

Multicultural Ethos in BP Koirala's *Sumnima*

This research paper studies the multicultural ethos in Bisweshwar Prasad Koirala's novel *Sumnima*. The Nepali version of novel was first published in the year 1970 and the English translation by Taranath Sharma used in this study was published in 2005. Writer's politics of liberal representation anticipates inclusive strategy in order to promote the issue of multi-ethnic ethos. The novel presents the higher social prestige of the Brahmins in the beginning when the prince-in-hunting speaks to protect the sanctity of their rituals by denying Bhillas to slaughter cows in their surroundings. When Somdatta goes through strict penance for knowledge, it leads to nothing except the degeneration of his own body which later results in the failure of procreative power. No rituals can help him to restore his ability of procreation. It is only after Sumnima takes him to the lap of nature and immerse him in the human pond, he is psychological and bodily revived. It dismantles the hierarchy of the Brahminic practices and shows that ethnic rituals and practices of Kirant community are equally powerful. Such a representation is his conscious strategy to reduce the hierarchal construction between the Brahmin and Kirant ethnic cultures presented in the novel.

The story moves around the love affair between a Kirant girl Sumnima and a Brahmin boy Somdatta. BP Koirala uses the third person narrative technique in most of the places. Somdatta is a hardcore devotee of the god. He undergoes hard penance to get divine power. Sumnima is from Kirant ethnic background; she enjoys high freedom, and does not face restriction for love and sexuality. She openly proposes Somdatta when they meet as adolescents. Somdatta goes to Koshi bank for grazing the cow. Sumnima also visits the riverbank regularly. After frequent meetings, they develop interest in one another but Somdatta's Brahminic values stop him from any

physical or emotional initiatives.

Later, Somdatta commits to a life of a celibate observing strong penance. After his completion of his spiritual practice, his parents get him married to a religious girl named Puloma from a Brahmin family. As husband and wife, they collaborate in every ritual practices. Later, they also attempt to produce a child of theirs but unfortunately, Puloma is not able to conceive despite different attempts. They did not have an emotional attachment and their sexual relationship was based on the idea that sexual intercourse is just for the means of reproduction and not bodily joy or satisfaction.

So, Somdatta also started thinking about his emotional sharing with Sumnima when they were young. Puloma also thought of a Bhilla boy who used to live near her maternal home when she was a young girl. Rather than the real person with whom they shared the bed and the house, they started taking pleasure in thinking about the people they once met or saw. One day, Somdatta goes to meet Sumnima to her village. He narrates his problem and his frustration. Sumnima's father is a traditional healer. He prepares for necessary treatment for Somdatta and instructs his daughter Sumnima accordingly. In the suggestion of Bijuwa, Sumnima takes Somdatta for a herbal treatment in a human pond. After that human pond treatment, Somdatta feels as if his body is revived.

Somdatta goes back home in the appearance of a Bhilla boy with a revived strength and is able to enjoy his sexual relationship with his wife Puloma thinks herself she is Sumnima. Puloma also receives him welcomingly thinking him to be the same Bhilla boy from her childhood. Puloma is finally conceived and begets a child. Sumniam, on the other hand, is separated from Somdatta and she finally marries a man from her own community and becomes the mother to a daughter.

At the end of the novel, Somdatta's son becomes an orphan and Sumnima takes him to her care. Moreover, he becomes a friend to Sumnima's daughter. When these two young children reach the age of marriage, they are attracted to each other and finally get married to one another. It challenges the existing caste hierarchy and shows a process of assimilation and acculturation.

Koirala's *Sumnima* is widely read in Nepal and has attracted lots of criticisms. Vishwanath Sharma argues that this novel is an amalgamation of two cultural beliefs. He views that "the confluence of Kirant culture and Hindu philosophy" (214). Hindu philosophy considers "the soul" as an eternal entity; it achieves some celestial merits and matter of divine power. Whereas Kirant culture simply considers "the body" as a matter of reality. Live reality and concreteness are matter of culture.

Similarly, Deepak Shimkhada shows the theme of communal harmony, "It is Koirala's wishful desire to bring communal harmony" (1060). In the phase of ethnic revival, the writer wants to represent communal harmony by altering the traditional mode of representing the ethnic groups. The writing favors ethnicity and weaker section of society. "The metaphor of the sky and the earth is the same the Hindu gods of the heaven and the mother goddess of the earth who dependent upon each other" (1060).

Bhanubhakata Kandel also discusses about the ethnic consciousness in the novel. He writes, "It discusses the issue of minority, plurality of meaning in cultural practices, cultural differences, and ethnic consciousness through innocent characters, among others" (23). It means role of Sumnima and Bijuwa is presented as conscious pioneers of the indigenous Kirant community. The text presents characters consciousness on their identity and existence. Kandel views, "Koirala implicitly and explicitly discussed the ethnic consciousness of the people through different

characters and different circumstances” (30). Showing Sumnima victorious in different occasions of the novel makes it more relevant as a multicultural text.

Lal Rapacha talks on ethnocentrism in *Sumnima*. Ethnicity is a contested concept which is based on binary with other social standards. So he argues, “*Sumnima* assume mere propaganda on ethnocentrism where dichotomies like ‘Aryan versus non-Aryan,’ ‘body versus Soul,’ ‘Religion of God versus Religion of Beasts,’ ‘wild Bhillas and Kirant versus cultured Bahun” (206). This argument supposes there is no real basis for multicultural ethos. For him, ethnocentrism is just propaganda because binary opposition does not match such idea.

In the above commentaries, have dealt to different issues guide by different scholar point of view. Sharma poses binaries between the soul and the body, Shimkhada says writer wishful desire of communal harmony, Kandel shows social consciousness of ethnic minorities, and the binary of social groups and so on. Besides these arguments, I want to show departure from them. Because of Koirala makes a conscious narrative strategy which liberal representation through including character from other ethnic groups. Deconstruct to the dominant Brahmin culture as well as presenting equally to Kirant culture. He dismantles the fabricated gap between the two communities, which is no value in contemporary time. It is abundantly changeable. Therefore, this paper strongly advocates multicultural ethos is in-depth crux thought in the text and application of writer. Thus, as the same kind of account that means multicultural ethos carefully collect by it.

This study uses the concept of multiculturalism with reference to discussions by different scholars including James Trotman, Terrence Turner, Bhikhu Parekh Rajeev Bhargava, and Mahendra Lawoti. Multiculturalism is a contested term. It has been used to indicate a specific social and cultural school of thoughts that adopts the

liberal and inclusive policy of cultural amalgamation. Though multiculturalism is not a new phenomenon, this received prominence during identity-based social and political movements both in global and Nepali context. The development in the transport and international trade that led to trans-cultural and transnational migration gave birth to new multicultural societies. It influences every human life and produces cozy atmosphere in which two different cultures co-exists and contribute to the process of acculturation. The demerits of such multicultural societies are cultural crisis, ethnic dispute, and religious riots, which was a commonplace phenomenon in early twentieth century. But later in the middle of the twentieth century, emphasis was given to the idea of cultural harmony, embracement of ethnic diversity and the acceptance of religious differences. International human rights documents codified such respect for differences through the concept of equality and non-discrimination. Terence Turner in his book *Anthropology and Multiculturalism* points out: “Multiculturalism is one manifestation of the postmodernist reaction to the de-legitimization of the state and the erosion of the hegemony of the dominant culture in advanced capitalist countries” (416).

Multiculturalism avoids the term ‘them’ and ‘us’ it means, dismantle hegemonic feature of dominant culture. It dismiss to single cultural values. there is no sense of separateness, there might be everyone in cluster form. In other words, it defends cultural rights of every group as well as individual. It does not portray the groups with opposite ends but expects to develop bridge and understanding among cultures. In his, book *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, Bhikhu Parekh says, “It is neither a political doctrine nor a philosophical issue but actually a perspective on as way of viewing human life. Increasing cultural diversity focuses on the promotion of rights for different religion and cultural groups.

The rights for cultural groups form basis for multiculturalism” (59). It expects interaction and communication between different cultures to enrich the culture as a whole. It provides an opportunity to individual or group of a culture to preserve his or their identity and permits him or them to express freely. James Trotman in his book *Multiculturalism: Roots and Realities* states:

Multiculturalism is valuable because it uses several disciplines to highlight neglected aspect of our social history, particularly the histories of women and minorities..... and promotes respect for the dignity of the lives and voices of the forgotten. By closing gaps, by raising consciousness about the past, multiculturalism tries to restore a sense of wholeness in a postmodern era that fragments human life and thought. (66)

Multiculturalism is a school of thought that advocates society to provide parallel status to distinct cultural and religious groups. No culture is entirely perfect or any other culture entirely worthless. Cultures evolve over times and this process has continued. Multiculturalism is a term which describes the coexistence of many cultures in a locality without any one culture dominating the region by making the broadest range of human differences acceptable to the largest number of people, and most significantly multiculturalism seeks to overcome racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. Bhikhu Parekh, however, comments: “Multiculturalism is, in fact, not about minorities but is about the proper terms of relationship between different cultural communities, which means that the standard by which the communities resolve their differences” (13).

In case of problems of multiculturalism, Rajeev Bhargava points out:

Multiculturalism is egalitarian but it can also be hierarchical, and is liberal but also authoritarian. So, an advocacy of multiculturalism is not exactly free of

problems, some of these are easily explicated. First, it tends to essentialism and hardens identities that generate radical exclusions of people. Second, by its encouragement of particularity, it appears to deepen divisions and undermine the common foundation necessary for a viable society. Third, it supports aggregative community power over individual freedom and by according equal right to oppressive cultures, it corrodes values of liberal democracy. (qtd. in Deb 94)

I also consider Mahendra Lawoti's ideas on ethnic inclusion and multiculturalism based on Nepalese context. He mentions how ethnic minorities are excluded from the social and political mainstream. Lawoti view, "In contemporary Nepal, gender, caste, and ethnicity are major defining categories and sources of individual identity" (71). He believes that the problem with the cultural harmony is that the state and the society in general are indifferent to the issue of marginal people, ethnic people, and even women. Exclusion is not desirable in a multicultural society because it perpetuates inequality, injustice and threatens to unleash large-scale ethnic violence. Moreover, the issue of inclusion is more silent in multicultural societies because multi-ethnic values and experiences are diverse.

The strength of the novelist is that he is able to give the perspective of a Kirant girl, Kirant Bijuwa and Bhillas as well. He presents inner psyche of both male and female and also different ethnicities. His story advocates the weaker section and indigenous practice of ethnic minority in a liberal voice. It helps develop multiple ethnic moralities. It also hints at a positive response towards other ethnic cultural practice. The reason of ethnic revival was to contribute to the discourse of identity and redefining Nepali nation.

The novel presents Brahmin and Kirant/ Bhillas as separate ethnics groups. It

also shows the distinction between the Aryans and the non-Aryans. However, Sumnima identifies herself as “a Kirant daughter” (7). On the other, Somdatta says, “I’m Somdatta, son of Suryadatta, a Brahmin belong to the Aryan stock” (7). What is interesting here in the identification is Sumnima identifies herself from her mother while Somdatta identifies himself from the father’s lineage.

The novel describes the diverse culture of Brahmin and Kirant ethnicities which results in the emergence of third space because third space allows assimilation and harmony in the society. The liberal perspective towards the universe opens up the possibility for cultural reconciliation. Koirala seems to consciously create a new cultural space through the amalgamation of different cultural groups as he shows in the end through Sumnima’s adaptation of Somdatta’s son, and later by the marriage between a Brahmin boy and a Kirat girl. Such assimilation promotes the emergence of multicultural tendency. Indeed, the outcome of continue changing paradigm marriage tends to harmony in multicultural society. Moreover, interactional presentation of socio-cultural convention restore to religious tolerance, communal harmony, and cultural reconciliation even it show ethical sincerity among multiple ethnicities. Thus, the novel constructs assumption about third space proposes to multicultural ethos.

Consider the following lines from the novel:

The hermitage was getting destroyed in a way. Now there was no fire sacrifice and other religious rituals were also not performed. As no repairs works were done for a long time, the roofs of the huts were leaking at the places. The yard was full of weed and had turned into a wild places. The stones paved on the sitting platform turned in the front and all around of the hermitage were getting loose and failing. (106)

This extract presents declination of Brahmin culture. It is quite unaffordable because

generations tend to attach with another kind of socio-cultural morality. It shows that cultural practices that are not rooted on the realities of the nature do not sustain for long.

Lawoti considers ethnicity as a major defining category of identity in Nepali context. Multicultural society concerns gender, ethnicity, religion and other categories that show the composition of a social structure. In this text, the novelist describes two major ethnicities which is the basis of their collective identity and they seemingly stand in opposition to each other. But, in essence, they come together in a human ground. And very consciously, the Brahmin author has given this humanitarian agency to the cultural spirit of Kirant community. This flexibility and reversing the traditional depiction of the Aryan-Kirant dichotomy has promoted the multicultural ethos in the novel.

Sumnima and Bijuwa also are shown in roles who accommodate and respect the difference. Sumnima does not impose anything on Somdatta or later to his son. Similarly, Bijuwa, who is also the religious leader of his community, do not avenge the prince's orders in order to keep their ritual alive in order to give space to the Brahman ascetic family.

Similarly, according to Watson, religion is productive convention in multicultural society. It often formulates social harmony through religious tolerance and sometime creates conflict due to interference (107). *Sumnima* presents debate and turmoil of religious cult. It counters the Brahmin religious values. It shows oppositional view towards other religion but it is genuine production of multicultural arena such like conflict and tolerance. In the novel, Sumnima views, "You destroy the structure of nature and dig an empty pit within you and when you drive away the nature, your sin grows into that terrible pit. You hate nature and religion will progress,

but religion is false bird flapping with false wings in the empty sky” (Koirala 32). The lines spoken by Sumnima slap the existence of Brahmin religion, which reveals the meaninglessness of certain value system. She regards nature has supreme ability to nurture all creatures. There already exists the law of nature. Violating the law of nature only invites disaster so everyone is expected to follow the law of nature. Even it balances straightforward each every circumstance rather created religious philosophy or certain ethics. Sumnima does question to the existence of Brahmin culture because it is an untactful and quite opposite with natural law as well as existence of people. The words “false bird” “false flapping” and “false sky” outlines to temporal values of Brahmin religious existence. It was formulated by a few in the past which probably was quite afforded or suitable for them. But now, it appears to be absurd and inappropriate. Our social and cultural values should not undermine the values of the human beings. They should be able to promote humanity. Otherwise, such value system will be questioned and go out of practice in the longer run. In the novel, Somdatta’s rituals are focused in making him wiser. But the question is if he continues to live in the jungle, how the humanity will benefit even if he becomes wise. Is it appropriate to ignore the reality of the present time only for the sake of life after death? Juxtaposed to the Brahmin culture, the novelist has presented a different culture of Kirants. They give emphasis on the present life. For them, happiness in this life is important. They want to see the people around them happy. Sumnima and Bijuwa do whatever they can to help others. In a largely Hindu dominated society, Koirala presents a situation where the minority Kirant population is more accommodative. They give space to Brahmin family and help them settle in the jungle nearby their village.

In the novel, when the prince summons the Kiraants and the Bhillas to order

them to stop giving sacrifices of animals, it angers some Bhilla boys. They intend to fight and rather killed instead of following the orders of the prince. But, Bijuwa deals this situation very tactfully. He shows his tolerance. As the head priest of Kirant community, he comprises to shift their place of sacrifice to a different place and allow the Brahmin family continue their practice according to their values. He says Kirant and Bhillas have defeated from the past but they have always favored peace. Brahmin and Kshatriya concurred from the past. Then, he starts to fix another place for butcher pigs and cows rather than going for hostile war. Bijuwa tells that to “go to war is like a destruction of our people” (15). It shows religious tolerance, humanity, and liberalism that capture the whole essence of Kirant/Bhillas cultural practices. Here, Koirala presents his multicultural ethos through the humanitarian role of Bijuwa and Sumnima.

Brahmin religious cult emphasizes spirit and divinity and Kirant religious cult emphasizes on natural world's reality. And these worldviews determine their course of action. Koirala is successful in showing how people of different world view and cultural practices struggle to find a common way of existing together. The differences of culture define their identity as a cultural or social group, but the common point of humanity allows them to respect the differences and accept them as fellow human beings. This is very strongly presented in Koirala's novel. The idea of inclusion and reconciliation between cultural groups is well presented in the novel.

Bijuwa has always given value to human body. When Somdatta's religious sacrifices fail to give them a child, he goes to refuge of the Kirant priest or the Bijuwa. And Bijuwa clearly says that his incapability of fathering a child is because he has undermined the body. Reproduction is the function of the body. And Somdatta has ignored the key component that helps in reproduction. This scene is a good

example where the Brahmin ascetic finally accepts the Kiranti rituals which he earlier considered is 'lowly'. On the other hand, Bijuwa and Sumnima are very kind and human enough to support him in reviving his bodily powers through natural healing process. Bijuwa explains about the importance of body in this way:

Our body is not a machine, nor a medium, nor a means. It is itself a goal, an objective. You should not neglect and hate it. When the physical body of man is devoid of its juice, the desire of pleasure and feeling of enjoyment, it is lifeless; and it cannot bear children. The body is not a lifeless emotionless tool only. A baby is the result and proof of copulation do you understand Brahmin.

(56)

This statement shows the problem of sorrowful journey of spirituality in the cost of bodily integrity. It opposes celibacy, penance, and shows how some Vedic knowledge does not respect the human values. Human body is a fact. It is a gift of nature, or a gift of god. If one believes in god, one should love the god's gift. But in the name of penance, Somdatta completely ignored the body in the beginning. His celibacy and penance only lead him to misery. Then, he wants to find out measures to tackle with his own frustrations caused by the Brahmin religious cult. He goes to the human pond with the Kirant girl Sumnima to get his bodily power revived. This acceptance is crucial because Somdatta has accepted that no particular ritual or culture is superior to another.

In the novel, Somdatta and Puloma go through a lot of religious sacrifices and penance to get a child. They go in bodily relationship as an obligation to beget a heir for their family. So they do not get pleasure in the bodily relationship. Sex itself becomes a painful act for Puloma. This leads to both physical and psychological distress for her and also for Somdatta. At the end Somdatta is bound to go ask for

help from the Kirant priest. The novelist depicts this scene through the following lines:

And on the fourth day he reach the Koshi river bank getting up very early in the morning. He was not able to get a wink of sleep all through the night worry. He began to mediate sitting on a lotus posture after completing his daily routine of bath etc. at that time he was suddenly remind of Sumnima father who was a Bijuwa, a Kirant priest. He knew that the Bijuwa was the religious teacher of the Kirant and he who had pleased the Kirant deities. Like a man surrounded from all sides by water of hopelessness gets the help of a straw, he also thought as if he got something to hang and directed his feet towards the house of Bijuwa. (53)

Somdatta receives proper advice from Bijuwa and is finally rescued from his problem. Koirala very tactfully does not engage Somdatta with Sumnima even though they are long time friends. He goes to his own wife to satisfy his bodily needs after he is bodily revived in the human pond. He protects the values of Brahmin culture at the same time presents the importance of accepting a different cultural practice.

Culture is a dynamic process. It is not fixed. In the novel, the novelist shows that Somdatta practices the values that are already fixed by his religious scriptures. Whereas Bijuwa and Sumnima do no depend on what is written on the scriputres but on the basis of their own judgment of what is good for people in that particular time. The traditional cultural practices are a part of the community's collective identity. Lawoti says, "Multiculturalism provides the justification for the extension of the issue identity and ethnicity" (108). In the same view, this text tries to the extension of Kirant ethnic identity by giving discrete justification that is distinct cultural practices. Similarly, cultural emergence develops multicultural composition and fixes ethnic

morality.

In the novel, Somdatta's worldview is a reflection of what he has read in his religious scriptures. He thinks physical pleasure and sexuality are hindrances in attaining spirituality. He regards extreme physical pleasure as a sin. After the accompaniment of Kirant cultural practice, he succeeds to change his attitudes. He observes, "Even in passion, in the acuteness of illusion. We had a sexual conjugation between the husband and the wife, no sinful act at all. Poor Puloma didn't realize the real truth, and maybe she on her part, might be suffering from the feeling of sin. Sin is a thing of the emotional world" (89). The above statement of Somdatta is a realization of what is sin and what is not. He reconsiders his old beliefs about sexual relationship and physical pleasures. He contemplates on how the sexual conjugation between husband and wife is not a sin. In the later part of the novel, Somdatta realizes the importance of physical and mental engagement with the body. After they have a son, he carries his son and says, "This is creation of my own semen. Puloma is just fertile field to receive my semen. I am the master of the field. This is my son sprouted in the mental womb of Sumnima" (103). This sentence shows how the conception of Puloma is being 'mental womb' of Sumnima. It shows Somdatta's politics of amending mentality by the effectiveness of Kirant socio-cultural facts. One needs to be engaged with the body before the body can bear fruit. In the novel, there is tension between Somdatta and his wife Puloma. Somdatta doubts the integrity of Puloma that she enjoyed the sexual relationship with him thinking of him as a Bhilla boy. This is expressed in the following lines Puloma says, "Brahmin I did understand yes, you saw with your own eye 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) Puloma points out that a Bhilla boy

had the ability to arouse her bodily desires. She distinguishes between her own husband and a Bhilla boy. While she engages with Soomdatta she does not get respect and happiness in her life and utters the word, “Cruel man! You had become the Bhilla that night, you mean man!”(102) Even Puloma had to, at least in the mental level, take refuge with Bhilla boy.

But the fact is that Somdatta himself gets revived in the human pond thinking himself of a Bhilla boy engaged with a beautiful Kirant girl. The imagination of an ascetic Brahmin male fails to connect him to the world of nature with all bodily passion and desire. This is expressed through the following lines spoken by Somdatta: “I’m really happy and, therefore, my body is feeling a pleasurable sensation. Somdatta concentrated in the water and said what I see me not at all, there is one Bhilla man and beautiful young woman with golden body” (67). This assertion shows Somdatta set free from hangover of mental restriction. He is grateful to Kirant religious practice.

Even in the case of Puloma, her bodily desires is revived after her imagination of the Bhilla boy from her childhood:

Only the sweet memory of Bhilla boy with whom she had companion while, she was in the village with her parents kept on coming to her. Being ruptured in that memory she closed her eyes. But in that way how long could she remain enraptured in the luxury of morning idleness? She had to get up and she had no other option. Protruding her lips into round opening, she said in a sweet voice, “Bhilla Young Man”. (81)

In the above expression, Puloma is remembering her childhood companion who is dearest companion than present husband. Despite that she is trained into Brahminic way of life, she gets pleasure in being with a boy who is bodily fit and who she hopes

can satisfy her bodily desire. It is seen that both Somdatta and Puloma realize that bodily desires are important.

About the female condition and position, writer provides two-segmented cultural ethos based on believable assumption upon different ethnic groups. In the novel, Somdatta appears to be a misogynist in his relationship with Puloma while she was incapable to conception. All faults are heaping for on her fortune. He tells that females are sinner. Besides that, after Puloma gets pregnant, he continues to blame her that she conceived by thinking of the Bhilla boy, "...Somdatta behaved that he swallowed some bitter thing once, and babbled to himself, the issue in the belly has received my semen just for a purpose, otherwise it is the mental child of some unknown Bhillas" (101). This kind of criticisms puts Puloma in despair. She even thinks that the situation would have been better if she were a wife of the Bhilla boy. She says, "If I were in house of Bhilla, they would have greatly celebrated the event with the beating of drums and dances" (101). This also shows that female has a respectful position in the Kiranti/Bhillas culture communities, whereas they are not give proper treatment in the Brahmin family. She has seen nothing position in Brahmin cultural tendency.

The novelist also plays with the use of words to represent the worldview of Somdatta and Sumnima. Somdatta uses the word "mata" to address his mother. This is a Sanskrit word which is also used to address female deities. Somdatta explains that mothers are like goddess. But Sumnima argues that she is just like any other woman. She posses things that any other common woman has. So it is inappropriate to make her a godly figure by disconnecting her from the human world. She again distinguishes to familial relationships, "What is mother over and above the relation of family? Hey Brahmin, don't try to spoil the warm and dear relation of such a close

relation uselessly with playful thoughts surging in your mind” (9). Her curiosity generates why blurred the relation between mother and son named of extraterrestrial language or godly language. It spoils the warm relation of the family members. It shows how Kirants internally respect the familial relations and the human behaviors. Bhramin develops a far relation by using godly language. Stuart Hall argues language creates meaning, it means enable us to translate our thought in words, sounds or images, and then use these, operating as a language, to express meaning and communicate thoughts too other people (18). It shows that Kirant are close to the earth because they speak the earthly language and depend on what provided by the nature. But Somdatta uses godly language derived from Sanskrit language but Sumnima disapproves. However, both linguistic understanding is operating certain meaning or communication.

Moreover, speech of Bijuwa distinguishes Kirant cultural practices that are distinct with a certain value. While he meets defeated Somdatta, he tries to experiment natural herbal treatment for him. He commands Somdatta to follow human pond treatment. The human pond treatment exhibits the application of ethnic cultural practice. It shows that Kirant cultural values or practice almost depend on nature. And none of the culture are of high values and complete or completely useless. Bijuwa says,

Sumnima! Brahmin Somdatta’s man within him has gone angry because he hated his own man. Yes, Somdatta it’s true if the inner man is hurt he is angry his habit is like that of child, We must now please his man within him, the body should never be neglected (57).

Bijuwa’s expression points at the weakness of Brahminic rituals that do not teach to love human body. Somdatta only after going to Bijuwa realizes the essence of human

body. It has only treatment to grasp natural cure as well as must be happy within and love the body. It leads to formation of healthy mentality/culture and healthy society.

Furthermore, cultural values and assumption outline to aims of inclusion in the novel because it distinguishes different ethnic activities. It creates certain separate boundary or multi-spectral morality. In the novel, the hierarchy between the social castes is shown in an interesting way. The prince who is from so-called ruling class exercises his power upon people in the community. But he pays respect to a poor ascetic who lives a minimal life in the jungle reading scriptures. This is also a significant event. On one hand, it can be considered as the result of the caste hierarchy. But at the same time, it is also an example of respect for 'good' people who are involved in the acts of learning and knowledge. The prince says, "Divine Brahmin! It is the religious duty of a Kshatriya to serve the Brahmin and such I will certainly fulfill my duty." (11) In this beginning part, the novelist depicts the men and women from Kirant community as lowly and uncultured who come to the assembly naked. But later on, there is an interesting shift. They showed as people who are closer to nature. The so-called cultured people are unhappy whereas they are happy. The following description of the indigenous people in the beginning helps us know the shift, which takes place in the later part of the novel:

After a while, the chief of Bhillas and Kirant communities living in the wild country in the neighborhood began to gather there one by one. They were mostly cloth less all over their bodies. The Bhillas with their shining dark bodies were decorated with the crowns of colorful peacock feathers on their heads and small conch shell beads on their chests and waists. The Kirant had the pale-bodied no decoration of Kirant at all. Like them female companions were also without any clothes on their bodies. Most of them had thrust bright

redhododendron flowers into their hair. (11)

It presents simple physical appearance and cultural style of Kirant/Bhillas culture in previous time. It present primordial phase condition of them it prefers to ritual and social practice.

In the novel, the author presents an interesting debate on the concept of violence. What is Somdatta's idea of violence? And what does Sumnima think of violence? Somdatta believes that the hawk killing a pigeon is violence but Sumnima thinks it is a law of nature. If the pigeon is saved from the hawk, the hawk dies of hunger. And that is the real violence. Because these birds are the food for the prey birds for their survival. Any intervention on basic requirement for survival is violence according to Sumnima. Somdatta expresses his view about the idea of violence by refuting Sumnima's idea,

And Somdatta said 'hey ignorant Kirant girl! This is the result of your lack of cultured upbringing that you don't have any knowledge of difference between violence and non-violence. Therefore, without comprehending the essence of nonviolence as accepted by religion you insult it and don't regard the violent behavior incited by savage instinct blamable. (21)

It means,, in Hindu religious way a comprehensible process of killing animals is non-violence because there is consider with religious belief it means to take life is sin. But Kirant cultural practice assume to survival of living being. Both side attitudes bring separate ethos of violence and non-violence. However, it carries on dual or multicultural perspectives.

This novel presents many instances of multicultural conflict through the conflict in worldviews of the two major characters. But Koriala tactfully resolves those conflicts by showing how these different social groups can live a better life

when they respect each other. In the later part of the novel, when Somdatta and his wife die, their only son is taken by Sumnima in her care. The boy grows in the Kiranti community. It creates a kind of multicultural context. The multicultural society spontaneously moves towards the process of acculturation and assimilation after the long time cultural practices. Trimmer and Warnock support the message of acculturation and assimilation because they say, “Cultural formations cross the borderline of certain socio-cultural boundary” (vii). Finally, the strict Brahmin family is rescued by the Kirant family. It became possible only by the openness of the Kiranti culture. There is a situation of reconciliation between these two cultures. Later, it becomes the case of cross cultural assimilation. When Somdatta is treated by Bijuwa and Sumniama, he feels very relaxed. He tells, “I feel that I should’t go anywhere. I have a mind to stay here till I feel comfortable, forever and ever....” (64). He even expresses his happiness : “I am really happy and, therefore, my body is feeling pleasurable sensation” (67). This expression is made after Somdatta bathes in the human pond. He comes down from the world of spirituality into the world of human beings.

In the novel, the Brahmin family is alone in the jungle where Kirants are in the majority. But the minority family is also treated with respect by the majority Kirants. They help this family to get settled. They give Suryadatta a cow so that he can feed his family. The ethos of multiculturalism is abundantly found in the novel.

Moreover, in the last part of the novel, Sumnima provides some practical suggestions to her daughter and to Somdatta’s son. She distinguishes various features Kirant/Brahmin culture and she says compromise is a final solution to reconstruct multicultural ethos. Sumnima says to her daughter:

The man who you have selected as your bridegroom is the son of a Brahmin.

His blood is different. His mind is taken by some unknown things, they are never satisfied with the fullness of this life. They are search of emptiness.

Therefore, they move about in search of emptiness through the performance of various kinds of penance (114).

She identifies how the Brahmin culture has different practices so that her daughter can be ready to compromise and accept them. This can only lead to a harmonious relation in the future. Likewise, she also describes the distinct feature of Kirant culture to Somdatta's son so that he can cope up with any differences in the future, "You are the descendant of saintly man. Today, you have made a Kirant daughter your wife. Her Kirant character is vivacious. But if you understand her ethical tradition and see the way she is transverse..." (114) Sumnima provides an exemplary model of multicultural spirit through her instructions for her daughter and her daughter's Brahmin fiancé.

The relationship between Sumnima's daughter and Somdatta's son shows the coincident of cultural assimilation and reconciliation. An orphan condition of Somdatta's son who adopted by Sumnima, after that his mind make up to the process assimilation. It directs to cultural reconciliation. Otherwise, Sumnima's daughter follows such activity with him. It presents to epoch of multicultural shifting because joining both of them culture, society, single identity, and self-separate rootness. After that they have joining or have a cluster identity. It captures the sense of wholeness that mean all are single human being; there differentiate neither Brahmin caste/culture nor Kirant sphere. It obviously takes to humanitarian values by process of assimilation and acculturation. In this way, children's affinity makes an ethical value of multicultural scenario. Following quote contemplates such essence,

Both the boy and the girl began to grow. In new place Somdatta's son didn't

leave the company of Sumnima's daughter even for a moment followed her all, became all the more intimate. The daughter of Sumnima felt jubilant having him and took him to new places far and wide in the village to show him. When she introduced him to boys and girls, she felt extremely happy and said Do you know, this is my *Yawa* the son of Brahmin down at the hermitage. She said, Come on; let's go to pick up flowers from the wild. (110)

The marriage between Kirant girl and Brahmin boy is an example of how the relationship is more based on the respect for each other and the natural desire rather than any unknown divine plan. Koirala has hinted that such cultural mixing might be a common phenomenon in the future. And the respect for others' culture is the only way to retain cultural and social harmony and the well being of a person. Talking about such context of multiculturalism Watson writes, "multiculturalism is purely visible aspect of cultural diversity, its deeper philosophical and political implication of the co-existence or different orientations to engage with world." (107) the conditional assimilation and reconciliation remark visible aspect of multicultural practices. The marriage between Somdatta's son and Sumnima's daughter paved the way toward a cultural hybridity that might be useful to do away the cultural extremes. This inter-racial marriage will allow both cultural and individual freedom. Koirala aims to present the idea of individual freedom as a way forward for social liberalism.

In conclusion, the analysis of Koirala's *Sumnima* shows that the novel has presented many cases of cultural conflict which is later resolved through a more liberal humanitarian approach. In the novel, Somdatta represents the ideological fixity in the beginning which does not prove healthy for his own personal life nor for the people in the society he lives in. But Sumnima represents a more liberal approach to life and relationship which was based on the human need. It was based on compassion

and love. She did not deny the call of nature. Though she is friend to Somdatta for a long time, she does not try to intervene in his ways of life. But she readily accepts to help him when he surrenders himself to be rescued from his problems. This novel does not only deconstructs the existing hierarchy among castes and cultures, it also strongly advocates that liberal approaches to life and relationship help resolve all kind of personal and collective crisis. The major characters in the novel represent the multicultural ethos, which is the only way to ensure social harmony and individual well-being.

The novel also shows that cultures (Brahmin and Kirant cluster) are dynamic process. It is overlapping each others. So, the cultural practices need to evolve with the need of the time. It might require the dismantling of the existing social fabrics. But if someone attaches to a fixed social value and does not prepare him/herself for change, it might invite social conflict resulting disharmony in the society sometimes tend to harmony/peace. Koirala through this novel advocates the need for a multicultural ethos which he presents through Sumnima and Bijuwa. Somdatta's character is juxtaposed to show how the fixity of ideology is a trouble in itself. Koirala has emphasized on the need for a liberal society that can only nurture the humanity in the longer run.

Works Cited

- Deb, Kushal. *Mapping Multiculturalism*. Rawat Publication, 2002.
- Kandel, Bhanubhakta. "Ethnic Consciousness in B.P. Koirala's *Sumnima*." *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol.2, no. 1, July 2014. pp. 23-30.
- Koirala, B.P. *Sumnima*. Trans. Tara Nath Sharma. Bagar Foundation, 2005.
- Lawoti, Mahendra. *Towards A Democratic Nepal: Inclusive Political Institutions for a Multicultural Society*, Sage, 2005.
- Parekh, Bhikhu. *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, MacMillan, 2000.
- Rapacha, Lal. "Ethnocentrism in *Sumnima* *The Kathmandu Post*. 17 July, 2005: 4.
- Richard, John. et. al. *The Practice of Cultural Studies*. Sage, 2004.
- Sharma, Vishwanath. "B. P. Koirala: a Figure in Modern Nepali Literature", *Journal of South Asian Literature*, vol. 27, no. 2, Summer, Fall 1992, pp. 209-218. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/
- Shimkhada, Deepak. "Ethnic Revival and Religious Turmoil", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 64, no.4, 2005, pp. 1059– 61. *JSTOR*, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25075954.
- Trotman, James. *Multiculturalism: Roots and Realities*. Indiana: University Press, 2004.
- Turner, Terence. "Anthropology and Multiculturalism: What is Anthropology That Multiculturalists Should Be Mindful of It?" *Cultural Anthropology*, vol .8, no. 4, Nov. 1993, pp. 411-429.
- Watson, Conrad William. *Multiculturalism: Concept in the Social Science*, Open University Press, 2000.