

Chapter One: Rajan Prasad Pokharel and his Quest

The writing career of Rajan Prasad Pokharel establishes him as a person making a quest for socio-economic reality of Nepali society. Pokharel's career begins with the publication of essay books like *An Intellectual Burden and Other Essays* and *Life and Literature*, and *Roars and Rigors*. Of the collections of essays, the first one is not available at the present although some essays have been reprinted in the third collection (Personal Conversation). The essays collected in these two books depict Pokharel as a critic of Nepalese society. He looks at various facets of Nepalese socio-cultural domain and presents himself as a realist concerned with the socio-cultural problems. Pokharel has written three novels too: *Rebels of the Mountain*, *Beyond the Lifelines*, and *The Sufferers' Message*. All three novels are also written at the backdrop of the Nepalese society. However, the second novel, *Beyond the Lifelines*, particularly presents Pokharel as a writer, who is concerned to represent a slice of the history of Nepali society realistically.

In fact, Pokharel's writing career presents him as a quester of reality in the Nepali society. In the essay "Life and Literature" collected in the book of the same title, Pokharel shows his concern not only about the society but about life itself. The essay itself is in fact a collection of ideas of different personalities of the Nepalese society who try to define life from their own standpoints. Pokharel begins the essay with a question, "*What is life?*" and tries to define it in the subsequent lines.

In his next essay "To Be a mother," he attempts to present an idealistic picture of a

mother. He writes about the importance of mother in every body's life saying that it is a relation that cannot be matched with other things. He states "Actually, mother is the greatest thing to be. Nobody is greater than the mother and nothing is high above her. Once a lady becomes a mother, she feels that she has acquired the highest position in the world" (23). He further says that "Everybody's love except that of the mother's is not fully natural. Other's love is either a friendly attachment or an attraction or a kind of compassion or an infatuation or the feeling of responsibility or a love for own existential surroundings" (25).

In the essay "Mummy of Goa," he portrays a female character, who is described as "Mummy of Goa." Pokharel also gives a short description of the place Goa itself. In fact, Goa is a beautiful place that draws everyone towards its beauty. It is a capital town where his sister in law being a widow with five children, has done great efforts performing social political and motherly tasks. People need motherly figures at different steps of life. So that they will give up casting evil eyes on women. Pokharel says that "They opened a business in the capital town, which is exactly on the bank of Mandevi river. They gave birth to five children and reared them to their self-standing capacity. After the death of the husband, she took all responsibilities of the family and of the business" (27).

Pokharel presents his own experience of society in his writing "Education to Children." In order to correct the educational system, he explores the realistic fact of the education given through the world and includes that education must be scientific and systematic through interaction among the children. He further states that "basically for the primary education the children should never be bordered. They should be in the total care of the parents, grandparents of very close and caring relatives. Keeping away the small children from the parents, will create a dangerous psychological effect"(33).

He further states: "They will develop a negative impression. So that, they may not be responsible for parents or home. Sometimes they can turn to be harsh, insistent and even absurd. Impression of the early childhood is long lasting even to the old age" (33).

Pokharel explores the fact of learning in his short essay "Learning from the People." He says that "people are the sources of all knowledge, People's experiences, feelings, thoughts, fantasies, imagination and researches are the contents of different subjects and disciplines. People's cultures, custom traditions, rituals and the historical developments and the courses of significant studies" (37). He further writes: "if a scholar doesn't have a regular connection with the people, his knowledge will be outdated as well as blunted. The ideologies, philosophical principles and the state laws are developed from the people's ethics, traditions and the social values. Therefore, people centered learning is the best learning" (38).

In the same way, Mr. Pokharel's writing "History and Pre- history" reflects that the writing of history is generally biographical. He says "History projects some figures to place them as the heroes of the time and all events are presented to surround their charismatic personalities. The person centered tradition of history writing is not the presentation of historical reality. Instead, the people centered history would explain the role of the people in the making of history" (41). He further explains: "The tradition of writing the people centered history has not yet been properly established. Rather when there is a process for it, the conservative force tries to crush it down. But it fossilizes to sustain any possible suppression" (41).

Pokharel combines realistic matter as history. He writes about the news of the Royal family massacre in his writing "The Changing Course of Nepalese History." He

says, "It was full of shock, surprise and suspicion. The massacre of king Birendra and his family resulted in a break of the old tradition. The natural transformation of the kingship from father to son in the tradition of linear generation ended . . ." (43).

He further mentions:

In the history of Nepal, the process of change is very rapid. The kinds of incidents that have taken place in the Nepalese political scenario in a short period of time are an unprecedented experience. It seems that the state of Nepalese renaissance has soon to come. The last phase of the night is really dreadful but the brightness of the morning is inevitable. (44)

And he further says, "political freedom without social equality, economic progress and collective practice will be just meaningless. The geographical unification of a country alone can never bring unity and friendship among the people (44)." He further claims, "All disparities and conflicts must be solved for the psychological unification of a nation. Nepal is certainly heading towards a permanent peaceful settlement. The empire of the guns must end, and that's certainly going to happen very soon in Nepal" (45).

In his writing, "The Precipitating Height of Dhirendra Shah," he talks about the charming appearance, wonderfully structured body, amazing fondness and fantastic habits of Dhirendra, had tempted many People. He describes that "He enjoyed life to the greatest possible extent. Certainly he was a great man of worldly enjoyment but his merry-making personality got lost in oblivion" (48). And he further interprets his writing with the most marvelous sense of metaphysical and idealistic approach. It centers on the realization of the importance of ritualistic way of thinking.

In a particular way, he exposes the past situation of royal family through characters

like Dhirendra, who could not rise above the level of the worldly happiness. He further says "Now, there's a lesson to many noble births who just would want to enjoy life in luxury and to those who think that it is an expression of love for the nation simply to attend the escortings and gatherings of some aristocratic powers. Dhirendra Shah is almost totally forgotten now" (48).

In the essay "Commitment to Nationalism," Pokharel says that "nationalism is a devotion to nation. It is a movement to arouse love and awareness for the nation. Nationalism is a feeling of patriotism: Movement for development and revolution for progress" (49). He further says:

The movement for nationalism can be strengthened by a kind of strong revolution, which should give counters to all suppressions and malpractices. The restoration of value politics and initiation for integrated development are essential for the people's awareness to nationalism which will bring self esteem to the people, so that people will develop a do or die concept for the nation. (49)

Pokharel in his essay "Democracy and Moral Culture" says that "Democracy is tested at adversity. The heart of democracy lies at the maximum exercise of human rights, freedom of press, speech, . . . government punishes corrupt and immoral people howsoever great position they hold, the government is always anxious about the peoples facilities and progress" (53).

He further explores that "taking action against some immoral people is not only a solution. There's a need of separate revolution, which should naturally sweep a way all moral irregularities. The revolution should be guided by the philosophy of a revolutionary

change and progressive settlement where all political and economic activities will be parts of a moral culture" (54).

In his next essay "The Cross-Current of Violence," Pokharel says that "Violence is natural to receive counter violence. The history of the world has always moved through the crosscurrents of violences. The conflicts between good and evil, virtues and vices, and the protagonist and antagonist forces have been the main subject matters of the world's writings either factual or fictional" (59).

Mr. Pokharel writes in his next essay "Sorry! It's not Blasphemous" about the people who spread falsehood in the name of God and religion. He states that "Blasphemous are those who sell Gods solely for their profit. They are the ones who have created discrimination among the people and say that it's God's wish. Blasphemous are those who blackmail others for God" (63).

He further says that "Some people say that the holy books can be read only by a limited group of people. They themselves developed the concepts of high castes and low castes, touchables and untouchables and priest and pariahs. God's mystery has been used by the crooks as the best tricks to run their business. The same crooks have taken hold over the political powers in most of the nations, and dancing on the heads of the innocent people" (63).

In the same way, Rajan Prasad Pokharel in his essay, "Over the Question of God," says that "human life is very short and the power of human mind is limited. The idea of the broadness of the universe, the rules of nature, and the relationship between space and time seems so vague and mysterious which our limited strength of mind can't explore or grasp. People believe that there must be a power which knows everything"(65). He further says:

"The time and space must have been united by some force. The same force is called God by the people. But that force also is dragged down to the level of certain persons, lifeless statues and animals" (65). He concludes his writings saying that "Sai Baba is a great human being. Buddha was great, Jesus was great. Even many scientists, philosophers, politicians, commanders, Yogis, Teachers and artists are great or greater than the general human beings, but it's foolish of us to think that they can drive the universe" (66).

Pokharel in his essay "Qualities of a true Gentleman" explains that "The gentle people do not tolerate injustices, oppressions and all kinds of unjust dominations. They don't care for entity, threat, or danger" (68). He further says that "True gentlemen are neither inactive nor selfish nor hypocritical nor simply polite or mild. People are gentle because they believe in actions and interactions. They're kind, compassionate and benevolent. They have got the acute sense of recognition of good and evil. They are harsh to the villains and kind to the innocent people" (69).

In fact, he has tried to show the real qualities of gentleman on the basis of some great personalities. He believes that "The gentleman do not get confused about the trifles. Some small minded people always talk nonsense and every time say that they have been hurt by others. They demand explanations on small questions and statements. They try to create situations so that other people get entangled with their unnecessary fusses" (69). He further writes: "The gentlemen never get involved in the trivial matters of the mean minds. Rather they clarify their positions by their involvement in the significant movements. They never care who is hurt and who is pleased" (69).

Pokharel's next essay "Some Indian Ways of Life" is a description of the life styles, simplicity, innocence and cooperation. He writes "They die for their religions and cultures.

In some of the Indian states they have still maintained the truthfulness of ancient moral conduct of respect and honesty" (73).

He further analyses that "Indian is said to have the darkest of the dark, and the brightest of the bright side of life. Indian philosophy, Indian talent and Indian creativity are famous in the world. Indian culture, art and music have unparalleled richness and profundity. He states: "Indians are very much devoted to friendship, Indian scholars are deeply pre occupied to their studies and Indian technologists are heartily engaged to their experiments. Their sincere involvement in their respective fields has put them in a significant position in the world" (73).

Pokharel has explored some unique experiences while he was attending a wedding party through his writing "The liners of Today'. He says that "every small line has its own trade union, whether it is declared or undeclared. The professional consciousness, problems and associations naturally bring the people of similar lines together. The local trade unions are united with national and international unions. He states: "The people of the world are divided into various different lines and united into the trade unions of their related field of work or business. The world of lines and sub lines is a very complicated one. Some of the lines are beyond the governments' observation. The government agencies cannot even catch up their networks. The underworld business covers a big part of money transaction which is illegal and unrecorded" (76). The underworld people are said to have dangerously influenced the monetary and political systems. Many great leaders have badly fallen into the grip of the underworld powers. Their worldwide agencies and networks are working almost freely. Only the minute observers can see some of their functions, otherwise the rest of the ordinary people simply feel the impact.

He further analyses that "an underground political party mobilizes its cadres who go to people with their slogans, declarations and plans of actions. The whole intelligence of the govt. with its unlimited armed strength tries to follow them at their needs, but still fails to find the insurgents even by all possible courses of action" (76).

Pokharel has discussed about the pros and cons of computer in his writing "The Crazy Mass of Computer". He says that "the computer age also came as a historical consequence. The whole world revolved round the computer" (79). He further says: "The formal introduction of computer languished slowly for about 50 years through different developmental generations. It is a scientific fact that the course of development won't have a full stop, but the age of computer almost ended. Computer itself is no longer a business, but a business activator. It is set in the life style as a house hold stuff like a radio or a TV set" (79).

In the essay "Between Roars and Rigors," collected in the book of the same title, Mr. Pokharel explains his own experience in the different modes of life. He writes about the different phases of his own life experiences including the life experiences of well-known writers, politicians, professors, philosophers and various kinds of luminaries.

In the essay "Fears and Fancies" Pokharel presents his childhood memories that he has experienced in the different stages of life. He writes that the bad experience of his childhood at the age of 3: he faces many problems because of poverty. He works hard even in the small age to bring up his sister and small brothers. In the same way, he experiences hallucinations after having a amount of honey. He says that "I had eaten my food with a good amount of honey. It was nothing other than a sheer intoxication of the honey. But I got a strange and very unique experience of hallucination in my childhood" (10).

Mr. Pokharel's next writing "Migration" is a short description of his adventures, excitements and sufferings. He says that "As we passed by every house, my mother and other women of the village shared tears and cries with the feeling of the certainty of the journey of life. They promised that they would meet some day if they remained alive" (11). He talks about many new experiences that gain on the way to Madhes. He describes many places like well raised pedestals under the trees, deep blue river bullock cart and many more strange things which he saw first time on the way to Madhes. And he enjoys observing paddy fields, bushes, play grounds and villages around.

In the same way, in his next essay "The Space" he writes about his childhood memories which he had spent in Terai with his own relatives, cousins brothers and sisters playing in large grasslands, meadows, barren fields, river banks, bushes and hedges. He mentions about the local bazaars and fairs, where they would be wedding celebrations and festivals. Moreover, he talks about the different cultures and tradition found in the Terai belt. He writes "In some days my father erected a small hovel and a barn, and managed to have a pair of oxen and a cow. I too shunned the cattle with my cousins into the open fields" (18).

Pokharel through his essay, "The Roars" discusses about his experiences of school going days, in which he has done lots of carefree activities like, screaming, hooting, howling, playing, dancing, singing and sometimes even fighting. He further talks about reading on the meadows and playgrounds. He with his classmates would use the large space of the open lands for funs and amusements. He says that "most of the times most of his cousins would be together playing, grazing cattle, cutting grass, going to school, swimming in the rivers, stealing fruits, going to local bazaars and having funs and joys"

(27). Sometimes, they would be involved in fighting such as they chased, fought and bit to the boy who was supposed to go away leaving his wife at maternal home. In this way, he spends his school days with care free activities.

In this essay, " The Deadly Days" he explains about the difficulties he had faced due to famine from the middle of the years. He writes "The days were really troublesome. sometimes I and my mother would sleep hungry" (30). This family faces terrible condition those days. It was very pitiful situation. They had to pawn the old traditional plates and dishes inherited from his grandfather's times, old beautifully carved bronze bowls, vessels, water pots at Dharan Bazar, to buy a small he- goat, some rice and spices for Dashain. In this way, they had to pass those days in troubles. It seems that he had passed very critical situations at that time.

In his next writings, " The Madhes Rivalries", he talks about the kind of rivalry with the tribal lords. He states that "The number of new immigrants was remarkably increasing . . . and there was a common feeling for the common problems. Therefore, we had a good strength to be able to protect from the animosities of the hostile groups. Sometimes we had internal confrontation with other tribal groups. There were several such real stories of villainy, enmity and murders" (34).

In the same way, Mr. Pokharel's next writings, "The Oxen Came Back!" he writes about the theft of oxen from his village conspired by own villagers and after deep investigation done, it was found in the village areas grazing in the field. He says "Surprisingly enough after three days of action taken against Langru (dacoit), early in the morning we too found our oxen comfortably grazing in a nearby field just above the hedges"(45). In this way, they would find the real thieves and robbers who had good

connections with Indian robbers. In fact, they are given many tortures in the Madhes by decoits and thieves. They got rid of them at last.

Pokharel expresses his experiences of his higher education in "My Higher Education" talking about his struggle life to support his family members and his college fees. He continues his study in Morang college of Biratnagar. He states "Being the eldest of a good number of children of my parents, I had lots of responsibilities at home"(49). After his completion of B.A., he comes to Kathmandu and joins M.A. in English. But he suffers a lot economically. So he starts tuition classes to junior students for economic support. In the midst of difficulties he completes his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees.

In his next writings "My One-Sided Feelings of Love" Pokharel explains about his one sided love for beautiful lady that never becomes successful. Hence, he suffers a lot because of unsuccessful love affair. He becomes mad like but he controls himself thinking about his responsibility for his family. He tries his best to influence her but in vain. He wastes much valuable time for love and he can't focus on his studies well. He writes that "For some years during the moments of my suffering I thought that I should not have met her. But now I felt that my sufferings have been shaped up as catharsis, and all sweet and sour past reminiscences have turned out to be a good creative stock in my mind" (66).

In the same way his next essay, "How So Soon I Forgot the Blow!" is the combination of the same tragic love-story. He becomes frustrated and confused a lot for future. Later he decides to get marry with his own student and settles his life. After getting married, he becomes fresh and happy and spends his life smoothly with love and veneration. He almost forgets his past unsuccessful love story but tries to write about it from his memories. He writes, "I will love her as powerfully and passionately as I did. I

will keep her always fresh in my mind. Even if she refused me several times, I should remain true to my love to her as my love was always true and genuine" (70).

Pokharel in his writings, "I Escaped Death" writes about the dangers events faced in life long. He says that "I feel that the natural consequences have saved him from the fatal dangers, and I know that the same consequences and coincidences will one day take my life too" (80). He further says, "writer Thomas Hardy is right to believe that the hostile forces are always playing against us" (80).

In his next writing, "A Strange Journey of Life Philosophy" Pokharel reports the experiences, ideas and philosophies of renowned writers, philosophers, politicians and thinkers. He comes to learn many more things from their interviews and interactions. He knows about the life philosophy of different wise people and learns the art of life. He attends the talk programs of B.P. Koirala in Biratnagar. Mr. Pokharel collects the precious expressions of different people in his diary. He says that "I got a good amount of collection from some renowned writers and poets like Bashu Shashi, Kisore Pahadi" (97).

In the same way Pokharel talks through "My encounters with the politicians" about some of his significant attempts about meeting great leaders for their expressions. He states that "It is a good idea to follow the precepts and styles of those great sages who devoted most of their time to creating the philosophy of life for others for the betterment of all mankind" (101). Here Pokharel has talked about the life style and devotion of great leaders who have done lots of things for the nation to bring up to this level.

In his next essay "With Poets, Writers and Philosophers" Pokharel talks about the strange journey of sharing great persons for their expressions on life philosophy. He says that he meets to the different great personalities like Osho Rajneesh, a famous American

philosopher Richard Rorty, a great scholar of Nepali culture Satya Mohan Joshi, famous novelist Lain Singh Wangdel and poet Madhav Ghimire, the poet of Era Siddhicharan Shrestha, leaders Tanka Prasad Acharya, Matrik Prasad Koirala etc. and learns many things from their lifestyles and philosophies. He further states "Every human life above the common features with that of other lives has its unique imagination and sensibilities" (121). Mr. Pokharel has gained ample satisfaction from his journey. He further says "I am not the one who gains satisfaction from the seclusion or solitariness, but I am man who enjoys intermingling and sharing" (121-122).

Similarly, Pokharel in his next essay "The Fights for Freedom" writes that "the people who fought for democracy, gained it, lost it again gained it and are again losing and fighting again for getting it back. Democracy has been something like a magic ball which people of Nepal gain by a violent revolution and lose it" (123).

He further says that "Every age demands its own reliable charismatic, competent and comprehensive leadership for the development of any political movement at its successful height and the same thing is going to happen in Nepal soon. The fights for freedom are still on for the achievement of still a higher form of democracy" (126).

In the same way, in his next writing "The Rigors" Pokharel reveals his involvement in politics as a simple supporter. He talks about the political conflict between the panchayat system and supporters of multi-party democracy. He discusses that the political scenario was very worse after the referendum. So being a witness of ups and downs of political scenario, he came to a conclusion that divinization of leader is very harmful for himself, for the people, for the country and for a revolutionary party, too. He further says that "Nepal does not need an over-smart leader as its executive head, but a straight forward, sincere and

devoted personality" (148).

In his writing "The Times I Wept" Pokharel says that "I have wept in my life probably for a countless times. Weeping is said to be the first language of human beings" (149). He further states "The news about the murder of poet Krishna Sen was really intolerable for me. On hearing about his murder I wept a lot all day and night long. And I wept a lot on hearing every story how my father died suddenly" (153). He explains about the importance of father as a family head and intolerable moments of his lost.

The above survey reveals Pokharel's attempt to portray different aspect of Nepalese society realistically. It shows that Mr. Pokharel is concerned with the quest of realism in his writing. It leads to the assertion that his novel *Beyond the Life Lines* represents the Nepalese Society realistically and presents a critique of its socio-cultural paradigm. This research work attempts to justify how the novel is such a representation.

The study begins with a short introduction of the writer and his background, introducing the political-cultural theories, and then presenting an in-depth analysis of the novel's plot and characters to show how it is a critique of the Nepalese Society. There will be three chapters, of which the first will present a survey of Mr. Pokharel's writings. The second chapter presents the analysis and the third chapter concludes the research.

Chapter II: *Beyond the Life-Lines*: A Cultural-Political Discourse

A cultural construct is a shared understanding of some aspects of the world that people of a specific culture understand that thing to exist. Although it sounds the same as culture, a cultural construct is a specific belief or understanding about something in the world. This does not mean cultural constructs do not exist; the reality part is less important since the social/ cultural and personal impacts of the shared understanding and meaning are more important. For example, gender is a culture construct, rather than innate in nature, because the specifics of how men and women behave can be observed to vary from one society to the next; gender roles are learned by being a member of a specific society, so gender is a cultural construct even if the way it is expressed in a specific cultural context is as though gender roles are innate in nature.

The "innateness" of gender is a part of the cultural construct; it is something that people in a certain culture agree on enough to develop expected patterns of behavior. Cultural studies designates a recent and rapidly growing cross-disciplinary enterprise for analyzing the conditions that affect the production, reception, and cultural significance of all types of institutions, practices and products among these literature is accounted "signifying practices." A chief concern is to specify the functioning of the social, economic and political forces and power structures that are said to produce the diverse forms of cultural phenomena and to endow them with their social meanings.

Cultural studies are devoted to the analysis and interpretation of objects and social practices outside the realm of literature and the other arts; these phenomena are viewed as endowed with meanings that are the products of social forces and conventions and that may

either express or oppose the dominant structures of power in culture. In theory, there is no limit to the kinds of things and patterns of behavior to which such an analysis of cultural texts may be applied, current studies deal with a spectrum ranging from the vogue of body-building through urban street, fashions, and from cross-dressing to the social gesture of smoking a cigarette.

Political constructivism is a method for producing and defending principles of justice and legitimacy. It is most closely associated with John Rawl's technique of subjecting our deliberations about justices to certain hypothetical constraints. Rawls argues that if all of us reason in the light of these conditions we could arrive at the same judgment about justice. Moreover, our shared judgment about justice is justified precisely because it resulted from suitably structured deliberative process.

This is constructivism's key idea, it holds that certain complex entities are constructed from more fundamental elements. Political readings in which they stress quasi-Freudian mechanisms such as 'suppression', 'displacement,' and substitution', by which they assert, a writer's political ideology inevitably disguises, or entirely elides into silence and 'absence,' the circumstances and contradictions of contemporary history. The primary aim of a political reader of a literary text is to undo these ideological disguises and suppressions in order to uncover its subtext of historical and political conflicts and oppressions which are the text's time, although covert or unmentioned subject matter.

The struggles against the remnants of patriarchy high caste chauvinism and feudal dominations and against the anomalies of love and relationship have taken a decisive mode in the backward villages of the hills and plains of Nepal along with the development of new consciousness. Any defence of an old irrational and illogical system by the pedantic

examples of myths, history and parables is useless. Ordinary local conflicts can also be solved by the arrangements of friendly games and marriages, but for the major social and political conflicts, the timely and practical assurances of social equality and political power sharing can have some useful meanings; otherwise even an eruption of a large amount of violence may not necessarily bring any effective solutions. At the height of the complications of events, when things become largely unrecordable, history gets naturally submerged into prehistory. Then only the human imaginations and sensibilities can work out as the real energies of life. The power gained by social hierarchies or the power by depriving others of their rights and privileges is undoubtedly a political power, because all power is a political power and all violence is a political violence. Even the violence seen between animals, birds and insects is solely with other dogs over a flesh or over a demanding female for sex is in a way to try to prove one's superiority by defeating and dominating the others, which is solely a political practice of power possession.

The concepts of high caste and low caste, the touchability and untouchability, and the aristocrats and the ordinary people are based on the amounts of power being used. By socially labelling someone as rights but also is curtailed with his/her sexuality. In this sense, the social rights, sexual rights, economics rights and any other rights amount to the political rights. At this point Marx and Foucault do not seem to differ much, but indirectly meet to agree that political power encompasses with the rest of other powers (55).

Therefore, history is propelled around the power politics from minute base structures to the magnified super- structures. The Nepalese society from its most backward stage to the present state of its growing consciousness is not an exception.

Insecurity, indeterminacy, uncertainty, humiliation and political short sightedness,

lack of commitments and unfair practices and a number of discrepancies in almost all areas have caused serious frustration and fugitive tendencies in the people. The corruptions, commissions and embezzlements in the government offices have made the situations worst. The politicians, parliamentarians and police and other security officers too have been badly engulfed into such unfair practices and in the heavy use of the back door devices.

Nepal experienced a large amount of bloodsheds in the recent years, but the people's expectations of the progressive transformations in the social and political systems have been badly betrayed by the political leaders. The centrally controlled feudal system for the last several hundred years lecherously sucked the people's blood to the maximum extent. The remnants of the feudal elements have not yet been totally uprooted. The so-called democratic and progressive forces too are not doing any significant works for the people to feel even slightly optimistic. The level of the suffering of the people have still been wider and wider, if not deeper. On the background of a large range of sufferings of the Nepalese societies, this novel has simply cast some cursory glances upon the apparent tensions and tendencies. Even then the descriptions are neither wholly sociological nor fully historical. The writer has tried to delineate multiple sufferings of the Nepalese society. The Sati system was probably the cruellest traditions.

Burning the wife alive with the dead husband on the funeral pyre in the name of the purity and eternal association sounds superficially farcical as well as penetratingly painful. There might be very few old people still living to tell the live stories of sati system today; however the marks of the system in the society are still dreadfully traumatic. The widows emancipated from the false tradition are still sufferings from many blind beliefs (56).

The sufferings of the punishments of the poor, helpless and deserted women on the false charges of witch and witch-crafts are still alarmingly formidable in the backward areas. The shamans' methods of driving away the so-called ghosts, spirits and witches from the bodies of the sick people even the cities areas are most tormenting, damaging and sometimes life taking also. To curb out a large number of deeply rooted nuisances, anomalies and ailments from the Nepalese society is still a very difficult task. The girls' trafficking by the agents and brokers to the Indian brothels and whore-houses is another big problems of Nepal. Many people from Nepali villages are hoaxed to the Indian cities for the sales of their kidneys and for their hardships by the brokers.

Human trafficking with the temptations of attractive employments for low level physical jobs in different countries by the agents and brokers is another dimension of exploitations. In the novel , there are two major characters, Apsara and Guna married at early age. Apsara helped her husband by her means, but Guna deceived her. Guna took her on a pilgrimage to India and left her in the train. A person helped her and married her. Coincidentally after many years, Guna and Apsara both met each other and expressed her deep sorrow over the shocking event. They finally accepted the new relationship.

Guna was captured by the rebels for his treacheries and corruptions, and was badly beaten. A rebel handed him over to Apsara who was searching him. Guna died the same night. After some crucial fight ,rebels came to the peace process and onto the power. The novel starts with the early marriage of Guna with Apsara. People were married so early on some social ,economical and cultural beliefs. It was believed that it would be pious if the daughter was given away by her parents to her husband much before her age of menstruation.

When Guna returned first time from Madhes to in-laws house on the way, he had been lean and thin by his studies and loneliness and he would recover his health by the reception and treatment at the in-laws house. His father in-law consulted astrologers for Guna and Apsara's good times and bad times. He asked the shamans, the person who used to treat people by their magic and incantation to perform their magic programs. They were asked to perform their medical practice to look into Guna's low health to get it better. In our society, still there are the people who call it a practice of blind beliefs. Some people still have a logic that shamans' magical performances are to be preserved as the psychological and cultural treatments of the people and basically for the people's entertainments on different occasions.

The villagers think that all the ills, deaths and mishaps that are taking place in the village are caused by the mistrusts and treacheries of the witches. The height of anger and excitement, the villagers get the witches to eat even the human excreta are the customary and conservative practices of shaman's presentations prevailed in the Nepalese societies. In the same way, swing fair, playing a game of kabbadi in a friendly manner to keep social harmony between people is another customary part of the Nepalese people. Similarly, gambling as a cultural inheritance practiced greatly in Nepalese culture in dashain festival.

In novel, the existence of nepotism also has been exposed prevailed in the then state. In those days, the government officers could employ their kinsmen in government officers quite easily as Guna's father-in-law found jobs at a post office where both husband and second wife of Guna would be working in the same table. Apsara's brother came to know that Guna was married with another lady and was living in her parents' house. In his extreme irritations he reported to the police about the possibility of the trick of the man

over his innocent sister. But Gune's second wife's father gave a pressure on the police administration to deactivate any of such complaints against him. The male- dominations, high caste chauvinism, mother- in -law's rule over the daughter -in -law, caste hierarchy, system of untouchability and touchability, and polygamy are the major characteristics of the old families of the high hills.

The novel depicts a realistic socio-economic caste and class based patriarchal Nepali society amidst fragile and turmoil political establishment. The narrative blends reality with imagination, and shows how humble hill youths get corrupted with their migration to the plains in pursuit of worldly gains. Guna and Apsara get married in their early teens in accordance to the practice prevalent among the hill people. Early and underage marriage is rampant among the people living over hills in Nepal. It has both socio and economic implication. Most of the people living in hills are below poverty line, and believe that early marriage brings free laborers in form of daughter-in-law who will take care of both field and household work: “Economically the family needed workers, and when the sons grew young, they were married as soon as possible” (11). Many minor couples are not aware of being married as they are never asked for their consent. It is the parents, particularly father, being the head of the family who decides when their children should get married. Parents take their daughters as a burden. Moreover, they believe that “it would be pious if the daughter was given away by her parents to her husband much before her age of menstruation” (11).

The hills of Nepal lack colleges and have a few high schools, and most of youths end up with matriculation, and parents feel privileged if their children get a teaching position in the local school. If their children get a job in the village school, they can help

their parents in cultivation and earn both money and social status. Guna is ambitious. After matriculation, Guna wants to go to the plains, the only option for him to get college education. However, for that he needs to seek the consent of his father who is “the supreme” (p. 11) in the family, and whose decision is final and binding in every family affair. Like other rural Nepali hill fathers, for Guna’s father, matriculation is enough to get a job of a primary level teacher in the local school. He outright rejects Guna’s request to allow him to go to Madhes to take admission in college:

“See, why do you think like that? Ten-pass is sufficient for you. If your brothers too study to your level, I will be happy and I think my duty to my sons is well fulfilled. I have talked to the head master of local primary school to give you the job there. He has promised me to give you the job. I will ask the school management committee to decide about it. They too must be positive that you are the first person from the village to teach in the local school . . . Having the job in school, you can have time to look after your family affairs, the management of the works, and the cattle and land cultivation. (12)

Pokharel shows an explicit dichotomy between old generation and new generation. Old generation, represented by Guna’s father, lead humble life and depend upon their limited cultivation for their living. They enjoy a close extended family. In contrast to them, new generation, manifested by Guna, are dreamers, and wish to cross their formidable life lines. They long to migrate to the plains where they have access to higher education and material prosperity. Guna refuses to shatter his dreams and defies his father. Apsara stands by him, and provokes him to run away to Biratnagar, the plains to fulfill his dreams:

If you really want to continue your study, I will help you. You should run away at night. I will give you my jewelleries . . . I will work so hard at home. They Guna's parents] will be pleased by my work, and will send you the money definitely. (12-13)

Apsara, well trained in the traditional role of a Nepali married woman, perceives her husband's happiness as her own. She gives her husband all her money, and rejoices awaited prospect of him with her:

Apsara prepared everything for Guna without any body's knowledge. She had a dream. She thought, "My husband will study more, and he will have a job in Madhes. Thereafter, he will take me to the place of his job, and I will be free from these hard works of the hill village forever. (18)

Guna escapes and descends into Biratnagar, a major city in the eastern part of Nepal. He takes admission in Morang College. He secures free lodging and earns some money to meet with his expenses by giving private tuition to a government official's children. The land mistress is worried about their young, immature daughter Samita's marriage. Guna establishes sexual relationship with Samita and weds her without the knowledge of his first wife to exploit the approach of Samita's father to secure a government job for himself:

A feature of the Nepali bureaucracy is the permeation of ascriptive allegiances at different levels of administrative hierarchy . . . when a member of a family attains a high status then the whole family including the members of his clan receives some benefits either in the form of appointments, promotions or transfers in the government or the

quasi-government enterprises . . . Nepotism and favoritism within the bureaucracy is not regarded as a malpractice, but as accepted social behaviour. (Upreti, 48)

Nepotism is very high in Nepali society. The people in bureaucracy often practise high level of nepotism, and secure government position for their kin and kith irrespective of their ability: “In those days the government officers could employ their kinsmen in the government offices quite easily” (50). Pokharel in a personal interview with the researcher highlights:

Nepotism is deeply rooted in the Nepalese society. The persons in power and high level offices favor their relatives for any entry, admissions and appointments. They protect their relatives from the troubles and crises. I have tried to show in my novel *Beyond the Life Lines* through some characters as the realistic and representative images of Nepalese politics and bureaucracy. (Personal communication)

Guna gets fascinated with the promises of a government job and a shelter in Samita’s parents’ house. Moreover, he takes his second marriage not offensive as polygamy is practice in his hill village: “If Apsara lived in the hill side village, he would manage them well too. It was not so unnatural to have two wives . . . The male domination, patriarchal justice system, and matrimonial hierarchy had no challenge. A man could have two-three wives on the strength of his property” (50- 54).

Guna gets a job together with Samita in a post office. He takes every precaution not to let either Apsara or Samita know that he is twice married. He keeps befooling Apsara that he is busy with his undergraduate studies. Nepali society clearly demarcates the gender

role between man and woman. Women are subjugated in the highly Patriarchal Nepali society: “In Nepal, women’s oppression is rooted in the feudal and semi feudal system of production. Women have not been able to inherit land on equal terms with men” (Onesto, 2005, p. 219). Onesto further highlights the social position of Nepali women that “It is said in this society that women should work according to the wishes of their fathers, their husbands, and their sons. This is how society treats women. Capitalism exploits women and gives them no equal rights in property and in other aspects of society” (167). A married woman must conform to her husband, and she should not let her laws to have grievances upon her: “There are narratives and grand narratives for the women to consider their husband as the god figures. The stories of Swasthani, Purana and other stories of the religious ceremonies were basically focused on the idea of the submissions of women to their husbands” (56).

Pokharel discusses the role of Patriarchy in Nepali society and subjugation of women who are forced and trained to accept males as their custodian:

Another deep-rooted anomaly of Nepalese society is patriarchy. The male in the family is dominant and decisive. The whole society moves around the axis of male centered concept. Females are just subservient to the males. Some years ago, a man could marry as many wives as he could keep, but a woman could never show any slight intimacy with any other person. The men’s power to suppress women made men arbitrary, unjust and cruel toward women. I have tried to show this harsh reality in my novel through the creation of oppressive characters. (Personal Conversation, December 15, 2016)

Apsara acts at the prescribed gender role and her maternal upbringing that she should always be loyal to her husband. She plays her gender role sincerely: “She had to cook meal, grind the corn and millet flour, and brush and wipe the floors and walls, shun the cattle for grazing and bring a basketful of grass and again prepare the meal and clean the pots and furnace” (52-53).

Apsara feels lonely in the absence of Guna. She misses Guna and finds separation from him unbearable. She does not feel being betrayed by Guna. However, she is unable to understand why he is indifferent to her. Unable to bear separation any longer, Apsara arrives at Biratnaga with her brother, Tirtha. Guna asks her to go back to the hill, but Apsara refuses. She emerges a strong feminist who wants a share in her husband’s prosperity: “She had a very strong desire to live with her husband when he wanted to study further. She supported him with money, with her moral, and with her mind and heart. Her husband for her was everything, so that she would not accept any proposal of separation from him anymore” (57).

Guna gets in trouble. He manages to cope with both wives by accommodating Apsara in a separate apartment. He tells Samita about Apsara. Samita gets into temper and makes it clear that he must leave Apsara: “If your first wife did not go to the hill side home, don’t you come to live with me?” (58). Guna does not want to lose his prospect being with Samita. He takes Apsara as an obstacle in the way of his success, and decides to get rid of her. He takes her to India on pretext of visiting pilgrimages, and abandons her in the train while she is asleep. Apsara horrifies when she wakes up. She finds her in an alien situation not knowing the Hindi language. Rajaram Yadav, who speaks some Nepali language, appears for her help. He promises to find Guna out. Having left with no option, Apsara

accompanies Rajaram in the alien place. Human sensibility plays a dominant role in the narrative, and establishes the fact that it crosses beyond the artificial boundary:

Another most important thing I have tried to present in my novel is human sensibility. I know that it makes the fiction writing powerful as well as universal. The delicacies of heart and mind, the intimate feelings between persons, and the evocation of sympathy and empathy are some of the aspects that my novels try to manifest. I claim, the distinct features of my novels are that they touch the people's sentiment and move through the depth of social reality without any superficial notion and unnatural presentation. In my novels, human sensibilities cause everything to move. (Pokharel, Personal Conversation, December 15, 2016)

To Rajaram, Apsara resembles his departed wife: "Rajaram deeply looked into Apsara's face which resembled the face of his wife. The memory of his dead wife overpowered into his mind" (70).

Rajaram and Apsara look for Guna in Bangalore, Puttaparti, and finally return to Biratnagar where they find Guna married to Samita: "Apsara had guessed that Guna was lost in India, but surprisingly enough in Biratnagar she suddenly caught sight of Guna walking together with another lady in perfectly smiling mood"(74). Apsara gets disillusioned and enraged to see how far a man can fall from virtue: "She realized to what extent a person can be so selfish. Her respect to Rajaram doubled and finally decided to accept him as her new husband" (74-75). Apsara marries Rajaram, and they return to India.

Guna makes a story and tells Apsara's family that she has eloped with her secret

lover on pilgrimage. Apsara's brother, Tirtha, does not believe Guna, and lodges a complaint to the police against Guna accusing him of deliberately abandoning Apsara to live with his second wife, but the complaint is nullified by Samita's father: ". . .Guna's second wife's father gave a pressure on the police administration to deactivate any of such complaints against him" (77).

The novel reaches a turning point after a span of twenty-five years. Guna and Apsara meet in Bangalore when Apsara's son, Suman by Rajaram and Guna's daughter, Samira from his second marriage get married with each other. Guna, now a widower tries to get back Apsara who is a widow. He cunningly tells Apsara that he has lost her by an accident:

I lost you in the train. I missed you. I had gone to fetch water, but the train moved away. I could not catch it back. I missed the train. You cannot guess how much I searched you. When I failed, I went back frustrated. I was really sorry to have lost you. Now I still repent that I should still have searched you some days and weeks more. (92)

Apsara sees through his deception, and retorts him: ". . . you fabricated the news that I ran away from you. I escaped from you. Do you know how much I suffered? . . . Darkness prevailed everywhere around me even in the brightest sunny day" (92-93). Apsara further counters Guna: "I worked so hard for your family right from my age of fourteen. I scarified everything for you. I saved every penny for you and for your studies, I had a dream. I had a dream. I loved you very much, more than myself. In return as a reward from you for all those devotions and sacrifices of mine, I was left in the train" (94).

Guna asks for forgiveness about abandoning Apsara on the train and asks her to be

with him since Samita died of breast cancer. Apsara refuses Guna's offer but promises to care for his daughter like a mother: "No, we cannot live together. We cannot regain that old relationship now. We are on a new relationship now. I am in the responsibility of my son and your daughter" (95).

The narrative turns to the Maoist People's War which ". . . was initiated on 13 February, 1996 . . . in the wave-like forms horrifying the domestic and foreign enemies and creating hurricane to shake the world" (Pasang, 2008, p. 2). The war against the old feudal establishment is waged to end caste, gender and ethnic based discrimination and oppression, and initiate social and welfare programs and change. The Maoist People's War aims to overthrow the government and establish a people's republic against the backdrop of a socialist society: "The People's War was aimed at overthrowing the government, doing away with the monarchy, and establishing a people's republic" (Bhattarai, 2008, p. 71). The Maoists get support from commoners frustrated and disappointed by widespread corruption, extreme poverty and social discrimination: "Many members of the marginalized groups actively participated in the insurgency, which grew rapidly and spread to most parts of the country. More than 13,000 people died, tens of thousands were displaced, and thousands were hurt and maimed" (Lawoti 3).

Nepal has a long history of feudalism, nurtured by the Rana Regime and Shah Dynasty that nurtures a handful oligarchy that monopolizes the political, economic, social, and cultural powers. The centralized political system also fails to address the genuine grievances of people even after the 1990 political changes, and the country remains politically unstable, socially divided, and economically deprived: "The post-1990 years also saw the continuation of cultural discrimination and political exclusion of marginalized

. . . The caste hill Hindu elite males overwhelmingly dominated influential position in the state and society” (Lawoti 2). The multi-party system disillusioned Nepalis who were aspiring for a better life and opportunities. The gap between the haves and the have-nots widened. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening. The majority of the population does not have a share in the governance; only people in the urban areas and close to power centers have access to the state resources. Many youths get attracted to the revolution and see the need for class struggle to achieve equality. Majority of people feel being betrayed by politicians: “the political leaders in the government had become corrupted and did not represent the people . . . the main source of corruption and repression and problem in society is because of the reactionary state power and system. And unless we get rid of it we cannot true” (Onesto 19).

The Maoist People’s War addresses extreme socio-cultural inequality among numerous linguistic, ethnic, religious, racial, caste and regional groups, and succeeds in attracting hundreds of margins. The Maoist Insurgency also springs from the frustrations of commoners resulting from irresponsible and visionless post-1990 democratic leaders, and corrupt bureaucracy. The insurgency transforms the psyche of both the nation and people. The People’s War reaches its apex as it addresses the marginalized issues of the nation. The marginalized populations for the first time demand their agendas to be heard. The Maoist Insurgency addresses the grievances and angers of Nepali people being divided exclusively into the high and low classes, the haves and have-nots, the high and low caste by the feudal monarchy for over centuries. The fierce Maoist rebellion was a by-product of the dissatisfaction and suppressed angers of majority of Nepali who were exploited by the monolithic, centralized oligarchy: “The rulers of Nepal never thought about these

possibilities? They exploited the hills and the hill side people, but never distributed the significant number of national budgets on the developmental projects over these wavy lands?” (Pokharel *Beyond* 111). Scores of Nepalis from different ethnicities Madhesis, dalits, Moslems, Tharus, women and other oppressed populations stand against the old regime which oppressed them for centuries without hearing “the voices of the people of the distant hills and plain lands,” and remaining “deaf to the moans of the minorities, ethnic communities, women, oppressed areas and exploited classes” (137).

The People’s War gained tremendous mass support: “The Maoist insurgency is a product of Nepal’s failed governance, feudalism and backwardness . . . The guerrilla movement began with just two guns and a dozen armed cadres, but within a few years, the movement had spread throughout the mountainous country, controlling nearly 80 per cent of the territory” (Roy 2). The war between the autocratic state and the deprived populations was inevitable: “Conflict is inevitable when there is leadership bankruptcy and poor governance, which is related to the structure, function and policies of the state, and, above all, about the socio-economic injustice in a plural society” (Gurung et al. 3). Pokharel says in another novel, *Rebels of the Mountains*: “The People’s War attracts common masses as “all sectors of life have become weaker and weaker, and the traditional democratic forces are plunged into more and more corruption and anti-people and anti-activities” (80).

Tirtha joins the Maoist Movement to avenge Guna for deserting Apsara: “After realizing that his sister was mercilessly left in India by his so-called brother-in-law, and the complaints were not heard by any level of state judiciary, Tirtha had left home for joining the rebel group almost for the same cause” (104). Another purpose of Tirtha to turn a Maoist rebel is to fight against the autocratic monarchy to eliminate class and caste

discrimination in Nepali society deprived of the social, economic, and political rights:

The excessive conservativeness in culture and tradition in the old Nepalese society almost kept every possibility of development intact and motionless. Moreover, the injustices, dominations and oppressions upon the innocent people pushed the society back to the old ages. There were some flickers of tussles appearing sporadically on occasions. Once an iron smith was badly beaten by the high caste men in an eastern hill village on an accusation of that he drank water directly from a tap, which was being used by the high caste men. (81)

The low caste, women, poor and other margins join the Maoist party and wage an armed war against the system: “The revolutionary party promised to support them with physical and moral strength. Then the revolutionary cadres trained the villagers of the untouchable castes and indigenous races. Some young men of the high castes with the positive thinking too joined it” (86). The Maoist movement gains high popularity: “The revolutionaries gained more and more popularity and people’s power. And thereafter, it took a height in the full swing of a violent war between the government’s armed forces and the revolutionary army with attacks and counter attacks continuing for some years” (88).

Guna gets a new government position as District Magistrate and is transferred to a Maoist affected rural area. He is taken into custody by the rebels and sent to a labor camp. Tirtha is the vice-commander of the rebels. Guna does not give up his possibility of escape and a new glamorous life with yet another wife: “If I escape from here from their grip, I have got a lot of property, two buildings, the rent and the prestige. I can still enjoy my charismatic life. I can still marry and live a life” (104).

Tirtha physically assaults him, and Guna's health degrades: "Guna in the rebels' health shelters too did not recover his health. He suffered from one after another problem. He had a continuous cold, cough and fever" (107). The rebels contact Samira who sends Apsara to free Guna from the Maoists. Basu, a young rebel and former lover of Samira, carries Guna across the hill on his back to handover him to Apsara. He takes a great risk as the Royal Army is patrolling the villages looking for Maoist rebels. In response, the Nepalese government launched major campaign to try and stop the insurgency. According to a 1998 US State department report, "Police reaction to the People's War insurgency led to incidents of unwarranted force against prisoners and noncombatants, and police committed numerous human rights abuses . . . more than 600 guerrillas and villagers had been killed by the government in the first three years of fighting." (Onesto 13). Basu asks Guna to tell the security forces they are father and son in case they are detained. However, Guna, "the agent of the state power," (113) does not want to help Basu:

If the Royal Army finds me and I will identify myself as the government officer in the rebels' hostage and ask them to lift me in the helicopter for my treatment. I will then safely escape from the rebel's capture. But what will happen to this man who is carrying me on his back? If they identify him as a member of the rebels' group, they will either kill him or send him to their custody. I don't care what happens to him. (117)

The battle between the rebels and the Royal Nepal Army grows fierce, and the civilians get trapped in cross firing. The rebels storm the district headquarters, set government offices on fire, raid banks and kill many security personnel. In retaliation, the security forces kill many rebels. The battle causes huge causality: "Beginning in February

1996, and lasting until just last year, 2006, Nepal experienced a revolution resulting in the transformation of hundreds of thousands of lives and an entire political system. The cost in human lives as of February 2006, has been estimated at approaching 15,000 mostly non-combatants” (Dixit 3).

The narrative has a dramatic turning as Apsara runs into Guna, and Basu handovers Guna to her. Guna realizes his nearing death. He confesses his crime and begs Apsara for forgiveness: “. . . I confess. Forgive me . . . You projected me. You raised me. But I deceived you” (132). Guna offers Apsara some portion of his property as compensation. He asks her to donate the property earned by corruption to charity organizations. Apsara forgives him for his sin: “I have forgiven you long ago. I forgive you forever” (133). Guna dies in Apsara’s arms. Apsara hangs Guna’s photograph next to Rajaram’s, hence marking reconciliation through redemption. Thus, the narrative shows how earthly temptation makes a pure soul to fall from his virtue. It points out that material hunger demeans a virtuous soul. It does not assume happiness. It may look attractive in its appearance, but it gradually degrades human virtue and makes him do vices. The novel illustrates that human sensibilities heal all the wounds and make it possible for two souls to reconcile with each other even if irreparable damage is done to one party. It transcends race, linguistic, hatred and worships humanity. Guna is an example of how he falls from a pure soul to a degenerated individual who deserts his illiterate loyal wife in an alien place in order to secure materialistic gains for himself. However, material prosperity does not give him stability, and he dies peacefully in the arms the abandoned wife who turns out to be his savior, and helps him attain redemption.

Chapter Three: Reconciliation

From this study, it can be seen that Pokhrel's novel 'Beyond the life line' reflects social injustice, oppression, political, and social anomalous condition in Nepalese society. Class hierarchy is consolidated by the concept of social oppression. This study has observed the fight against social injustice, exploitation and domination. Characters take part in social conflict through their actions, dialogues and discussion and this is based on political aspects. Apsara, Guna, Tirtha and Rajaram take the part of the then Nepalese society. Mr. Pokhrel has shown the reunion between different characters at the end of the novel that reflects the clear example of reconciliation. Guna's expiation comes in the form of confession and humility bred from the necessity of circumstances as well as a genuine recognition of the villainy he committed both against his wife and the society he lived in, and a readiness to redeem himself by way of compensating for those whom he had wronged. Coincidentally after many years, Guna and Apsara both met each other and expressed their deep sorrow over the shocking event. They finally accepted the new relationship. In the same way, swing fair, playing a game of kabbadi in a friendly manner to keep social harmony between people is another customary part of the Nepalese people. Similarly, gambling as a cultural inheritance practiced greatly in Nepalese culture in Dashain festival. The power gained by social hierarchies or the power by depriving others of their rights and privileges is undoubtedly a political power, because all power is a political power and all violence is a political violence. The Nepalese society from its most backward stage; feudal and conservative society to the present state; advanced society is in its growing consciousness.

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