

Tribhuvan University

Body Politics in Mahesh Bikram Shah's Selected Stories

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English
in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in English**

By

Keshav Lamsal

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Abstract

This thesis entitled "Body Politics in Mahesh Bikram Shah's Selected Stories" examines the representation of both male and female bodies, prevalent domination of women's bodies and their protest against it in the male centered society. The female characters like Eliginia, Jacqueline, Mambal's wife, Nepali girl living in United States, and Derli's bodily experience represent the domination and violence of patriarchy on the one hand, and how they get power through their own body on the other. When the male characters try to pursue their interest, they start playing with their counterpart's body for achieving their goal, so do the female characters. The passivity of conscious women characters excavates the domination of patriarchy but they still resist against the violence. They do not feel secure even with their beloveds. Though the characters try to resist it by leaving their boyfriends or partners but their body still remains a site of fear, panic, violence and insecurity. Women's bodies continue to become a site of domination because of their weaker social or economical positions.

Key Words: racism, superiority, body politics, subjugation

This research is to pursue basically three objectives while analyzing Mahesh Bikram Shah's selected stories. First and foremost, it studies the concept of body in terms of location and structure of the society. It examines how body on the different location has been interpreted. Secondly, the researcher analyzes the bodies of males and females in terms of holding the power in socio-cultural context. It describes who holds the power in the society either male or female in terms of the body. It studies the possible reasons of losing the ownership and identity by the female characters. It presents the glimpse of how male characters have been manipulating the bodies of women in order to accomplish their interest and vice versa. Finally, it also tries to dig out how bodies have become the site for the intensifying articulation of power, desire and disgust of the individual and its consequences in the society. It furthermore scrutinizes whether female characters have accepted the urge of males or resisted their instruction that is directly related to the issue of their body.

Mahesh Bikram Shah is one of the prominent writers in the Nepali literature. He has written on the issues of ethnicity, Maoist insurgency, women's suffering, and socio-political culture of his time. He has also written about his experience from foreign societies. He has contributed in Nepali literature with numerous stories collections like *Sataha (Gambler, 1996)*, *Sipahiki Swasni (Wife of Soldier, 2002)*, *African Amigo (2003)*, *Chhapamarko Chhoro (Son of Guerrilla, 2006)*, *Kathmanduma Kamred (Comrade in Kathmandu, 2008)*, and *Jackson Height (2012)*. He is recipient of prestigious Nepali award Madan Puraskar in 2006 for his *Son of Guerrilla*. His stories depict the national and international ambient.

This research studies three stories from Shah's *Jackson Height* that include "Kali Keti" (Black Girl) "Contract" and "Derli ra Seto Ghoda" (Derli and White Horse). These stories present abuse of the females by the males, and how women

bodies are commodified by their counterparts for pursuing certain goals. It also gives the picture of female's resistance and how they use their body as the source of power in order to achieve their interest on the other. The stories in *Jackson Height* include the stories of America and Haiti along with Haitian, Negro and Nepali characters. These stories are the outcome of writer's experiences while visiting those places. It gives a picture of Western society where women and men's bodies have been commodified for sustaining their life. Therefore, the characters of the selected stories have presented the world view of people living in different corner of the globe regarding the issue of objectification of the bodies. The characters reveal their story about their bodies' mistreatment, commodification, and exploitation by the both male and female characters in the stories.

Mahesh Bikram Shah's *Jackson Height* is a story collection that portrays the suffering and subjugation of female character but it also presents how they find power from their body. It expresses male's interest upon female bodies and how they handle to make the most of it. These three stories present the domination done to women but also talks about the resistance made by female characters. Patriarchy as the dominant factor tries to rule over female but female doesn't remain silent against the domination. They show their resistance in the form of speech and revolution. That is why it also deals with issues of resistance of females. This is the era of science and education so most of the women are conscious regarding their identity and rights. They do not hesitate to raise their voice against the domination. They do not accept any sort of violence, torture and misbehaviors done to them. Furthermore, feminist has helped them to expand their level of consciousness. While reading Shah's stories, we can find protest of female characters against the traditional assumption. Though all female characters are completely in the fist of male characters, they show their

resistance at their best. In the stories most of the characters carve a way for protecting their bodies.

These stories deal with different issues like honor based violence, contract on marriage and betrothal for the material gains. Here, honor based violence refers to the mistreatment and imposed violence as a way to assert husband's power or authority over his wife. A husband goes on exploiting on the bodies of female as if the marriage has allowed him to do anything. In a patriarchal society, a husband denies listening to his wife due to the feeling of inferiority and violates upon the body of women in return.

The first story "Kali Keti" (Black Girl) depicts the society of Haiti where female bodies are commodified for pursuing certain interest of male. In the story, a white character or a visitor at the night club asks for a girl from whose body comes the thick smell of blackbody, like it would come from a wild boar. Two brokers Mambali and Jule offer him different girls along with Alice in order to please him but he does not applaud them. He keeps on asking for the exotic black girl. Eventually, Mambali with the magic on the eye of Jule becomes successful in bringing the girl that meets the criteria of guest and receives hundred dollars in no time. When Jule gets startled after observing the girl and wants to know who she is, he replies, "She is my wife Jule!". He cheats on to his wife in order to collect butter and bread. Here, the character Mambali as a husband holds the power in the family. In the name of collecting bread and butter, he even does not leave his own wife to vend. When he does not find girls who could attract the visitor, ultimately he carries his own wife and puts up her for the money. Here, his wife is compared with the very black bear because she has black skin and she has no glamour in her presence. Furthermore, she belongs to subaltern. She is made an object that can be easily sold and bought. So, this story unfolds bodies of both male and female and marital relationships in the

treatment of money and subjugation.

On the other hand, “Contract” represents the milieu of United States where a Nepali girl and Negro named Richard make a contract for their survival. It presents the pathetic condition of a Nepali girl who undergoes while in the US. It presents how a Nepali girl becomes a victim of the Negro’s talon. It inaugurates the consequence of avarice in city life for happiness. It is structured on the foreign ambient with a Nepali girl as its central character. She first makes an indulgent contract in the form of marriage with a Negro for her settlement in US. According to the agreement, she has to manage expense of Richard for a year till he signs on the marriage certificate and pay off \$5000 after signing in marriage certificate. But, Richard plays with her body neglecting their contract. He threatens, terrifies, rapes and asks money with her time to time. Finally, he coerces her to be in sexual relation with his friend Jack and she is obliged to accept everything like a robot following their instruction. Here too, the story plot is revolved around the domination of the female. The Negro as a male and being a US citizen confiscate everything from a girl and obliged her to accept everything in the honor of their relationship. If something went wrong, she could be deprived from the green card. So, she had to respect all the commands and demands no matter what is being asked. This story is the epitome of the honor based violence where a husband violates his wife’s rights and freedom imposing certain values of honor.

The next story, “Derli ra Seto Ghoda” (Derli and White Horse) also describes a situation where the black female characters are willingly ready to sacrifice their body to have a white boyfriend. Central character, Derli wants to engage in a relationship with a white man because her friends are already betrothed with white boys and they have been enjoying different materialistic things. They consider that

holding a hand of white is a matter of pride. These female characters are guided by dolor and American green card. They fancy making their destination in US but white and black males are using their body to accomplish their lust. So, this story too deals with the theme of politics of body. One is taking advantages from the other's body. One depends upon other to achieve their goal using another's body.

Jackson Height has attracted large number of criticisms since its publication. Numerous critics have examined the text from the perspective of racial prejudice, stylistics in the presentation, sociological concern, and so on. Critic Shekhar Kharel, on his review titled "Continental Menu" discusses about Nepalese people's suffering and unfulfilled dream in foreign land. He writes:

The main affordability of this creation is to shake or bringing the quake on the heart of reader. It is documentation of those Nepali people who have become victim in foreign land. In this sense, Shah's stories seem to be purposeful and beside literariness it also carries psychological, sociological dimensions. A reader can feel like travelling on rail throughout five continents while going through the stories. (16; my translation)

With these lines, he gives his idea that the stories of the book are like the collection of different settings and dimensions of the society. He describes the stories as heart rendering due to its appealing empathy with the reader but does not dig out the problem that has made the condition so pathetic and tear jerking. He puts things like in the salad bowl but does miss to interpret the incident and its consequences in the deeper level. He valorizes the quality of literariness and Shah's ability of presentation.

Sumitra Subedi on her dissertation paper submitted to Tribhuwan University in 2015, describes that Shah's stories are depiction of social, economical, familial, religious, morale, educational and political heart-rendering scenario of Nepalese

society. She gives her culmination regarding stories in this way:

Mahesh Bikram Shah's stories scrutinize the economical, social aspects and day to day experience of Nepali and Foreign male and female artistically and sarcastically. Especially, his attempt is to depict the pathetic condition of those male and female who try to pursue their goal in the name of love, romance and economy. (96; my translation)

Here, her focus seems to be the economy and society because she comes to an end with the remark that bitter experiences and things have been happening to the characters due to their own love, romance and economical problem. She focuses her study on the aesthetics of presentation and its outcome with the help of the characters. In her understanding, Nepalese people and other people try to pass their day to day life with the happiness, prosperity and stability but that it not going as their wish so they have to depend upon others.

In a review titled "Police or Litterateur" Ashwini Koirala writes that though Shah's stories are written on the basis of foreign ambient and character but they resemble it as everyone's story living in different part of the world. He discusses:

Since all the stories of *Jackson Height* are written in the ambient of International character and setting, they are completely a new experimentation in the Nepali literature. Shah has written the stories of people living in different twenty five countries' of the globe but still Nepalese heart can sense the story apathetically through his writings. (18; my translation)

The abovementioned lines also deal with Diasporas' sentiments and pathos because in one way or another they seem to be matching with the people living in abroad. He argues depicting the scenario of the different context and presenting in the Nepali form is quite unique itself. It is a new experiment in the field of literature so far as

Nepalese literature is concerned. But, whatever the text has presented that has strong connection with the reader in terms of touching the heart of anyone.

Another critic, Lila Luitel, in her review entitled “Declarative Specification in *Jackson Height*” examines the stories as the representation of activities, behavior and virtue of the people living in the different corner of the universe. She further describes:

Since the characters are always suppressed by poverty and other uncountable miseries, they happened to accept the prostitution for their survival. . . Shah presents the social reality of the people as it is due to the unemployment and scarcity to fulfill the needs. He furthermore scrutinizes the darker side of the human life and reflects them as it is with the help of the stories. It also includes the fragile and pathetic condition of the Nepalese women living aboard. (2; my translation)

It is clear that Shah is trying to show the miserable condition of the characters that is mainly concerned along with their bodies. Here, the projection of the writer is directly not hinting though towards the politics of the body but when one goes through the stories s/he comes up with the conclusion that the characters have been living a life with the help of their own body by showing gratitude to male. Their bodies can only ease the problem they have come across in time. Since, they get their bodies manipulated it automatically becomes the politics of the body. It is not only about the poor condition to face overcome with the help of the body, it is also the means of domination and subjugation in front of males by giving full authority.

In this respect, it is apparent that numerous critics and reviewers have examined the stories of the *Jackson Height* from various points of view including body politics. They arrived at several findings and conclusions but none of them

notice the issue of representation of the body in terms of power and the manipulation. But they have not meticulously represented the manipulation done on the bodies of female characters by male characters and the power possessed by their bodies. So, the study of Shah's stories from the perspective of body politics is expected to contribute to the existing scholarship.

Body politics particularly deals with issues related to the bodies. David Mikics in his book *A New Handbook of Literary Terms* clarifies body theory as emphasizing "the palpable presence of the human body: the immediacy of physical response, its passions and sufferings" (44). That is to say body theory particularly deals with the aspects of body how that is taken, how one's body is treated physically, what kind of desires and passions are advocated by the bodies and how the body gets suffered is the vital point of this insight. Politics simply refers to the use of intrigue or strategy in obtaining any position of power or control, as in business, university, etc. Here, taking references from this same definition body politics signifies the condition where one uses another body in order to hold the power and enjoy the scenario after confiscating the rights of others. So its meticulous concerns with the exploration of the bodies that is essential for the construction of gender and sexuality in traditional discourse.

Similarly, Elizabeth Grosz in her book *Space, Time and Perversion* defines body politics as "an artificial construct that replaces the primacy the natural body. Culture is moulded according to the dictates of nature [. . .] nature is a passivity on which culture works as male (cultural) productivity supersedes and overtakes female (natural) reproduction" (106).

Body politics has particular connection with the body and it has to explore the bodily experiences. It celebrates women body. Therefore, women become conscious regarding their body and its significance. With this consciousness, women become

aware of the various ways in which they have lost their control over their body. Some of the critics who have worked on this idea include Judith Butler, Elaine Scarry, and Caroline Walker Bynum. This research basically borrows the idea of Judith Butler from her texts *Bodies That Matter* (1993), *Undoing Gender* (2004), *Gender Trouble* (1990). The thorough analysis of these selected stories is also an integral part of theoretical modality. Having mentioned that, it may take the idea of other theorists if necessary while analyzing the related issues of the stories.

Body politics deconstructs the hierarchic schematization between mind and body. It sees identity as socially constructed and not fixed. The Western history since long back has created the dichotomy between “mind” and “body,” in which mind signifies to male and rationality whereas body is associated with women and emotionality. To support this incident, Butler in her text *Bodies that Matter* discusses:

The philosophical tradition that began with Plato and continuous through Descartes, Husserl and Sartre the ontological distinction between soul and body in variably supports relations of political and subordination and hierarchy. The mind is not only subjects to the body, but occasionally entertains the fantasy of feelings and its embodiments. (17)

Here, Butler presents her idea that mind has always become dominant in comparison to body. Mind is directly associated with rationality, logic and power while body signifies only with emotion and sentiments. That is to say men are supposed to have mind while women are body. In this sense female is always dominated by male so does the mind to the body. Therefore, male control female as mind does to the body.

In addition to these, Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* argues that the structure of gender is merely a social construct and patriarchy’s policy of division for ruling over the females. Drawing the concept of Butler, Lennon Kathleen in her

review states:

Butler is resisting accounts of gender divisions which see the binary categories of male and female as originating in natural sexual divisions, yielding either biologically or psychologically essentialist account of masculinity and femininity. . . Gender is not a fact. Gender categories are constituted by the very performative acts which are taken to be an expression of underlying identities. (125)

With these lines, we come to conclusion that Butler believes that gender is a cultural product of the society. Our body and gender is interpreted in terms of cultural product. Our body is defined is association of performance that is also the production of society. She hereby defines the gender identity as performative acts not a fixed one. According to her insight identity of person is always at the flux because it can be changed in terms of performance.

Judith Butler who has used the Foucauldian concept of the disciplinary body to produce the notion of performativity to explain the deployments of the body through acts and gestures, especially in terms of discursive identity that is both open and constrained. She further emphasizes on the performativity as she analyzes it, “a whole range of normative binaries that are used to characterize embodiment-male/female, health/ill-health, heterosexual/homosexual, black/white, and so on- may be exposed in their instability but also paradoxically confirmed by the performativity of abject bodies” (9). The competency of performativity decides the category of the body which is again based on how the body is constituted in a particular context. “Language and materiality are fully embedded in each other” (69), as butler herself puts it. So this clearly indicates that not only the feminine body but any body as such falls into trap of constitutiveness.

In this way, body politics tries to dismantle the dualism of mind and body where mind is given due respect and body is neglected. Therefore, body politics as a theoretical tool not only reveals the domination over female bodies but also glorifies female's resistance against the mindset of this dualism. Moreover, it tries to deconstruct the primitive conceptualization of gender and sex with the help of other insights like queer theory and drag culture. These all theories have same purpose of fighting back with the traditional notion of patriarchy. They owe anti-patriarchy philosophy as an essence. It's primarily concern is to protect female rights regarding the body and grant the gracious honor to female who are indulged as inferior, irrational and emotional.

Body politics constitutes two aspects. The positive aspect of it is that women use their body to fight back and resist violence and mistreatment. Negative aspects show the domination of male over female body. Both aspects are prevalent in the Shah's stories. Besides, we find female using her body as a weapon to pursue her goal in the stories. The female characters spontaneously employ their body with male body to have their goal fulfilled. It means to say, female characters in the stories appeal their body for pursuing their goal either that is to make relation as marriage in the form of contract or to share the bed with males. In this way, we can scrutinize these stories from both perspectives the way male treats the body of female and the way female becomes ready to use her own body for obtaining their goal.

The first story "Black Girl" deals with the setting of Haiti and the narrator is male where women body is commodified as an object that is exchanged with money like any other goods. It depicts the picture of the Haiti's society where prostitution is rampant. Here, women are made prostitute by the male or male-centered society in order to fulfill their basic needs and become the bread winner. After that they all make

the most of this profession with the help of female bodies. They make a business for their survival taking the vantage of female bodies. Two brokers of the stories are truly depended upon the female's bodies for their survival. If they are able to find the customer for the female characters like Eliginia, Mesiliya, Jacqueline, Alice and so on they can collect bread and butter for that day otherwise there is no way out. Here, by bringing the customer for these girls these two brokers get their ration so their life is totally based on the business of the body of females.

Women do not have any agency in this context because they have to accept everything offered by men. They have become mere a scapegoat because their bodies can be sold, bought by another male who is interested. Male has everything to celebrate because he holds the central power that has given him full freedom to perform anything he likes. In this context, Shah writes:

“He says he wants a girl flawlessly black, absolutely black, dark as night,” Mambali said. “Who is this man?” Jule asked. “Says he has just come into town. Looks like a German but could be an American too. Looks like a bull ready for the butcher's knife.” Jule laughed. “So we caught a fat cock. We might get good price from him? What you say?” (1; my translation)

This instance of the longing of the very exotic kind of girl by the white male is the epitome of how males are greedy over the feminine body and gratify their bodily needs with the experimentation on female bodies. Here, the white male is portrayed as the master or superior who can easily buy girls of Haiti. The customer at the restaurant has been presented as the master of all because he is white and belongs to US or European countries. Moreover, he has huge amount of money so he can buy anything with it. He reckons his money can buy anything including women as well. That's why he holds the power in terms of race, money and gender. In this context,

Butler in *Undoing Gender* sees this underestimation as the cause of black race and their lower living strata. She further argues:

The human is understood differentially depending on its race, the legibility of that race, its morphology, the recognizability of that morphology, its sex, the perceptual verifiability of that sex, its ethnicity, the categorical understanding of that ethnicity. Certain human are recognized as less than human, and that form of qualified recognition does not lead to a viable life. Certain humans are not recognized as human at all, and that leads to yet another order of unlivable life. (2)

It expresses the subjectivity of the blacks because black body has been treated as an object. One white man wants to play with the body of black female because he owns money to hire it. In this respect, all black females have lost their identity as human rather treated as the means for recreation or pleasure for the males. They are not given due respect by male character who has been demanding a flawlessly black girl. He even does not give proper identification for Haitian female rather compares them with wild bear. He thinks his money can buy those black males too because they have very struggling life in general.

The ox like man believes that very black, flawlessly black girl can satisfy his fetishism. He keeps on asking new girls instead of consoling with the granted. He uses his money as the power in order to achieve his goal. When he gets the girl that meets his criteria his happiness knows no bounds. Shah writes:

The bull stopped . . . absolutely black, as though smeared with soot. Big breast, big hips, short curly hair, as though small bushes grew on the pinnacle of the hill. . . The bull was clearly taken back. Here was his fantasy. Her blackness was unrelieved, her smell untamed and raw. He flipped through her

body. Her fingers, the neck, the forehead, reflecting the nightclub. Finally he laughed, loud and satisfied. (7; my translation)

Here, racialized gender hierarchies also classify women dissecting their bodies and attributing certain physical features either to the category of sex or beauty. This dissection process of assigns features such as skin color, hair texture, and shape and size of lips, nose refer to category of beauty, while features of such as the breasts, hips and buttocks are assigned to the sexual category. Given the Eurocentric aesthetic standards that prevail in Black community, Black women traditionally have been defined as being sexual. The aforementioned lines clearly depict the same scenario of Blacks women. It presents how male are eager to accomplish fetishism through the body of female. Here, the white man laughs as if he has achieved most valuable thing of the world after getting the body of black woman. He just wants to fornicate with the body of Black woman. She has become a doll like figure in front of male who could satisfy the lust of male. Therefore, it clarifies that woman bodies are always a kind of playing thing for male who could enjoy as per their wishes.

It highlights the gendered dimensions of Haitian racism. The story parodies African women on a number of different levels. While the customer describes an initial attraction to the woman, his attraction quickly turns to revulsion as he observes the woman's body and feels the odor. The protagonist maligns the wife by comparing her body to a bear, a wild animal. By comparing a Black woman to an animal, the story perpetuates gendered practice to racial alterity. These practices of "Othering" reinforce dominant configuration of gender and race. By doing so, the story clearly demonstrates the extent to which black women are accorded a less than fully human status in Haiti.

Most powerful domestication and control over female body in the society is

none other than the bonding of marriage. This relation has given the male full authority of the females. Males can enjoy everything of the female whereas females have no right to protest. Males resemble themselves as the master before their counterparts and seize all rights as if they are their own that results into politics of the bodies. It is the male who make the decision of female about their life. Once husband commands, wife has to perform accordingly otherwise they may become victim of their angst and fall in the violence. They are bound to accept such kind of domination either they are educated or not. In this sense, all women lose their self identification and respect. The white man's rejection of different girls like Eliginia, Mesiliya, Jacqueline, Alice leads Mambali to bring his own wife for selling. "You did not let the bull get away, my friend. Where the hell did you get this girl? She is my wife, Jule, Mambali said his voice flat and emotionless" (7; my translation). Here, his wife is speechless because she cannot resist against his husband due to the social barrier. Gayatri Chakavorti Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" writes that since subaltern people lack history, they cannot speak. She especially raises the issues of females as subaltern who are more deeply in shadow and states the subaltern as female cannot read or speak (65). In this point of view, Mambali's wife as the female character seems to be following the path of Spivak because neither she can protest against the domination nor escape from the prostitution. On the one hand she has accepted it because it is done with the direct presence of her husband for collecting bread and butter. On the other hand, the very profession has been continued in Haiti since long. She is unable to resist because she does not hold any power in front of her husband and white man.

In this context, Butler argues: "It has been argued that women ought to perform certain social function and not others, indeed that women ought to be fully

restricted to the reproductive domain” (1993: 33). Her main claim with these lines is the male centered society creates different kinds of norms and values in order to manipulate and marginalize female. Marriage is one of the norms that give them ample of power to dominate the body of female. They assume that female is subject to reproduce and for the intercourse. So, they use the female body as the part of entertainment to experience sublimity. That’s why story depicts the scenario of different characters performing as call girls. They are behaved as the tools to achieve certain pleasure. All female characters seem dumb in front of the male like wife of Mambali while they are sold to male. That’s why they are obliged to be scapegoat in the male dominated society.

Besides, “Black Girl” also presents the resistance made by female character when they are mistreated and disvalued. Shah in this context describes, “It was clear Alice’s beauty, her strong body. . . she stepped away from the bull and went to an old Mexican sitting by himself at another table” (6, my translation). Here, Alice comes to visit a customer in a night club but when that man does not give much attention to her and behaves disrespectfully she escapes that person and goes to another person. It is a kind of challenge she does to the bull like man because she goes to another man ignoring him. Here, she uses her own body as the means of protest with the behavior of the customer in the night club. In a traditional concept man has a lot of freedom to choose the things according to their interest and women are not given these sorts of freedom. But when female become quite aware of their interest, they also start making choice as per their wish. Alice going to the next man is the epitome of their consciousness and freedom to choose their own interest.

Most powerful domestication and control over female body in the society is none other than the bonding of marriage. If this bonding is done in terms of contract

then its consequences becomes more bitter and pathetic. One cannot withdraw the contract in between due to his/ her motto. It makes them more subservient because they too are trying to pursue a goal through the contract. It leads to rape, beaten and violence because there is no matter of love, respect and holy nature of relationship rather oscillates around only lust and money making process. “Contract”, another story of *Jackson Height* depicts the same nature of presentation. This contract is made on the marriage that brings hurricane like Katrina in the life of female character who is a Nepali girl. Shah in this context writes:

This contract has been made with an understanding. She has to bear all the expenses of Richard for a year and pay off \$5000 after the marriage ceremony. When she becomes the wife of Richard constitutionally, then she becomes the citizen of US. Thereafter, she can divorce him and search for better opportunity for sustaining life in future in the US. (59; my translation)

The contract made on the basis of understanding seems fragile because one is trying to pursue goal with the help of other. Richard is already powerful due to his gender and his American identity and yet the contract gives him another vantage to exploit the girl.

In this way, the story “Contract” deals with the same kind of domination of a Negro named Richard to a Nepali girl. A Nepali girl who plans for the better life, ultimately falls in the ditch dug by herself. She has become the victim of the contract marriage. The ill-fated girl has to undergo a plenty of domination in the story. “Put off my shoe”, he ordered . . . bring me a bottle of whisky and make peg ready along with ice” (58, my translation). He shows his power ordering her to perform everything according to his wish. He knows that she could not leave him because she is in dire need of PR. The PR functions as the weapon for Richard to control over her. In order

to get a green card she has to please Richard and accept his all demands for the immediate result. In this issue Sharma writes “Her belief of becoming great person living in US has obliged her to follow all the orders as an honest girl. She has lost her own prestige in this context. That’s how she starts upbringing herself as a robot” (192; my translation). It indicates Richard’s power. He even does not perform the trivial things like putting the shoe off which he can do himself. He every time plays with her because the contract has given him robust feature and he is an American. So, he has been using these powers for confiscating all the rights of Nepali girl. She even cannot raise her voice against this nonsense behavior due to his very rude nature. He shouts at and rapes her if she denies accepting the things.

Nepali girl has experience of domination as Shah writes, “She makes a decision of having supper and take rest, but she could not do so when she remembers Richard’s angry face and rude behavior. Later, she decides to accompany him for dinner” (57; my translation). It is more about fear which brought up while she starts living with him. Though it can be respect but it shows more fear inside her because she does not want to become victim again neglecting these common things. Hence, it can be said that patriarchy rule over female for no reason. Women are not given freedom to perform any task according to their own desire if it is about having dinner as well. She cannot go against Richard because she does not want to lose the chances of getting permanent residence in America. Shah has presented Richard as a represented character of the whole male-centered society where female are treated as the secondary object.

By the same logic, Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* examines that because of the association of female with body they are marginalized. She writes: “This association of the body with the female works along magical relations of reciprocity

whereby the female sex become restricted to its body, and the male body, full disavowed, becomes paradoxically, the incorporeal instrument of an ostensibly radical freedom” (16). For supporting this insight, “Contract” story embodies the same kind of differences in terms of body. It presents that women in the male-dominated society are like the puppet and they should perform according to male’s wish in order to provide them heavenly happiness. Here, Nepali girl has to surrender in front of Richard for the sake of green card. While depicting the doll like nature of women, Shah writes:

Richard was naked outside. He landed a smile while sleeping on sofa. He took a remote control on the hand and pressed the ‘OK’ button surfing through YouTube. There came the foreplay of world famous porn star Eva Hilton with her boyfriend on the screen. You should do like that. Richard told looking at her. She walked to Richard and landed herself in his lap. Richard started undoing her clothes one by one. She became full naked... She became Eva Hilton kissing everywhere on his body. (60; my translation)

These lines clearly have proven that women have been dominated in the name of honor. Here, Richard does not show respect and honor to her rather wants her to imitate the porn star’s activities for his pleasure. By imposing the benefit of becoming male and US citizen he wants to control the rights and freedom of Nepali girl. She is being exploited but she cannot raise her voice against this abuse because she has become the victim of her own dream. In this context, Sharma writes, “To receive PR she has to please Richard by hook and crook. . . her fantasy of America as the superpower and its people as great mad her like Eva Hilton on the screen” (191; my translation). Richard knows that she cannot go away whatever he does to her because she is desperately in need of permanent residence in US. That’s why he takes

everything for granted and keeps abusing her in the name of marriage. She has to bear everything for her own betterment. This marriage merely has become honor based violence where a husband can do everything to a wife.

In this context, Judith Butler in her book *Undoing Gender* claims that bonds of kinship do not become viable if it is not based on marriage. She further writes:

Efforts to establish bonds of kinship that are not based on a marriage tie become nearly illegible and unviable when marriage sets the terms for kinship, and kinship itself is collapsed into “family”. The enduring social ties that constitutes viable kinship in communities of sexual minorities are threatened with becoming unrecognizable an unviable as long as the marriage bond is the exclusive way in which both sexuality and kinship are organized. (5)

When one party or person in the contract becomes more dominant then its consequences turn into violence, ill-fate and so on. One tries to get everything due to his/her power and starts manipulating with other along with time. This scenario of contract in the form of marriage also could not make any justice because it is not dedicated relation. It is done for achieving goal so there lacks the honesty, sincerity due to lack of true connection of two souls. One who owns the power always tries to snatch things from other. Therefore, fake marriage gives more pain to people who are underclass or treated as minor. “Contract” depicts the same pathetic condition of Nepali girl who is downplayed by the Negro. Shah writes:

Jack stays here today. . . Do not pretend much, come and sit around . . . she looks at Jack. He is staring on her body as the vulture does to its prey . . . there plays the porn film on the screen . . . she knows that she could not defy Richard’s wish . . . Jack helps Richard in undressing . . . I am ready to become a husband for you for few days, would not you become a whore for today

baby? Richard fumbles his cranny hands throughout her naked body. (63; my translation)

The above mentioned lines presents 'tear-jerking story' of a Nepali girl who falls in the ditch dug by self. Though she tries to react on it but her rejection in front of two giant Negros make no impact. Here, these two monsters play with her body for pleasure. Marriage is nothing for Richard rather a means of satisfying his lust and a way of collecting money. He never cares her wishes while making her ready for intercourse. He keeps on abusing her with the help of porn movies against her consent. Ultimately, crossing the limit of the marriage he compels her to have sex with his friend named Jack. Sharma with references with these lines writes, "Richard has accepted to become a husband of Nepali girl for earning money. It is not only his desire rather it happens due to capitalist society. . . In this way, people manipulate power according to their wishes" (196; my translation). Here, Richard as a male and American citizen uses his power for making the most of his wishes. He imposes all his desires on the Nepali girl either that is unnatural sex or compels her to share bed with his friend. In this way, a girl has become a whore due to the domination of male.

In this manner, Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* borrows the concept of Michel Foucault and mentions: "Power is that which forms, maintains, sustains and regulates bodies . . . power acts in bodies but is not to form them" (34). Power here she means the power of the male in the society that imposes certain rule and regulation on the females to regulate their bodies. They channelize their power implicitly and explicitly along with the context. Here, Richard has used his power explicitly in order to dominate a Nepali girl. He asked her to follow everything without any mercy. He furthermore compels her to share her body with his friend too. It proves that male misinterpret their power when they get an opportunity and female

has to become a scapegoat.

Apart from this, the protagonist of the story uses her body for pursuing her goal. Though she has gone to US for higher education, her intention is to settle there and earn money. When she keeps roaming in the American society, she does not find best job. She becomes job stress and ultimately decides to make a contract with a Negro who works along with her in the same fast food company as a sweeper. Shah describes:

She is completely distressed and finds herself inside the cage in US's freedom based society. Due to her failure to get appropriate job in different locations and frustration, she makes a contract of marriage with her colleague who works as a sweeper. (59; my translation)

It indicates that she has taken marriage as a trivial things and her body as a product. She is ready to share her body with the Negro who holds the citizenship of US. She reckons to achieve PR using her body. It is outcome of American society because there is no hindrance for girls to have divorced after she gets PR. She makes the contract on the basis of the same purpose. Here, she turns out be using her own body for the sake of her dream. Sharma writes in this context, "American law allows people to have divorced after certain time of marriage, it gives the freedom to people to make contract for their personal benefit. This structure or law of controlling mechanism has governed the bodies of both characters in the story" (193; my translation).

In addition to this "Contract" also presents the protest of Nepali girl while she is obliged to share the bed with a stranger. She is conscious that sharing the bed with a new guy is a loss of morality. She refuses to accept the proposal of Richard to involve in fornication with his friend Jack. Shah presents the incidents in this way, "What did you do Ricahrd? Oh God . . . what are you doing? I am not a prostitute but your wife

(63; my translation)”. Here, these lines describe resistance of female character in the form of rationality. She does not become ready to endure the devastating experience. She tries to apprise her husband that she belongs only to him not to his friends. Moreover, she clarifies that she is not a strumpet for doing so. She resists with her all effort to abandon the ill activity. But ultimately she has to accept the order like the robot. Even readers can show their genuine empathy with the protagonist’s treacherous contract married life. In a broad sense, Shah is trying to show how Nepali girl’s suffering is not only her personal suffering but also a common problem of twenty-first century’s diasporas women in American patriarchal society.

In “Theorizing a Politics of Female Body”, Elizabeth V. Spelman argues that the female body is in a state of exile including self-exile and self-censorship, outsidership, and un-belonging to itself within indigenous patriarchy. She presents her idea as:

I include literal and metaphoric connotations of exile, as well as the concept of internal exile of the female body from patriarchy . . . Female protagonist undergo what I term “internal exile” where the body feels disconnected from itself, as though it does not to it and no agency. (2)

The experience of internalized exile unfolds as a process that includes female protagonist’s complicated level of consent and collusion to domination. The unfolding, indeed the process of the body being exiled, brings female protagonist to a state of consciousness. They protest against domination and attempt to use their bodies through speech, silence and so on. But, their resistance gets failed and baleful outcomes results into more violence and chaos. The same bitter reality has been experienced by the protagonist in the story. She is in US and does not have her own control over her body. Her body is governed by Richard though she makes an attempt

to resist through her speech that goes in vain and has to accept the command of both guys. In this sense she is self-exiled in terms of her body.

“Derli and White Horse” narrates story of girl named Derli who becomes the victim of his own boyfriend. The boy pretends to be a good lover and persuades his affection in the name of love which concludes with devastating result. She herself plunges into fantasy of having a white boyfriend that ultimately costs her much in the end. She wants to enjoy the materialistic life having a white European boyfriend who could afford everything of her desire and takes her away to US. In this respect, Shah narrates:

Her colleagues Catlin, Caroline, Simelia are very much clever. They make foreign boyfriend changing frequently . . . they come to college with laptops at the hand. They carry American makeup kit in their bags. They have American dolor in the bag instead of goods. Though they speak Creal and French but inserts English in between. Want to speak English even crippling. (154; my translation)

Here, English male and language has been taken as superior to Haitian male and language. White males are presented powerful who could afford materials like cosmetics kits and laptops to Haitian girls. This has created an advantage for whites so that they can easily play with the bodies of the Haitian Black girls. Imitation of English language in their conversation shows that Black girls also want to enjoy same kind of power like whites. Butler in her book *Undoing Gender* notes, “That power emerges in language . . . or, indeed, in other modes of articulations as that which tries to stop the articulation as it nevertheless moves forward” (13). Due to universal value of English language, Black girls also want to be as powerful as whites. Therefore, White race has become dominant everywhere. Moreover, Black girls presume that

white can fulfill all their desire and grant them their every wish.

Similarly, Jonas, beloved of Derli also deceives her as he gets benefitted using her body. He is poor and cannot afford motor bike for visiting places. But when he is offered some amount of money from a white man, he hires the motor bike and takes Derli to beach for pastime. He intentionally mistreats her and eventually sells his own girlfriend to a white man for money. Shah describes:

Jonas took Derli inside the hotel without telling anything . . . At the main gate of hotel, the very white man was standing with a beam . . . Let's go inside, white man whispered . . . he wrapped her with his hands . . . She asked for Jonas turning back . . . But white man said he has already gone because he has come here just to leave you. His eyes seemed victorious while staring at her.

(164; my translation)

Due to her reverie of making a white boyfriend and living a good life, Derli has become the victim of her own boyfriend. Jonas pretends as if he is honest and true to her while taking her to trip but ultimately handovers her to the next man with the certain amount of money. He does not show his sincerity and respect for his own love. He takes an advantage of being a boy friend of a girl and exchanges her with money. On the other hand, white man easily purchases Black people either they are male or female. He shows his power in the name of race and rationality and makes exploitation with the help of body of Blacks. Mahesh Karki in this regard writes, "A man who works in UN wants to enjoy the bodies of Haitian girls. His desires easily gets fulfilled because Haitian girls become ready to share bed with them for dolor or in the fantasy of getting green card they make physical relation with white" (67; my translation). That's why white takes Blacks as an object which can be hired painlessly in no time. It is happened due to his European identity, UN's service and masculine

quality. Therefore, he satisfies his bodily desire with money purchasing a female.

On the other hand, the protagonist of the story Derli desires to have a white boyfriend for her personal benefit. She is guided by the consumer insight because she also wants to entertain the fancy life having all desire fulfilled. For this purpose, she becomes ready to go in white hand sacrificing her body. Though she does want to gain and consume newly introduced products in the market but becomes a product herself in the eye of white man. Shah describes:

Derli was embraced with white man. He was loving her forgetting everything. He was unfolding Derli's dreams letters. One day he takes her to US. He was loving her unconditionally . . . look at me girls! Why do you feel proud? I too have an American boyfriend. She started laughing carelessly. (164; my translation)

Here, Derli takes the opportunity to be in the lap of white man as a fortunate thing. She claims that since she is with the white man, it gives her good fame and respect among the girls of her circle. Karki in this context writes, "She becomes a scapegoat. She does not care even if her boy friend manipulates her body to buy a motorbike but she reckons her life has become successful. She does not mourn while losing self rather keeps laughing indicates the success of the consumerism" (69; my translation). Her happiness seems to be crossing every corner of globe, she is happier for accomplishing her goal to have a white boy friend. She feels awkward for herself but when she gets the hand of white men she willingly becomes to share her body with him for pursuing her goal. In this sense she has become less human and more a consumer. She happens to become the object of selling and buying.

In addition to this, Derli is lost in an American culture and dream. There is hegemony of America in Haiti so she also longs for a white man though she is already

having a Haitian boyfriend. She engages in romance with Jonas but still tries to seek the white man somewhere beside her. Shah describes this scenario as, “Jonas put Derli in his lap and embraced her with a soft kiss. Derli closed her eyes and suddenly there came the face white man in her imagination” (162; my translation). It indicates that though she is in the lap of her boyfriend physically but she gets satisfied remembering her dream with white man in her thoughts. It implicitly indicates that she has accepted the imperialism of the US.

Shah’s stories are full of male consciousness because writer implicitly presents female character inferior to male character and the entire stories end with the victory of male. In this respect, we can sense that there is certain authority on the part of writer as well. The sense of authority which infuses these stories derives from the accumulated weight of the mimetic tradition of his culture where he was brought up witnessing male’s superiority and victory that is pervasive in the stories. There are traces of his male centered ideology in his presentation of females. Reality and outcome are distorted for the benefit of male as the dominant discourse of patriarchy he has been inculcating since his childhood. That is to say balanced representation of both male and female is still missing in his stories. In this sense, we can come to conclusion that Shah’s *Jackson Height*, thus is not successful in representing the dominated, voiceless female and advocate for their rightful place and security in the society.

Mahesh Bikram Shah’s selected stories present a handful of female characters that have been treated as the fragile and subservient character to male. They have been beaten so badly, raped and obliged them to share the bed with the unfamiliar faces, eventually sold as an object that shows imposed domination done to them by the male characters in the family. It presents their meaningless struggle to resist

against the violence. As the human civilization kicked off, it splintered the society into two different dimensions. Thereafter, male and females are treated differently as to show their different values. Males embody superiority, rationality, intellect, robust, civilized, cultured and so on while females are considered as inferior, irrational, emotional, fragile, barbaric and uncultured. It helped to dig out the deepest hole in the society which makes females as the means of subjugation.

Patriarchy on the other hand, has been treating female as the secondary figure in terms of their assumption. Males confiscate all the rights of the women in their hand as taken for granted. Therefore, female lack agency of their own which hinders them to perform according to their interest and resist against domination. In this way, a woman is domesticated within the certain boundary of society and family which ultimately has urged them to accept their position as the “caged bird”. Moreover, they are obliged to follow the norms and values endorsed by society which is ruled through patriarchy. This research paper argues that female body has been a site for exploitation, violence and domination in the context of patriarchal society because they primarily lack the social and economical agencies to fight back those domination.

All in all, Mahesh Bikram Shah’s stories are an epitome of depicting how domination is done in terms of gender and race and also present how female protest against the domination. Though these stories are written based on the certain location still they hold the worldview of all women living throughout the world. They have become successful in presenting the politics of the body artistically and show how a male stereotypically presents female in the society. Though this research focused on *Body Politics in Selected Stories from Jackson Height*, Shah’s stories can also be studied from the perspective of diaspora studies and cultural studies among others.

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