groups. Though this appearance does not focus much on content or group ahead of knowledge, regard, and level highlighted but that social identities include content as well.

Identity is categorized into private and public. Drolma forms new identity as a singer, nun, internationally known personality with her own effort. So, she is self identified person. Drolma gives an identity of masculinity at present. Drolma identifies with reader by inclusion of certain pieces of experiences, issues, events, and

expectations. Her autobiographical narrative arouses different ways of thinking and being in the human world which helps to persuade alternative reality and truth. Life narrative celebrates the subject matter of self where other subjects such as identity, memory, experience, embodiment, and agency work together. But how and what autobiographical author includes identities are always contextual and mediated. Though this definition does not focus much on content in group membership beyond knowledge, regard, and rank, other definitions have highlighted that social identities include content. Identity and social identity theories describe the self as including both a stable set of evaluative standards and a fluid, ever-changing description in the moment.

The researcher takes ideas from cultural critic, Richard Johnson who pinpoints cultural similarities and differences of people, and meaning making process. He asserts: “The latest theory of the autobiographical at interdisciplinary boundaries suggests new ways to engage the canon of autobiography and the larger field of life narrative, including other media of self-presentation” (137). In addition, to support difference and harmony in an identity and possibility of identity. Self, self-concept, and identity can be considered as imposed elements, with forming self-concepts and identities being part of self-concepts. Sometimes the terms are used in reference to the process of making sense of the world in terms of what matters to me or to the consequences of social contexts on a variety of beliefs and perceptions about the self, or simply to refer to membership in socio-demographic categories such as gender or social class. Other times what is meant is an implicit sense or a warm feeling of relevance and inclusion. Thus, the terms can and often are used to explain what might be the process underlying outcomes. A common theme among self and identity theorists is that the self matters for behavior. Yet demonstrating that how one thinks

about oneself produces action.

A clear way to exhibit that the self does influence behavior is to manipulate whether and how people think about themselves, and to show that this influences their behavior. It seems reasonable to ask whether the self is a stable mental construct. Most social science theories of the self articulate both stability and flexibility as aspects of the self. Thus, social identity is a part of an identity theories that describe 'self' as including both a stable set of evaluative standards and a fluid, ever-changing description in the moment.

The text is composed in first person narration. To break down the rules of life, Drolma has examined this autobiographically. For this perspective, Manju Shree Thapa says:

Ani Choying Drolma is an exceptional singer, admired by fans in Nepal and throughout the world. People are moved to tears by the plaintive purity of her voice, and the haunting melodies of her ancient songs and hymns, passed from master to pupil for many centuries. Ani Choying has always believed that nuns have a great desire and potential to make the world a better place, if only given equal opportunities. Arya Tara School, opened in 2000, aims to equip nuns to help and to serve their communities in a professional and humanitarian capacity. (3)

This excerpt reflects as Manjushree Thapa that Drolma is attracted by the mournful purity of her voice, and the unforgettable tune. Drolma is unforgettable to women kingdom by establishing different academic institutions like Arya Tara School.

The book reviewed by Roshan Thapa reflects her nunnery period. In this period, she was getting enlightened in her restless life. Highlighting on this, Roshan presents:

Life in the monastery, home to several dozen nuns, had its charm as well as its challenges. Aware of Ani Choying's painful past, he guided her gently on the Buddhist path. She didn't turn out to be a conventional Tibetan Buddhist nun, though. She learnt to ride a jeep, eagerly sought to improve her English and flouted convention by learning martial arts. (1)

According to Roshan Thapa, several nuns face different challenges in life. They accept knowledge and enlightenment after latter time of the monastery residency. Drolma decides that to run away from home is good. She escapes to a Buddhist monastery outside Kathmandu and asked to be ordained as a nun. As Ani enjoys a certain respect in Tibetan society, and she knows that as a nun, her father wouldn't dare to be violent upon her.

Drolma was raised up on the shade of her parents where her father does not even care about his daughter's needs and desires. But, she was the one who never stepped back and followed her dreams. Drolma further adds in her interview regarding her life in context to changing herself. She adds:

There was no visible discrimination between sons and daughters, but my work at home was to clean everything and look after my brothers. Being a Nepali family, my parents were socially and culturally influenced by Nepali traditions. My father was a sculptor and my mother was a typical housewife.

Simply speaking, I was born in middle class family of Nepal. (3)

She narrates her life without any hesitation. She moves ahead because her parents had not compromised with each other. She does not want to see such obstacles in her life. She continues with her interests, skills and hobbies. Fortunately, Drolma was only sent to school till grade five. So, the researcher tries to transform into self by an art in the contemporary era by textual analysis.

This study contributes to a greater understanding of how powerful experiences of place form, inform, and transform individuals' relationships with themselves, others, and the larger world. Implications indicate a need for the cultivation of greater awareness of the people–place relationship toward a more coherent partnership. Further research into co-affecting factors influencing place, identity formation and development is needed.

Self and identity appear quite changeable depending on how they are assessed. If features of the situation matter and if the situation is stable, self and identity appear stable, making it impossible to learn if they are context-dependent. Moreover, since people tend to experience the self in context, they may experience stability even though which aspects of self are significant which depend on what makes one distinctive in the moment. Regarding this, Drolma narrates, "By the age of eight, I was as hard as nails. People around even call me Bruce Lee, maybe because I had the same bowl-cut hairstyle. I liked this nickname because I loved Bruce Lee and I wanted to fight like him, be strong like him, break brick walls with my fists like him, win every time like him" (22). She focuses on various experiences of race, sexuality, and class to talk sexual artistic identity. Though she is a female, but she compares herself to someone who is physically strong. She challenges the male dominated society and tries to explore her new identity. She believes that women are no less than men.

Drolma assumes artistic identity. Despite of her bitter childhood days, she sees dream of achieving goal in her life which came true too. She is supported by her master. He orders Drolma tightly on the way of Buddha devotion. In this regard, in novel, Drolma narrates, "I put on a white dress, the one I was given for the end of year dance performance at school. I choose it as a symbol of my purity. I tie up my

hair with an old elastic band, the kind they use for typing up bags” (34). Though Choying's nature seems harsh, she also had soft corner inside her. She put on her white dress to represent herself as other normal nuns whom we usually find them as peaceful persons who have no anger, rage in them. And the other side of her character which helps her to become bold and confident in this male dominant society. A collection of social science theories assumes that the self-matters for life choices good combination of an animate and non- animate. Similarly, tough body of evidence that has yet to be assembled.

As reviewed by Bless and Schwarz, the direction of the contextual influence can be classified as assimilation or contrast. Assimilation occurs when the implication of relevant information has a positive relationship with the resulting judgment. Contrast occurs when the implication of prominent information has a negative relationship with the resulting judgment. Contrasting the male, Drolma negates colour and man's behaviour. Drolma composes, “His skin is smooth and flawless, his hands big and long-fingered and he is dressed in a fine shirt of saffron silk. He radiates senses of extreme gentleness and cleanliness” (35). She engages to respect her Guru. She mostly pays attention on hospitality of guru in the then time. But her identity is different from her mother's identity. Similarities and differences are formed by the category in an identity from different time and place. She constructs abstract life by identification and distinctiveness with the other in the text.

Commonality and difference is culturally formed over period of time. Commonality can be formed in one particular culture. Understanding of something is always marked by certain shared beliefs in certain culture. Richard Johnson highlights:

Identity is the matter of construction and reconstruction. The nature of identity

is fluid and flux. Richard Jenkins talks about the social identity in terms of social construction. He argues that, 'Identity can only be understood as a process of 'being' or becoming. One's identity-one's identities, indeed, for whom we are always multi-dimensional, singular and plural- is never a final or settled matter. (17)

In addition, to support difference and commonality in an identity and possibility of identity, Richard Jenkins' ideas are taken. Regarding identity as discursive, one key theoretical model researcher has incorporated the concept of 'heteroglossia' from Mikhail Bakhtin. Moreover, ideas are brought to approach the nature of reality in an identity formation. Drolma highlights:

To start with I worry about him a lot. His belly is swollen from malnutrition. His skin is covered in lumpy white patches that appear and disappear over his abdomen, arms and neck. The skin on his dry knees is like elephant hide. More crucially, I worry that his tranquility is the sign of some mental disability. (175)

This excerpt shows the cultural difference that helps to shape unique identity and position of the person. She adopts a boy in her life for future. She wants him to be good and healthy but the boy becomes skinny and belly. In this concern, she creates a new identity of parent whom she is more concerned of her child's health.

Drolma's life in the monastery is fruitful as well as challenging. It is the second home to all the nuns. Ani Choying is poured with lots of love by her master who helps her to forget the bitter life of her childhood and move ahead in future. Due to her master's unconditional love, guided towards her, it becomes easier to follow her dream along with the nunnery life though she has some enemies inside the monastery.

The convergence of authorial signature and narrator, by contrast, is a distinguishing mark of life narrative, argues Philippe Lejeune in “The autobiographical Pact.” Lejeune defines the relationship between author and reader in autobiographical writing as a contract. “What defines autobiography for the one who reads is above all a contract of identity that is sealed by the proper name. And this is true also for the one who is writing the text” (1). Similarly, they are not essential born, inherited, or natural though much in social organization leads us to regard identity as given and fixed.

M. M. Bakhtin argues that consciousness which also implies identity as a category of consciousness dialogical. That is, it is always implicated in “the process of social interaction” (190). Since social groups have their languages, each member of the group becomes conscious in and through that language. Meantime the subject comes to consciousness through multiple identities and multiple voices. Having the situation, Drolma focuses, “Peter is an American who’s been living in Kathmandu for a long time. He often tells me how much he likes my songs. We get along very well. He knows I’m a fan of Tracy Chapman and I know she’s a friend of his” (234-35). Position and identity is marked by the action too. It shows that, she has already occupied a space in other people’s heart through her singing. As, she has gone on the tour to several countries to show her talent, her fans have increased day by day which has helped her boost herself and also help in establishing her new identity as a singer.

Contextualizing the identity Stuart Hall argues, identity is “a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (392). Producing and consuming meaning is influenced by power of culture. So, culture is power but meaning is not fixed over time and place. It changes according to context. In, *The Practice of Cultural Studies*, Richard Johnson,

et.al talk about the culture and cultural studies. They argue:

Implicit in the culture –as-power issue and the questions that arises from it is the idea that everyone participates, however unequally, in the cultural process of making meaning and fixing and shifting identities. Yet, the best-known definition of the cultural-and perhaps still the dominant one is everyday use-tends to narrow the cultural field down to specialized, often elite, high cultural practices and products that are distinguished from common culture and ‘owned’ by experts or privileged groups. (10)

Drolma brought gifts for her mother from foreign land which is beyond the imagination for her mother as their economic status was too low during Drolma’s childhood. Her physical and psychological bonding to women is to deny all male achievement in Nepal. In meaning making process everyone cannot involve equally and cannot possess enriching meaning. Drolma’s parents make a contrast between ancestors and modern period. Their artistic meaning and identity is different. Her parents practice local cultural activities and make meaning through it. Meaning making process is determines by the place where they live, what activities they do every day and what types of people they meet often.

Her mother narrates stories about traditional women and their surroundings. Drolma also adds, “For the first time in my life I am rich enough to give my mother a special present. Like all Asian women, she loves gold. And I love to see her happy” (101). Generation gap also provides an underlying structure for the organization of difference and commonality in an identity. Her parents are ignoring injustices but she interrogates and tries to know about the discrimination. Being a daughter, she tries to fulfill her parents' desires and plays the role of a son who is considered as the bread earner in Nepalese society.

Identity theory and social identity theory have more overlaps than differences in their understanding of the self. For this reason, it is argued that the unification of these theories is advisable in order to both avoid redundancies in theorizing about the self and to provide a uniform approach to the versatile nature of identities. In terms of their bases, their processes, and their outcomes, Identity theory has focused more on role performance and role relationships within groups. Concentrating on this Ani Choying Drolma asserts, “I need to ponder all this. With my hand on the door I turn back to Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche. He is smiling at me. Think about this tool” (98). She finds some common shared feelings, behaviors in the nun. They are free to question gender and sexual injustices in the surroundings of monastery. But that is not pure or same mentality of all nuns. All nuns are not calm, quiet. Anger can also be inside them. It’s all about understanding the self. What roles they play with the people around them and how can they establish new identity?

Identity theory has focused on the causes and consequence of recognize with a particular role. A membership meaning primarily has suggestions for role meaning that has an implication for what you do. For example, social identity theory would highlight one’s identification or association with a particular gender group, while identity theory examine the roles or behaviors persons enact as members of a gender group. Identity theory emphasizes doing, social identity theory emphasizes being. But this notion may change over a change of time and formation of social, cultural organizations. Understanding, forming and consuming meaning is not fixed. Indeed, identities are unstable, context based. Smith and Watson opine:

What may be a meaningful identity, on one day or in one context, may not be culturally and personally meaningful at another moment or in another context. . . . Identities linked to gender, national citizenship, work status, sexuality,

class location, generational location, ethnicity, and family constellation” (33).

Identities are marked not only by culture but also by the different other things such as race, gender, sexuality, class, family background, political and religious affirmation. Identities are never fixed. It changes its shape due to various factors.

Similarity and difference in identity, for Richard Jenkins, is important thing to classify and associate people. In his book, *Social Identity*, he adds, “Identifying ourselves, or others, is a matter of meaning, and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation” (17). Opposing to this stratification, Drolma views and notices, “I need to give meaning to my actions and my life, give them value. For so many years, I had to take care of myself, to treat my childhood wounds. Now I know I’m healed” (139-140). Her mother was practicing patriarchal conventions. She does not dare to raise voice against her husband’s violence. Here, Drolma shares some common ground at home with family members. She too suggests her mother to revolt against her father’s actions as she does not want to make her father- daughter relationship sour. But she is different in outside. At least she had the knowledge of identifying the situation. She performs identities based on context and situation. She didn’t go against her father because she feels that her father is as respected person as her Guru and should act according to the time and situation.

Drolma’s mother is practicing gender discrimination and injustices but she was interrogating it and tries to know about the discrimination because Buddha’s ideas is not similar to her mother’s practice. She is now politically active to change the world. Her physical and psychological bonding to women is to deny all discrimination formed by society in Nepalese society. So, she is more open to express her sexuality. She asked Mohammad Ali, "Hello, here is your tea. May you enjoy it and give me a few kung fu lessons"(91). This excerpt represents a muscular

designation and strength through the spiritual power. When Drolma was worshipping, she got a foreigner, Mohammad Ali from whom she was impressed by his Buddha's philosophy from the meditation of Asthanga. She enjoys the kung fu lesson of Mohammad Ali and wants that lesson from him.

After trying on various possibilities, adolescents and young adults are predicted to stake a claim to an identity that then remains stable; tradition manipulates neither social context to test effects on identity nor identity to test effects on behavior. Instead, the focus is on empirically testing whether identity changes over time as expected and, once an identity is committed to. Researcher focuses on operationalization the process of committing to an identity and testing whether this process is best described linearly.

To the extent that 'self' is a tool for meaning making, maintaining sense of worth, and regulating behavior, then an effective self should be sensitive to new information. The narrative in the *Singing for Freedom* also reflects, "I feel tired. I don't like having this thing. Besides Kunsong Dechen my teacher's wife, is waiting for me. She wants to talk to me though I don't know why. That morning, as I ran out of the kitchen, she called to me "Tell me, Ani Choying, is someone chasing you?" (75). Drolma remembers past actions of her master's wife. Now she recalls identifying her own way of behaving and master's wife. The contemporary time when she was unable to recognize the society, master's wife was dealing gently. In this way, she differentiates an empowered woman and so called traditional woman. Drolma gets an inspiration to have pity on other.

Identity is largely connected with the institution where people share common values, beliefs, behaviors, based on gender, age and so on. It is essential to know the importance of society and culture where institutions work as a system which work for

practice only. Richard Jenkins mentions:

Habitualization may be a necessary condition for institutionalization, but it isn't in itself enough. A degree of inter subjectivity – shared meaning-is required. When a number of people begin to share the same habitualised pattern of activity, to possess some sense that they are doing it, and to communicate to each in the same terms about what they are doing, that is the beginning of institutionalization. (158)

Collective identity demands shared understanding and practice of tradition differently.

In group, Drolma practices nun's behaviors, values in her nunnery world. She transforms herself by sharing same features, habits and activities in the monastery which was completely opposite from her homely environment.

Nunnery is a way of reflecting common features over particular time and place. This process lead human being into group or collective identification and then they identify in particular group. Drolma narrates, "I go home, my bag washing now heavy with water, carrying it on my hip because my back is covered in blue, red and black weals inflicted by my father with his whip of electric flex" (43). The identity has been attained and maintained by the immigrant in her homeland is found to create problems for him in a new environment where the culture, traditions and life style is altogether different.

This issue is painfully affecting Muslim immigrants who immigrate to non-Muslim countries as their Islamic code of life clashes with the secular and more liberal ideas of the west. The famous psychologist, Erik Erikson who is attributed to have coined the term 'identity crisis', defines identity as,

. . . A subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of

some shared world image. As a quality of unself-conscious living, this can be gloriously obvious in a young person who has found himself as he has found his communality. (Erikson 70)

It is apparent from Erikson's description, identity has many factors contributing to its development and these factors differ from individual to individual. Identity crisis on the other hand, originates for an immigrant when his original identity obtained from his homeland, clashes with demands of a new identity in the new land. Drolma asserts, "I tell my mother this story and I can see how happy she is for me. I'm definitely not about to abandon religion. My mother has become my best friend" (161). The matter of identity is inherently temporal. Moreover, there is not final truth and fixity in the overbearing practicality of the identity. Drolma foregrounds nun. But her nun identity is influenced by earlier social, cultural, historical processes. She writes not only preconceived opinions of mainstream culture towards, but also mentions emotional and physical bonding.

Identities are historically specific models and they are historically formed within the particular time and place. Cultural identities and their models are formed by time and place. Models of identities are constructed in particular historical context. Certain models are followed and certain models are questioned. Writers follow and resist identities on the basis of their knowledge. Temporality and spatiality paves the way of internalizing the identity. Drolma lives in particular time and place then she includes selected events and moments. She incorporates some events and moments to show the risks, difficulties and unique identities. She claims:

The next day I managed to persuade Dilkhi to go with me. We found him after half an hour, terrified and hiding in the roots of the tree. I caught him in a shawl I'd brought with me. Specially and he hardly struggle at all. With the

little creature hidden in a fold of my robe I went back to my room as though nothing had happened. Of course my secret soon got out. In couple of hours everyone knew of wrong doing and the handy man first of all. (67)

If meaning is constructed, structured by society then identity is discursive socially and historically. Giving priority to something is based on the self-desire and values.

In this concept, the little creature is being helped by Drolma. It gets terrified after separated from its mother. Here, Drolma shows her humanitarian value despite of getting scolded by her master as she brought that little one to her room who is separated from its parents. In this how humanity is narrated in the social and psychological version.

Smith and Watson opine that, “There are models of identity culturally available to life narrators at any particular historical moment that influence what is included and what is excluded from an autobiographical narrative” (34). In this way, narrator gives knowledge of history and movements. Drolma’s individual identity is connected to the history of her lifetime. Similarly, narratives deal with the temporal and spatial history. She also attempts to assert an identity and follows model of identity to reject earlier cultural practices.

Retrospection of the past is history and context based. To retrospect past, autobiographical narrators write past life memories on the basis of internal and external environment. Inclusion and exclusion of the events varies with the autobiographer. Here, Drolma has included these historical moments. Formation of her identity is influenced by these historical moments. Drolma narrates, “My teacher closes his eyes and recites a passage from the Dhammapada, one of the most ancient Buddhist texts to be preserved to this day. No louder than a murmur, his voice completely fills the little room. I feel wrapped in its familiar warmth” (96). Drolma

narrates that her teacher cannot listen well in the last days of his life. She is ready to cry but her powerful emotion resists her to overflow the underlying feelings and emotions. In this concern, she always remembers her teacher to understand the suffering of master. This personal feeling, Drolma narrates in her autobiography by saying to forgive her because pain is a usual process. But confident, courageous women are always ready to fight against time. In this way, she was always being a tough person in the beginning of monastery education. Hard expression, feelings and sentiments can change into pity through moral lessons. However, a man is close to morality and humanity. Because of these two merits, she got social identity in her life.

The title *Rivethed: Tales from the Assembly Line* announce a limit of identity that the narratives explore, exploit, and explode. Here, for instance, “Rivethed” re-imagines himself as “Rivethed,” a figure of betrayer agency in the monotonous assembly-line life of General Motors. The “Rivethed” speaks Hamper’s fears of fading into the helpless catatonia of alcohol and mechanized routine and his desire to resist the orders of faceless bureaucrats. But autobiographers often incorporate several models of identity in succession or in alternation to tell a story of serial development.

Drolma narrates:

Rebellion was not in her nature. But it is mine. I didn’t want to submit. I didn’t want to be some man’s slave, nor to be treated like an animal. I would have preferred to die than to become dependent on the moods of a person who was not better than me, but who happened to have something between his legs and the rights to go to school. (31)

The narrator writes of her ego born in mind is outburst. Her mother is polite. Drolma wants to be a nun because man’s behavior is cruel. Because of patriarchal society her mother is not revolutionary but in span of time, Drolma turns dynamic in her society.

Cultural identities, according to Stuart Hall, are “the unstable points of identification suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture” (395). Thus they are marked by time and place. There are models of identity culturally available to life narrators at any particular historical moment that influence what is included and what is excluded from an autobiographical narrative. Some models of identity culturally available in the United States over the last three hundred years have included the sinful Puritan seeking the signs of salvation, the self-made man, the struggling and suffering soul, the innocent quester, the bad girl or boy, the adventurer, and the fraud.

If one has to associate herself/himself with organizations, societies, and other contexts, one cannot grasp fixed identity. So, identities are intersectional. Multiple levels of experiences and its effect on identity conceive the diversity of identities that constitutes the intersectional aspect of identity. Smith and Watson argue that, “The effect of this multiplicity of identities are not additive but intersectional. . . . To speak autobiographically as a woman is not to speak as a ‘woman’ and as a ‘black.’ It is to speak as woman” (36). There is no absolute, universal fix one identity. In her text, Drolma has captured intersectional aspect of identity. Not only her identity is intersectional, but also other women pose intersectional identity in her text. Drolma mentions:

I don't remember the first time someone stopped me in the street and asked for my autograph, staring at me wide-eyed and thinking, “It's her, yes, it's really her! But it all happened suddenly. This album in Nepalese, full of humanist songs with modern arrangements, came as a big surprise. And people liked it at once/ one song – not even my favourite - became a big hit with both children and older people. (208)

Drolma is different; she is a woman, poet, poor, and marginal. She poses multiple identities. Her album in Nepalese market is popular because it is full of humanist songs with modern arrangements. People like her melodies because of the message carried by her songs in melodious tune.

In her book, *Autobiography*, Linda Anderson mentions that, “Autobiography has been one of the most important sites of feminist debate precisely because it demonstrates that there are many different ways of writing the subject” (87). Plurality of identity can be found in women’s writing. There is no singular definition and experience of women rather there are multiple ways of thinking and living in the world. Drolma describes the situation of bar, coffee-shops, groups and the street of village. She writes, “For more than two hours the nuns recite mantras and sing sacred to the rhythm of trumpets, cymbals, bells and all kinds of traditional religious instruments that are still unknown to me” (62-63). From these intersections of multiple positions, experiences, contexts, she captures intersectional identity. Religion is also base of identity. Mantra as Buddha reciting is also an art where Drolma can sing and recite.

Drolma’s narrative of childhood and adulthood experiences as a fragile women who gives the essence of quest for regional, national and successful identity. She is interested in other political movements such as communism. She has multiple identities. Among other, she has more intersectional identities in her text. Her emotional attachment with other women is part of her poetry. It means she is a writer and her identity as an artist is reflected as she writes, “My teacher seems to have withdrawn so far into himself that his last towards words are barely audible” (96). She and her master share their poetry. They have got psychological connection with each other. Her woman’s identity and creative identity is expressed.

This notion of intersectional aspect of identity functions in fluid way. Fluidity and ever changing concept lies in the identity. Earlier categorized notion of women has changed over the social, geographical, political, temporal change. In the book, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, Amartya Sen also examines identity as intersectional. Sen defines, “We are all individually involved in identities of various kinds in desperate contexts, in our own respective lives, arising from our background, or associations, or social activities” (23). Drolma is simply a woman, but she has multiple experiences and looks. She develops her sexual identity and traces hybrid identity in the text. She writes:

Every day I sit on a big stone looking out over the valley. I meditate as best I can. Jerry Garner has gone back to the USA. I no longer try to harden my fist so I can fight better on the contrary, I put lotion on my hands, I want them to be soft. I’m happy to have more free time. The goal I have set myself, to learn to fly, is a great motivation. At the end of my meditation, I twist my neck trying to look at my back and cheek if maybe wings are starting to grow. (100)

Performance is another way of understanding identity. People perform views, experiences, understanding based on cultural, social, historical, religious construction in certain context and space. While their indigenous culture has been repressed, often brutally? Such subjects are inheritors of the legacies of a colonial history that made them less than fully human beings. For them, autobiographical writing has often served as a method of involvement in colonial repression.

The effects of this multiplicity of identities are not additive but intersectional. That is, we cannot just add the effects of one identity to the effects of another to understand the position from which someone speaks. To speak autobiographically as a woman is not to speak as a woman and as a nun. It is to speak as woman only. To

speak as a native Australian is not to speak as a man but as the Mangol community as well as an aboriginal. There is no universal identity of man or woman outside specificities of historical and cultural location. Drolma relates, “My father’s eyes are fixed on me. For a few minutes now he hasn’t spoken. He glances respectfully at the young nun, his anxious eyes shifting from her to me. He looks as though he wants to speak, but speechless. I know that he has always understood that I would not belong to him and that nothing could change” (51). As Drolma grew older, she was taken to Nazi Gompa. Her father took her there and he was completely speechless there. But Drolma felt free at that time. She felt that some positive transformation in her life is going to take place. Recalling her childhood memories and witnessing such discrimination make her realize that she could never be happy if she was to become someone’s wife.

From multiple experiences, she observes or assumes different sorts of identities. Her multiple identities are revolving around from her childhood to adulthood. So, identity is flux in nature. Story of one’s seems simple in page but embarrassment lies there in the text because retrospection is there with the help of autobiographical subjects. Remembering early life, past events and turning points refracted through experiences. Identity is massively reflected with the politics of memorizing, the acts of agencies, and embodiment. Similarly, knowledge also paves the way of forming identity. Getting or knowing something constructs the identity. It would be interrogation on stable perception and thinking. Questioning earlier social formation, views and forming other sorts of viewing world can be subject matter in life writing.

There is no any absolute truth and reality. Michel Foucault makes a linkage from discourse to power/knowledge. He argues that not only knowledge operates the

power but power and its consequence lies in whether knowledge used or not. Multiple levels of truth can be found. In *Power/Knowledge*, he argues:

Truth isn't outside power. . . . Truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned. . . . The status of those who are charge with saying what counts as true. (131)

This power, knowledge relationship effects on the formation of identity. It works on the existence of identity in society. In the essay, "Virtual Activists? Women and the Making of Identities of Disability," Helen Meekosha mentions that, "Inside ourselves we have to grasp the contradictions of our individual lives. Our identities are constantly in tension, as we are defined by others and redefined by ourselves" (24). It is the power politics of society, and cultural reflection to shape the identity.

Nevertheless, cultural practice of something is not always stable. It is not untouched by the growing consequence of the knowledge and fluid, temporal identity.

Retrospection of past is always based on portion of experiences and events in life narrative. Identities are presented through multiple forms such as difference and commonality, discursive nature of identity, historically specific models of identity, and intersectional aspects of identity. These things are structured by class, gender, race, religion, language, nationality, sexuality, ethnicity, ideology, power politics, psychological development of the person, and social practices. Identities are internally and externally constructed, reconstructed by interpretation and change of the world.

Feminist philosopher Judith Butler situates agency in what she calls the

performativity of subjectivity. Butler narrates in her book:

Identity is enacted daily through socially enforced norms that surround us. Thus it is through our reenactment of the norms of, say, masculinity or femininity that we know ourselves to be a heterosexual man or a woman. But this enforcement of norms cannot be totally effective since individuals fail to conform fully to them because of the multiplicity of norms we are called to reenact in our everyday lives. (145)

The force of masculinity gives a force to femininity. In this perspective, the performance of woman is taken as nothing. The failure to conform signals the possibility of a variation of the rules that govern intelligible identity.

And with failure come pattern or changes of identities Drolma highlights, “ At my concerts I sell little things from Nepal, CDs, magnificent silk scarves, pashminas, little pieces of jewelry made by Nepalese women, anything people will like and that will boost my income! The audience love to go home with a little souvenir, and, as I sign my album, I do a bit of selling on the side” (198). Drolma believes that creating more opportunities for nuns to study and to develop their own capacities for compassionate action is the best way. She dedicates herself to her teacher’s vision throughout her life. She is committed to do whatever she could to promote the advancement of nuns, not only for their own benefit, but because they will then be better prepared to serve and benefit others.

When people have encountered representations of themselves as objects of surveyor’s gaze the “exotic” native other of anthropology and the racialized laborer or slave of imperialism how do they begin to assert cultural agency, especially while using the terms and the medium of the colonizer? To think about the uses of life narrative in postcolonial writing is to encounter these conundrums. As, historically, a

master narrative of Western hegemony in its celebration of the sovereign individual, traditional autobiography would seem contrary to people whose modes of expression were formerly oral and collective. Yet its reinterpretation in a range of what Caren Kaplan calls “out-law genres”. Kaplan writes:

Auto ethnography, testimonial, and prison memoirs has been an important means of asserting cultural agency for postcolonial subjects in many parts of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. For Kaplan an out-law genre “mixes two conventionally ‘unmixible’ elements—autobiography criticism and autobiography as thing itself. The result of this mixing is a textual politics of location a specific context in which the text is produced and the self-narrator situated. (Resisting Autobiography 208)

Ani Choying Drolma’s identities are embedded within broader networks of gender, race, class, religion, nationality, sexuality and so on. She induces new ways of thinking and new ways of being in the human world through her retrospected biomythography that outputs the ways of understanding identity. Being a woman of Nepal, she has experienced different sorts of experiences, problems in very early age of her life. It is life narrative of homosexual woman from the perspective of looking at life and society through incorporation of almost every turning point in her early childhood and adulthood.

Drolma’s life is constituted by multiple other subjects and contexts such as experience, memory, agency, embodiment and identity. Her identity is discursive in her text that is constructed through different factors. Identity is also influenced by history and historically specific models of identities.

Identities are marked in terms of many categories: gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, class, generation, family genealogy, and religious and political

ideologies, to cite the most obvious. These are differences that, at least for now, have meaning in the material and symbolic structures that organize human experience. But identity implies different identities also as likeness. We have noted that discursive systems emergent in social structures shape the operations of memory, experience, identity, and embodiment. People tell stories of their lives through the cultural scripts available to them, and they are governed by cultural restriction about self-presentation in public. If individuals are constituted through discursive practices, how, then, can they be said to control the stories they tell about themselves? Some contemporary investigations of agency are helpful in addressing this question.

Autobiographer's self and politics of writing life story is connected with identity. In this regard, identity is crucial autobiographical subject for the construction of life story. Formation of identity and its association with other various subjects are incorporated in Drolma's text. Identity has multiple levels of factors to constitute the consequence and nature. Her identity is different from other women in general and traditional heterosexual in particular.

Drolma's life has been transformed into empowered nun from a dominating and illiterate family. In the past she emerged from the Tamang family to a global human being through her songs. Without being a university listener, she has become a worldwide foreign language speaker. She is a bold, confident and source of inspiration by non violence in this digital age crossing the imposed ideas of patriarchal society. Her identities, positions are defined by society and redefined by herself. So, she got different identities in her life. Her identity is not only related to women but also related to immigrant female, artist, and activist. She includes intersectional aspect of identity to question on such fixed and constant thinking of identity.

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