

I. Masculinity: Historicity and Spectrums

This thesis studies Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* and Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima* with an application of masculinity theorists. It sets a primary goal to examine how traditional masculinity gets transposed with the advent of plural forms of masculinity in last few decades. Hence, this research further seeks to foreground how they are operating actively in the novels and promoting for the reconsideration between male female dichotomies. Moreover, it confines to study the subject matter of novels regarding Nepali socio-economic condition in which the masculinity functions as to assert the stereotypical notion of maleness. In particular, this work focuses on how hegemonic concept of masculinity, which is synonymous to male domination, was in application even after the advent of democracy in 1950 in Nepal. This research further seeks to foreground the relation between male and female characters in terms of patriarchal notions which claims the rule of male over female. Moreover, the central concern of this study is to invigorate the concept of feminine resistance for their emancipation which seems possible by dismantling the ideology, belief and value system of masculinity.

The research begins by introducing some of the basic concepts in masculinity studies, and then move on to discuss how the discourse of masculinity underlies various cultural domains such as family, society, culture, religion, ethnicity, fatherhood, aging process as well as those relating to war. It also interrogates how various South Asian masculinities are theorized and practiced in multiple socio-historical and literary contexts. The central female characters of these novels, Sakambari in *Blue Mimosa* as well as Sumnima and Puloma in *Sumnima*, become so much famous as the historical figures. The female characters acquire the dominant role to critique the masculinity, patriarchy and create the female self and female

masculinity. In *Sumnima*, the major characters; Sumnima and Somdatta argue much about male and female. Unlike traditional woman, she questions on the views of Somdatta. Being a son of Brahman, Somdatta attempts to impose racial masculinity on Sumnima but he surrenders his self to her to revive his sexual vigour which is connotative to masculinity. Unlike other female characters of the novel, Sumnima interferes all the circumstances from the beginning to the end. Though she belongs to lower Kirant community, Sumnima is confident, responsible, decisive, protective and bold which stand her in the role of male.

Similarly, in Parijat's *Blue Mimosa*, Sakambari redefines the traditional notion of masculinity. There is no attraction of women towards Suyogbir aftermath of his retirement from army. His misogynic and hegemonic character blurs in front of Sakambari. So, this novel questions the traditional notion of masculinity juxtaposing the decline of masculine and asserting rise feminine power. Suyogbir's masculine ego is questioned and he is compelled to continue his existence as effeminate and emasculated man. Sakambari's disinterest in marriage, indulgement in smoking, control over the family and courage to argue with Suyogbir about various aspects like: war, life and marriage identify her as modern masculine figure. Hence, the ideas and confidence in the female characters of the novel transpose them to the opposition of their tradition.

The study of masculinity in Nepali texts is very rare. Since the concept of masculinity was started from Australia with the initiation of R.W. Connel in the decade of 1980s, the literature written by the Nepali writers has not been studied widely by applying this prospective. So, this research makes in-depth overview of the historicity of masculinity and its impacts in interpretation of literary texts. The theoretical notion of South Asian masculinity is applied to interpret the racial and

religious masculinities in the texts. The concept of plural masculinities will be explored on the foundation of core masculinity theorists: R.W.Connel, Michael Kimmel, Judith Butler, Judith Halberstam, Sanjay Srivastav and such other prominent writers. Most significantly, this research examines the role of male and female characters on the basis of socio-economic background of Nepali society when *Blue Mimosa* and *Sumnima* were written. Specifically, this paper will dig out the projection of sexual, religious, ethnical and racial masculinity in major male and female characters of the novels.

This research necessitates bridging the traditional concept of masculinity with the context when the novels were written and published. The decade of 1960s was plethora for the search of freedom and independence from political and social captivity in Nepal. Bisheshwor Prasad Koiral himself was the advocator of democracy, justice and independence. He chose the characters enabling the female and marginalized castes with the strength of resistance and critiquing. He ran the pen to make it the most important weapon to overthrow any domination and exploitation. Parijat also represents to the progressive movement of Nepali literature who stands against the traditional definition of women. Sudha Tripathi writes, " Masculine Nepali society behaves women as a secondary to men or *swasni manchhe*. (188)" [My Translation]. In this way, both Koirala and Parijat have consciously attempted to root out negative masculine attributes and promote positivism in the novels.

Gender and Masculinity

Gender is a cultural construct which refers to the traits like masculine and feminine attached to male and female. It further denotes to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in families, societies and cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics,

aptitudes and likely behaviors of both women and men. Gender is neither biologically predetermined nor is it a fixed entity.

Toril Moi argues that patriarchy constructs certain characteristics as masculine and feminine and imposes them on men and women. Moi further contends, “feminine and ‘masculine’ represent social constructs: patterns of sexuality and behavior imposed by cultural and social norms, and to reserve ‘female’ and ‘male’ for purely biological aspects of sexual” (209). He disagrees with the notion of pure femaleness and maleness based on binary opposition. Gender, thus, is not concerned with how males or females really are, but the way that a given culture perceives them.

The study of gender is important because it helps understand women’s subordination to men, which is socially constructed. However, until now there is confusion between sex and gender, and gender issues are taken as female issues and are concerns of women. It may be that feminists were one of the first ones to analyze the gender representation in literature and other cultural texts and protest the misrepresentation of women in them. But, gender studies is concerned with not only the representation of women but also of men. According to Desiree Lwambo, “Gender studies is a tool which can be used to dismantle the gender inequalities and to promote the alternative modes of interaction” (8). Studies on gender representation help to measure how society views men and women and how gender roles go on changing with the changing social process. Since gender roles are learned and go on changing, the theorists of gender studies argue that they can be unlearned as well.

Gender studies is concerned with studying the representation of both men and women in literature and other art forms. However, the representation of men and masculinity is often overlooked. The concept of masculinity as a recent phenomenon emerged as a means of rethinking feminist thought by embracing a more relational

approach to masculinities and femininities. According to Susan Faludi, contemporary culture damages men as much as it does women. The traditional concept of being a man turns men into a “bread earning robot” subject to the whims of the employment market and disconnected from quality relationships and parenthood. He says, "Both men and women are ruled by commercial values that revolve around those who have the most, the best, the biggest, and the fattest" (599). Both sexes have now become the victims of the culture of consumerism, appearances and glamour.

The term ‘masculinity’ is used to refer to attitudes, behaviours and attributes which are associated with maleness in a particular culture. Ideas about masculinity define what it means to be a man or a boy in a particular time and place, and vary widely across different contexts and times. Masculinity is understood as a social construct: that is, it is not something which is innate to men and boys, but something that is created by and for each society.

Masculinity relates to perceived notions about how men should or are expected to behave in a given setting. It is a discursive accomplishment rather than a natural fact; men too are not free to construct themselves as they wish. It is their cultural history which determines the kinds of identities they can consume. It may be a performance, but it is one that often becomes habitual or routinized. Hans Bertens too agrees that like femininity, masculinity is a social construct. As he asserts,

What traditionally has been called ‘feminine,’ then is a cultural construction, a gender role that has been naturally assigned to countless generations of women. The same hold for masculinity, with its connotations of strength, rationality, stoicism, and self reliance [. . .] Masculinity, too, is a cultural construction. (98)

This extract focuses on the study of masculinity as a comparative idea of femininity. The basic determinants of the masculinity are strength, rationality, stoicism and self dependence that any society expects for the male sex.

R. W. Connell explores the historical origins of attitudes toward masculinity in his book *Masculinities*. He looks back into the sixteenth century Europe and the changing social and religious climate to trace the development on individualism. He contends that industrializations, exploration, and civil wars became activities associated with men and formed the basis for modern masculinity. He writes that masculinity is “simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that a place in gender and the affects of these practices in bodily experiences personality and culture” (71). Masculinity is a relative term which is defined and shaped by what it cannot be feminine. Theoretically, the masculine man is free of any feminine traits, including weakness, passivity and subordination. It, for example, denies narcissism and exhibitionism and remains free of traits such as vulnerability and sensitivity which are regarded as feminine traits.

In all societies there are multiple ideas about what it means to be a man, which are often highly contested. For this reason it has become common to refer to ‘masculinities’ in the plural. In most contexts there are one or more forms of masculinity that are more valued than others, sometimes referred to as ‘hegemonic masculinity’. Hegemonic masculinities are the standards by which other masculinities are measured. Sanjay Srivastava contends, “Patriarchy makes men superior, whereas masculinity is the process of producing superior men” (11). In many contexts, the vast majority of men do not conform to a hegemonic masculinity and some even actively resist it. The valorization of masculinities over femininities, and of some forms of masculinity over others, serves to create and perpetuate social hierarchies.

Masculinities and femininities also interact with other forms of social identities and hierarchies, for example along the lines of race, ethnicity, class, caste and religion.

In particular, masculinity is semiotically connected with, opposed to and in relation to femininity. Gender politics are changing, there have been resistance on sexist stereotypes, and there now exists a myriad of gender identities. This research contends that cultural messages within the literary discourse of Nepalese society in 1960s and 1970s, nonetheless, were still functioning largely to reinforce traditional gender roles and conservative forms of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity is defined in relation to femininity, and in patriarchal societies, masculinity is usually valued more highly than femininity. The 'breadwinner' ideal is the dominant form of masculinity exercised in Nepal.

Brief History of Nepali Modern Fiction

The history of novel writing in Nepali language dates back to 1827 B.S. after two years of the completion of unification campaign in the Kathmandu Valley. Shakti Ballav Aryal had translated *Biratparba* on that year from Sanskrit language. But the publication of Rudraraj Pande's *Rupamati* in 1991 B.S. is taken as the threshold of modernism in Nepali novel writing. Unlike the previous novels, it has acknowledged the notion of newness in both subject matter and form. Krishna Baral and Netra Atam advocate this novel as "first modern novel" since it portrays social reality, uses conflict and written in a conversational language (82). Nepali society could not remain untouched by influence of changes in social, political, cultural and economic sectors of Europe and America. The opinions of Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx and such other person invented new principles of analyzing the society and way of understanding human beings by questioning the rationality of human beings. Adhering the maxim of Ezra Pound, 'Make it New' Nepali novel writing

encompassed the trend of so many literary and philosophical movements: surrealism, expressionism, imagism, vorticism, dadaism and so on.

History of Nepalese fiction, novel specially, is shorter than poetry. Nepali poetry, first started by Bhanubhakta, rapidly progressed taking both inspiration and the subject matter from Sanskrit literature. Later on, with the beginning of modern education, writers came in contact with English literature and philosophy which in turn influenced both Nepali poetry and fiction. Early twentieth century writers such as Guru Prasad Mainali, Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala and Pushkar Samsheer Rana had already begun writing short stories based on then contemporary social issues. They were inspired from the philosophy of Karl Marx, Mahatma Gandhi and psychology of Sigmund Freud. They gave their writing political and psychological dimension and ran their pen within the periphery of rural life.

Nepali literary critic, Krishna Chandra Singh Pradhan writes, “Rudra Raj Pandey is the first practitioner of the modern Nepali novel to depict the social reality of domestic life in everyday language [My Translation 8]”. Govinda Raj Bhattarai agrees with the view that “Rudra Raj Pandey’s *Rupmati* is considered as the first modern Nepali novel” [My Translation 22]. Bhattarai argues that Nepali fiction has gone through different historical phases, viz. idealism, realism and new writing or experimental writing which he calls postmodernism. He also argues that Nepali fiction was immensely influenced by different schools of thoughts - psychoanalysis, existentialism, Marxism. When romanticism made its appearance in the history of Nepali literature, western literary influences began to infect the native trend in literature. Following the end of Second World War, school of pessimism and existential absurdity, certain kind of western literary influences began to produce parallel political influence. In addition when anti-Rana regime movement took

momentum in a snail pace, similar search for freedom and spontaneity in expression occurred in it. But even during the practice of the following the establishment of stability in the political arena, young emerging artist saw a bright prospect of reviving the long valorized trend of telling puranic tale. Soon after the unification of inclination towards the cult of telling a puranic tale came in the scene. It paved the way for the rapid advancement of Nepali literature.

After the consolidation of Rana dynasty in Nepal, many literary artists were forced to take Sanskrit language as the major means of creative expression. Sanskrit was the sole and whole means of literary expression. However, certain coterie of scholars and readers with academic consciousness were drawn towards the English language. Even some of the leading Rana dynasts like Chandra Shamsheer and Dev Shamsheer had lived in Calcutta, the centre of British rule in India, for completing their study of English. Even some of leaders who fought against the Rana dynasty took English knowledge and education in India. Hence it is obvious that some of the leading personnels did not hesitate to orient themselves in English education.

Nepali critics have no unanimous opinion about the sources of Nepali fiction. Different critics have pointed out different sources of the Nepali fiction. Sanskrit literature, especially Pauranic stories were the early inspiration of the Nepali literature including novels. Taranath Sharma, in his article "*The Evolution of Nepali Fiction*" mentions three different sources of inspiration of the Nepali fiction: "The ancient *Puranic* and mediaeval literary traditions, the folktales, and the Western influence" (1). Moreover Narmadeshwore Pradhan mentions various factors responsible for the advent modernity in Nepali novels. He says, "The post-colonial values like patriotism, nationalism and search for cultural identity have been inspirational to the modern fictional writers" (3).

Historicity of Masculinity

The word masculine, as a synonym for male, is a very old word in English. It was used by Chaucer in the fourteenth century. However, the terms masculinity, masculinize, and masculinism came into common use in English only in the late nineteenth century. This change in language signaled a rather different way of looking at men and their position in the world. Masculinity refers to the social roles, behaviors, and meanings prescribed for men in any given society at any one time. As such, it emphasizes gender, not biological sex, and the diversity of identities among different groups of men. Although we experience gender to be an internal facet of identity, the concept of masculinity is produced within the institutions of society and through our daily interactions.

The meanings of masculinity vary over different dimensions. Four different disciplines are involved in understanding it ie; anthropology, history, psychology, and sociology. It differs on the basis of the degree the society reinforces or does not reinforce the traditional masculine role model of male achievement, control, and power. Some countries practise a high ranking masculinity where as some others do low ranking. The high masculinity ranking indicates that the country experiences a high degree of gender differentiation. In these cultures, males dominate a significant portion of the society and power structure and females are controlled by male domination. On the other hand, a low masculinity ranking indicates the country has a low level of differentiation and discrimination between genders. In these cultures, females are treated equally to males in all aspects of the society. So, the meaning of masculinity differs in relation with various factors.

First, masculinities vary across cultures. Anthropologists have documented the ways that gender varies cross-culturally. Some cultures encourage men to be stoic and

to prove masculinity, especially by sexual conquest. Other cultures prescribe a more relaxed definition of masculinity based on civic participation, emotional responsiveness, and collective provision for the community's needs."What it means to be a man" is not unanimous throughout the world. The difference of masculinity between two cultures is greater than the differences between the two genders.

Second, definitions of masculinity vary considerably in any one country over time. Historians have explored how these definitions have shifted in response to changes in levels of industrialization and urbanization, in a nation's position in the larger world's geopolitical and economic context, and with the development of new technologies. For eg: "What it meant to be a man in seventeenth-century France or in Hellenic Greece is certainly different from what it might mean to be a French or Greek man today."

Third, definitions of masculinity change over the course of a person's life. Developmental psychologists have examined how a set of developmental milestones leads to differences in our experiences and our expressions of gender identity. Both chronological age and life stage require different enactments of gender. In the West, the issues confronting a man about proving himself and feeling successful change as he ages, as do the social institutions in which he attempts to enact those experiences. A young single man defines masculinity differently than do a middle-aged father and an elderly grandfather.

Finally, the meanings of masculinity vary considerably within any given society at any one time. At any given moment, several meanings of masculinity coexist. Simply put, not all American or Brazilian or Senegalese men are the same. Sociologists have explored the ways in which class, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and region all shape gender identity. Each of these axes modifies the others. For example,

an older, black, gay man in Chicago and a young, white, heterosexual farm boy in Iowa would likely have different definitions of masculinity and different ideas about what it means to be a woman. Yet each of these people is deeply affected by the gender norms and power arrangements of their society.

Gender varies so significantly across cultures, over historical time, among men and women within any one culture, and over the life course. In this way, we cannot speak of masculinity as though it is a constant, universal essence, common to all men. Gender must be seen as an ever-changing, fluid assemblage of meanings and behaviors; we must speak of masculinities. By pluralizing the term we acknowledge that masculinity means different things to different groups of people at different times. While talking about masculinity femininity comes together, we cannot separate these two terminologies.

Gender issues are not women's issues alone. We need to understand that "femininity" does not exist in isolation from "masculinity". The image and power of one determines the image and power of the other. Women can be considered "inferior" only if men are considered "superior". Women can be and are subordinate only if men are willing and enabled to subordinate them. So, since there is no universal meaning of masculinity, it is essential to analyze its plurality.

Plurality of Masculinity

The previous scholarly enquiry in the arena of gender studies focuses heavily on the position of men relative to that of women, with much emphasis placed on the subordinated position of the later. However, research into men and masculinity as a single one-dimensional entity, a complex multi-faceted concept of what it means to be 'male' has been developed. In contrast to the previous thinking on the subject, theorists like Michel Foucault, Michael Kimmel, R.W. Connel, Judith Butler, Judith

Halberstan and so on now argue a spectrum of masculinities exists, with multiple way of doing 'male'.

This research work first explores the possibilities of multiple masculinities and then analyses the fictional work of Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima* and Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* in order to show how their major characters don't confine to the ideals of manhood espoused by the traditional masculinity that suggests a number of characteristics that men are encouraged to internalize their personal codes and which form the basis for masculine script and behavior. Both Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala and Parijat seek love and forgiveness as opposed to traditional themes of destruction and gain. Through these characters, the novel has modeled a new masculinity that does not enable misogyny, that is not built on power over women or men but power with them and that gives men room to explore and express themselves without shame or fear. In elaborating this claim, this study analyzes the existing discourse on masculinity studies.

Masculinity studies or 'men studies' as they are sometimes called, as a relatively independent discipline began in the 1980s. Several more or less organized men's movements and men's right groupings that had evolved as response to feminist movements of the 1960s (in America and gradually in other capitalist countries) and which developed independent into pro/anti feminist, Mythopoetic and other directions, can be seen as the initializing forces behind masculinity studies expansion. Simultaneously, emerging gay liberation movements scrutinized the concepts and belief systems regarding what it means to be a man. An academic field of masculinity studies is eventually manifested in the social sciences.

Tim Edwards in his book *The Cultures of Masculinity* discusses the three phases in the critical studies of masculinity. The movement of Sex Role paradigm in

the 1970s which Edwards regards as first phase demonstrated primarily “the socially constructed nature of masculinity and its reliance on socialization, sex role learning and social control” , and secondarily “showed how these processes were limiting and perhaps even harmful to men in terms of their own psychological and even physical health” (2). The pressure of performance, whether in bedroom or the boardroom, and an emphasis on specific representation of men-crystallized around the commonly quoted syndrome of ‘big boys don’t cry’—were particularly common targets of earlier phase of study.

The second phase of critical studies of masculinity emerged in the 1980s taking the Sex Role paradigm as dubious, and interpreted masculinities in the plural sense rather than the singular sense of one, often white, Western and middle class model. The writers of this wave were heavily influenced by the second wave feminism. Fundamental in this work was the work of R.W. Connel in developing the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Connel and other second phase critics criticized the Sex Role paradigm of the first phase of critical study of masculinities as “ the most hegemonic and therefore dominant set of masculinities, exerting influence, control and power over the more opposed masculinities, particularly those commonly associated with vectors of race , class and sexuality” (2). Consequently, black, working class and gay masculinities were seen as being subordinated to and perhaps exploited by white, western, middle class and heterosexual men and masculinities. Thus, the second wave of studies of masculinities is concerned more than anything else “with power and its complex and polyvalent meanings and operations” (2).

The emergence of the Third Wave of masculinity studies is clearly influenced by the advent of post-structuralism as it relates to gender in terms of questions of normativity, performativity and sexuality. In this phase, masculinity studies entered

into many disciplines ranging from social science, literature, media studies to even peace and conflict studies. But the common thing is “their emphasis ...on the sense of artifice, flux and contingency concerning masculinities” (2). Rachel Adams and David Savran contend in *The Masculinity Studies Reader*:

Deconstruction and related variance of post structural theories questioned the stability and universality of all identity categories, posing the self as mutable and fragmented effects of subjectivity. Influenced by post-structural theories, feminists came to see gender as historical, contingent construction invariably constituted in and by its performances. (4)

Gender, thus, came to be seen as a historically contingent construction, invariably constituted in and by its performance.

Various theorists define masculinity as a unalienable part of gender and argue it as a ‘performance’. Judith Butler argues, “Masculinity like gender is not an essence but performance” (8). Describing gender as performance did not mean that it was a supplemental or voluntary aspect of identity; rather it was a set of mandatory practices imposed from birth and repeated again and again in a doomed effort to get it right. Disengaged from body, masculinity and femininity need not correspondent to the sexed categories, man and woman. In line with Butler, Connell in *Masculinities* argues, “Femininity and masculinity are not essence: they are way of living certain relationships. It follows the static typologies of sexual character have to be prepared by history and analyzes the joint production of sets of psychological forms” (179).

Judith Halberstam also analyzes the concept of masculinity from the perspective of performativity. In “Introduction to Female Masculinity”, she argues, “Masculinity must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male boy and its effects” (355). It means, someone who is biologically female can act as man.

Masculinity has to be understood in relation between men and men, men and women and even women and women. Halberstam substantiates her argument by studying the female characters from television and film to show how female characters possessed and demonstrated specific types of masculinity. She traces the female tradition and practice of performing masculinity and it does not neatly fall under lesbian categories, nor does it elide heterosexual ones. Women can embrace, practice, try out and demonstrate masculinity, without trying to imitate or masquerade as one of the boys. In other words, Halberstam is deconstructing traditional concept of masculinity by offering a case study that helps notice the difference between being a man and masculinity. Thus, according to her, like transgendered figure discussed by Butler, female masculinity renders gender boundaries fluid and malleable. According to her,

Far from being an imitation of maleness, female masculinity actually affords a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity. In other words, female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing. (355)

She transforms the traditional notion of masculinity which was dominant and male-centric. She invented a new idea with an argument that even a biologically female possesses and performs masculinity.

These three phases of studies emphasized on the social and cultural construction of masculinity and challenged the ongoing tendency to see masculinity as “something that is and has always been and will always be coming from men’s testicles” (Edwards 123). Thus masculinity now is taken as historically- emergent experience, and within any historical or social context there exist competing forms of masculinity. Thus, within any society multiple masculinities exist; each of them tied to social construction related to the factors like race, class, age, sexuality, and

ethnicity and so on. And since masculinity is a social construction, many forms of masculinity tend to be found in a particular social or cultural context, and what is currently considered as masculine will not necessarily be the same from one period of time to the next. Connell says, “Masculinity is not a fixed, homogeneous and innate construct but is rather fluid, rational, contextual, changing and constantly being negotiated” (835).

Masculinities are multiple and are shaped by interplay between gender, race, and class. One can therefore argue that masculinities can be black as well as white, working class as well as middle class, heterosexual as well as homosexual. Connell contends the degree of power that a man holds tends to differ in terms of class, nation, race, sexual preference and the like. He argues, there exist different forms of masculinity such as black masculinity, gay masculinity, working class masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, female masculinity and so on. There are the products of so many complex and shifting variables.

South Asia, Casteism and Masculinity

The caste system which is closely associated with Hinduism in South Asia is considered the oldest surviving social hierarchy in the world, with a 2,000 years old history. It orders persons into caste categories or Varnas on the basis of ritual purity. It is considered one of the rigid stratification systems without any possibility to change one's caste or move between caste categories. Caste of a person is determined by his/her birth into a particular social group (*Human Rights Watch*).

According to Hinduism, there are four major castes; *Brahmin*, *Kshetriya*, *Baishya*, and *Sudra* under which, a person is categorized by birth. Caste system is founded on the hierarchical basis. *Brahmin and Kshetriya* are considered higher in social status and *Baishya*, and *Sudra* are taken as lower status. The first two are

privileged than second two in social, political, economical, cultural and other arena. Human relationships like: love, marriage, friendship, and so on are also preferred to their own respective castes. In case of *Sudra*, there is the practice of untouchability in the name of *Dalit*. The hallmark of the caste system and discrimination against Dalits is the practice of “untouchability” (Uddhab P. Pyakurel).

This research sets out to study or explore notions of masculinities among major characters of Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* and Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima*. S. Anandi et.al. say, “Masculinity - both as ideological construct and as a set of practices - is not homogenous or unitary across time, space, and social groups” (102). The multiple articulations of masculinity are contingent upon varying and shifting contexts. An individual masculinity can be both hegemonic and subordinated at a time which is affected by situation, social and economic differences, setting, and circumstances. The 'subordinate' variants of masculinity are valid for most of the population who remain relatively power-less. In other words, masculinities not merely mediate the relationship between men and women, but also between men and men. Those men who do not or cannot conform to the hegemonic masculinity are treated by those who do as effeminate and inferior. Thus, any study of masculinities needs to explore the complex interrelationship between competing notions of masculinities and femininities. This study has explored the complex interrelationship between competing notions of masculinities and femininities. For my research project, I set out to study the interplay of masculinity in the lives of male and female characters. More specifically, the study seeks to understand the perceptions of masculinities among the characters, how they deal with the notions of inferiority attributed to them by the caste system across the domains of family, occupation and leisure/social time.

In short, we can say that the feeling of masculinity as superior is prevailing greatly in all over our Nepali society. From the historical time till now every one of our society has been showing the masculine as more superior. Nepal being a patriarchal male dominated society has been getting privilege over women in all aspects of life. This feeling of being superior to women is the major cause for women to be behind in every spheres of development. Men are supposed to have masculine attributes such as brave, strong, protector, fighter, soldier, sacrifice etc. There are many hegemonic masculine figures from the history such as Prithvi Narayan Shah, Janga Bahadur Rana, Bhimshen Thapa. But it is very difficult to give example of women with hegemonic masculine attributes in the history of Nepal.

The caste system cannot be eliminating completely within a year or passing the untouchability and caste based discrimination bill, act or policy neither the constitution assembly. It will minimize after the sensitization process and socialization. People who hesitate to come out and introduce being a Dalit or hiding in new society changing their caste are coming out after the situation has improved and strong law against discrimination. Young generation does not have any feeling of inferiority for being Dalit in urban areas or we can say they do not experience such discrimination and do not want to engage in caste system complexity. What they believe is in competency and success they get in life and the knowledge they gain. But things are not same every part of Nepal. Still there are extreme discrimination and different forms of inequality in caste system.

Besides the study of historicity and spectrums of masculinity, it is equally important to make in depth study about the Parijat and Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala who are the writers of *Blue Mimosa* and *Sunnima* simultaneously.

A. Parijat and Her Contribution in Novel Writing

Parijat, the nom de plume of Bishnu Kumari Waiba, was born in the Tea-Estate of Darjeeling in 1937 A.D. She is the daughter of Kalu Sing Waiba and Amrita Moktan. Parijat suffered from a partial paralysis since her youth and ventured from her home only rarely during the past twenty years. She was unmarried and childless; a status that was not usual for a woman in Nepalese society and that was due to partly because of her illness and partly due to personal preference. Despite her disability, Parijat is a formidable force in Nepali literature, and her flower-filled room in a house near Balaju has become a kind of shrine for progressive Nepali writers.

Parijat belongs to Tamang community which is a Nepali tribal group of antiquity. She was a Buddhist by birth and her childhood was deeply unhappy. According to Lama culture, she was named Chheku Dolma Lama. The catastrophes of her life were the death of her mother and her elder brother while she was too young. D.R. Pokhrel writes, "Parijat was peculiar, sentimental, isolated and shy due to the death of her mother in her infancy and her struggle with the loss and tenacity" (16). Parijat herself has described it as a "self inflicted wound."

She received her early education in Darjeeling. In 1950, the family moved to Kathmandu where Parijat attended college and completed B.A. in 1960 A.D. from Padma Kanya Campus, and later she did her Master's Degree in English Literature. Since she was a middle class family and taught in school until she was afflicted with a crippling disease that had made her an invalid till the end of her life. Her father subsequently became mentally ill. Parijat's memories, which Abhi Subedi describes as "Confessional and Intimate" (213), were serialized in *Ruprekha* (outline) and now volume of reminiscences have appeared. Viewing this background of tragedy and

hardship, it is not surprising that most of Parijat's writings evince an attitude of alienation, pessimism and atheism.

Parijat has been successful to write her name in golden letters in the horizon of Nepali literature. She has written various poems and short stories. But she is more popular as a novelist. In 1966 her first novel, *Blue Mimosa* was published and received the Madan Puraskar, the first award offered to woman in Nepal, for the best novel of the year. This novel is historic because it focused on the progressive stream of the nation. Michael Hutt interprets this novel collecting the views of various critics. He says that critical response to the novel is of two kinds. He says, "Some think that this novel advocates the philosophy of decadent and vulgar, and its theme foolishly imitative of the west. On the other side, some critics praise for its modernity" (214-15).

Parijat's second novel, *Mahattahin* (The Ignoble, 1968), is a novel of existentialist nihilism. The nameless hero or anti-hero of the novel is shown in futile search for the 'self' in his existence and is in perpetual confrontation with his own insignificance in the scheme of things. In this the individual revolts against the given situation of life. In her third novel, *Baisko Manchhe* (The Man of Prime Youth 1992), Parijat attempts to combine existentialism with Marxist thought. Her other novels are *Toribaribata Ra Sapanaharu* (From the Mustard Field and Dreams, 1977), *Parkhalbhitra Ra Bahira* (Inside and Outside the Wall, 1978) and *Antarmukhi* (Introvert, 1978).

Review of Parijat's *Blue Mimosa*

Since the first publication of Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* in 1966, numerous critics have expressed their opinions on the different aspects of the novel. Most of them have focused on the existential aspect as the main subject matter of the novel. In this

regard, Abhi Subedi analyses this novel from the prospective of existentialism and absurdity. In his view both male and female characters survive in emptiness of their life. Sakambari represents the absurdity of existence and equally she is an emaciated and a mysterious lady. She reminds him an 'archetypal woman'. He further says,

She is not beautiful but she has an aura about her that attracts men towards her and they cannot see beyond her. Suyogbir falls in love with her. Suyogbir is an ex-army man who had fought many battles and had slept with many women. After her death he does not see any meaning in life, [. . .]. He becomes like an agnostic Buddha. (120-21)

Here, Subedi presents *Shirishko Phool (Blue Mimosa)* as the existential novel and Sakambari and Suyogbir are truly the existential characters. Despite the lack of feminine beauty, she has an aura about her that attracts men towards her. Another character Suyogbir is compared with an agnostic Buddha. He fought many battles and slept with many women while he was on the front but none of them left any impression on his mind. He falls in love with Sakambari who is an emaciated and mysterious lady. In contrary to Suyogbir's past experiences, Sakambari's death shatters him much. He does not see any meaning in his life.

Similarly, Kumar Pradhan insists on the existential issue of the novel. He notices that the characters of the novel are conscious of their existence and they are living in meaningless world. There is not any emotion in their life and action. They are frustrated and alienated extremely. He examines the predicament of Sakambari and Suyogbir as the advocators of absurd novels. He contends, "Sakambari exists in isolation and so does Suyogbir. This sense of unrelatedness to the universe and the notion of purposelessness of experience make *Shirishko Phool (Blue Mimosa)* a absurd novel" (180-81). He sees similitude between Parijat's Suyogbir and Camus'

Sisyphus. Both are the anti-hero and living in the absurd world. As an anti-hero Suyogbir is not simply alienated from the society but he does feel himself alienation. They follow the rule of purposelessness in their behaviour.

Shreedhar Gautam's ideas about the novel are not different from the ideas of Subedi and Pradhan. He writes:

Blue Mimosa impliedly reflects a sense of alienation and meaninglessness seen in our society. It conveys an idea that every person is responsible for his or her own deed, and it is for the individual to give meaning to one's life. It opposes cruelty, in humanity, vulgarity and inequality in all forms. (4)

He observes directly the sense of alienation and meaninglessness of the novel and the characters' responsibility for their own deed; it is because they want to give meaning to their life. He explains the scene of cruelty and inhumanity which are the major characteristics faced by any existential characters.

Krishnahari Baral and Netra Atam see a spark of war and its consequence through this novel. They analyze the terrifying condition of war which alters human life into the meaningless where everybody knows the absurdity of his or her existence though no one can escape from it. Baral and Atam annotate, “*Shirishko Phool* has raised the question of existence out of the terrifying condition of war. Human beings are aware of their meaningless life though they are compelled to live in absurdity” (150).

Michael James Hutt talks about the psychological issue and the complexity of the novel. According to him, Suyog's memories of his sexual exploitation during his military service; his unexpressed wild and foolish love towards Sakambari and his clumsy attempt to reveal his feeling to her that causes her death, all are responsible to

psychological analysis of the novel. Besides, the novel is something different than what it seems in surface. His extract goes as:

Suyog's infatuation remains almost wholly unexpressed and Sakambari dies. Her death is not the melodramatic demise of the traditional Nepali heroine, however: there is an underlying suspicion that Suyog's single clumsy attempt to reveal his feeling to her is in some way responsible. (214-15)

The psychological background to the novel is Suyog's memories of his sexual exploitation of Burmese tribal women during his military service.

Sandra Zeidenstein emphasizes on the uniqueness of the novel. According to her, this novel *Blue Mimosa* breaks the tradition of prose writing. The male and female protagonists are usually ideal in look but anything more. Indifferent relationship, inhumanity, frustration, absurdity, lack of pure love and unhappiness are the major characteristics of the novel which overturn the trend of previous novels. She writes as:

Her main characters are anything but ideal. Sakambari is skinny, she smokes, and she wears glasses. Her ideas about war and religion are iconoclastic; her ideas about sex are aberrant. Mujura, a less important and less interesting character, is the traditionally ideal woman who lowers her eyes when speaking to a man. Suyogbir is not a typical hero. True, he is a Gurkha Warrior, but one whose memories, released by Sakambari's goading words, are of guilt and misery. (11)

Britta Stovling notices the inflamed humanity in *Blue Mimosa*. She thinks that there is lack of love and consistency of power between men and women in the novel. She says lack of love or inability is more perilous than hatred. The fire of hatred can make the thing purer than destroying it but the situation out of love like a contagious

disease. Impliedly she sees the suppressed condition of women all over the world through this novel. She reminds the domination of chauvinistic society upon female. She expresses, "Parijat's novel *Blue Mimosa* deals with the lack of love as the curse of our planet, as a contagious disease. The novel, in other words, is on the asymmetry of Therefore, it seems that critical reviews focus mostly to the single subject matter of the meaninglessness, uselessness of love, life etc. in the novel. Some of the articles published often in newspapers about Parijat and her novel *Blue Mimosa* have also given regularity to the same kind of critical responses. Aparajita Acharya can be taken as an instance. Her expression in her article in *The Kathmandu Post* on Jan.6, 2008, is as follows:

The tale reminds uncertainty within the boundaries of a lone philosophy with its characters running from one end of the spectrum to the text. If a parallel sought in their forms, the story perhaps can be better aligned with existential nihilism. (5)

B. Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala and His Literary Career

Born on 24th Bhadra , 1971 BS. in Banaras, Bisheshwar Prasad Koirala, popularly known as B.P. Koirala was an extraordinary and a beloved leader of Nepal who actively participated in the democratic movement in the country. He accompanied his father to *Banaras* at the age of four and he completed his education there. He began his political career by participating in the Indian revolution. He actively participated abolition of *Rana* rule for the development of Nepal and and also founded Nepali Congress Party in 2003 BS. Besides this, in the year 2004, he led the labor strike and went on 29 days hunger strike demanding the improvement of prison and establishment of democracy. His struggles and hardship in jails paid off and in the year 2007 BS, democracy was introduced in Nepal and he served as Home Minister in

the first Interim Government. In the same context, he successfully conducted '*Bhadra Awagya Andolan*' and '*Satyagraha*' in 2014. By the election of Nepal in 2015; he became the first elected Prime Minister of Nepal. Unfortunately, the royal decree on 1st Poush, 2017 demolished the democracy and the democratic leaders including *Koirala* had to stay in jail for a long time.

He was not only a famous politician but also a famous literary figure. He first published his story in Hindi language in '*Hansa*' magazine in 1987 BS and his first Nepali story was '*Chandrabadan*' which was published in 1992 BS in *Sarada* magazine. He was the first person to introduce human psychology in Nepali literature. His literary works include story collection like *Doshi Chasma*, novels like *Tin Ghumti*, *Narendra Dai*, *Hitler ra Yahudi*, *Sumnima*, *Babu-Aama ra Chora*, *Modiaain*, and his auto-biography *Afnu Katha*.

Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala is one of the most well-read and thoughtful writers of Nepalese literature. He wrote short stories, novels, and some poems. He began writing short stories in Hindi. His first Nepali short story "Chandrabadan" was published in *Sharada*, a Nepali literary magazine in 1935. In his stories, Koirala depicts the character and mind of women. Four other stories of Koirala were included in *Katha Kusum* published in 1938. Koirala had established himself as one of the most important Nepali short story writers by 1938. *Doshi Chashma* [Guilty Glasses], Koirala's anthology of sixteen short stories, was published in 1949. He was one of great writers to contribute in Nepali literature.

Koirala was very busy in the 1950s as he was in the center of Nepal's national politics. He was, however, able to write an incomplete novel *Hitlar ra Yahudi* (*Hitler and the Jews*) in the form of travelogue. The years of 1960s were very productive for Koirala in terms of his literary output. He wrote many novels and short stories in jail

during 1960–68. They include: *Tin Ghumti (Three Turns)*, 1968; *Narendra Dai (Brother Narendra)*, 1969; *Sumnima (A story of the first Kirata woman)*, 1969; *Modiain (The Grocer's Wife)*, 1980; *Shweta Bhairavi (The White Goddess of Terror)*, 1983; *Babu Ama ra Chora (Father, Mother and Sons)*, 1989; and an incomplete autobiography *Mero Katha (My Story)*, 1983, and many more yet to be published.

Koirala also has dozens of political essays: "Rajatantra ra Lokatantra" ("Monarchy and Democracy"), 1960; "Thichieka Janata Jagisake" ("The Oppressed People Rise"), 1969; "Rastriyata Nepalko Sandarbham" ("Nationalism in the Context of Nepal"), 1970; "Kranti: Ek Anivaryata" ("Revolution: An Absolute Necessity"), 1970; "Panchayati Vyavastha Prajatantrik Chaina" ("The Panchayat System is not Democratic"), 1978; "Prajatantra ra Samajvad" ("Democracy and Socialism"), 1979; and "Rastriya Ekata ko Nimti Ahwan" ("A Call for National Reconciliation"), 1980.

In politics Koirala was a social democrat but in literature he was an existentialist. He said that he wrote his literary works to satisfy his anarchist impulses, impulses which revolted against the traditional order of things. But as a social democrat, he was in search of a political order that was agreeable to every citizen of Nepal.

Koirala had studied economics, logic, literature, and law. He was a voracious reader of English, German, French, Russian, Hindi, Bengali and Nepali literature. His educational background and artistic genius combined in his own works to present a view of life in an artistic, logical and compelling manner. He would thus shake the conscience of Nepali readers by questioning their unreflective acceptance of the traditional value systems.

Koirala's short stories were first published in the 1930s in Hindi and Nepali literary magazines. Koirala first came to notice in Nepali literature because often his characters seemed to have been treated with an understanding of Freudian psychoanalysis. Even when a short story or novel of Koirala was not Freudian in its approach, it was still noteworthy to Nepali readers because he presented an unconventional approach to life. Koirala presents a passionate plea against the philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which assumes that the world is an illusion and thus makes life and death a meaningless phenomena and that the observance of one's own duty is the ultimate priority. Koirala was against war. Characteristically, Koirala presents one more instance in which he analyzes the mind of a woman, as he did in most of his short stories and novels.

Reviews on Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima*

Since its publication in 2027 B.S., *Sumnima* remained as a catching piece to the critics who competed most to diagnose the multifarious meanings in it. The title of this novel is kept by the major character Sumnima. Many critics have examined this novel from feministic, racial, psychoanalytical, and Marxist point of view.

Taranath Sharma considers *Sumnima* as a novel which shows the clash between spirituality and physicality. He writes, "Sumnima is an aboriginal Kiranti girl who contradicts with the belief of Somdatta. Somdatta believes on spirituality and Sumnima advocates for physicality. From the first meeting at Koshi river, they debate on the paths: either religious or physical is right, to attain the bliss of human life. The philosophy of Sumnima wins" (My Translation 10).

Murari Prasad Regmi interprets *Sumnima* from socio-psychological point of view. He makes in-depth study of Nepali racial structure and evaluates this novel as a symbol of racial harmony. He views the ideological transformation of major

characters regarding the way of defining human life. He says “Both Aryan and Kiranti have compromised their superior and inferior complexity, and have created the social and cultural integrity. Here, Sumnima remains as an icon of such psychological transformation” (My Translation 19).

Tulasi Bhattarai evaluates *Sumnima* as a novel of women empowerment. He opines that Sumnima struggles hard to identify herself as an independent and self decisive human being. First, he comparatively evaluates the characteristics of two major female characters: Sumnima and Puloma. Then, he writes, “Sumnima is a symbol of freedom. She is happy, free, self-decisive and advocator of physicality. On the other hand, Puloma gets victimized due to advocacy of spirituality and ultimately is entrapped by the social rules and artificiality. Sumnima succeeds to establish a woman- self” (My Translation 37).

Indra Bahadur Rai analyses *Sumnima* from existential point of view. He denies categorizing this novel as a symbolic novel rather judges it as a novel of representation. He further differentiates a symbol with representation. He says, "A representative always knows whom to represent but a symbol is ignorant whom to symbolize. Therefore, the characters of *Sumnima* undoubtedly represent norms, values and beliefs of Aryan and Kiranti culture” (My Translation 177).

Krishna Chandra Singh Pradhan does minute psychological study *Sumnima*. He briefly points out “Sumnima discloses the triangular conflict among Id, Ego, and Superego. The tension, relation and behaviors of characters are the outcome of conscious and unconscious mind” (My Translation 50).

Despite the manifolds of views expressed over Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* and Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima* about existentialism, racism, gender studies, psychoanalysis and so on, it seems essential to dig out the issues of masculinity in both

novels. So, this research attempts to study how the masculine ideology functions to enshape the predicament of major characters. Since contemporary Nepali society during the publication of these novels was patriarchal, the domination of male characters is distinctively portrayed. Equally, it was the time of social transformation too. Democracy was established although the step of king Mahendra derailed it for 30 years. Nepalese women got emerged slowly and gradually in social, economical and political arena. The influence of international movements regarding the rights of women also got reflected in Nepali literature. Women writers like Parijat started an advocacy in women's empowerment and even male writers like Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala wrote the literature providing the major roles to the females.

Both Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* and Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima* criticize the identity of male characters created by the ideology of masculinity. In Parijat's *Blue Mimosa*, Sakambari resists the existence of Suyogbir as a hegemonic male who once involves exhibiting his virility on the basis of physical strength. He rapes the daughter of head hunter and exploits the the daughter of Barmeli farmer in a similar manner. But the acquaintance of Suyogbir with Sakambari blurs his masculinity. Suyogbir continuously feels emasculated, weak, shy and indecisive in front of Sakambari. Sanjiv Upreti says, "The palace of masculinity can be stood until a woman expresses her sexual desires and infatuation towards him" (258). Suyogbir feels threatened due to his growing age and masculine attitude of Sakambari. Unlike the traditional women, she smokes unhesitatingly andf makes her hair short. She possesses the confidence and dares to express her opposing views on love, life and death. On the other hand, Mujura is presented as a traditional feminine modest woman who empowers the masculinity .Here in this novel, Parijat's attempts to criticize masculinity in the presence of Sakambari. One of the critics, Moana Kanel from

Hanover, Indiana, USA has written a book review portraying Sakambari as bold, free and independent girl.

Moreover, Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima* also questions the ideology of masculinity in his novel *Sumnima*. Unlike the traditional women, Sumnima presents her confidence, vigour, strength, caring and intelligence too. Her opinion becomes victorious at last. She innocently challenges the self-centered, traditional, and egoistic male ideology of Somdatta. She argues, "Father is a person whom the mother introduces to the child". Crossing the boundary of racism and feminine traits, she proves to bold masculine figure.

This dissertation has been divided into three chapter altogether. Among them, the first chapter gives an overview of the whole research. It introduces the issue and hypothesis in the light of the critical discussion undertaken through the review of literature relevant to Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* and Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima*. It tries to figure out the nexus among sex, gender and masculinity. By writing the overview of modern Nepali novel and contribution of Parijat and Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala in writing novels, it tries to establish the theoretical insights required for the analysis of the text in the upcoming chapters. Similarly, the second chapter consists of the textual analysis undertaken in the light of relevant theoretical insights. This chapter blends theoretical insights, criticisms on the selected novels and extracts from the novels in its effort to prove hypothesis. The final chapter concludes the whole dissertation reasserting the findings of the study.

II. Transposing Hegemonic Masculinity: Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* and Bisheshwor

Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima*

Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* and Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima*, interrogate the doctrine of hegemonic masculinity and consciously assert their feminine strength. The novelists have given vital space and role to the female characters which represent contemporary Nepali society of 1970s. In those years, women were under the shadow of patriarchy and most of the literary characters of that time witnessed that ethos of the society. Parijat and Koirala criticise the notion of hegemonic masculinity. Masculinity is not homogenous rather it is plural. While writing about the plurality of masculinity, R.W. Connel categorizes the masculinities in which hegemonic masculinity posits at the top of subordinated masculinity. According to the then contemporary social structure of Nepal, the role of young male, Brahmin and Kshatri was hegemonic whereas the role of women was subordinated. The males had possessed power and legitimacy. Somdatta in *Sumnima* and Suyogbir in *Blue Mimosa* conceive and perform the hegemonic concept of masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity is constructed both in *Blue Mimosa* and *Sumnima* in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. The masculinities of Kirant, Bhilla, and other female characters in *Sumnima* and the masculinities of Shivaraj and other female characters in *Blue Mimosa* are subordinated whereas Somdatta and prince in *Sumnima* and Suyogbir in *Blue Mimosa* represent hegemonic masculinity. The characters of subordinated masculinity critique the role of hegemonic characters.

The story of *Blue Mimosa* revolves around relation between 45 years old ex-army Suyogbir and 24 years old young lady Sakambari. Suyogbir meets first to Shivaraj and his three young sisters: Sakambari, Mujura and Sanu. Among them, the

personality of Mujura and Sanu is enshaped by the femininity as determined by traditional patriarchal ideology, whereas the personality of Sakambari challenges and reinvents that traditional stereotypical notion. In this way, First two are intuitive, flexible, tolerant, compassionate, emotional, nurturing, graceful, gentle, sensual, and receptive. On the other hand, Sakambari is accountable, supportive, courageous, protective, assertiveness, confident, trustworthy, fierce and caring.

Sakambari in the novel possesses manifolds of masculine characteristics; however, Suyogbir is attracted to her. Suyogbir becomes unable to express his love to her due to his realization that he is too old in comparison to her. His tower of masculinity erected on the founded of power, legacy and age is shakened. He feels very much emasculated and looser which is supported by his expression, "I had begun to look old, how or where could I hide myself, especially from Sakambari's eyes? I wanted to hide but where can you conceal a bitter truth?" (24). Here, the statement of Suyogbir justifies his inability to perform his hegemony. Still he asserts himself as a hegemonic masculine figure. He dares to kiss Sakambari but that incident becomes end of their relation. Physically fragile Sakambari becomes weaker and weaker and dies at last. On the other hand, Suyogbir survives meaningless solitary life. He does not feel proud of possessing her but goes under trauma of regret. His guilt is revealed through his monologues, "I could expect to fall very low in their eyes, to prove myself, in Shiva's view, a base person, a traitor. Sakambari would spit at me" (78). The hegemonic ideal of Suyogbir enacted in war gets crumbled when he confront Sakambari.

Suyogbir has dual masculinity in the novel: masculinity as Gorkha soldiers in the war and masculinity in the relation with Sakambari. He becomes cruel, inhuman, aggressive, and abusive like that of traditional patriarchal agency. Though he fails to

gain any gallantry in the war, he rapes the young girls losing the common sense of humanity. He performs destructive masculinity. Now, all his hegemonic and toxic masculinity are stored in his memory. His recollection of incident with the daughter of head hunter questions on the rationality of masculinity. He consumes her as if he has a right to do so. Regarding this issue, Roger Scruton says, “Men have an overwhelming desire to relieve themselves upon a woman’s body” (178). He controls her body despite of her protest. He plays brutally with her sensitive organs. She struggles insistently but fails in front of enraged masculine figure. He recollects the incident as:

She was not afraid of me. Opening her eyes very wide, she challenged me.

Inflamed, unable to control myself, I struck her on the head with my rifle-butt and she fell over, unconscious, into the bushes I scratched her breasts with my savage nails until they bled. I bit her lips, her cheeks, and her neck until they bled. (55)

The masculine figure of Suyogbir is troubled by the war. During the war, he had affairs with some other Burmeli girls whom he performed his destructive military masculinity. They were mercilessly raped, killed and abandoned.

The masculine ideology believes on the muscular exhibition as the identity of males. Physically, females are tender whereas males are stud. So, the person who exhibits his bravery by doing the violence on the tender body of women is a real man. Moreover, the real man is dominant, physically strong and emotionally closed off. Suyogbir performs such manliness on the body of Matinchi, the daughter of Burmeli farmer and buffalo girl of Makharing:

Today for some reasons Matinchi’s tears would not stop. Nothing could comfort or please her. Her tears kept on flowing but I remained as unmoved as rock. When I was ready to go Matinchi fell at my knees weeping. I tried to get

away from her but I could not. I gave a strong kick at her tender breasts and ran off toward the barracks. (63)

The extract above shows how cruel a man can be. He is empty of emotion, sympathy and empathy. As hegemonic masculinity always holds the power over other genders, Suyogbir does over Matinchi in the war.

In *Blue Mimosa*, the hegemonic masculinity of Suyogbir blurs aftermath of the war. He is constantly haunted by the memory of war which he laments too. The feeling of alienation troubles him. Moreover, the arrival of ageing lessens the charm and strength of masculinity. He links his hegemonic masculinity of the war with present. Now, he can't assert that sort of masculine attributes. His brutality was his past but at present he confronts Sakambari with an expression, "My dear Sakambari, to you my life comes for shelter. Don't run away like this. Come, I can't rape you" (56). This is the monologue of Suyogbir who mentally abandons masculine hegemony and possesses feminine characteristics like shyness, emotionality, and fragility. The bold and rebellious personality of Sakambari makes him behave so.

Many males feel emasculated along with the growth of age since masculinity and physical potency are interconnected. But the love and the expression of sexual attraction by the women towards him empower the masculinity. Besides it, it helps to erect the palace of his masculinity. Sanjiv Upreti argues, "A man thinks that his masculinity is safe until a woman wants him" (258). Ageing Suyogbir thinks that young Sakambari won't certainly accept him as her lover. This assumption lowers his royal stick of masculinity. Suyogbir inwardly realizes that he is old. He says, "On the way I suffered from my wound. I am old. Not only am I old, but I look" (23).

Different female characters of *Blue Mimosa* become a challenge in front of fragile masculinity of Suyogbir. Sakambari stands herself as critique of traditional

stereotypical masculine ideology. She cuts her hair very short like the ancient Hebrew army. Unlike traditional women grown in Nepali soil, she smokes publicly and makes philosophical discussion about the emptiness and meaninglessness of human life. She calls her brother Shivaraj and Suyogbir with their names. She has no hesitation to smoke sitting with the males, and talk about love, life and death. Suyogbir frequently exclaims, “What a really hard woman she is”! Suyogbir is influenced by the characters of Sakambari.

Opposite to Salambari, Mujura conceives traditional feminine characteristics; she is so beautiful and does have impressive physical traits. Unlike Bari, She behaves politely. She never talks eye to eye and stays away from the men. Suyogbir does not see feeling of hatred in her. She feels shy while talking sometime reddens her cheeks too. Suyogbir never feels challenged by the personality of Mujura. Many times, he attempts to beg the hand of Mujura with Shivaraj and wants to say that he will make her happy.

Although Mujura has marriageable qualities, Suyogbir’s soul is attracted by unnatural feminine activity of Sakambari. Her memory triggers his heart even after her death. At last, Suyogbir owns none of them but lives solitary, boring and meaningless life acknowledging the path of emasculation which degrades the notions of hegemonic masculinity and creates the space for female self and female masculinity.

Blue Mimosa presents the male characters in their weaker form and female characters in dominant role where the decline of masculine power and rise of feminine power goes side by side gradually. By juxtaposing the gradual decline of masculine power and rise of feminine, this novel catches the ethos of contemporary Nepali society. With the reference to the *Muluki Ain* (Civil Code) of 1963, Siera

Tamang writes, “Indeed, this MA is said to be Nepali women’s ‘Magna Carta,’ allowing them the opportunity to walk on the same line as women from developed countries and giving women as citizens opportunities in political, economic, social and cultural areas not only legally but also constitutionally” (132). It was the time when Nepali women were in the process of being free, independent and self-reliant. From the beginning of the novel, she uses the metaphor of ‘orchid’ to criticize the masculine thought of comparing the women with flowers. Sakambari says,

These flowers have been brought from a special place. They have a special characteristic. Look here, on these stems something like buds are sprouting. Do you see? They are the most important organs of the flower. With them they kill insects. That’s why they call this the life- killing orchid. Bumblebees, black-bees, hornets must not come near. (13)

This extract metaphorically tells that modern women are different from the traditional women. They are not weak, fragile, sensitive and weak like the flowers. Moreover, they have their own existence than pleasing the males.

Contrary to Sakambari, Suyogbir loses the qualities of masculinity. Michael Kimmel gives the new definition of ,masculinity as it is “ more about the character of men’s hearts and the depths of their souls rather than the size of their biceps, wallets or penises; a definition that is capable of embracing differences among men and enabling other men to feel secure and confident rather than marginalized or excluded” (254). He further writes,” We need men who are secure enough to compassionate, fiercely egalitarian and powerful enough for holding others up rather than pushing them down” (255). In the novel, Suyogbir argues,” She and servant got on the bus and for a long time she went on talking to Shiva Raj from the window. For the first time in my life, I was very much jealous of a man” (45). He is neither protective who can

rescue Sakambari from the dungeon of physical fragility nor dares to express his love to her. Rather he is indecisive and feels jealousy to the boy who talks to Sakambari.

Similarly, Koirala's *Sumnima* pinpoints the gender issues in an optimum way. The major character, Somdatta, Sumnima, Puloma, Bhilla Man and so on have been illustrated as the mirrors of contemporary Nepalese society. The male characters demonstrate their traditional masculine traits that come to face a sarcastic criticism in the presence of feminine characters. The relation between Somdatta and Sumnima shows more than personal. Sumnima represents as the voice of voiceless especially of innocent Nepali women. At the beginning of the novel, Somdatta and Sumnima express opposite opinion on father and mother. Somdatta strongly advocates for tribute of father and Sumnima values more to mother. Narayan Chalise observes ideological differences between Aryans and Non-Aryans reciting the opinion of Somdatta and Sumnima. He says, "Aryans are introduced by fathers whereas Kirants are recognized by mothers" (22).

Sumnima in *Sumnima* questions on the physical fragility of Somdatta and identifies herself as a bold girl. In her first meeting, she addresses Somdatta as a "weak bodied boy"(7). Somdatta introduces himself by his father which Sumnima criticizes. Somdatta feels proud to identify him patriarchal lineage as "I am Somdatta, son of Suryadatta." But Sumnima, who gives more value on mother, immediately questions him "Why did you mention your father while introducing you?" Their long debate on father and mother reveals that Sumnima strongly illuminates Somdatta against his masculine attitude.

Somdatta attempts to uphold the hegemonic masculinity and its related beliefs, attitudes, experiences, practices and so on. He wants to exercise the patriarchal norms by devaluing the ideals of Sumnima and escaping from himself from the emotional

attachment with her. But he fails and proves himself as an unsuccessful male figure in enhancing his marital and familial responsibilities. He tries to conquer over flesh and physicality in the name of attaining salvation and enlightenment. He marries to Puloma but becomes unable to prove his virility. Later his disability is compensated by Sumnima herself. Unlike, tradition expectation; Sumnima becomes a rescuer of Somdatta's manliness.

The male characters of this novel can't continue their hegemonic masculine instead get transposed into a helpless creature in front of female characters. Bhilla youth abandons his initial aggressive and violent attribute and turns to be common men and then no longer insists to wage his war with Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Similarly, the prince initially supports Aryan culture but gets calmed down by the response of Bijuwa.

Sumnima depicts the painful complications that arise in a man-woman relationship. These complications portray the historiography of Nepali society too. After the establishment of democracy and the influence of the waves of independence, equality and coexistence, the gender roles were sure to be changed in Nepali society. The powerful attraction that exists between a Brahmin boy and an ordinary girl has been splendidly shown. There exists of dualism within Somdatta who also wishes to pursue spiritual salvation but is torn between his desire for this woman and his urge for spiritual emancipation. Somdatta gets entangled in his thirst of physical and spiritual salvation. As a *Marda*, he should have been successful leave or possess Sumnima combating all sorts of complications. In fact, he surrenders his self with Sumnima's philosophy. To surmount carnal desires is not possible for an ordinary mortal and the pleasures of the flesh have a place in life. The Brahmin boy is serious about his spiritual goals but succumbs to the charms of a lovely girl.

Caroline and Filippo Osella have interpreted the theory of hegemonic masculinity within South Asia. They identify the 'breadwinner' ideal as the dominant form of masculinity in South Asia. This ideology puts a great deal of pressure and expectations on Nepali men, expectations that they are often unable to meet.

B. P. wrote novels focusing on the problems of existence but here also he depicted characters from a particular social background. His first novel, *Sumnima*, was published in 1968. In it, he shows the confluence of Kirati culture and Hindu philosophy. The attitude of Sumnima, a Kirati girl, towards life is centered on the body, but her lover, Somdutta, the Brahmin boy, believes more in the soul than the body and in life after death. In this book, however, the importance of both body and soul has been emphasized and a compromise is struck between body and soul for purposeful existence in this world. According to literary historian Abhi Subedi, "This novel introduces a completely new theme in the history of Nepali novels. Just as Hermann Hesse's novels that dramatize the clash between life and cults and stands independently in the tradition of Western literature, this novel also stands on its own.

Koirala assigns pivotal role to Sumnima, female character, around whom entire characters revolve. Her innocent femininity gets sharpened in course of meeting and interacting with Somdatta. She enables herself to defy over-ambitious and dominant attitude of Somdatta. She makes verbal attack to the masculine thought of Somdatta about religion and irreligion. Unlike traditional masculine character, he gets emotional and logically defeated. "Sumnima had never had refuted his arguments this with such vehemence. He kept himself restrained" (21).

Hegemonic masculinity asserts male in terms of sexuality. Male becomes first to purpose and talk about the sex. Unlike the concept of hegemonic masculinity, Sumnima presents her as a frank and open to speak about sensitive organs. She says,

“Mother told me that this sort of thing happened to women in my age. She also says that I am quite beautiful and my body is well developed with the stomach prettily shaped and breasts in their right places. Isn't she right Somdatta?” (22). But Somdatta feels very much shy to observe the naked body of Sunnima and accuses her as a sinner for being vulgar. He responds her, “Sunnima, you shouldn't talk like that, you now! These are sinful words” (22) which means a physically attractive object of the gaze receives or a fetishist desire to own a male body

Resistance of Patriarchy and Search for Female Self

Masculinity thrives most in patriarchy. RW Connel argues, “Masculinity is defined in relation to femininity. In patriarchal societies, masculinity is usually valued more highly than femininity” (69). In all societies, there are multiple ideas about what it means to be a man. Since Nepalese society stands on the roots of patriarchy, being a man is valued more than being a woman. Sanjay Srivastav states, “Patriarchy makes men superior, where as masculinity is the process of producing superior man.” The male characters of *Blue Mimosa* and *Sunnima* are valorized due to the prevalence of patriarchal ideology in contemporary Nepali society. But both the novelists have resisted the traditional mindset of patriarchy in the strong presence of female characters. They are in search of autonomy and self identity being free from the status of suppressed and other.

Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* and Koirala's *Sunnima* are also regarded as the modern novels which incorporate the vibes and intentions of modern generation. The speakers of the novels try to show the way Nepali women are perceived and expected to behave by men in contemporary patriarchal society. Various factors; caste, religion, class, culture and so on have become the pivotal issues of sarcastic criticism by female characters. Sakambari is the protagonist of *Blue Mimosa* who engages herself

in verbal diatribe with males and shows her disregard to the male dominated actions. Similarly, in Koirala's *Sumnima*, Sumnima and Puloma resist the masculine notion proliferated in patriarchy.

Sakambari, the protagonist of *Blue Mimosa*, seeks the emancipation from the chauvinistic norms and attempts to recreate the innermost subjective human essence in women. She struggles for her autonomy in making decision about her life. She possesses obstinate, enigmatic, self-emphatic and bold characteristics which reject love, marriage and praise as they are the chains of patriarchal domination. Her unwillingness to submit herself to the male's desires and courage to stand independent really consolidate her self.

From the very start of novel, the writer tries to catch up the so called 'patriarchal readers' mind' providing the narration of Shivaraj's home visit by the speaker i.e. Suyogbir. The novel also projects the Nepali male culture at home and out of the home from various characters. After the third meeting between Suyogbir and Shivaraj, Suyogbir is invited to Shivaraj's house. Zeal Subedi while interpreting *Blue Mimosa* from the prospective of patriarchy writes about the belief system of Nepali society in which males are privileged of various freedoms than females. He argues, "In Nepali society, males are set free for gambling where as in the same society, the very act by the females is considered as immoral and unjust (10)". Both Shiva Raj and Suyogbir are free to stay at restaurant late at night and drink alcohol whereas, females are not expected to perform such activities.

Males in the patriarchal society are free to weight or judge the females. They simply take females as baby-producing machines, domestic slave or just merely an object to gaze on. Females are objectified as a beautiful object to look at in the novel too. Sakambrai introduces her:

“My name is Sakambari.” Her voice burst in on us like a bullet. Startled, I turned toward the door and saw a woman of twenty –four. She was about five-feet-three, fair, with very large breasts on an extremely thin body. She wore gold-rimmed glasses on deep-set, sparkling eyes. Her hair was cut very close to her head, in the style of ancient Hebrew soldiers, and her small, white lobes wore earrings of black stones. (3)

All above lines from the novel clearly gives the vivid picture of objectifying the females in patriarchal society and their resistance too. Sakambari’s voice is compared as bullet and emphasized her physical structure.”Young woman” with “very large breasts” having “fair” complexion with ornaments are good to look at. She is depicted as a scary and strange character who introduces mostly opposite to patriarchal belief. Sakambari is introduced as a unique character having masculine and manly attributes. She wants to create her own self. She admits her, “My name is Sakambari”. There is no expression of shyness and hesitation.

The male protagonists of *Blue Mimosa* are only two: Suyogbir and Shivaraj. Both of them advocate for patriarchy at the same time they are severely criticized by Sakambari. Suyogbir possesses the dualistic character. His attributes in the war identify him as womanizer and toxic masculine whereas as a pensioner he acts as helpless and sublimated. Suyogbir expects women to be shy, slow, polite and innocent. But Sakambaari is opposite to his thought. The way she enters the room embarrasses him. He says:

“She came into the room. The atmosphere froze. I wanted to laugh in turn at her name, her behavior, her looks but my laughter also froze. In that atmosphere I could not laugh at all, I could not do anything. I saw quite clearly that my friend was embarrassed. He blushed, but tried to cover his

embarrassment by saying, "This is my middle sister. She passed her I.A. exams in the first division, but now she stays at home because her health is poor." He did not repeat her name and I had already forgotten it. I looked up when she said "Namaste" and [. . .]. Taking two cigarettes from the package lying on the marble table, she strode toward the door. (3-4)

When we observe and consider the above mentioned extract from male's point of view, we can say that the extraordinary behaviours, looks and lifestyle of the female protagonist, Sakambari, are dominant and superior to the males. It can be proved that when she enters into the room where Shivaraj and Suyogveer are sitting that they became startled by seeing her strangeness. Even the atmosphere froze as Suyogveer says. It means they are afraid of and cannot speak too by her look. She does not feel shame to smoke towards her brother and other male characters as well. She does whatever she likes and speaks whatever she wants. What other people say that does not affect her.

It is noteworthy to indicate and give short glance on the contrasts between Sakambari and Mujura. It can be understood through this expression:

Now I've done it! I've got to go. Bari won't be asleep. If she finds out about this, she'll explode. [. . .]. She's asleep by now. Bari does not get to sleep until close to midnight. Besides, it's not Mujura's nature to oppose anyone. She doesn't complain if I drink. But Bari doesn't care what people think; she gets angry. And that makes me care for her even more. (10)

From the above expression by Shivaraj, Parijat shows the contrasts between Sakambari and Mujura, where Mujura is presented as a traditional girl who does not oppose anyone, she does not complain if Shivaraj drinks. She lowers her head when speaking with male characters. On the other hand, Sakambari does just opposite to

Mujura. She does not care what people think; she gets angry when her brother drinks. It means she overlaps the male power as Shivaraj represents. All these clues show that Sakamari plays the important 'boyish role' in the novel to control male characters. Her role seems more dominant and superior to male character to show her separate autonomous self towards the male-rooted society. "She is not that kind of woman who immediately feels helpless"(12). She is a bold woman who does not feel any hesitation to speak with anyone.

An ex-army serviceman and male protagonist, Suyog, who fought against Japan in the Second World War has made daily routine to drink alcohol in the evenings in the bar. He brutally raped and murdered several indigenous girls and he remembers several incidents during the war. These descriptions of the protagonist in the novel pictures the freedom that male are exercising in the existing society. Male's brutality is described as masculine act whereas same act, if done by females, is considered as crime or inhuman act.

Like the red and purple orchids blooming throughout the forest of Pidaung, Matinchi, a Burmese farmer's daughter, was tempting lovely, never enough. I often teased her like a blossoming flower. I met her often and took freely from her what I wanted. She wanted us to marry and on this basis I went to sleep the night in her bed or brought her to sleep the night in mine. Without affection and without money, I swallowed down everything, her being, her virginity.

And I often told her, "Soon we'll marry, Matinchi." (61)

Various critics argue Sakambari as brave and rebellious girl. They tried to build their arguments from the act of smoking that does by Sakambari. They did have presupposition in their mind that smoking is a rebellious and strong act which women are not supposed to do in patriarchal society. One of the critics, Moan Kanel from

Hanover, Indiana, USA wrote a book review portraying Sakambari as bold, free and independent girl. Somdatta asks her "If I asked you now to stop smoking, what would you do, Bari?" But she replies "I'd smoke ten with pleasure" (36). Here he self is clearly exposed.

Suyogbir conceives patriarchal concept which is frequently expressed in the novel. Though he leaves Sakambari, he chooses Mujura as suitable girl to marry. Every time the theme of marriage comes up, he immediately thinks of Mujura, "Perhaps this is what a wife is like" (28). Sakambari and Mujura differ in almost every respect. Mujura is a cliché of what is considered an "ideal Nepali woman." She wears a white sari, her long hair is loose, and she has beautiful eyes. She never looks straight into a man's eyes or comes close to him. She blushes when indelicate topics come up and does not oppose anyone. Thus, her talk and behavior are portrayed as well-mannered and suiting a woman.

I like long hair on women, so one day I said to her, "Bari, long hair really suits you. You should let it grow." When I went there three days later, she was waiting with an inch of hair. She was like a widow who had come from hardware with a shaven head or a madwoman who had just cut her hair. (48)

Sakambari, however, wears a black sari, and her hair is cut very close to her head. Her eyes are deepest, sparkling and black, hidden behind gold-rimmed glasses. She has slender fingers, a tall and extremely thin body, but very large breasts. She comes close to people and does not use the conventional way of addressing an older male person as "elder brother": she calls Suyog "Suyogji," implying equality and familiarity. She never feels helpless, has her feelings under control, and says directly what she thinks. In Sakambari's personality, "male" characteristics are combined with "female" attributes.

Suyogbir brings the reference of war many times to justify that his abuse on innocent women was rational. He further says, "But there is no one to provide for the poor soldiers, especially our soldiers who, in the name of their ancestors, have to wield their khukuries and jump around . . . War means cutting up men who are just like us, that's all it is (7)".

But Sakambrari defines the soldier as the criminal. She refutes, "You're criminal too" (27). She does not valorize the war and its warrior, Traditional male inherit the war as the souvenir of masculinity and strength. Bari says, "Who can trust a soldier?" (38). Moreover, she does not get pleased to be called by her pet name 'Bari'. To the opposite of this belief, most women are pleased and happy to be called by their pet names. Casually, she said, "You may call me whatever you like" (26-27).

Despite the effort of male characters to act traditionally, sense of resistance seems very strong in *Blue Mimosa*. Shivaraj says, "The day after tomorrow is Bari's birthday. You're invited. Please don't bring anything like a present when you come. Bari doesn't accept that sort of thing. She'd be likely to throw it back in your face" (21). It shows the rebellious nature of Sakambari. She does not become obedient to the male members of the family rather she leads them. She dares to comment the bad habit of males. She admits, "Shiva's a drunkard and Shiva's friend's drunkard" (25).

Thus, it can be said that through the image of the bold, strict and courageous lady protagonist, Sakambari who by challenging and disregarding male norms and dominated actions, she has been able to create her distinct autonomous and independent self. Lastly Parijat, the novelist, is advocating the female self in general in the novel *Blue Mimosa*.

Similarly, female characters in *Sumnima* also resist against the patriarchal notion. This novel shows two cultures: Aryan and Non-Aryan. Arya culture is guided

by patriarchal social structure whereas Non-Aryan is directed by matriarchy. Aryan follows orthodoxical Hindu caste system. In this culture, women are just respected as the ideal figure. Women are considered as an incarnation of goddess but in practice, they are compelled to bear the exploitation and injustice of male. In contrary to it, women are practically freed to exercise their rights. Sumnima and Puloma are identical to the female characters of contemporary feudal society. Sumnima represents the females of Non- Aryan social structure whereas Puloma represents the females of Aryan culture. In the novels, there is the representation of Kirant and Bhilla as Non-Aryan in which women are discriminated. They are free and self-dependent.

Sumnima has a freedom to play with anybody and to marry whom she likes. But in Puloma such freedom is rarely granted. She grew in strict control of her family and `aftermath of marriage she survives in the guidance of her husband. She has no pride of being a woman. She is deprived of the individual freedom and rights. Moreover, her birth in the so-called higher Brahmin family restricts her to utilize the means of pleasures. She is grinded with the patriarchal Brhamin disciplines. She passes complicated ascetic life. Pleasure is must in sexual intercourse but she is compelled to have that just to bear the children. Her infertility for a long time traumatizes her. Finally she becomes pregnant but that also turns to be suspicious.

He said to Puloma, " You have purified to yourself today after three nights with polluted clothes. The order of our teachers must be followed without any question any only for fulfilling our religious duty the occasion for our bodily union has presented itself today just get a son. (44)

The above extract tells that Puloma is compelled to have a sexual intercourse on fourth day of menstruation which is not scientific. It is more humorous to know that it should be free from the lust. Puloma is physically and mentally exploited. The

scientific fact that “the conception on fourth day of menstruation is less possible” is denied. Instead, she is accused of not conceiving a baby due to curse of previous life, touching the cow in monthly cycle, and having meal in bronze plate. Puloma is victimized by patriarchal mindset. Somdatta behaves her as if she is the root of all the problems.

In the novel, females are extremely exploited. Somdatta himself is devoid of child bearing capacity. He surrenders to Sumnima and gets decorated as Bhilla after taking bath in ‘human pond’. He begets a son having sexual intercourse with Puloma with full of physical pleasure. Sumnima was ruling his heart. He forgets all this and accuses Puloma for committing adultery with Bhilla. He stands himself as an epitome of toxic masculine who upholds patriarchal ideology of exploiting woman.

Religion influences men and women’s physical, psychological and emotional state of mind. The characters of *Sumnima* are guided by the principles of religions. The masculine Hindu ideology became a source of treachery on women. Somdatta does not respect Sumnima as his beloved nor does he devote to Puloma as a wife. As a result his familial life encounters a disaster. His negative attitude towards the women increases resistance in Puloma. When Puloma comes to know that she is pregnant, she says in a tone of challenge as if proclaiming a war.” I am pregnant” (100). Then they exchange some dialogues which are sufficient to understand both of them.

Somdatta replied in a same unattractive voice, “It’s good that is happening.

Now you desire for a son, he will salvage your lineage.” Somdatta said to himself,” I was not present for her that night. I am not the father of one in her womb up to this day.” (100)

The patriarchal notion of son is taken as to purify the sin of his parents after they die and can 'salvage the lineage'. Moreover, he still hesitates to claim him an authentic father of the baby dwelling inside the womb because that was the conception of unfair copulation.

Parijat has blown the voice of women against the patriarchy in *Blue Mimosa*. The female characters have resisted any superior attitude of males intellectually and have advocated for female self. The issue of resistance is not only strong but also rebellious to challenge the patriarchal perception. Both Sumnima and Puloma dare to abandon the tradition view and create the space for female self. Sumnima, though she is uneducated, responds wisely to Somdatta about philosophical standpoints. When they debate, she takes the support of mother and views against Somdatta's support to the father. She argues, "Father is the male shown by the mother" (6). But Somdatta opposes her with an opinion, "Mother is field, you stupid girl. The master of the field is father" (7). This exchange of dialogue shows that the female characters in novel do not remain silent to let the males to impose patriarchal notion on them. They actively participate to argue on every issues.

Resistance has become powerful in the role of Puloma. She dares to cross the limit of patriarchal boundary encircled around her and she attempts to create her self. She has gained equal academic height with Somdatta. She enables her to interact in any philosophical agendas. She does not remain silent like traditional Nepali women cursing her fate. The narrator comments:

Now she did not accept the commands of her husband blindly without replying. Somdatta also was aware of his unending knowledge and stopped having the feeling of excusing even the small mistakes of his wife. Sometimes taking the subjects of religious scriptures and spiritual subjects their

conversation developed into heated debates. Both of them stubbornly stuck to their power of scholarship. (49)

The above statement explores the feeling of resistance on Puloma. She has abandoned the ideology of toleration. It criticizes the concept that wife should obey her husband unconditionally. Moreover, Puloma does not believe that the knowledge of religious scriptures should be gained only by the males.

Puloma has understood that the knowledge is power. She is also conscious about the domination of males on females. She becomes intolerant and aggressive to the discriminatory opinion of Somdatta. Regarding the knowledge of religious scriptures, Somdatta says, "You pretty know, in some religious texts women are debarred from studying religious scriptures. Now, I come to realize that the sages of the past had prepared the rules knowing everything well" (50). This view is humiliating to the existence of women in religion. But she immediately prepares her to say "Innumerable verses in Vedas were composed by women" (50). This intellectual interaction blurs the anarchy of Somdatta.

Somdatta hates Puloma for being unable to bear the child. This evokes the feeling of hatred in Puloma too. She says, "Somdatta, if you have such an enmity towards me, now listen, I too hate you from the core of my heart" (91). This expression shows the natural resistance of woman being tired from the continuous biting of male dominated society. Her pregnancy is an outcome long and passionate waiting. It should be the happiest news to Somdatta. Instead of celebrating the happiness, he demeans her with his bitter response. She feels insulted and attacks on his philosophical belief as son 'salvage the lineage'. She says, "You needed a son to offer you your ghostly food after death that I am going to give you that person sooner or later. If you are unable to think this event from a mother's point of view, at least

you could look at it from a father's view" (100). These lines show the aggression towards her husband due to his disrespect of her motherly state. Women are taken as the source of bearing the children. Masculine ideology always expects them to bear a son to salvage the lineage. Somdatta does not realize that his birth was the happiest moment to his mother and father.

Puloma strongly resists the ideas which attempt to fragment and degrade femininity, existence of females, and self respect of women. Somdatta always blames Puloma for carrying 'the mental child of Bhilla' in her womb. When it exceeds the limit, Puloma responds loudly,

Brahmin! I did understand. Yes, you saw with your eyes how your wife was loyal to you But you cruel man! Today you are trying to take away that joy of mine too by saying that you had become the Bhilla of that night. You mean man! You are jealous of even the pleasure of adultery. (102)

The above view is the result of suppression and hunger of self assertion. Somdatta himself engages himself in intercourse but blames her committing adultery. Her idea protests to the entire patriarchal sentiment. She counterattacks the mission of Somdatta to weaken the women's existence.

So, both *Blue Mimosa* and *Sunnima* interrogate the patriarchy which is functioning as a threat of female self. The patriarchal based Hindu ideological social structure is an obstacle for the progress of the women. The female characters have become rebellious to dismantle it and invent their self.

Ethnic and Religious Masculinity

This thesis explores the multiple ways in which constructions of caste and ethnicity are critically important to identity, and play a vital role in constructions of Brahminic masculinities. Nepal is multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-

religious country in which masculinity becomes adjacent to each of the identities. The constructions of caste and ethnicity are critically important to identity, and play a vital role in constructions of masculinities. Greater need of power is significantly associated with higher drive for masculinity. The hierarchies among the various ethnic groups have created the complexity. Traditionally Brahmins and Kshatris attempt to impose ethnic masculinity whereas other castes become subordinate to them.

S.Anandi, et,al argue that masculinity is both as ‘ideological construct’ and as ‘a set of practices’. In the context of Nepal, these ideologies and practices are manifested in caste system and religious beliefs .Therefore; it is not homogenous or unitary across time, space, and social groups. The multiple articulations of masculinity differ in accordance to the varying and shifting contexts. During the time of 1970s, racial discrimination on the basis of religious hierarchy was in practice in Nepal. So, the characters of the novels are not free from that ideological mindset. Ethnic and religious masculinity excludes suppressed or Dalits and Non-Aryans from social, economic, and political opportunities. Moreover, this also depends on situation, social and economic differences, setting, and circumstances, and so on.

In Koirala's *Sumnima*, the protagonists act the role of dominant and subordinate masculinity. Kimmel’s view on masculinity emphasizes on its enactment. He says, “We test ourselves, perform heroic feats, take enormous risks, all because we want other men to grant us our manhood” (214). In terms of performativity, Judith Butler argues, “masculinity has become a relentless test by which one man proves to other men, to women, and ultimately to himself, that he has successfully mastered the part” (215). In the novel, Somdatta is under this constant scrutiny and pressure of his parents and society to perform his masculinity. As a son of Brahmin,he has to do severe meditation to acquire spiritual knowledge. Moreover, Kshatri is taken as the ruling caste in this

novel. The prince listens to the complain of Brahmin about the slaughter of cows and other violent actions by the Non-Aryans, the prince addresses his armed followers and speaks in a valiant tone, “Go to the village nearby and give this royal order that the king demands the presence of the chiefs of the Kirants and Bhillas”(11). Brahmin and Kshatri behave as if they were born to impose power on lower caste.

The hegemonic masculinity of Brahmin and Kshatri emasculates the masculinity by the marginalized Bhilla and Kirants. They belong to the non-hegemonic class. He says. “ minorities, defined in terms of race, class, ethnicity or sexual orientation, all characteristically understand what a man means differently from members of the ruling class or elite of from each other too” (Morrel 27).

The prince said, “Bhillas and Kirants present here, our ancestors have conquered you as you have been squarely defeated in battles. The Brahmin family standing here establishing its hermitage is highly respected by us. Therefore, our main objective is to provide protection and comfort to this family by all means at our disposal” (12).

The given extract illustrates how authoritative were then Kshatris. For the protection of their culture and Brahminnic shelter, they could be ready to make Kirant and Bhilla run away. The prince also exhibits the feeling ancestral victory over them.

In Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala’s *Sunnima* , both Somdatta and the prince show their superior gaze on Kirants. But they are questioned and critiqued by the positive role of Kirants for ethnic reconciliation. Somdatta is a descendent of Suryadatt who represents Brahmin. Similarly, Both Somdatta and the prince who visits the shelter of Brahmins collectively adopt the policy of suppression on lower caste.

Similarly, in Parijat’s *Blue Mimosa*, Suyogbir inherits the military characteristic of his Kshatriya community. He joins army and takes part in the World War as the

Gurkhas. Sanjeev Upreti envisages the masculinity of common Gorkhalis parallel to that of lower class Britons. He opines, "Masculinity of common Gorkha soldiers was represented as being similar to the masculinity of lower-class Britons, a mode of masculinity of associated with qualities such as physical valour, courage, impulsiveness, and lack of rational control" (41). Suyogbir admits, "The blood of warrior caste was boiling in me" (6). He feels proud of having ancestral blood of warrior. In the novel, he further compares himself with "I was a leopard, ready to jump out of the bushes" (40). Being a soldier of warrior caste, he claims himself as a rightful man to kill others. When his battalion had to advance to the front lines of Phalam district, he explains his situation in the words: "This is the time to die, the chance to earn a V.C., my blood comes boiling up, and my hand goes automatically to the handle of my khukuri" (48).

Still, when speaking to his drinking companion, Sivaraj, the brother of Sakambari, he clearly confesses three times that he never killed anyone, and that others have done so because it was their duty as soldiers. Moreover, in the war, he becomes a womanizer and authorized male to rape and play with the sentiment of women who were unarmed.

This view contrasts strongly with Sakambari's evaluation of war. She generally calls it a crime and asserts, "For whoever's sake or under whoever's command we fight, it is a crime committed by one person against another" (21). It might be true that Suyog never killed in actual fighting, but not only killing is a crime, as Sakambari points out, and he did abuse three women in his leisure time, not even during military duty. Suyog is shocked by the directness with which Sakambari judges him as a criminal. He thinks that soldiers die in the name of heroism, that they sacrifice and are sacrificed, and he does not want to see it as the crime it is. The presence of danger and death in war, and a wish to enjoy the final moments of life gave Suyog the feeling that he had a right to take

and do whatever he wanted. When the Chin girl was unwilling to give in before he raped and killed her, he remembers thinking, "We are dying, and I ask her to give me this one night" (41). Thus he commits crimes, believing that he and his victim are going to die anyway in war, and pretends that there is no difference in their being killed in war or by himself: "There's nothing special in our deaths: die at my hands, and that will be your death too" (41).

Connell uses the phrase 'patriarchal dividend' to refer to the ways in which all men benefit from patriarchal privilege without personally being engaged in direct acts of aggression or oppression of women. In *Blue Mimosa* too, the male characters have got that type of dividend. Because of his belongingness, Suyogbir gets an opportunity to join in army. He confesses, ". . . that I had joined the army partly out of interest, partly because my parents wanted me to, and partly because my warrior blood was stirred up" (6). Both Suyogbir and Somdatta are free to drink, smoke and stay outside up to late at night.

Hegemonic masculinity refers to the widespread domination of men in the social, economic and cultural spheres. Puloma is accused of degrading from her caste, religion, culture and morality by Somdatta. He blames her frequently about her relation with Bhillia man. Somdatta says, "You have become a Non-Aryan in your behavior, character and physical habits. The whole Aryan culture, religious instructions and moral teachings and moral teachings have disappeared from you .God has abandoned you and left you all alone" (98). His view asserts on the continuation of social and cultural ethics to hold the power.

Regarding notion of masculinity, Osellas writes about Brahmanic masculinity. He contends, "Brahminic masculinity is socially high status associated with control, detachment, power and ideologically utterly separated from and unavailable to the

feminine” (49). Somdatta attempts to be hegemonic by advocating the spiritual ideology. The attitude of prince over Kirants also proliferates that concept. But from the middle part of novel, feminization begins which entirely succeeds at the end. Somdatta says, “Sumnima, today religion has triumphed over irreligion, the Aryan banner has been hoisted in this land of religious penance” (17). This is the expression of triumph over lower caste.

Racial masculinity of Bramhmin and Kshatri characters are questioned. Sumnima accuses Somdatta for being responsible to break the violence. She says, “Your religion has disturbed the structure of nature, and that’s the reason why violence has become possible in the world” (21).

Female Masculinity

Blue Mimosa and *Sumnima* advocate for the female masculinity. The theoretical ideas propounded by Judith Halberstam and Judith Butler about gender and masculinity reversed the concept of masculinity studies. Following their ideas, masculinity studies have focused almost exclusively on masculinity performed by men. Now, this research further explores roles assigned to women characters by applying Judith Butler’s theory of performativity and Judith Halberstam’s theory of female masculinity to bring out the representation of female masculinity in the novels.

The entire story in Parijat’s *Blue Mimosa* centralizes on Sakambari who asserts her masculine attributes throughout the novel. She is bold, confident and caring. She is free from the stereotypical women of Nepali society. Berger et.al in their introduction to *Constructing Masculinity*, insist that masculinity is multiple and that “far from just being about men. They mean to say that masculinity is not limited only with biological male and it is manifested in the performance of the character that is either male or female. She plays the role of head of the family. It can be understood

in the expression of the narration,” But Bari does not care what people think; she gets angry. And that makes me care for her even more” (9).

In both novels, female characters masculinity is also defined by courage, strength, aggression and violence. Aggression is a pillar of the stereotypical construction of masculinity. Although it is widely believed to be a male’s issue, female protagonists in *Blue Mimosa* and *Sumnima* exhibit an aggressive masculinity. Quite different to the traditional women, Sakamdari criticizes the physical war but involves in the verbal war with Suyogbir. She criminalizes Suyogbir for his murder in the war. She contends, “Soldiers are the criminals” (27). Similarly, in Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala’s *Sumnima* too, Puloma does not hesitate to express her anger. Puloma, who was completely enflamed with rage, said in a same voice of slander and contempt, “Hey vulgar man! Lascivious Brahmin lacking self restraint, come on, exercise your right” (95)! Both Sakambari and Puloma show their masculine behaviours.

Butler says that gender is not fixed on a woman’s body or a man’s body but rather articulated by an individual’s performance of gender. Like his view, the male characters perform female attributes whereas female characters : Sakambari in *Blue Mimosa* and Puloma and Sumnoma in *Sumnima* perform masculine roles. The smoking gesture of Sakambari is not less than that of macho man. Suyogbir quests traditional feminine qualities in her but always gets shocked to face her amazing expression. He says, “I wanted to talk her. I took a pack of cigarettes from my pocket and offered her one; without hesitation she took it” (13). These qualities of confidence and boldness of Sakambari are parallel to Sumnima . While talking to Somdatta, she says, “My mother says that I am quite beautiful and my body is well developed with the stomach prettily shaped and breasts in their right places. Isn’t she right Somdatta” (22)? Sumnima is biologically female but she conceives masculine character.

Female masculinity is a performance of masculinity by female bodies that take up behavior or characteristics commonly considered masculine, for instance, show of strength, courage, aggressiveness, leadership, assertiveness, dominance, and violence (Abele). Sakambari in *Blue Mimosa* takes the responsibility of the family. Even Shiva Raj feels secure to be with her and gets frightened in any mistakes. Shiva once tells Suyogbir, “He trusted Bari very much, more than he trusted himself. It was possible to confide in a girl who keeps to herself” (30). Moreover, Sumnima is courageous to express her love with Somdatta even after her marriage which the male characters cant. After reviving the virility in Somdatta, “Sumnima caught Somdatta and clasping him in a strong embrace she kissed on his lips” (70). Her action justifies that Sumnima is courageous enough to express her will which Somdatta lacks.

The female characters in both novels become masculine in a variety of ways: they work and become protector; they are courageous and assertive leaders, and aggressive fighters, yet they remain as dutiful wives and daughters who conform to the expectations of women. The masculinity of Sumnima, Puloma and Sakambaru is more than a social construct or an innate biological characteristic; these women take on masculine identities out of necessity in the novels. The male and female of Nepal in 1970s were face to face for the sake of their social, economical and political rights. In that case, the female adopted the masculine qualities to guarantee their rights and assert their self and ultimately it resulted in to the female masculinity.

In this way, the female protagonists in the novels take on masculine roles because the situation at hand demands it. However, these women do not abandon their feminine roles; they still work as a home maker. The novels also suggest that the behaviours perceived by the characters are social constructs that can be taken on by females and males alike. Moreover, these aggressive women are not confined to literary texts only but are found in real life as well. Egara Kabaji scrutinizes, “Today’s

women are encroaching into male territory and are redefining themselves as assertive, independent and willing to take risks” (105). The women in the novels enter into the territory of men. Sakambari does that by smoking, cutting the hair short, denying to marry and willing to be always victorious. She is comparatively masculine than feminine. Suyogbir evaluates her, “Usually I find her hard and cruel as ever” (29). While talking about war Suyogbir expresses, “In the countless times, I had been defeated by Bari in such talk, it was at least a satisfaction that she never preached or pitied me” (38).

Puloma defies all the restrictions made on women and struggles for masculine role. Likewise, Sumnima at the end of the novel transforms to be a protector entire Nepali civilization. The narrator observes manifolds of changes in Sumnima. He further says, “But the woman who was in complete ignorance was establishing herself in full determination and he realized that he had not yet acquired adequate knowledge” (31).

Both Parijat and Koirala explore the trauma of being a female in male ordained society. They have openly challenged the male perpetrators by portraying women with masculine attributes. Patriarchy was so pervasive in Nepal during that time and women were suppressed in every nook and corner of the society. Their marginalization into social, political, religious, cultural and economic domains had really marred their immense potentialities and capabilities. Their suffocative confinement in the ghostly chamber of patriarchy had reduced them into helpless, hapless and restless creatures. But as an angry rebellion, the female characters of the novels do not accept the male domination but attempt to demolish suffocative patriarchal mansion modeled on male psyche acquiring the strength of female self.

III: Call for the Reconciliation between Men and Women

Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* and Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima* witness an important period of Nepali socio-cultural history. The time of their composition was 1970s AD when the Panchyat system was in its prime youth. Patriarchy and the role of males had exceeded to the existence of women. Reversing the stream of time, the novelists have provided the platform to the female characters to explore their female self. Like femininity; masculinity has become a cliché to study about the manliness and males. In the research, masculinity has been contextualized in interrogation of these two novels. Both *Sumnima* and *Puloma* become the mouth piece of the writer in *Sumnima*. They have shaken the hegemonic masculinity of Somdatta and compel to surrender his self to the self of female. They become the victim of the ideology of hegemonic masculinity but never feel defeated while dismantling the tower of patriarchal notion. They criticize sarcastically to the perception of Somdatta who represents that group. Similarly, Sakambari idealizes herself as an epitome of female self.

Gender is pivotal subject of these two novels. Since it is a social construction, patriarchy and masculinity play dominant role to shape its concept in Nepali society. There exists the discrimination between male and female where woman is the subordinate to the man. Under this system, men dominate, suppress and exploit the woman. In both novels, male characters do have privileges over females. Males are free to exercise physical, social and economic rights. They feel proud of being a male who can inferiorize and demean the opposite sex. That pride is under the fragile foundation which frequently quivers in the presence of women.

Traditionally, male is supposed to be aggressive, competitive, and physically strong, decisive, violent and so on. So, masculinity is relational term which is studied

in relation to the femininity. The male characters in the novels project them as the superior human beings as if they were born to rule. Somdatta in *Sumnima* valorizes the father and exploits his wife; Puloma. She is accused in both circumstances either she is unable to conceive the baby or conceives the baby. Somdatta marries her with an expectation of bearing a son to salvage their lineage. She is frequently accused of committing adultery. Puloma also does not tolerate all the bruises; instead she protests all the irrational arguments of Somdatta. Unlike the traditional women, she creates new identity of revolutionary woman.

In *Blue Mimosa* and *Sumnima*, the palpitation of the patriarchy is heard loudly. The will and aspirations of women are denied. The females in the novels are emotionally blackmailed. Suyogbir mercilessly plays with the sentiment of three innocent girls and murders them in the name of love in war. Similarly, he waits long as the fox to loot the virginity of Sakambari. His kiss falls her down on the death bed. Moreover, Somdatta abandons Sumnima with an expectation of erecting the tower of Brahminic masculinity. Sumnima's lovely infatuation towards Somdatta lowers down due to the masculine mentality that only male should be the actor.

Diversity is specialty of Nepali society. This research applies the theoretical concept of R.W.Connel who advocates for plural masculinities. Plural masculinities incorporate issues of masculinity in race, sex, age, religion and many other social arenas. This concept addresses the plurality of Nepali culture and its impact in male female relation. So, this research has done the minute study of plural masculinities. Racially, Brahmin and Kshatriya enjoy advantages of hegemonic masculinities and other castes are suppressed. Aryans in *Sumnima* and Suyogbir in *Blue Mimosa* share the dividend of masculine religion, race, gender and perception. But none of them is free from the resistance and criticism of opposite sex caste and religion. Suyogbir

feels emasculated with the growth of age and finally wants to prove that he cordially loves Sumnima. Somdatta of *Sumnima* revives his manliness with the help of Non-Aryan woman Sumnima and later his son elopes with Sumnima's daughter.

Eventually, male characters of the novels attempt to impose the masculine ideals which female characters resist and create their own self. The tenacity between male and female characters turns to be a milestone to reconcile men with women too. Besides it, it becomes an imperative to the women to ensure the female masculinity. The reconciliation between the daughter of Sumnima and son of Somdatta at the end *Sumnima* dismantles all sexual, patriarchal, racial and religious superiority. Similarly, Suyogbir's willingness of dissolving with Sakambari questions the masculinity and its enactment in male characters. So, numerous circumstances are depicted in the novels to assert masculinity from the male characters and to create their own self with masculine qualities from female characters which ultimately advocate the harmony and equality between men and women in Nepal.

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