

Tribhuvan University

Representation of Aging in Samrat Upadhyay's Selected Stories

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Hukum Singh Shah has completed his thesis entitled  
“Representation of Aging in Samrat Upadhyay’s Selected Stories” under my  
supervision. He carried out his research from October 2023 to December  
2023. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva.

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Dr. Komal Phuyal  
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## Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Representation of Aging in Samrat Upadhyay’s Selected Stories in Samrat Upadhyaya’s Arresting God in Kathmandu” by Hukum Singh Shah, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## Representation of Aging in Samrat Upadhyay's Selected Stories

### Abstract

*This research explores the ways of depicting the concept of aging in some of the stories of Samrat Upadhyay's collection Arresting God in Kathmandu (2001). The paper studies the age of the characters from five stories: "The Good Shopkeeper," "The Cooking Poet," "Deepak Mishra's Secretary," "The Room Next Door," and "This World." The stories cherish the young age and view old age in a very stereotypical way: the old age becomes a negative category in which people lose vigor and activity. By cherishing the life and energy, the stories unfold a serious truth about the old age that Nepali people have not been able to enjoy their life in the old age. The characters want to quench their physical, social and psychological desires by preparing themselves to take up various actions in their life. Their endeavor to avoid anxiety and stress fails because of negative perceptions regarding ageing. The paper has followed textual analysis through close reading. Furthermore, the frame of analysis is taken from the literature on aging and the research on literary gerontology as it has appeared as one of the promising fields of the study.*

**Key words:** Aging, Longevity, Society, Psychology, Function.

This research paper, based on Samrat Upadhyay's collected stories from *Arresting God in Kathmandu* (2001), tries to identify aging concept in Nepal's context regarding age, marriage.. The traditional notion of aging in Nepal is changing in this spectrum as well. The characters in the selected stories face confusion regarding aging: they are between positive and negative concept of ageing. They seem to believe aging as the process of longevity, however, the term 'old and maturity' itself become different phenomenon for them. The characters find aging regarding their lived years but when they realize that aging is not only based on lived years but also for their achievements along with responsibilities in their life. Both positive and negative aspects of ageing are encountered in the stories.

Similarly, old people face aging problems in their life. Traditional concept has become one of the hindrances for their progression. Psychological concept of aging focuses on one's desire and readiness for the all sort of challenge. Though characters in the stories are living under the biological aging they have intense desire for creativity similar to young age. In Nepali context, characters seem perplexed between these two concepts. In the story, cooking Poet Acharya himself commends that Giri's poems are more authentic and extraordinary than his poems no matter how many years he has practiced in poetry. Nonetheless, his negative concept about ageing does not accept him a genius person publicly. After receiving the medals for his contribution in poetry and politics, he is still in confusion about either support or reject the new generation. It seems as if the person who spends more years and elder than other is regarded as the complete source of knowledge. The characters both having traditional and new concept seem confused about the concept of aging. Still fossils of traditional concept of aging are remaining in this prospect.

The elderly population in Nepal has experienced a notable shift in their perception of aging but residual concept leads them to follow the conventional concept. They seem to have changed mentality about aging but cannot step onward. This seems that there are both old and new concepts of ageing. New concept expects aging as not only being fit by physically more than that it treats aging as socially and psychologically fit. people are perplexed about aging. They are not sure what exactly the aging means for them. The characters seem to have changed about the concept of longevity and shifted their notion about aging but yet to confirm. Psychological and social aspect of functional aging has been evolved as a new knowledge about aging in the characters but they could not execute this knowledge in a proper way. This is how evolving concept of ageing has brought tussle between old and new concepts about ageing within the characters.

This search studies how old and new knowledge have become contradictory about maturity and seniority. Similarly, aging concept regarding biological changes have become another challenge for the society. Characters are confused because of traditional social concept. For traditional concept of aging, it is dealt based on how many years one has lived. Changes in fitness and lifestyle has subdued old concept. One can be old before one's predefined age of old. This is possible because of the change in everyday life contributed by science and technology. In the story "Deepak Mishra's Secretary", Misra finds Bandana-ji more loving than Jill but the concept of previous marriage, he is still failing to accept Bandana-ji as his new wife. For the Nepali society, once someone marries becomes lifelong husband for her. One has no virginity for new marriage. He has carnal desire and quenches his desires with Bandana-ji but finds guilty because of old social concept of aging. He thinks that he is no more capable for new marriage. He is haunted by Jill to continue his conjugal life

but no avail. These selected stories try to expose the new reality of society. People in the society has been changed regarding marriage and aging. However, they seem inclined to the old fashion of aging concept. Stories question about the traditional social concept of aging founded on biological concept of longevity propelled to new functional concept. These stories epitomize the tension rose by new concept of aging concept based on its functionality.

Change in technology and politics demands change in traditionally forged knowledge. It is necessary to install new concept of aging in Nepal. Stories demand settlement between positive and negative concept of ageing. We are bound to treat a person old based on his/her age and physical changes as well. However, aging concept cannot be reduced just because of physical changes and age count. It is suggested that aging is based on social position and psychological fitness.

This research has selected five stories; “The Good Shopkeeper,” “The cooking Poet,” “Deepak Misra’s Secretary,” “The Room Next Door” and “This World” from *Arresting God in Kathmandu*. These short stories expose the hidden notion about aging. Their newly developed psychological ideas tend to quench their desires as a young person. Characters are aware of their social boundaries of aging so they can’t escape from the social boundaries. They undermine the social boundaries however; they are bound to perform accordingly. Pramod, Acharya, Giri, Deepak Misra, Bandana-ji, Mohandas, Aunt Shakuntala and Kanti experience new ideas regarding aging and maturity. These characters suppose the aging as changing social phenomenon and psychological performance. In spite of this, they can’t go beyond the social and biological structure of aging set by traditional concept. Longevity and physical concept of aging mere becomes problem for their new knowledge.



This book was written in the light of Nepali society's privileged concept comparing with western society. Jill from western society finds age of marriage is not limited to the social institution rather it is dynamic according to individuals. Samrat Upadhyay, Nepali scholar and the professor in Indiana University, looks at Nepal's tradition from western perspective. The bizarre picture of Nepali society has been portrayed in his stories. People of traditional mindset tend to deal new knowledge making their previous traditional knowledge as the touchstone. The Nepali society seems to embrace changing perspective on aging. On one hand they do so. On other hand they can't reject the previous notion. Taking both new and old notion together becomes problem for them and they are in dilemma about which one to choose.

Nepal was facing political and social changing from absolute monarchy. Decentralization of power made Nepali to decentralize knowledge. Similarly concept of aging went beyond the traditional perspective. Still, debris of previous concept were prevalent there. In this context, people could not handle new concept easily. Undergoing political struggle paved way to new concept. Notion of maturity, criteria of marriage and its age, seniority and social prestige and health and aging became topics for discussion. These areas were under the discussion but became individual understanding. As far as these topics did not become topics for public discussion, new knowledge could not be established.

The selected stories show the conflict between new and old knowledge about aging. They show the confusion and paradox about which one to choose because of dynamism of aging concept. Characters in the story face symptoms of aging before their biological aging. Some character regard maturity as the long process. Even they find maturity in personality, they could not treat them as psychological concept. In this spectrum, aging concept is relational. There is relativity of aging in social,

biological and psychological concepts. Traditional concepts of marriage, maturity, physical weaknesses, readiness and enthusiasm try to remain as usual but the characters seem unhappy with these perspectives. In spite of this, they could not replace traditional concept with new understanding. So, they are confused and vulnerable.

Aging has been multidimensional complex subjectivity as it embraces concepts from various disciplines; biological, social, economic, psychological, geographical, political etcetera. Reductionist approach treats it as a limited and final objectivism. However, it is more subjective than objective. Its circumstances and phenomenon are highly sensitive to the other fields of study. Traditional concept of longevity has been problematized due to the entry of various subjects to this field. How much years people have been lived cannot finalize a person's aging. Maturity focuses on person's personality rather than his/her age. Though it tends to relate with age it cannot be rigorously treated as final result. A person's education, social relations and physical and mental wellbeing are affecting factors to his/her old age. Readiness and retarded mentality are relative to the person's engagement in food, exercise, creativity and personality. In the same way, economic conditions play vital role in people's level of stress. How people respond their age is resultant to their physical health and eagerness to the creativity. Desires could not be limited to the age boundaries. Premature aging and readiness in old age clarify that concept of old is personal. Simply, physical changes occur according to time but degree of those changes are not certain. Physical health and bodily functions in old age are relative to social, mental, cognitive and epistemological aspects.

Medical science and physiology anticipate aging as changes occur in bodily functions. Similarly, changes occur in body. Hair becomes white or gray. Wrinkles

come on face and skin contracts. Tumors are spotted on legs and hands. Body scoops. Eyesight becomes weaker than before. Hearing capacity is impaired. Speed of functioning reduces. Memory power becomes weak. Bodily pain and vulnerability grows. A person loses interest and becomes mentally retarded because of dilapidated body. Diseases attack frequently. Stamina collapses. However, premature aging indicates that aging is not only fixed to longevity rather it is the concept of fitness. Mario Ulises Pérez-Zepeda et al. claim: “The aging process is not synonymous with a decrease in the function of the human body (or any other living organism), however, it does bring with it an increase in the frequency of chronic diseases, mainly diabetes mellitus and systemic hypertension” (2). Bodily functions can’t determine the old age people but chronic diseases affect their lifestyle. Because of chronic disease body becomes weak and symptoms of old age can be occurred. In this respect they maintain: “The most common outcome in recent years has been simply to carry out the same actions that are used in younger adults, a strategy that is not effective and in the worst case has been harmful” (2). Care is necessary to manage aging.

Similarly, old age people need extra care. However, if a deserving person can’t get proper social, mental and medical care, he/she will face aging soon. In order to improve their health, it is necessary to provide them good nursing. They argue, “There are some examples in elderly Mexicans, where it has been shown that implementing a specific care strategy for older adults can improve their health status” (2). Special care can increase intensity of their bodily as well as mental functioning. Family relationship and aged-friendly environment provides energy to fight against disease and frailty.

Furthermore, social and psychological wellbeing supports people to remain young. Either people are hosting disease or old age, they can cope with those physical and mental problems easily. They find:

As previously mentioned, knowing the different perspectives of these phenomena helps to have global solutions and with less margin of error when taking into account the elderly with their bio-psycho-social environment and with less emphasis on the “organicist” vision that Currently prevails in medicine, in other words, what is good for a kidney is not necessarily good for the heart. (2)

Motivation and counselling can be source of avoiding helplessness. A person living in a stressful environment is prone to be attacked by many sicknesses. In contrary, one who enjoys social and psychological environment can face his/her old age easily.

When a person feels retired mentally that becomes victim of old age. They claim:

There are two problems of particular attention in the health of older adults: dementia and frailty. Dementia is better known today and many of the resources in research are currently being devoted to its study, however it remains a condition with a high burden for those who have it and particularly for their family and social environment. (2)

A person’s inability to cope with physical problems become source of bothering.

He/she feels himself or herself burden of the family and society. Such feelings should be eradicated through sense of belongingness. “On the other hand, frailty - understood as the loss of the ability to respond to harmful stimuli - is still an emerging problem and with many questions still to be resolved” (2). Frailty makes them unable to handle their problems appropriately. “Evolution of species is one of the most useful theories to explain aging and has fully translated into aging phenomenon by the disposable

soma theory of Kirkwood. Moreover, many of the processes that occur during aging seem to respond to evolution” (2). There is interrelationship between evolution theory of aging and readiness to handle them physically, socially, mentally and psychologically.

Medical science treats aging as physical changes in function of cells and their modality. Its approach cannot be fully perceived. Only bodily functions can't determine one's psychological, social and mental functionality. Physically unwell people can show their readiness and creativity in various fields unless they are limited. They can be prominent figures in other disciplines that those do not demand physical labour. Mario Ulises Pérez-Zepeda et al. maintain:

On the other hand, the reductionist focus of other medical specialties (internal medicine, surgery, orthopedics, etc.) makes it difficult to study the phenomenon of aging and it is more useful, both conceptually and in practice, to focus on the biology of systems, or a holistic approach (3).

Aging phenomena is complex that goes beyond physiology and longevity. Medicines and pharmaceutical treatment can't be sufficient to handle aging. They demand multidisciplinary approach to study aging:

Among the new items to consider are: services (access, quality, innovation, technology), the incorporation of social determinants of health, deep analysis of these determinants, a multi-disciplinary approach, systematic incorporation of the evidence for creation of public policies, and molecular biology (genomics, proteomics, metabolomics) (3).

Social concept of aging and facilities provided for the old people can have varieties of senses regarding old age. A person living in a low standard of social and economic

environment can find aging more stagnating for his/her progression in the old age. Economic shortages can lead stress to harm physical health.

Classifying age-groups and determining their general characteristics provides normal way of looking the concept of aging through pathological concept. However, such symptoms based on groups vary within the groups. Many subgroups will be created and research will be complicated and result will be random. There is no general result rather heterogeneity of aging produces multiple results. In this spectrum, social and psychological aspect of aging play vital role along with the physiological aging. These terms are intertwined and relational to other aspects of aging. Even people of same group can respond their old age differently. Aging can be person view; relativity of his/her social and psychological conduct. Clinical logic says that as far as one passes many years he/she is prone to be affected by diseases. Because of the old age, one's functional capacity reduces; can't handle daily activities effectively. Morbidity occurs along with the passage of time. Ultimately death becomes inevitable goal. However, one could not easily surrender his desires and passion because of his/her old age. Resilience of the body and mind tries to regain previous property.

Social function of body denotes certain norms regarding aging. Society's norms and values provide a kind of knowledge that regulates individual's behavior. Society accepts that because of the body size aging concept differs accordingly. Scott Going et al. "concept of aging differs from the body size and health function (1). Magnitude of one's capability varies according to health status. Lack of knowledge regarding health, one can face old age in early age. Creativity and knowledge increase motivation to do more than the demand of the age. Jack Botwinick claims: "Jack

Botwinick claims that aging is not because of mental retardation rather lack of motivation and other factors” (122).

Motivation and social integrity adds values on persons’ belief system regarding aging. Similarly, life expectancy is dynamic because it differs according to age to age. Valdemiro Carlos Sgarbieri<sup>1</sup> and Maria Teresa Bertoldo Pacheco claim: “Much of the current progress in genetics, evolution, and biology has been integrative, in part because many aging-related phenomena are considered now as multi-causal” (1). There is no single cause of aging that could be biological or longevity merely.

In the context of Nepal, old people as well as adults are facing helplessness, loneliness and sense of fragmentation because of urbanization and foreign employment. Financial problems render these sentiments who stay at their home. Sarah Speck and Ulrike Müller-Böker find: “In villages of the middle hills of western Nepal in particular, outmigration of younger generations has profoundly complicated older people’s living conditions (2). This situation challenges older people’s life. Government should bring policy for their wellbeing. Further they say that family is responsible for caring their family members (2). Alienation has propelled old people to feel old enough. They do not have courage to do something. They find themselves helpless and living without family support. Downfall of the joint family has become another reason for their sense of aging. When family members stay apart from the old people, old people feel insecure and helpless. The cause of loneliness and lack of motivation make them to be retarded.

Good human relationship increases hope and decreases boring and exhaustion. As far as loneliness remains one feels tired. Being among people, sharing thoughts and supporting each other develops existence of human society. Nowadays humanity

has been ignored because of social and cultural capital's degradation. This directly affects people's health. Social health preserves physical and mental health. Gordon Browning and George Spilich maintain: "There is ample evidence which suggests that a positive relationship exists between health and performance on perceptual-motor and cognitive tasks" (9). Good social relationship strengthens humanistic bond; one has the sense of the members of the union. Unity provides courage and encourages to work together for better results. Similarly, old people find themselves among group members and they find unity as their stake.

In spite of this, there is preoccupied privileged fix notion about old people. Either they are thought to be unproductive and retired or they are treated as disabled. This notion darts them to be passivity. Such passivity has been the result of social discrimination. Instead of treating them differently, there should be space for them. Christiane Brosius supports this idea:

Old age often gets compartmentalized—with the effect of sidelining agency—in a similar way as “poor” and “deprived” marginalized slum-dwellers, for instance, are fixed as categories. Moreover, old age is often victimized. Both elder-escapes and age-friendly cities help to challenge this view, placing emphasis on resourcefulness as deeply appreciated unless it romanticizes and thus overshadows scenes of exploitation and exclusion. (136)

Aged people friendly environment can install enthusiasm and readiness to follow creative routine for old people. Richa Shah et al. discuss:

Frailty is defined as a state of being vulnerable to adverse health outcomes such as falls, delirium, and disability. It is a multidimensional concept encompassing physical, social, cognitive, and psychological aspects. Although



frailty is common in old age, it is not a manifestation of old age and is reversible with appropriate interventions. (2)

Frailty and weaknesses can be reduced through multiple ways of dealing with aging: social, psychological and epistemological. Delyana I. Miller et al. suggests: “Food, cognitive exercise; mental challenges and lifelong learning, social engagement and interaction and physical exercise preserve physical and mental health” (2). If old age is properly handled, it is not a problem rather a new creative way to conduct life from lifelong experience. Old people’s social relation, psychological dealing and physical fitness support their old age. They demand special treatment through multidimensional approaches.

“The Room Next Door” exposes the new possibilities of living carefree. It reinvents the taboos in the society about physical relation before marriage. Further it teaches us how to respond normally with problems caused by violation in social norms. Social phenomenon create knowledge about aging. Concept of aging is culturally constructed. In the story, Aunt Shakuntala is obsessed with her husband Mohandas who is indolent and careless about their children’s future. He has been friends with many idlers in the society. Unlike Shakuntala, he finds everything ok. Being a father of a son and a daughter, he is not concerned about their future as much as she does. Even at the time of promotion, he does not meet personalities in power for hobnobbing. He ignores all these things. He is an adult man who is free from all social infringement. Shakuntala is so conservative. She cares their conjugal life to be exceptional from others’. She wants her relatives’ applause. She had sense of social concept of aging. However, her husband seems as if like a teenager. His behaviors resemble a very young man or a child.

Once Mohandas had brought a sage in his house. Shakuntala finds staggering to her attitude. She thinks she has not made to care strangers. Lamfu comes daily to their courtyard. He has tea and returns. He seems having low sense. She chides him but he does not care. He does not mind whatever people think about him. His pungent smell emitted from his mouth; yellow teeth caused by smoking 'Bidi' (tobacco smoked filling in a cone of leaves) clearly show his carelessness. Like an old uncared forlorn man, he is in that situation. We can anticipate him a young man but his condition resembles an old man.

It has been almost three months, Shakuntala has not been receiving any letters from Shanti. She worries about her. She asks her husband to find out her condition. Mohandas simply responds her that Shanti may be in her ease. A phone call comes from Kathmandu and they are shocked by the information that Shanti has been impregnated.

Mohandas goes to Kathmandu and brings Shanti home. She is unwed pregnant girl. Shakuntala hides the matter. She decides to hand out the baby to an orphanage. Shanti rejects her idea. For Shakuntala, the baby inside her daughter's womb is shame for whole family. Mohandas finds solution abruptly. Lamfu marries Shanti. Lamfu's social status and personality does not match to Mohandas'. This unequal relation has been forged. Mohandas finds it as their fate. He takes it easily, however, Shanti finds it insulting and disgusting.

Here, sense of seniority, personality and concern about family life and future become confronting elements to each other. After marriage, Shakuntala expects formal life, social prestige and care. In contrary, Mohandas wants to live carefree life. The concept of social aging demands social life and maturity in Mohandas' behaviour. Shakuntala's thoughts are too formal. She demands hierarchy. Mohandas

seems advanced. Shakuntala has to accept new psychology of aging either she likes or not. Still, she is confronting with the new ideas about aging embraced by Mohandas.

Similar to Mohandas, Lamfu is careless about settlement. His psychology shows ignorant of his age and age-concerned personality. He accepts the child. In Nepali society, a girl like Shanti, impregnated before her marriage is thought to be impure for marriage and impossible to find out any life partner. As if it is thought that she has no age to get husband. Her marrying age has been finished. It means she ruined her age though she is young biologically. Socially, she has finished marriage stage in her life. Either she likes or not, in order to keep new born baby with her, she marriage with Lamfu. Mohandas is psychologically different from both biological and social concept of aging. However, he could not go beyond social norms and values. To give name of his father to the new born baby, he manages marriage between Lamfu and his daughter. Such confrontation can be revealed in this story regarding the concept of aging in relation with marriage and responsibility along with social norms and values.

“Deepak Mishra’s Secretary” represents distorted relationship and sense of helplessness in Nepali society. For Nepalese, marriage is once for all in their whole life either they are happy with the marriage or not. So, Deepak Mishra seems haunted by Jill for reconciliation of his conjugal life because he could not think to marry for second time. It compares eastern tradition with western tradition about marriage and choosing life partner. Deepak Mishra’s wife Jill Mishra has left him in Nepal and gone to America without any prior notice. He fires and hires multiple secretaries. He is obsessed with relations. He could not connect himself to new relations. However, he has intense desire for new relations. Sometimes he finds them attractive as a young girl and sometimes they become dull as an old woman. Why does this happen to his

mind? This happens to him because he finds these relations meaningless. The reason is he could not establish long lasting relation with them. To his understanding, long lasting relation could be established after marriage. Marriage provides stable and consistent relationship between a man and a woman. He has to fire his friend's sister Anju who miscalculates accounting numbers and concern only about her cosmetics. She parlors her face and combs her hair at office. Then he appoints Bandana-ji, an undiplomatic, hard, thin and unattractive lady. She has skin disfigurement, however, she is talent in accounting and computer.

In the beginning he wants to develop friendship with Bandana-ji but she exposes her rigid attitude. She is hard working and well concerned about her duty. He asks her to go with him outside for breakfast, lunch, snacks and dinner. She rejects all his proposals. Even she does not take tiffin and eats no food while in duty. This becomes very strange for him. She creates boundary line between them; boss and secretary. He is keen to interact her and develop new relationship. She wears the same old yellow Sari (a kind of clothing for women in Nepal and India). He finds no pleasure in her. Instead of speaking politely, she clears her throat whenever he asks her something to respond. Besides this, she has demanded high salary and her salary toppled all secretaries' salary in the town. He has agreed her demand. Why has he agreed to pay high to such an undiplomatic secretary? He takes decision instantly because of his loneliness. He wants to fill the space.

People foretold that his business would submerge when Jill left him without any notice. His duty as a social animal and as a mature man goes in a rigorous way. He was alone. His loneliness made him drink a lot. However, he managed his business keep going on track. His conservative concept about marriage and relationship exhaust him from quenching his carnal desire. Physical relationship

increases intimacy between a man and a woman. He could not maintain physical relationship to deepen his bond. Jill's love haunts him. He finds her very beautiful and attractive among women. He is mesmerized and infatuated by her physical aesthetics and artistic talent. She exhibits her painting in Kathmandu and wants to meet artists in Mumbai. She is open minded and befriended with many people around her. She ignored and left Deepak Mishra without notice that she mentions later in next visit that she was unhappy with him.

In spite of this, he is dragged to follow her when she returns Nepal. Deepak Mishra, a well-established businessman, could not do otherwise. He does not search a girl to marry who cares him. The social concept of aging in Nepal is very much different from western world. Once someone is married to a girl, he is no more qualified to get married for second time. End of virginity means end of marriage forever. It does not matter how young and energetic we are. One's readiness does not matter for involving in marriage for second time. The concept of maturity, formal life or formality, social responsibility and being an old person is related to marriage in Nepal. Tradition, norms and values are against second marriage.

To his disappointment, he was perplexed not because of biological concept of aging and his physical inability but because of social concept of aging. He wants reconciliation of their marriage relationship and reunion of their life. He has physical relation with Bandana-ji. After their physical relation, he feels guilty. He goes beyond social boundaries again his residual subjectivity drags him in. being a member of a society, one can't reject the values and norms of the society.

Later on, after getting relief from traditional concept of marriage in Nepal, he finds Bandana-ji a perfect girl. She appears beautiful and attractive for him. Jill has said that she is no more interested in him. She was not happy with him. He fires his

secretary Bandana-ji, when Jill knows their physical relationship. He becomes helpless again. He receives a parcel of yellow Sari which he had bought for Bandana-ji. Now, Bandana-ji has returned his gift. She reminds him that without any relation there is no value of sharing gifts.

He leaves Bandana-ji. He wants to give her money more than her due but she rejects. She takes the amount according to her due. Perhaps he wants to make her life convenient by giving her money. It shows his conservative mindset thinks money as the source of pleasure in life. Similarly, Jill might have left him because of his behaviour. He gave more attention to his business than their relation. Human relationship can be the remedy for aging. It reduces pain and trauma. Time and again, he is helpless, alone and drunk when he loses relations. Now, he finds Jill an ugly woman and Bandana-ji an attractive. He seeks her in the market. He could not find her. He listens a legend singer's song from a shop. To his wonder, the singer is not anyone else but Bandana-ji herself. Her capability and readiness to sing a beautiful song attracts him. Here, quality of a person becomes source of attraction for him.

The very concept of marriage, aging, talent and social relation are controversial in this story. He is traditional man who follows tradition of the society. When he spots his surname as Jill Mishra in the record of Annapurn Hotel, he becomes happy and expectant abruptly although they were not attached physically, mentally and socially. He is more concerned about his lawful wife Jill than caring secretary Bandana-ji. He thinks that his age for marriage has gone because he has already married to Jill. Jill is open to enjoy her every desires at any time. Deepak can't enjoy his youth and energetic mind and body because of social restrictions set in his mind. He behaves like a matured old man. In the beginning of her job in Deepak

Mishra's office as his secretary, Bandana-ji behaves rigidly. She rejects his every proposal. When she finds he is alone and needs friendship, she supports.

For Bandana-ji and Jill Mishra as well, marriage and providing partnership are two different things. Marriage is a social institution but providing supports, establishing relations are matter of individual interest. Enthusiasms, energetics, happiness, readiness, sense of pleasure all these things come and vanish timely in Deepak Mishra's life. Similar to an old man, he becomes helpless, exhausted, tired and physically retarded or dilapidated when he is alone. His conservative concept of marriage can take him together with nobody. It is speculated that he gets enlightenment after spending time with Bandana-ji. Her unattractive bony body, face like a pregnant woman, dark circles around her face, blackish patches etcetera all these things show her unattractive body for him. Her monotonous dress of yellow Sari makes him feel nauseated. As far as their relation is established he finds everything fine and ok. The matter of youthfulness becomes matter of good relation.

Similarly, "The Cooking Poet" shows triggering tension about concept of aging and maturity. Acahrya is a famous poet. He protested against Rana regime in his young age. He wrote for people's revolution to bring democracy, freedom and prosperity ending the more than a century long Rana regime in Nepal. Now, he is at his sixty and living a comfortable life with his family; his wife Durga, a son and a daughter, getting royalties from his previous writings. He donates the amount received from royalties to the schools for infrastructure and educational materials. He guides beginners of poetry who has spirit of poetry. Carrying a recommendation letters, many novice poets come to visit him at his resident as an apprentice. He judges their poems along with their character, maturity and humility.

In the same way, Giri comes to visit him carrying a recommendation letter. He welcomes him at his home. He begins to observe him carefully. He is firm resolved about, “The poet does not make the poem; the poem makes the poet” (Upadhdyaya 21). He examines Giri’s poems; an epic. Giri’s epic is flawless and overwhelming. He has written this within less than a year. He could not console his mind that a novice poet can write such outstanding epic in a short period of time. Acharya is surprised by Giri’s verse, style, content and maturity. His concept of maturity is very different from that what he witnesses in Giri. For him, it takes much time to get maturity in poetry. He finds his lifelong achievement has been succeeded by a novice poet. He could not believe that a novice poet like Giri could produce such applausive epic in a very first attempt. Confusion about how and what to teach a master becomes subject of obsession and restlessness for Acharya. Then he decides to work together with Giri.

Acharya mentions him a genius among his colleagues. His colleagues ask him to publish him but he responds them with the need of more time reminding his knowledge that these are not interested in promoting a novice writer. A schedule has been set for Giri’s visit and he follows it rigorously. Every time he brings new poems and gets them checked. The confusion intensifies in Acharya’s mind. As far as he goes through Giri’s poems, he finds them more attractive than his poems which are already been popular in Nepal.

His frequent and regular visit establishes intimacy between Giri and Acharya’s family members including him. Acharya compares his poem secretly to the Giri’s and to his wonder, his works are lagged behind before Giri’s. Acharya starts to criticize Giri’s poems and Giri becomes nervous. He starts to bring vegetables in his bag along with his poems. He helps Durga cooking food in the kitchen. Seeing this, Acharya’s



son; an engineering studying fellow, teases him naming him as “Cooking Poet”.

Durga is little afraid of this close relation, though she is happy in his presence.

Acharya gets acquainted with Giri’s sad childhood and his present condition. Giri is surviving in his scholarship. His sister is mentally retarded. He is the member of United Democratic Front. Acharya cautions him to focus on poetry rather than politics. In spite of his active participation in politics his poems are quite unaffected. Acharya remembers his young age involving in politics and jailed for his revolutionary ideas. Acharya arranges a program in which Giri will recite his poems. Giri gets congratulations and supports from audiences. His poems are mind blowing. He quotes Acharya who propelled him to get chance to recite poems on the stage.

It is winter season now and Giri has not been submitted his poems for many days. Acharya is obsessed about his condition. So he sends his son to find out the conditions of Giri. To their dismay, his son could not find Giri at his room. News reports that Giri has been killed in a movement; tussle with opposite front. They mourn heavily. After a long time they are recovered from the grief.

Acharya is awarded as a poet laureate for his poetry and contribution to the revolution. He gets letters of congratulations across Nepal. His photos are posted on the walls over the country. He attends the congratulation ceremony. He goes to the podium. Accidentally, he has hallucination of Giri. He sees Giri stand at the dark corner of the hall waiving his hands. He is haunted by his poems more than his physical presence. This hallucination is the product of his poetry’s great impression on him.

In “The Good Shopkeeper,” Pramod becomes jobless when company fires him reasoning the company’s economic befall. He finds that Suresh knows computer but he does not. So the company lets him go out. When he reveals the message of his joblessness by the day before Radhika, his wife, she worries too much. He complains

that she worries too much so he does not like to share any matter with her. She suggests him to see Shambhu-da, her distant cousin. So that he could manage a job for him. He visits Shambhu-da and gets assurance only. After visiting him many times without any settlement in a job, he begins to doubt him as a headhunter. He is sure that Shambhu-da won't find any job for him. However, Radhika is still expectant that Shambhu-da could only help in her adverse conditions. She respects Shambhu-da more than her husband.

After being a jobless man, he strolls around temples that he has not been visiting for many days before. Homraj sees him at Pashupatinath temple and knowing his condition sympathizes him. While sitting forlornly in a park, a housemaid asks him if he wants to buy some peanuts. He refuses. She offers him tea as homage. Initially, he hesitates and later on accepts her proposal. They go to her room at the corner of Asan market. She says that her husband motivates people not to think too much to worry about them. He finds her simple. Her husband is in the village near Pokhara city. He works as a carpenter. They have tea together and quench their physical desires. Both of them fear about if her husband comes what they will do. Then they do not fear of him.

At a relative's feast, he faces humiliation. Relatives are playing card. He does not play because either he does not like it or he have no money. Pitambar mocks him being jobless. Shambhu-da defenses him. Shambhu-da and Pitambar quarrel to each other. His wife blames him of the situation. He endures libel from his wife and finds her a fool. Because of his jobless situation and mounting debts from relatives, Radhika wants to sell their piece of land in plain and made him conduct a shop. He reacts his ego that he could not be a shopkeeper who has been an accountant for several years. Perhaps he thinks being a shopkeeper is an old man's occupation. When

he anticipates good relationship with friends, relatives and housemaid, he agrees. This indicates happiness is the sense of belongingness and social relationship. The symptoms of aging could be mitigated and handled wisely in a pleasant atmosphere.

“The Good Shopkeeper” exposes family responsibilities, maturity and social and physical relationship. Its setting is in Kathmandu; capital city of Nepal. Its major character Pramod, Radhika, Shambhu-da, and housemaid. Pramod loses his job as the company goes down. Being a jobless father, he suffers from financial scarcity. His relatives friends, mock his situation as a jobless including his wife. In case of problem, he gets humiliating comments from everywhere instead of support. Shambhu-da, his distant nephew, provides him sufficient assurance but could not find a job for him. His wife is obsessed and has no prospect of good future. Her hopelessness adds trouble to his psychology. He roams here and there in search of job but no avail. He is tired and alone among relatives and friends. Even his in-laws do not want to talk to him. Friends just sympathize him.

In old age people may suffer from obsession, loneliness, exhaustion, tiresome and weaknesses in body and mind. He seems not old enough but because of the detachment from his daily routine; regular pattern of attending office works, he becomes indolent. Aimlessness tortures him. His psychological desires could be consoled in some extent through social relation. However, he could not establish good husband-wife relationship. His wife just discusses about job and economy. This irritates him more. Besides, she does not grow plants of motivation, encouragement and belongingness in his heart and mind for him. His life becomes burden for him. He is physically well but mentally retarded due to reverse conditions in his life. The symptoms of old age occur earlier before his biological aging; longevity. He is in

vulnerable condition. He can't distinguish any way to what to do for livelihood. He is almost perplexed and confused.

According to Nepali society's norms, maturity comes along with marriage and being a father of his children. He is the father of a child. His wife is anxious about her child's future. She does not care about Pramod's emotional desires. There is lack of love, affection and compassion in their conjugal life. If something lies here, it is the matter of responsibility. Time and again, she reminds his duty to afford money for fulfilling family utilities. The sense of maturity and responsibility stagnate his progress. He could not think freely. Even he does not find exact solution. Sense of maturity stands as nightmare before him. It accelerates his anxiety. He becomes silent and helpless before people who tease him. Pitambar satirizes him saying no job no problem. He listens calmly. This calmness and absurdity has been brought by the failure of his family life and lack of economic resources.

After marriage, physical relationship with a strange one is social taboo in Nepali society. However, Id principle remained in unconscious mind tries to fulfill his/her carnal desires. Unfulfilled desires cause anxiety, pain and obsession. He meets housemaid in a park. She offers him friendship. He follows her and they have physical relation frequently. After that he is enlightened. His heavy heart floats in the air and feels light. Strides of pleasure appear in his face. He begins to play with his daughter. Seeing him happy, his wife expects that he may have find a job. To her dismay, it is not matter of job. She becomes sad again. She proposes him to install a shop. He anticipates meeting his friends and relatives in humility. Now, building rapport becomes more important than his job or occupation for him.

Pramod is fired after working there for three years. His wife finds this strange because traditional concept of talent and maturity are laden in the years a person

passes. His wife inquires that instead of firing an experienced accountant why they have fired him (2). Similarly, Homraj wonders about his joblessness being a diligent worker (3). Shambhu-da has earned reputation by hobnobbing with people and earned good profit by doing illegal affairs. He assures Pramod to find a job (5). He seems senior and superior to others in the story. Pramod goes to the temple. His religious devotion yields nothing. His liaising with a maid gets him enlightened. While following the maid he is afraid of seeing by someone he knew (11). He needs accompany. After all, “His heart seemed to have expanded” (11). He is enlightened and he gets pleasure from the maid. His tiresome and frailty disperses and he becomes happy.

Giri, a newly emerging poet, tries to establish himself in poetry taking support from Acharya. Acharya was resolute about the poet that a poem makes a poet (21). For Acharya name and fame are functional. However, he could not sustain in his idea. He finds his colleagues are not interested in promoting a novice writer (23). He is stunned that his poetry becomes less important than Giri's. He has nagging back pain (25). Though he commemorates his young age involving in the movement, he suggests Giri to be committed in poetry not in politics (27). He seems obsessed by Giri's political involvement. In his old age, his epic does not go well. He doubts his past works quality in comparison with Giri's present works (29). Yet, he is not ready to accept Giri's poetry as superior than his. Giri dies in a riot. Acharya is announced as the poet laureate. This shows the sense of maturity and talent are in conflicting nature with sense of traditional notion of aging. This story satires on the sense of maturity. His poems are mature. His wife says that his kitchen feels empty in his absence (31). A diligent creative poet Giri is ruined and mocked by the traditional

notion of maturity and talent. Acharya finds him most prized pupil but could not help himself (31).

Deepak Mishra's triangular love puts him under exhaustion and becomes premature retarded. After firing multiple secretaries, he appoints Bandana-ji as his new secretary paying mostly in the city. When he knows that his ex-wife has paid her visit to Kathmandu, he is relentlessly interested to see her. He becomes happy after knowing that his ex-wife Jill has still kept his last name. For him marriage is done for once in whole life. However, Jill says that she was not happy with him (39). She does not care about him. Once when he kissed Jill and he is pushed away and he screams. She keeps him holds him like a child (40). Because of residual culture about marriage and maturity he is helpless before these two ladies. He makes love affair with Bandana-ji. After having physical relation he regrets. Bandana-ji recommends him not to worry about his wife but he warns her to mind her own business (44). "On the drive home, Deepak was troubled by what he had done with Bandana-ji" (45). After marriage Jill resided in his mind not his heart (45). Jill satires on Nepali culture about relationship that a woman is either mother, sister, aunt or a whore (47). Deepak is in this situation. Deepak could not accept new relationship with Bandana-ji as his source of happiness. If he thinks still he can't abide by. Because of the relationship with Bandana-ji, once ugly, she becomes more and more beautiful for him (49). When he asks Bandana-ji to submit a resignation, his body is tired and mind is fresh (53). His experience of pleasure with Bandana-ji seems unreal for him now (53). He tries to escape but could not. Again he follows Bandana-ji and finds her. This shows his transitional knowledge about family, marriage, relationship and fulfillment of carnal desires.

Mohandas's wife aunt Shakuntala is obsessed by her indolent husband. She seems very much traditional about her personality and family reputation. Unlike her, her husband is carefree. She is obsessed about her daughter and son. When she hears the news that her daughter Shanti has been impregnated, she is exhausted. Mohandas brings her home. Shanti wants her grandchild to be handed to an orphanage but Shanti denies. Mohandas gets Shanti marry with Lamfu, another carefree man. Lamfu shows signs of being retarded (101). She cares too much about what society thinks about her (101). Shakuntala always finds her children vulnerable. Mohandas suggests her not to treat them as suckling child (105). Mohandas asks her not to hide the matter and take it easily (111). However, she worries too much (105). Lamfu marries Shanti. Shanti accepts this marriage in order to keep her baby with her. Mohandas seems enlightened but could not escape from social norms and values. He arranges such an unequal marriage to be safe from social critic. Shanti says that she could not bear seeing Lamfu and Shanti together every day (116). In this spectrum, social norms and values regarding marriage and maturity trouble Mohandas' family members.

Kanti attends an unequal marriage between a professor and a Nepali girl who is twenty years younger than the professor. She marries him in order to get her green card. In this case, age does not matter for marriage if someone gets benefits from it. Kanti and Jaya acquaint each other in the party. They make love affairs. Jaya is open to many girls. She loves him much. When she finds him with another girl she is obsessed. Her mother wants her to marry with Prakash. She does not like him and later on she rejects him. She is haunted by Jaya's love. Sometimes, she thinks for reunion. Her mother says that she needs to be with someone (152). After the break up with Jaya, Kanti's mother wants her marry to someone as quickly as possible (153). When she meets Jaya for second time after they have parted, she wants to forget all

those things happened with her. She wants to say something but could not (157-158). She feels loneliness frequently in her life. Finally, she leaves Nepal remembering her love with Jaya. She could neither forget him nor accept him. She is in confusion about open relationship and social norms regarding love. She has become happy with Jaya. However, she could not finalize either accept him or leave him.

It is found that characters in the selected stories from *Arresting God in Kathmandu* are in confusion because of cultural and epistemological change in privileged notion regarding marriage, maturity, seniority, readiness, happiness and desires associated with age. On one hand, Nepal is undergoing many political, cultural and social changes. Similarly, changes in social mindset and new knowledge regarding previous assumptions can be witnessed. Mohandas, Jaya and Lamfu live their carefree life contrary to social norms corresponding to social and familial responsibilities. They do not bother whatever the society thinks. However, they could not replace old ideas by new enlightenment. Acharya finds his poems outdated in comparison with Giri's poems. He finds him genius but can't accept completely. Kanti's mother wants her daughter to marry in time. Kanti lives between two worlds. She is perplexed. This is how characters face transitional notion of aging in Nepal. They are confused and astonished about what to follow old or new. Neither they accept traditional notions nor could they replace them by new one. Because of this they are vulnerable and prone to face anxiety and depression. This transitional phase has created obsession, mental conflict and dilemma. So, it is necessary to install new ideas about aging and care for old people.

In this way, the selected stories from *Arresting God in Kathmandu* show the negative perceptions of aging in Nepali society. The celebration of youth and denial associated with the old age imply that the general perceptions of the people does not



wholeheartedly accept the elderly people in their regular world. The stories also present the issues of marriage, maturity, seniority, carnal desires, happiness and aging. The characters become happy because of good social relation. Kanti, Pramod and Shanti become happy being with people. Deepak Mishra is obsessed because of the lack of intimate relationship with his wife Jill. He gets happiness through physical relation with Bandana-ji. Nepali society does not allow extra marital affairs. He could not maintain relationships because of social norms and values.

The fire of youth and the issues emanating from therein find draw the primary attention in the stories of Samrat Upadhyay. The knowledge of the elderly people and their experience never find their way to the central complexity of the plot in his narratives. The young characters feel energetic and enthusiasm filled when they are psychologically well. Their mental fitness enhances their physical performances. Marriage ceases one's physical affairs outside. After marriage one becomes mature. He/she is thought to be old. They have to complete social responsibilities. There is no freedom in their life. Individual life is no more. They have to follow social life. This process increases sense of aging. One feels end of his young age. The characters in the story try to break this social boundary to fulfill their desires. Their readiness for social relationships indicate the sense of aging is what we think and how we respond it. They succeed in doing so. However, they return back to follow traditional notions about aging. In Nepal, people are living under the shadow of social concept regarding aging. They feel premature aging after their marriage because of social responsibilities, norms and values. Traditional concept of longevity is also stagnating matter for their progression. Functional aspect of aging has been undermined in some extent by traditional concept of aging. Because of longevity concept some talented youths lag behind in comparison with senior people. Youths are thought to be novice

who keep calculating their age. It is recommended that traditional concept of aging disturbs old people in Nepal for their personal aptitude and progression. Their psychological, social, functional, physical aspects are interrelated. Characters' positive view of ageing has brought happiness and negative view has made them sad in the selected stories. Only single dimension of biological concept cannot measure aging. Aging is multifaceted and multidisciplinary. The social concept of aging should be dynamic according to change in social structure. Appropriation of their psychological, physical and social desires can enhance the concept of betterment of living in their old age.

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