

## Chapter 1

### Quest for Sexual Fulfillment

#### *The City Son and Instinctual Forces*

Human relationships are complex in their nature. People coexist with each other in the world, where conflicts and differences in their lives occur. Learning how to effectively manage those problems can have a great impact on the qualities of the relationship. But human relationships are becoming more complicated in the modern contexts. Human beings have to handle and tackle with various complexities of life. Their actions are mostly driven by their consciousness. The unconsciousness mind contains mental processes that are isolated to consciousness but that influence judgments, feelings or behaviors of individuals. Their behaviors, feelings and decisions are forcefully influenced by their past experience, and are stored in the unconscious. Their actions are motivated by psychological drives. This research attempts to study Samrat Upadhyay's *The City Son* from psychoanalytic perspective to explore the impact of excessive libido of the main characters suffering from obsession.

Didi (Sulochana), the main character in the novel, tries all the time to reconstruct her position as a controlling power to fulfill her desire and grasp her husband, Masterji, in her own favor. In all the process, she loses her temper, expels Masterji's second family, destroys the life of Apsara, Masterji's second wife, and favors Tarun, the son of Apsara. But when Tarun gets older, Didi's relation to the boy turns to an emotional attachment. She goes against the social norms to make a sexual relation with him. Thus, the novel reflects excessive libidinal acts of the main characters, Didi and Tarun. The main argument of this thesis is that the sense of revenge and excessive sexual desire leads Didi to an unnatural sexual relation with

her own step son.

The novel is a tale of betrayal and abuse. Didi is an unattractive girl whose marriage to bright, attractive Masterji's is arranged to settle a debt between their fathers. Masterji is a tutor in the city which makes it difficult for him to visit home regularly. He marries a beautiful young tutee as his second wife and she bears him a son. But it is unknown to Didi. She is busy in her household work when a stranger woman comes to tell her that her husband has been cheating on her. The woman describes the beauty of the little boy and his mother that cannot stop Didi to think about her step son and moves there with two sons. The husband, through his timidity, allows Didi to intimidate his new wife. Didi changes quickly from a victim to a victor. The second wife Apsara eventually leaves home, sinks into madness, mainly on account of Masterji' cowardice nature, and finally dies.

Although Didi hates Apsara, she has fascination towards Tarun, her step son. She gives a lot of attention to him, feeds him anything he wants to eat and shows him love more than she does to her own two sons. He is in Didi's care. She quickly begins to treat him more like a lover than a child. Tarun also begins to love Didi more than anyone else because he initially sees motherly figure in her. At the beginning, he is only about ten years or even younger, but she begins sexual play with him. If he does anything that does not please her, he feels lost. His straightforwardness and silence encourage Didi to abuse him emotionally and eventually physically.

Finally, Tarun lacks the ability of socialization or expressing any interest in girls. Although Tarun gets married to a girl named Rukma, the sexual relation of Tarun and Didi continues up even after he gets married. His obsession with her is so profound that he is unable to consummate his marriage. Tarun has no mother beside her and he is terrified with a fear that she will leave him. He keeps secrecy and

silence as an abused child. He neither wants to interact with his wife nor does he take any interest in her sexually in fear of losing Didi. Rukma, on the other hand, feels crippled like her mother-in-law and decides to leave him and live alone. But after she discovers the reality, she somehow struggles to bring the situation in control and makes things turn good. Rukma seems the only most powerful and hard-hitting character in the novel. As the heroic wife, she handles the situation and makes her husband free from the grip of Didi.

Upadhyay, a distinguished fiction writer, born and raised in Nepal, writing in English, is widely known as a great novelist, essayist and short story writer. He moves to United States, completes his higher studies and receives Ph.D. from University of Hawaii. Upadhyay 's first book, a short story collection of *Arresting God in Kathmandu* is a Whiting Writers' Award Winner. *The Royal Ghosts*, won the 2007 Asian American Literary Award, the Society of Midland Authors Book Award and was declared a Best of fiction in 2006 by the Washington Post. *The Guru of Love* a New York Times Notable Book and San Francisco Chronicle Best Book of the Year. *Buddha's Orphan*, longlisted for the DSC prize in India. And his late novel *The City Son* has been shortlisted for the PEN Open Book Award. He is the first Nepali-born fiction writer writing in English to be published in the West. His books specially portray the current situation in Nepal, which Upadhyay views largely through the lens of contemporary American realist fiction.

*The City Son* portrays the life in the city where the country's people change themselves in touch of it. In her village, Didi used to be submissive and obedient. A good daughter to her family, a loving and caring mother to her children, patiently waits for her husband dreaming a beautiful life. But when she comes to the city, she becomes bold, leading, dominated, and crazy about sex. In the case of Masterji, he

also used to be an obedient son to accept all his father's wishes and desire, a loving and caring father to his sons and a responsible husband to his wife. But later, he marries a beautiful city girl as his second wife and forgets every vow which he has made to his father.

A persistent obsession caused by the estrangement from the loved ones has led the major characters to excessive libidinal acts. Masterji's obsession and unsatisfied sexual relations with his first wife leads him to marry another beautiful girl in the city. Didi's obsession is to take revenge on her husband's betrayal and recover her unfulfilled sexual desire by other alternative, which leads her to an unnatural sexual relation with her own step son. On the other hand, Tarun, being aware of losing Didi, he feels shame, secrecy, and silence. He turns no more social and has no interest in girls. He sees his motherly figure in Didi and emotionally becomes closer to her. And most importantly the misguidance of little Tarun brings him to a troubled adulthood.

This study tries to explore the novel from the psychoanalytical point of view mainly based on Sigmund Freud's theory. The focus is mostly on the types of libidinal activities of the major characters, the causes behind their too much libidinal desire and its consequences. The main concern of the study is to discourse on the major characters' psycho-sexual activities and libidinal instincts which seem immoral and unethical in the contemporary Nepalese society. Upadhyay attempts to explore this unexplored hidden reality of the Kathmandu people to provide new flavour for his readers. The major objectives of the study are to analyse the libidinal activities of Didi and Tarun as displayed in the novel and to find out the causes and consequences of such libidinal acts.

## Review of the Literature

After the publication of the novel, many critics have attempted to analyze it from various perspectives. *The New York Times* reviews, "Subtle and spiritually complex. . . . Mr. Upadhyay's stories bring us into contact with a world that is somehow both far away and very familiar." Nepal is found to be exposed in the outer world. For this, Upadhyay has played a great role. He describes every corner of the Kathmandu valley through his novel, which makes the reader familiar. The novel has the spiritual complexities which makes it difficult to analyze. The relationship between mother and her step-son makes the novel difficult to detect and the readers mind cannot easily grasp.

Men, in this novel, are mostly powerless, weak and dependent. They become completely victim of the circumstances. Females are presented to be more powerful throughout the novel. Ali Eteraz talks about the gender aspects in the novel. Highlighting the power of female characters in his novel, he states:

The author is male, which we can kind of put aside, but in the book itself, even though the main character is male the most dominant character is female, and the other males—Masterji, Mahesh uncle (Tarun's adopted father), the sons—are all pretty much either weak, intoxicated or superfluous. (Para. 8)

Eteraz talks about the gender issue in the novel. He places male characters being dominated throughout the novel. But, he is unaware about the psycho-sexual aspects in the novel that this thesis attempts to explore.

Upadhyay's writing style is simple and clear. His way of writing makes his works readable. Appreciating the art of writing of Samrat Upadhyay and his unique style, Tricia Springstubb comments, "Reading Samrat Upadhyays' disturbing new

novel, *The City Son*, is the literary equivalent of watching a horror Film. His style is assured and unadorned. The occasional metaphor such as this dead blackbird inside her arrives to arresting effect Upadhyay leaves us holding our breaths” (Para.1). Upadhyay has a different ways of writing fiction. He has started a new style of writing fiction. This novel is like watching a horror movie or as if it is like a soap opera and we, as audiences, are waiting for the next episode. He uses some modern literary techniques like imagination, metaphor and the flashback which make the audience react on the novel. Though Springstubb talks about the ways of his writing style but he ignores the psychosexual analysis of the main characters in the novel.

Comparing Samrat Upadhyay's *The City Son* and Shirley Jackson's domestic horror novel, *The Wall Street Journal* comments, “Fearless . . . There's an eerie element of black magic in Didi's Svengali-like manipulation that evokes the domestic horror novels of Shirley Jackson. This superb book stages an intensely powerful showdown.” Like a domestic horror novels of Shirley Jackson, the novel portrays the Svengali-like characteristics in Didi, who hypnotically forces a child to have sex with her. The encounter of the novel is terribly powerful.

Talking about Upadhyay's way of writing especially timing, clearness and straightforwardness, Oindrila Mukherjee comments on the novel, “ . . . Upadhyay's writing is lucid and straightforward. He focuses on the minute details of setting and character to draw us into the narratives” (Par. 4). Upadhyay's writing style is simple and clear. He does not waste his time on explaining the weather or the other things. He focuses on the minute details of timing, setting and characters to draw the readers into narration.

Upadhyay is straightforward in his writing. *Publisher Weekly* mentions, “Upadhyay tells his story with simple and direct prose . . . . The multi character

narration adds dramatic depth” (Para. 1). Upadhyay tells his story in a very simple way. The book starts up from Didi's perspective, then transcends to Tarun and finally to a woman named Rukma. Thus, these multi character narrations make the novel clear to its readers.

Similarly, another critic, Sonia Awale deals with the depiction of universal matter, although the novel has been set in the conventional Kathmandu city. She postulates:

Samrat Updhyay is a master storyteller, and although his books are set in Kathmandu the plot of unconventional abuse in *The City Son* is universal. His writing is simple, stark, and sparse- as if the author does not want to let language get in the way of storytelling . . . . Both exhibit distinct public and private facades. (Para. 4)

Upadhyay's story is especially set in Kathmandu but his indication towards is universal. The story of abuse and betray can happen in any corner of the world. Overall, his writing is simple and clear. Awale talks about the way of writing style of Upadhyay. Rather it is shadow of his character's psyches and their complex situation in their life led by the psycho-sexual behavior.

Thus, though many attempts have been made to analyze the novel from socio-cultural, economic and feminist points of view. But, none of them has paid any significant attention to the psycho-sexual aspects and its consequences in the novel. Therefore, this study finds this psychological issue new and untouched and analyzes the novel from a new psychoanalytic perspective.

### **Outline of the Study**

This study has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents an introduction to the research concerning the excessive libido and its consequences. It

particularly illuminates the lifelong obsession of Didi, the main character, to channel her authority and power over the family. Similarly, this chapter incorporates the thesis statement as the major argument of analysis. It also consists of the major problems of this thesis. Related literature review regarding the novel as well as the author has also been highlighted in this chapter. The outline of the study itself has been included in the introductory chapter.

The second chapter focuses on the theoretical background of psychoanalysis. It draws explicitly on Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic approach in relation to libidinal instinct of human individual. Freud studies the human mind to explain their hidden motives of psychological makeup. He focuses on the infantile sexuality out of which psychological disturbance occurs and affects the adulthood. This concept has been applied in the novel to analyze an abused child in one side and the action of an abuser on the other.

The third chapter explores the novel through the lens of Psychoanalysis and libidinal desire. The effect of psychic mind and the story about an abused child have been under consideration. Didi's behaviour shows psychic acts in the novel. Similarly, it tries to explore how her activities harm all the characters in the novel. Furthermore, this study tries to analyze the marriage which has been taken as financial consensus between two parties. Similarly the situation of isolation, separation and betrayal of the major characters has been incorporated as a psychological phenomenon. Finally, the fourth chapter is a conclusive restatement of the main concern of the novel.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Freudian Psychoanalysis: Concept and Practice**

#### **Sigmund Freud's Theory of Psychoanalysis**

The term Psychoanalysis is developed by Austrian Sigmund Freud.

Psychoanalysis itself is a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorder of the people by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in mind, conflicts and fantasies and the interpretation of dream. It can also be defined as a method of treating mental disorder by repeatedly reading a mind or behaviour of a person in order to make him aware of experiences in his early life and compare the connection between them and his present behavior or feeling. Freud's theory focuses on sex and aggression during the time period Freud lived in, when sex and sexual ideas were not socially acceptable. Those ideas were unspoken and socially restricted. Freud was the founder of personality theory and therapeutic practice.

Freud was the first to draw attention to the significance of unconscious processes in normal and neurotic behavior. Freud also extended the use of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature. The characters in stories can be analyzed on the basis of the symptoms they display in the course of the events. Similarly, the text can be taken as a site which shows the symptoms of the writer's mentality. The critic can be reached the mental world of the writer through the symptoms of the text. Freud talks about the determining factor of human action. All of his work depends upon the notion of unconscious, which is the part of the mind beyond consciousness which nevertheless has a strong influence upon our action. Freud's understanding of human personality was based on his experiences with patients, his analysis of his own dream, and his based reading of humanities these experiences provided the basis data for the evolution of his theories. In real life, man

often becomes a site of conflict between conscious and unconscious mind. In fact, no person is an island and nobody is a perfectly unified personality due to the constant conflict between conscious and unconscious aspects of mind in him/her.

The perfect and unproblematic image of a person that we see on the surface is merely an illusion. In fictional works, writers use psychosexual symbols to represent the psychosexual reality of the characters. Such symbols not only rationalize what is irrational in characters but also add beauty and power to the fictional work. Freud coined the term psychoanalysis in 1896 after a long struggle to work out his ideas on the causes of neurosis and other mental disorders. All the same, he remains a major social and cultural force, and his impact on how we think about ourselves has been incalculable.

Psychosexuality is the mental representation of sexual activities. This involves biological, erotic, physical, emotional, social or spiritual feelings and behaviors. Freud believes sexuality as the central source of human personality. People both consciously and subconsciously seek to attract others with whom they can form deep relationship. Explaining sexual behavior, Lois Tyson states, "Of course, sexual behavior is also a product of our culture because our culture set down the rules of proper sexual conduct and the definition of normal and abnormal sexual behavior" (25). The application of psychoanalytical theory to interpret the literary work is not only as important as understanding literature but also about human behavior and actions.

Actually sexual behavior is set according to the cultural norms and values in the very contemporary societies. Psychological approach takes the text as an expression of the secret and repressed life. By applying psychoanalytical theory, it looks into the characters and explains their invisible motives or psychological

representations. Peter Barry emphasizes, “All of Freud’s work depends upon the notion of the unconscious, which is the part of mind beyond consciousness which nevertheless has a strong influence upon our action” (92). Thus, the presence of unconscious and its vital roles are the main concerns of Freudian psychoanalysis.

Freud was the founder of both theory of personality and therapeutic practice. He does not limit his study only to this mental process. He studies how people relate to the world around them and the object relation:

Freud was interested in the way children idealize parents and then internalize versions of those ideals as part of their own psychological makeup. Such internal ideals then become models for regulating one's libidinal impulses. He also focused on the strong feeling that parents' departure can produce, feeling of rage at controlled when the child develops an independent capacity for play. (Ryan 96)

This way the child learns from separation to become an independent being. The object relations theory suggests that the way people relate to others and a situation in their adult lives is shaped by family experiences during childhood.

Psychology is the scientific study of mind and behavior. It is multifaceted discipline which includes many subfield of study. Psychology is a broad field that encompasses the study of human thought, behavior, development and many more. In another variation, understanding of psychology can help people achieve insights into their own actions as well as better understanding.

### **Personality Structure**

Freud's structural theory of personality focuses how the conflicts among the parts of the mind shape human behavior and personality. These conflicts are mostly unconscious. Freud divides human personality into three psychic zones: the id (or

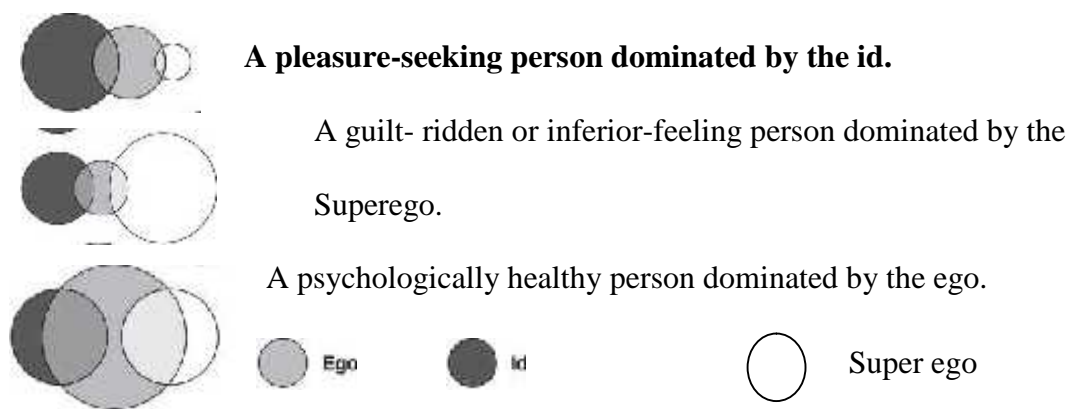
unconscious), ego (or conscious mind) and super ego (or conscience). The id is the aspect of the personality that is driven by internal instinctual, such as hunger, thirst and the drive for sex or libido. It mainly reserves the libido, the primary source of all psychic energy. It functions to fulfill the primordial life principle, which Freud considered to be the pleasure principle. Ryan asserts, "[Freud] coined the word libido for pleasure-seeking instinctual urges that propel us through life and that account for some of our most basic physical urges such as sexual desire" (94). The id acts in accordance with the pleasure principle that it avoids pain and seeks pleasure. If these unrestrained impulses are blocked or suppressed, these may lead a person to destruction.

According to Freud, the ego and the superego are other two psychic zones of mind. The ego is a rational regulating agency and operates according to reality principle. It protects the individual by regulating the instinctual derives that arrives from Id. It is the rational, pragmatic part of our personality. It helps separate what is real and realistic of our drives as well as being realistic about the standards that the superego sets for the individuals. Highlighting the role of ego, Ryan states, "The mind often seeks compromises or attain expression, but in such a way that it compromises with the repression the ego exert against it" (94). In other words, ego consists of the conscious mind though most of its portion remains unconscious. Freud's theories argue that psychologically healthy persons gradually develop strong egos and become able to cope with the demands of the id and superego.

The superego is concerned with social rules and morals. It develops as a child learns what their culture considers. Instead of instinctively acting like the id, the superego works to act in socially acceptable ways. It is the mental censoring agency that represents what the society considers moral and social standards. Kendra Cherry

mentions, “The superego is the aspect of personality that holds all of our internalized moral standards and ideals that we acquire from both parents and society our sense of right and wrong” (Para 1). The superego acts like a perfect and morals of our behavior. It is presented as conscious, preconscious and unconscious.

To Freud, the most primitive part of the mind was the id, the ego and the superego. The ego has conscious, preconscious and unconscious components, whereas the superego is both preconscious and unconscious. Fiest and Fiess study the relationship among Id, Ego and Superego as:



(Fiest and Fiess 36)

In the first person, the id dominates weak ego and a feeble superego, preventing the ego from counterbalancing its ceaseless demands of the Id and leaving the person nearly continuously struggle for pleasure regardless of what is possible or proper. The second person, with strong feeling of either guilt or inferiority and a weak ego which will experience many conflicts because the ego cannot mediate the strong but apposing demands of the superego and the id. The third person, with a strong ego that has incorporated many of the demands of both the id and the superego, psychologically healthy and in control of both the pleasure principle and the morality principle.

Freud believes that the id, ego and superego are in continuous conflict and that adult personality and behavior are rooted in the result of these internal struggles throughout childhood. He believes that a person who has a strong ego has a healthy personality.

### **Psycho-Sexual Development**

Sexuality is the major factor in Freudian thought. He relates sexuality and its expression to infantile sexuality, the Oedipal Complex and libido. Libido is the energy that drives sexual desire. Freud's theory also speaks of child psychology that is much controversial. Yet, it explores a new dimension of psychoanalysis. It is a series of five overlapping stages through which children pass by their first five years. He focuses on sexual development including oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital stage. He also believes that only few people successfully complete all of five stages. He also feels that most people tied up their libido at oral stage, which prevented them from using that energy at anal stage. Hall explodes his ideas about oral stage, "Infantile sexuality on the other hand, is on the whole devoid of such centralization and organization, its individual component impulses are of equal power, and each independently goes in search of acquisition of pleasurable excitement" (273). Therefore, id seeks pleasure only, regardless of the consequences and superego represses all pleasure seeking impulses. For example, the child sucks during his oral phase, its mouth became the organ of getting sexual pleasure.

Similarly, during anal phase, individual have their first encounter with rules and regulation, as the child gets pleasure from controlling and discharging the body waste. This erode occurs about age 2 and 3 years. Some critical episode for development occurs during phallic stage. The child becomes aware of its sex organ during this period and develops the oedipal complex, castration anxiety and the very

penis envy for the girls. Emphasizing the characteristics of the phallic stage Hall asserts, “For from the third year on, there is no longer any doubt concerning the presence of a sexual life in the child. At this time the genital already begin to become active; there is perhaps regularly, a period of infantile masturbation, in other words, a gratification by means of the genitals” (281-82). So, sexual life of the child shows from the third year that it has much in common with that of the adult.

On the other hand, latency develops during the age between 5 to 12 years, where the development of healthy dormant sexual feeling for the opposite sex. The entire task from the previous four stages is integrated into the mind in the very final, genital stage, where libido begins to be used in its sexual roles.

It is during three stages of development that the experiences are filtered through the three levels of the human mind. Form of these structure and inherent conflict that arise in the mind that personality is being shaped. Therefore, if any emotional disturbance occurs on the child, it unconsciously affects the adulthood.

Peter Barry, however, talks about childhood behavior that by living together from early childhood the sexual attraction must have been diverted from these members of the family who are of opposite sex:

Many of Freud's ideas concern aspects of sexuality. Infantile sexuality, for instance, is the notion that sexuality begins not at puberty, with physical maturing, but in infancy, especially through the infant's relationship with the mother. Connected with this is the Oedipus complex, whereby, says Freud, the male infant conceives the desire to eliminate the father and becomes the sexual partner of the mother. (93)

Freud notices that a child learns to control his rage at the loss of his mother by devising a game in which he controlled her departure and return. Feeling of lack of

control were thus turned into their opposite. Though his theory is disputable, it explores a new aspect of psychoanalysis.

Libido is a term used in psychoanalytic theory to describe energy of survival and instincts. Actually it is the part of the id and its driving force of all behavior. It represents all psychic energy not only the sexual energy. The following chapter is the study of the novel *The City Son* from the perspectives of the working of libidinal forces in few major characters.



## Chapter 3

### Manifestation of Excessive Libidinal Drives

#### Emotionless Marriages and Sexual Impulses

The increased interest in family and marriage is due to a number of reasons. Satisfaction with marriage is the main parameter characterizing the conjugal relationship. Upadhyay tries to explore the complex marriage relationships of the characters in the novel. The main cause behind peoples' separation is their sexual desire, more powerful than their relationship. He explores the concept of marriage in relation to his characters. He talks about the arranged marriages which go wrong for them. Though he talks about two arranged marriages, which were financial arrangements of both sides, the characters suffer from loneliness, separation and finally betrayal from their loved ones. Consequently, they indulge in excessive libidinal activities. They do not even want to care what is moral or immoral. Upadhyay unveils the shades of hidden sexual abuse and psychological obsession through the novel. He especially explains the characters' psyche, their behavior and a story of an abused child through the lens of psychoanalysis.

The novel presents the mismarriage between Didi and Masterji. Didi lives in a remote Nepali village. Her husband, who is always referred to by a title rather than a name *the Masterji*, teaches in the city. He rarely comes home to see his wife and sons. Theirs was an arranged marriage. Didi was not a physically attractive young woman. But, she was even tempered and hard-working. This early description gives us some insight into the kind of woman Upadhyay has chosen for his heroine. One day a stranger comes to Didi's house in the village with news about Masterji's second marriage. The news she brings sets in train the rest of the story. He has married a young and beautiful wife, and they have a son. Didi remains in a deeply tragic mood.

She wants to challenge the social norms and take revenge upon her husband and his second wife by having a secret relationship with her own step son.

The story is about abuse, neglect and twisted love. It is hard to see the motivations beneath Didi's character. Those early descriptions of Didi force us to hate her. She wants to take revenge upon all those who have wronged her. But equally, she has been wronged and while the form of her domination of her husband's son cannot be remotely penalty. It could be her unfulfilled desire for love and physical connection that she is acknowledging which ultimately lead her into separation.

The female characters are particularly dangerous. They are forced into arranged marriages and later abandoned by their husbands, who fall in love with other women. The rural female protagonist does not accept her fate, and fights back in a manner that challenges the social norms. Didi is a victim who becomes a predatory villain, yet she remains a deeply tragic, near mythic figure, least of all for herself.

A marriage born of financial gain, the Masterji takes to please his father. Masterji describes her when he goes to spy on her when their marriage is to be arranged is grotesque:

She was round, her face like a soccer ball. His heart dropped into disappointment. When she comes closer, he saw her face. It was bhadda, flat and dark and uninteresting. Her cheeks were puffed up as cotton had been stuffed inside. She had dark spot on her face . . . . A battered bhakundo, like the football our local boys kick and kick so hard on the field that it's all blackened and bruised. (17-18)

The author wants to express Masterji's obsession. Their marriage was a financial arrangement between their fathers and in which Masterji was benefited.

The novel maintains the contrast of Didi's ugliness versus her sexual powers.

Didi, has all the qualities of a good wife, daughter, daughter in-law and mother but she has an extreme sexual appetite. Reflecting upon her sexual appetite, the narrator narrates:

She was ferocious in the bed during those times when the Masterji visited. She was like a tigress who took immediate control. She clawed and scratched and was in exhaustible. When the Masterji got tired, she rode him, with abandon, uncaring of the moans, and the whimpers. She made him cry, grasp and, occasionally shout-so loud and rollicking was their love making. (19-20)

As Masterji was tutor in the city, it made difficult for him to visit home regularly. When he visited Didi, he would become violent and crazy for sex. Her sexual energy would quickly turn into something equally as disgusting as her physical appearance.

The novel shows Didi's extreme sexual desire throughout the novel. Her unconscious desire to have Masterji is too high that she does not care about holy and spiritual day, “Even when he returned for the last rites for his father, she didn't leave him alone at night. It was not the proper thing to do - the grieving period was supposed to be pure and uncontaminated- and he felt guilty when he returned to the city” (20). Didi's excessive libidinal desire is going to be destructive in the future.

The author presents various arranged marriages which unceremoniously break up when the husbands fall in love with other women. The mismarriage between Masterji and Didi leads Masterji to an extra marital affair in the city. On the other hand, Tarun and Rukma's mismarriage results in isolation and loneliness.

Didi first suffers from the years of loneliness, separation and finally betrayal. First she is too aware of her children and of her life too. When she was in village she used to be submissive:

What's going to happen to my boys? She reflects. But it's too late and she knows it. She's not at the start of this momentum; she's already in the middle Of it. The boys are going to suffer other people, unknown faces she hasn't yet met, are going to suffer people who are now suddenly connected to her. (5)

Upadhyay mentions Didi, as ugly, fat and eagerness to have sexual relation with her husband in the very second chapter.

Tarun is being habitual of Didi. He does not want to hurt her in any manner. Whenever Mahesh uncle (his adopted father) talks about getting married, Tarun twists the conversation. But he loves his mother very much so he does not want to disobey her. The following extract reveals his true condition:

Tarun asks her how she's doing. He doesn't expect her to talk, as she hasn't talked for a long time, but today she says, "You get married now." . . . He panics at the thought of another meeting with Rukma. "Bring Rukma here," Apsara says. "Ma-" Her right palm flies through the air and strikes him on the face. The disbelief of what has just happened stuns him. (144-45)

Tarun is pretty sure that this decision would result in devastation. But he has no other alternative to get out from this mismatch.

Mahesh uncle goes on giving pressure to Tarun to get married. He wants Tarun to be settled in his life. Also he wants to fulfill Apsara's wish of seeing her son as a bridegroom:

There's something irrevocable about a dying person's last words. Tarun is determined to be firm, but as the days go by- as his mother's body is burned by the river, and he shaves his head and dons all- white clothes

of mourning- her words ring in his ears, and her slap hover around him, near his cheeks. Mahesh Uncle continues to pressure him. It's imperative, he says, to have a good female presence in the house. When Tarun can't argue with Mahesh uncle's constant appeals any longer, he says, "Okay, okay, do what you need to do." (147)

Being a good son of his mother, he obeys the decision of what Mahesh uncle does. He just wants to stop the conversation between them but was unaware of the consequences of his decision.

Finally this thesis paper tries to explore the consequences of emotionless marriage and sexual impulses. The present of the main characters is going to damage their future. And their unsuccessful marriages lead towards their devastating future which the following sub chapter is going to deal with.

### **Libidinal Activities**

The unsuccessful marriage relationship between Didi and Masterji lead the family into complete breakdown that has been depicted as possessive libidinal and sexual abuse. When Didi learns of her husband Masterji's secret second family in Kathmandu with the attractive Apsara and their young son Tarun, she becomes upset and leaves the village to join him in the city with her two sons. True to her domineering personality, Didi takes over her husband's house hold and hounds Apsara out. Although she has no beauty herself, Didi has a fierce libido which manifests itself in her affection for her good-looking step-son, Tarun and which turns into possessive obsession and abuse.

Appreciating the art of writing, especially narration of Samart Upadhyay and discussing about the human behavior and desires for sex, *Kirkus Reviews* mentions: "The arc of Upadhyay's narrative is like that of soap opera, though rather more lurid .

. . the human cost of the quasi-incest is exceptionally high” (Para. 1). Upadhyay has different ways of writing. He uses new style of writing fiction. The novel is more shocking and its technique is like that of soap opera. Rather it describes the human sexual behavior and their desire to have. It especially discusses the illegitimate sex relation between a mother and her step son which seems unacceptable in the contemporary society which this thesis tries to analyze.

After Didi moves to the city she meets her husband and his second family. Her personality is power, Masterji's silence is her strength, as she captures everything and everyone, “Her eyes are specially reserved for Tarun, on whom she bestows small, encouraging smiles” (23). This shows how her mental forces drive her conscious desire to have Tarun. Upadhyay highlights Didi's attraction towards Tarun. She forgets that she has her own two sons to care for and gives a lot of attentions towards him. “Didi’s fingers care Tarun's face, his chin. I think he's the most beautiful boy the whole world, she says, her gaze fixed on him” (45). She has done all these things because she has been described as an ugly woman. And the novel does not open the physical appearance of her own children so, she finds Tarun to be too beautiful and likes him.

Upadhyay talks about his characters' psyche. He is able to show how a submissive village woman changes herself into a city villain. Her revengeful activities destroy the life of almost everyone in the novel. Jee Yoon Lee comments:

The devastating trauma of sexual abuse and the impact it has upon a family. He deftly handles the narration of a scorned wife's determination to punish her adulterous husband, his mistress and the son produce by her husband's infidelity. The story is grim; upon learning of the betrayal, there is no redemption for the vengeful wife

Didi or for those over whom she exerts power. (Para 1)

Upadhyay is able to make reader understand how Didi's action starts and her revengeful action leads her towards sinful activities.

Didi's desire for revenge turns to obsession. The novel opens her physical as well as her sexual appearance, as she controls all the members through it, "Now it's Didi who is physically demonstrative. She tousles his hair, wipes his face, and says, "You should have been born my son" (32). Anytime in front of her own children, the cunning Didi tells Tarun is the boy whom she meant to give birth. She wants to prove him how much she loves and care him. Although she is not beautiful, she has a fierce libido which manifests itself in her affection for her good looking step son which turns into possessive obsession and abuse.

Although she is from the village, she never forgets that she wants to adapt to city lifestyle. She thinks that city appearance can change everything and everyone like Apsara and to attract Tarun to herself too. Reflecting on her effort of attracting Tarun, the author narrates:

Didi emerges from the Kitchen she looks younger perhaps because of the hair cascading on her shoulder he's never seen her hair down before but also because, Tarun realizes with a start, her lips are red. She has lipsticks on and her eyes look darker because she has put khol around them. The way she's wearing her dothi, it looks different, not loose but tightly wrapped around her hips. (69)

She is becoming one of the "Sahariya women." At first the author describes Masterji's second wife, Apsara's beauty, "A city kind of beauty," sahariya type, the type one finds in magazine, which makes her jealous of her. She thinks beauty can control everyone around her.

Upadhyay has always talked about dualist life of people in his novel. Old-new, male-female and city and the town are mainly discussed in his previous book. But in this novel he portrays a woman, a stepmother molesting her young stepson, not once, but continually, "She comes close to him and stands a few inches away. She's breathing heavily. Stand up, she says. He does. He's afraid of meeting her eyes, but he can't help himself, so he lifts his gaze. Her eyes are big and shiny and filled with something that seems to want to swallow him" (70). She takes a strong interest in Tarun visits, which turns both physical and psychological for years she maintains to emotional and control over the work Tarun.

The sexual subject matter is somehow uncommon in Nepal. Because of their social standards people are being silence in those matters. Rajit Ojha, questions about the existence of complex libidinal relations in the Nepalese society:

The first things came into my mind while I was reading the novel  
Is it really possible? Do these kinds of complex relations exist in  
society? I haven't seen any of them. But probably yes, because they are  
hidden. Samrat has made his own journey and he nails in that.  
Sometimes you feel he is crossing the boundary, but again this is the  
only way he writes, and this is the way readers love him. (Para.1)

The novel somehow portrays the hidden complex sexual relation that exists in the society. Though, the writer seems to cross the boundary, but his intention is to make the novel readable and spicy raising the issue of incestuous relation.

In another variation, Didi's desire to become Tarun's real mother and to replace his own mother is too psychic act. When they are in the bed together, she expresses her desire to have him. The following extract shows her real desire to possess him:



You love your Didi, don't you? She asks. He nods. You love me more than you love your mother? She asks slyly. He's silent, then he says, I love you more than my mother. She closes her eyes and takes a long breath, gratified. I'm your real mother, am I not, even though I'm ugly? Please say yes, *chora*. He's quiet again, then he says, Yes, you are my real mother. Her eyes are still closed; her lips are quivering. (88)

It reveals her unconscious desire to have Tarun as her own son. She has been drawn to Tarun because she is unfortunately ugly and he is inherently handsome. So, she wants to change his beauty into herself.

As a Nepalese writer, Upadhyay writes in English about ordinary, mostly middle-class characters, their struggle against arranged marriages, caste system, social norms and values and economic hardship. Springstubb after reading comments:

As in most of his work, Upadhyay here explores the tension between old and new, including arranged marriage, the caste system, the role of women and the prohibition against sex before marriage. Tarun's young wife is nearly destroyed by their "close-in, walled house with its rooms of madness and entropy." (Para. 8)

In this case, the above quote talks about the reverse situation. Old and new, male and female, sex love and lust are his main focused points.

The author talks about crossing the traditional boundaries in the novel. They were being the matter of shame in the eyes of readers. Didi compares Tarun with his father in a sexual bed which is ridiculous:

"It's so nice, just you and me," Didi says. "No one in this world has a clue about the deep love you and I have for each other. Your father, well, I'm sure he's dying of jealousy." She laughs softly." This jealousy

world will try to tear us apart, Tarun, do you understand? You won't let it happen, Will you, son? Will you let anyone come between us"?

(91)

She first suffers from an enforced separation from her husband, then the years of loneliness and finally betrayal. He wants to fulfill the gaps with her own step son, but afraid of the world. Also she wants to conform to Tarun that he does not leave her like his father.

The novel deals with mismarriages and the result of their actions. Different critics have paid attention on this matter and have shown their ideas. Their overall evaluation shows that the peoples' psyche can lead their life towards their own way.

### **Consequences of Excessive Libido**

This thesis tries to explain the overall evaluation of the main characters libidinal activities and their consequences.

To lose the other is to lose one-self because one has not learned to distinguish other from self. Tarun does not want to lose Didi as a care giver, "It's true: he can't imagine not being with Didi. What would he do? Where would he go? He'd be so alone in this world" (91). Didi becomes one of the most powerful persons in Tarun's life. He has lost maternal love and care of his own mother. He feels alone without his Didi. He does not want to leave her as he is too young to understand her negative intention and inappropriate touch of her.

As time passes, Didi's affection to Tarun goes sexually. He thinks to meet a therapist about what ails him. He says to therapist, "I was a young boy when we started our relationship she is the only mother I've known" (111). This declaration in front of the therapist horrifies him because he has his own mother. Yes, but whenever the word 'mother' comes, he thinks of Didi and also he is too young when Didi started

to molest him.

Didi never forgets that she is from the village. So she does not want Tarun to interact with the *Sahariya* girl. She thinks that whenever he comes to contact with these girls, he will go far away from her like her own husband did. She warns Tarun:

All these girls are not worth your time. These *Sahariya* types. They'll stab you in the back the first chance they get. They don't have any morals, just like your mother. Look at how she so unabashedly fornicated with your father. The only good thing she did was bring you into this world. (92)

Firstly she warns him not to interact with *Sahariya* type of girls. Secondly, she begins to wear lipsticks, powder and *khol* which are the signals of her transition from village to the city life. She attempts to hold affection to Tarun and attract him just like Apsara did the same to Masterji.

Although, Tarun wants to tell his own mother all about the circumstances, he cannot, as she sinks into madness. He does not want to give trouble to his innocent mother. In one hand, he wants to share everything to her expecting what are mother for? But on the other hand, he thinks he will never be so cruel to her. To describe his inner fighting of his feelings, Upadhyay mentions, "As he clasps his mother's hand, he could tell her when it all started, what he and Didi do, providing for his mother small details that will be embroidered in her mind" (112). As a mother, Tarun thinks, she should know every fact about their children and definitely she would understand him and brings him out from that situation but afraid of hurting her.

Tarun loses socialization. He is unable to interact with other girls. He hardly contents his fantasies with other girls. But Didi's grip on him is too strong that whenever he has fantasies, he ends up with her, "He's afraid that Didi will find out

about his fantasies, so he keeps his mental meandering tightly locked up inside him. Whom would he tell them to, anyway? He doesn't have friends with whom he feels comfortable sharing any secrets, let alone something like this" (117). Tarun's life is a web of sickening, shame and secrecy. He cannot resist her magnetically pull, cannot break her offensive hold.

Mahesh uncle brought Apsara and Tarun to his house to escape his own humiliation over a lost love. Though he loves Apsara, he never dares to give her a single hint. There is no place for love in the novel. It only talks about sex, mismarriage and isolation in the character. Leslay Mason projects that the novel incorporates the story of suffering and search of sexual satisfaction:

There's scarcely an ounce of human warmth in any of the characters.

Even Mahesh Uncle who takes in Tarun (*The City Son* of the title) and his mother, now suffering a nervous breakdown under the strain of her banishment, and gives them a home in his expensive gated residence, comes across as a lonely, ambitious, and ultimately selfish man, despite – or because of – his housekeeper's assertions to the contrary.

Sex and control are at the heart of the story. As a result love (in any way shape or form) does not get a look in. (1)

To provide some solace to Apsara and her son, Mahesh uncle takes them in his expensive residence. Apsara has been totally nervous due to her separation from her husband. Now they become alone and helpless because of her husband's selfishness. Rather than love and relationship, sex and control are interpreted more quietly throughout the novel.

After the arrival of Didi and her children, Masterji despite his education his name and total attachment towards Apsara, becomes cowed. Apsara leaves home and

forgets every responsibility towards Tarun. She undergoes mental sickness and madness. Presenting her madness, Upadhyay mentions, “After about an hour, he finds her sleep in a pavilion by the Bagmati shore. Her head is on the lap of a saffron-robed sadhu, whose eyes shines fiercely. Upon seeing Tarun, the Sadhu puts his finger to his lips and says shhh!” (58). All of above, Apsara is also one of the major characters who become victim of the circumstances. She sinks into madness, she has gone against her parents' will and marries a man who is already married. This leads her towards mental illness and immoral sexual relations to Bagmati shore's sadhu.

Upadhyay talks about the arranged marriages which turn in destruction. They compel suffer from the lack of emotional attachment despite their social and marital ties. People go against social norms and values and make love affair which does not long last. He talks about the gap of their marriage though they are in same bed there is a huge gap of their physical and emotional attachment. Tarun cannot get released himself from Didi, so he accepts her as a fate and reveals it to Rukma:

Every day he can see the small damaging effects he's having on her. He rationalizes then that she has also chosen her fate, which is to be with him, so she has no choice but to accept it. Just like he's had to accept his life with a step mother with whom he's so tightly entangled, you are bound to your Newar lover and I am bound to Didi, that's our fate, he thinks. (170)

Being a modern woman, Rukma agrees to an arranged marriage after a love affair which goes wrong. Tarun thinks that they both become the toys of the fate, where they would never able to escape. First, he is too young to understand Didi's intention but being an adult man he is not able to pray himself from her grasp. So, he accepts her as his fate. His bossism with her is so profound that he is unable to consummate

his marriage.

Every time when he returns home after spending private time with Didi, he becomes hopeless and he barely responds to anyone. He curses himself of having relation with his stepmother, "At home, he avoids his mother. He doesn't have to try hard because she's often in her own world.... he does not meet her eyes. She stared of him as he goes into the house. He runs up to his room and lies in bed breathing heavily, his eyes closed. He hates himself"(76). Tarun grows into a young man. Yet he cannot escape from the grip of Didi, who molests him, latching on to his ever sexual desire and manipulate his thoughts. He does not want to see people getting hurt more than he already is.

This novel is not for everyone. In one hand, it is difficult to understand. On the other hand, it is difficult to analyze. The child is prepared for sexual relationship. Brody Bonnie, observes how a young boy is sexually abused, "*The City Son* is hard-hitting book, one that punches the reader right between the eyes, and then does it again. It's content matter is horrific but the writer knows what he is talking about as he describes a young boy groomed to be sexually abused" (Para. 1). It shows how a child is prepared into sexual relationship, and easily mistaking love and sex. The writer understands the attitudes of the people involved in sexual abuse and portrays them cleanly. Although the book is well written and tackles the subject matter skillfully it is difficult to read it with the purpose of in-depth analysis.

Upadhyay wants to highlight the characteristics of an abused child i.e. emotional disturbance of a child can harm his adulthood. So, after getting married, that he is not able to maintain his married life. For this Upadhyay narrates, "Their bedroom turns into a painful space at night Rukma changes into her nightgown in the bathroom. Then slips bed, still hoping that something will be different . . . . He tries

idle conversation with her, but she knows it's to mask the discomfort he feels" (169).

Tarun ashamed of the unlikely and ridiculous relationship with his own step mother. He further imagines that for what her lady would listen to the man who sleeps with his stepmother. A little bit he wants to interact with her but immediately guilt grabs him and is afraid of Didi. As a young boy, Tarun has frightened by masked dancer in the crowd. When everything comes to normal Tarun and Rukma go together for some refreshment, there he sees a lakhey dance:

The lakhey stops at Tarun and Rukma's table. His engorged eyes are focused on Tarun. "The lakhey is going to eat him," a voice says loudly, with relish, and then the air becomes silent. The lakhey leans over and inches his face closer to Tarun's until their noses are nearly touching. . . . Tarun appears paralyzed. Sweat dots his forehead.

(242-243)

The lakhey, a dancer masked as Nepali folklore demon, is representation of novel's main theme. Tarun approaches by lakhey, who moves his body as Didi does but dances in open space. Though the environment is cool and everything is okay he still remembers Didi. He compares Didi to a lakhey, and becomes afraid of her arrival.

Didi, is just as the other character. But as time passes she becomes an unstoppable Marauder, where once she moves to the city. Her seduction of Tarun is inevitability, the side effects of her natural encounter with the powerful forces of the city.

Sex and control are at the heart of the story yet love does not get a look in.

Rukma, after the departure from her lover, hopes a happy new life with her husband. But her desires turn into isolation and separation. The following extract reflects her dejected condition:

It has her sitting upright in bed that night, this thought that makes her

wonder why it didn't occur to her before: he has a mistress. Yet when this thought comes, it seizes her with logical forces. It explains his disinterest in her, the guilt that appears to assail him at moments. There's someone else who satisfy him, both emotionally and sexually.

It's quite possible that he's even married to her already. (225)

She is dreaming of having good married life. She is trying so desperately to know everything about him and to make him of her but he's not responding. After revelation of his disinterest towards her, brings suspects on him. Little does she know that she is entering into a deeply wounded person's life.

People have chosen their life according to their psychological desires. They have lust in love, married in profit and lost in loneliness. The love is not glorified in the novel, but the sex is express throughout the novel. This thesis understands the psychological problems of an abused child and shows it clearly.



## Chapter 4

### Workings of Sexual Drives

The author brings a portrait of hidden complex relation that exists in the society. Nepali writing in English has therefore largely been focused around Kathmandu, which has been symbolic of all that is good and bad about contemporary Nepal. But Kathmandu is never mentioned by the name in the novel. It simply suggests all such large cities over the world whose forces might, similarly impact the lives of outsiders.

Upadhyay has always written graphically about sex but in this novel, his thresholds on the lustful act. The disturbing are the scenes that involve the stepmother molesting her young step son and not once but frequently and continually. For years, Didi, maintains total emotional control over innocent Tarun. As he grows old, he feels self-loathing but fails to pry himself from her grasp. There are people who lost love because of their relationship, people who lost confidence, and then there were people who suspected something vague but did not have a try to save matters. But there are the people who fear about being caught in the web and they do not want to hurt other more than they really are.

In the novel, women are presented more likely to be psychologically powerful than the men characters, whereas other characters fail to protect Tarun from becoming the shattered man. Rukma meets and marries him. Tarun's behaviors and activities make her suspect on her unfaithful husband. But she remains silent. Tarun's cowardly father leaves back his mistress, Apsara. And willfully ignores his wife's sexual moves and violation to Tarun, which starts when he is only a child. Apsara is similarly unable to protect Tarun. She forswears all her maternal duties and care when Mastgerji rejects her, leaves Tarun to seek mother's love from the vitiate Didi.

In another part, Didi's son Amit tries to destroy his stepmother's life. But when he suspects his mother's growing attachment towards Tarun, he indulges himself in drug addiction to blind himself for the circumstances. The whole family suffers from silence, like a disease which makes them apparently through madness, drug abuser and isolation.

Finally the rise of the heroic wife, Rukma figures out what is happening and manages to overcome his situation. She is a modern girl who agrees to an arranged marriage after a love affair gone wrong. When she learns Tarun's secret love with Didi, she takes her own action. She seems to get fairest treatment in the novel. Rukma tries to fight against it rather than will fully disregard the sexual harm of Tarun's youth and its consequences. He is no longer masked so the question is would he be able to accept himself as a man who cover his emotional and physical energy?

This book is very difficult to read at times and understand deeply. But it is somehow true; the story may exist in the societies hidden. Samart Upadhyay understands attitude of sexual abuse and describes them very cleanly and perfectly through the novel. The little boy has faced the horrific nature of a woman, so-called mother.

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