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– Bijay Tamang

Redefining of Kumari Myth in Rashmila Shakya's *From Goddess to Mortal*

Tribhuvan University

Redefining of Kumari Myth in Rashmila Shakya's *From Goddess to Mortal*

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Letter of Recommendation

Bijay Tamang has completed his thesis entitled "Redefining of KumariMyth in Rashmila Shakya's *From Goddess to Mortal*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from July 2016 to September 2017. I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis, entitled "Redefining of Kumari Myth in Rashmila Shakya's *From Goddess to Mortal*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by, Bijay Tamang, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

Rashmila Shakya's *From Goddess to Mortal* project brings out the facts of the myth of Royal Kumari and highlights its reality on the basis of her own personal experiences. This study analyzes Kumari Tradition from the perspective of third world feminism. First world feminism only focuses on individual freedom and political issues related to the right of women but Kumari is far from such value because she is goddesses and her prestige and dignity are related to religion, virtue and culture of Nepal. Rashmila loves the tradition and tries to subvert the western feminist and child labor activist idea about Kumari and demands to continue the tradition for the sake of nationality and cultural unity. She further claims that Kumari is one of the identity markers of the nation and Nepal is famous all over the world as place of "living goddess".

As a Royal Kumari, she spent nine years and earned the experience of what actually the Kumari of Kathmandu is. In the third world countries, cultural practices like Kumari tradition has given a great value for the social bond and our country Nepal. This tradition maintains the harmony between the Buddhist and the Hindu society. As Kumari is from the Buddhist family but she represents also as the Hindu goddess Taleju and she is worshipped by all the Nepalese. But the Westerners have viewed this tradition in the different way. Kumari is like a caged bird and she is deprived of child rights. Generally, from the perspective of the west, this tradition as the third world culture which pushes the society backward. All the myth come out in the newspaper Journal writings have become the main source of their information but the real importance and real life of Kumari as revealed by Kumari herself. She has made it clear about this tradition. And this thesis brings out the real life experience of Kumari Tradition and its importance in the society analyzing from the third world feminist view.

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I. Introduction to The Goddess Kumari and the Concept of Third World

Feminism

This study explores Kumari Myth in line with the view of the third world feminism. Rashmila Shakya, a former Royal Kumari, has tried to subvert the aged long myth about the traditional concept and general understanding of Kumari tradition through her autobiographical book *From Goddess To Mortal*. The book is compiled by Berry Scott on the basis of life story of Rashmila Shakya. To be Kumari is not only to get worshipped as goddess but also an opportunity to change the life as Rashmila herself. On the basis of these events, this text is going to be analyzed from the perspective of third world feminism theory drawing upon the theoretical framework of Chandra Talpade Mohanty and other feminists.

The objective of this research is to illustrate the importance of kumara tradition in Nepal. In Nepal, worshipping of a virgin girl is a typical cultural practice which establishes harmony and dignifies woman in the society. This research also tries to challenge the Western feminists perspective towards kumari, for them kumara is caged furnished bird and means of earning object. Her situation is no different from the circus girl who plays various roles in the guidance of circus girl.

This research not only explores the importance of kumari in Nepali culture but also challenges the misconceptions still prevalent in the society, the first world view towards the third world culture. In Nepal, the living goddess Kumari is regarded as a supreme Tantric goddess, a common deity of Hindus and Buddhist. While, Hindu tantric worships her as Durga Bhawani or Taleju, Buddhist Tantric worships her as Vajradevi. So, Kumari is the post that acquired her own personal dignity and values in her family, community and nation. She is worshipped as a living goddess.

The tradition of worshipping Gods and Goddesses has existed from the early human civilization. Throughout the world, people have been worshipping both Divine Mortal God and Divine Spiritual God. Similarly, even today, in some parts of the world, people have been worshipping living gods. As such practice comes from Nepal and India where there exist tradition of worshipping young pre-pubescent girls called "Kumari". The word Kumari derives from Nepali word meaning "Virgin" which only includes unmarried young girls in Nepal and India. Kumari is a name given to young virgin girl who is considered to be the Goddess where Hindu Mythological Goddess Durga resides.

In Kathmandu valley, there are various Kumari such as Kumari of Bhaktapur, Kumari of Patan and Kumari of Kathmandu. But the Kumari of Basantapur who lives in Kumari cottage (Kumari Ghar) is considered a main Kumari and she performs various ritual and cultural activities on various occasions. The tradition of worshipping Kumari dates back to 6th century. However, officially the Kumari Tradition began during 17th century. There are many evidences and facts of how the tradition of worshipping Kumari started. Among many evidences, the most popular one is that of Jay Prakash Malla, the last Nepalese King of Malla Dynasty. According to legend, King used to get visited by Goddess Durga every night in his Chamber to play the Game of Dice which is also called "Tripasa" in native Nepali language (Allen, 22). However, Goddess Durga forbidden the King not to tell about this meeting to anyone but King's wife became suspicious about the whereabouts of her husband during the night and she followed him to Chamber. As she approached the chamber, she saw Goddess Durga and her husband both indulging in Game of Dice. As Goddess Durga found that the King's wife came to know about their secret meeting, she was angered and told king that if he wants to see her again or protect his

kingdom then from now onward she will only appear in the form of young virgin girl. Since then the tradition of finding Goddess Durga started among the young virgin girls, thus Kumari Tradition was established. Basically Kumari is selected from Shakya community on the advisor of astrologer and Royal priests. Jagadish Regmi highlights the situation as:

Eligibility criteria to be selected as Kumari are tough and rigorous and one must pass different tests to be considered as Kumari. Basic criteria to be Kumari is that she should be unmarried and Virgin and must not have any injury or accident marks on her body. She should belong to Newar Shakya clan, she should be in good health and never ever has and is suffering from any diseases, and in addition, she must not have lost any teeth or shed any blood from her body. After passing some of these basic criteria, she is further examined by high priest. Furthermore, her hair and eyes should be black, dainty Hands and legs. Moreover, she should have small and well-recessed sexual organ and set of perfectly twenty teeth. (1)

Above lines highlight the eligibility of being Kumari. Basically, Kumari is selected from pure Newar community whose mother and father both should be Newar. The age of Kumari should be four to six during the time of selection.

The existence of Kumari found in ancient *Purana*, Kumari is one of the incarnations of goddess Devilike Durga, Bhabani, Kali so before Jaya Prakash Malla's time there found existence of Kumari in Kathmandu valley Jagadish Regmi highlights,

"According to chronological evidence, King Gunakama Dev established Kantipur i.e. Kathmandu City nearly one thousand year

ago. During the reign of King Amar Malla, a religious dance-drama of “Swetakali Nritya” was performed every twelve years in different localities of the Kathmandu Valley. (12)

The story of the ballet is based on the dance-drama of Swetakali, the white robed goddess of Naradevi tole of Kathmandu while its music is derived from various classical and popular folk songs of Nepal. In ancient time when matriarchy was prevalent in Kathmandu, the city was protected by seven mother goddesses called Swetakali, Raktakali, Bhadrakali, Kankeswari, etc. The temples of these goddesses are located along the border of city and they are represented as khadga or sacred sword.

There are several myths on Kumari and her existence in Kathmandu valley.

One myth goes on:

Once during that time, when the demons suddenly attacked the city and destroyed the lives and properties of the peoples, the goddesses, unable to fight them off, had to flee and hide themselves. The ballet begins here while searching for the goddesses, the king of demons Chandrasur also known as Mahisasur comes to a garden where he finds the daughter of Swetakali was busy decorating herself. They exchanged glances and falls in love with each other. When the mother goddesses know about their love and relationship, they become furious and reprimand the daughter. After discussions, they made a plan to use the daughter to kill Chandrasur. (Anderson 33)

Above lines highlight the myth of Kumari that generally heard in Kathmandu valley and its surrounding area. There are several myths about the Kumari. Anderson further highlights the myth as:

Another popular legend comes during the reign of King Trailokya Malla where Goddess Durga and King played Dice in his chamber. However, one night King made sexual offer to Goddess and she was filled with rage and stopped visiting him. Filled with regret, King pleaded Goddess to return and finally she returned but in the form of young girl from Malla dynasty. Hence, according to the legend, the tradition of worshiping Kumari was started. (Anderson 33)

In Nepal, Kumari is worshiped as living goddess and is selected from Nepalese Specific Caste – Newar Clan (Shakya or Bajracharya community). Kumari is worshipped by both Hindu and Nepali Buddhist. Kumari is considered to be resided by Goddess Durga until she menstruates. After that she is considered impure and Goddess Durga vacates her body. Chiara Letizia projects Kumari as, "The innocent yet exotic, gajalu face of Nepal's living goddess, the Kumari, looking out of the wooden windows from her palace has inspired writers and photographers since time immemorial" (22).

From Goddess to Mortal brings out the real story of the former Kumari, Rashmila Shakya, who was chosen to be the living goddess at the age of four and spent eight years away from her parents at *Kumari Ghar* living a life vastly different from that of a conventional young girl. The book describes her struggles as she makes the transition from the world of innocence to a life of common matters. This is also a young woman's quest to correct the world's exotic misconceptions about Kumari. The most poignant section of the book describes Rashmila's transition from the life of a Kumari to that of a normal 12-year-old. Life after *Kumari Ghar* is not easy for her. When she leaves her palace, she is virtually illiterate. Put in grade two, she works

doubly hard to catch up with her classmates, and the struggle continues through her teenage years. To the most part she succeeds, but at times reality hits her with a thud. Rashmila uses *From Goddess to Mortal* for a few specific purposes. She is very critical of the media, both western and Nepali, for often resorting to clichés about the Kumari. For instance, she explains that she was never made to spend a night in a room with 108 freshly severed goat and buffalo heads to prove her courage. Nor did she have to undergo a particularly rigorous physical examination. Rashmila says she cannot claim the 32 signs of perfection that Kumaris are said to possess. Mallika Aryal in The Nepali Times reviews on this book as “*From Goddess to Mortal*” proves that a lot of the more spectacular stories we hear about Kumari are wrong”. She states that all the stories we have been hearing since long time are not entirely true and the real story of the Kumari is shown in this book.

Not only a critic, she shows us that life for present and former Kumari is improving, a goddess now has a chance at being educated while she is serving. But many institutional changes are still needed and Rashmila makes some suggestions: serving Kumaris need to be treated a little less like goddesses and more like normal young girls, while a scholarship to finance higher studies would cost the government much less than a pension for life. If such changes were to be put into place, Rashmila says she would have no qualms about advising other young girls to serve as a Kumari. The book proves that a lot of the more spectacular stories we hear about Kumaris are wrong. The book succeeds in calling attention to reporters who are keen on writing stories about exotic lands without doing formal research and is a good example of how, with repetition, writers' misconceptions become accepted as the truth over the years. It is also very clear from Rashmila's story that it is possible and not exceedingly

difficult for a former Kumari to readjust to society, particularly with a little help from her family.

The book is analyzed from various perspectives by commentators.

Abi Subedi comments as:

Reading this book is like traveling into the realms of a very loving, genuine and thrilling experience of a living goddess. This book is a bridge that links the world of innocence with the world of experience. It also shows a unique and rare combination of innocence and power as told through the narratives of Rashmila Shakya. (From Goddess to Mortal 1)

In all, the story of the Living Goddess has been told over a hundred times but never so engagingly or as honestly than in *From Goddess to Mortal: the True Life Story of a former Royal Kumari* by Rashmila. A Kumari is a prepubescent young girl selected from the Shakya caste and she is worshipped by the country's Hindus as well as the Nepali Buddhists, though not Tibetan Buddhists. A Kumari is believed to be the bodily incarnation of the goddess Taleju until she menstruates, after which it is believed the goddess vacates her body.

As Nepali culture is very rich in its cultural heritage, worshipping of Kumari is also one of the most valuable cultural richness. A young Buddhist girl representing also a Hindu goddess Durga has made a strong religious bond between two religions thus keeping social harmony. Such a cultural importance has much space in the third world countries to which the post colonial feminists focus to preserve.

An underlying theme of Rashmila's narrative is learning, starting with the inadequate formal education for the Dyah Meiju from an old tutor who taught her only multiplication tables at the time of the book's publication, when she was on her

way to being the first goddess with a college degree in Information Technology. Interestingly, after getting through the SLC exam, Rashmila becomes a part time teacher for Health Science and Moral Science. “I suppose it is logical enough to have an ex-goddess teaching Moral Science,” she quips. Although she now receives a lifelong pension from the government, Rashmila wishes she was given a scholarship instead. In several places she expresses frustration with having to deal with the misconceptions that have sprung around the institution of the Kumari. But there is no bitterness or rancor in Rashmila. If anything, she is eager to offer suggestions to better the lives of the young girl who serves Nepal as she herself did. It is memorable for reasons beyond its fascinating subject and well-written content. This true life story does that rare service of inspiring the reader with its courage, honesty, and heart.

The autobiographical novel *From Goddess to Mortal* is analyzed from Third World Feminist point of view because Kumari is cultural and religious icon of third world including Nepal. Existence of Kumari is related to third world feminism because Kumari is more cultural and spiritual than political. First world feminism is more political than third world feminism. Third world feminism like Indian, Muslim and Nepali feminism is more cultural and religious than political. The role of Indian women is controversial. Their role is different in different context. Society uses feminist identity according to the need of society. The woman worshipped as goddess in some cases can be a character of hatred in other society and compares as witch so third world feminism has not strong is controversial and patriarchy has not strong stand point to identify who women are. Third wave feminism encompasses several diverse strains of feminist activity and study. The third world feminism attempts to expand feminism to include women with a diverse set of identities recognizing that women are of many colors, ethnicities, nationalities, religions and cultural

backgrounds. Unlike first world feminists, third world feminists stress to the socio-cultural importance of women and it cannot tell globalizing the situation of all women. Women make up half the population, and creating an environment like the present where women can study hard, worked hard and still be treated as less than equal by her own culture, drives thee intelligent women either out of the country or into resigned complacency where progress is near impossible. Women for the development of society is necessary as the third world feminists believe the loss of progressive women holds a society back because without the support of its women, no country can trulymove forward.

Uma Narayan as a feminist through her book *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Tradition And Third World Feminism* disputes feminism as a solely western notion, even while challenging assumption that East Indian feminism is based on western models. She also holds that the charges of what constitutes “westernization” need to be radically re-examined. Narayan analyses the relationship between Third World Feminism and the West, critiquing the way that Third World Feminists are often read, by both western feminists and people in their own families or the nations, as being “Westernized” in their ideologies. Like the Kumari Tradition is also a unique cultural asset in the third world having its own value for uniting societies from different religions and culture but westernized feminist mentality fail to see feminist critiques as part of intercultural debate about social institutions. Narayan, writingfrom an Indian feminist position, attempts to clarify misconceptions that she believes have resulted in a false perception of Indian values, how Indian women live and religious constructions of Indian culture, law and society because she had been living in the United States for a decade while this book was written. Narayan defines and addresses the roots of sati, dowry and dowry-murder – term that are often confused or jointly

defined like the worshiping of a living goddess (Kumari). She also moves any critical reader to rethink and redefine the notion of “tradition” and resituate the roles that Hinduism and other religions have played in establishing and propelling sati, dowry and dowry-murder in some pockets of Indian history and regions. Siddi Bir Ranjitkar in his review of the book, *Kumari: The virgin goddess* by Narayan Prasad Shrestha criticizes the misinterpretation of Kumari tradition. He writes “the Newars of Nepal devote a great deal of their devotion and ritual activity to the worship of the most notable and unique feature of their religion is the worship of Kumari, the living virgin goddess”(4). He further emphasizes the importance of Kumari worship taking it as invaluable cultural heritage of Nepal and need to preserve it. Uma Narayan highlighting the Indian culture writes in her book *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Tradition and Third World Feminism*:

It is not that mothers and mother-cultures often raise their daughters with contradictory messages, but also that they often seem unaware of these contradictions. They give voice to the hardships and difficulties of being a woman that have marked their lives, teaching us the limitations and miseries of the routine fates. (9)

Another third world feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty puts forward her ideas about the feminism and the third world culture. Mohanty in her essay, “*Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse*” states:

The relationship between ‘Woman’-a cultural and ideological composite of the constructed through diverse representational discourses (scientific, literary, juridical, linguistic, cinematic etc) – and women’-real, material subject of their collective

histories- is one of the central questions the practice of feminist scholarship seeks to address. (6)

In this essay Mohanty critiques the political project of western feminism and its discursive construction of the category of the Third World Woman as a generic homogenous victimized stereotype that western feminists must save. She further states that western feminism have tended to gloss over the differences between southern women but that the experience of oppression is incredibly diverse, and contingent upon historical, cultural, and individual reasons.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is one of the most influential Third World Feminists who has given prominent ideas about third world culture and tries to deconstruct the western understanding towards indigenous cultural heritage through her different books. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" she discusses "the lack of an account of the Sati practice, leading her to reflect on whether the subaltern can even speak" (13). Spivak demonstrates that the Western academy has obscured subaltern experiences by assuming the transparency of its scholarship. That is how the westerners take the worshipping of Kumari as the patriarchal construct imposed upon an innocent child. This view of western writers is what Spivak calls Eurocentric one as they disavow the problem of representation; and by invoking the subject of Europe. Also in non-western cultures and myths, women have been marginalized and given a lower status. India has long been a land of contrasts: the land of the holy Brahman and the degraded untouchable, of magnificent wealth and unspeakable poverty, of Taj Mahal and mud huts. The status of women in India has varied in different historical periods and in different regions of the country, and has also been subject to differentiation according to class, religion and ethnicity. The general situation, however, is one of suppression and domination within the bounds of a

patriarchal system. Whether the woman in question belongs to a peasant family and is compelled to drudgery in the field and at home or to a high-caste family and living a life of leisure, she is the victim of a set of values that demand implicit obedience to male domination, and of many other social practices that circumscribe her life.

Women are always taken as inferior, the other, and mysterious. Quoting a learned Sanskrit Scholar, Shankar N. Prasad writes, "Even angels cannot decipher woman's character and man's destiny" (Singh 322). This observation shows woman as being born with evil inclination and a mine of vices.

From very early times, Hindu society has shown its concern for women in a variety of ways. The general position and status of women are changing, so naturally, the attitude of society towards them could not remain the same in different periods. We have therefore to note and account for the vicissitudes in the attitude of society. One school is seen declaring that the woman is the highest gift of god to man, while the other is seen asserting that the best way to reach god is to avoid woman.

The position which woman occupied in Hindu society at the dawn of civilization during the Vedic age was much better than what we ordinarily expect it to have been. Going back to the hoary past of the Vedic period about 2500 B.C., women occupied a high status in society and gave off their creative talents equally with men. In this society, we find that the wife was treated with utmost courtesy and regard. It was well recognized that the wife was the ornament of the house. 'Man is only half', he is not complete till he is united with a wife and children are born. Vedic experts have observed that the husband is identical with the wife and vice-versa. It is therefore natural that the happiness of each should be regarded as depending upon the other. If there is complete harmony between the two, the house becomes a heaven, if there is discord, it becomes a hell. A.S. Altekar writes regarding the importance of

women in the Vedic age: "Woman and prosperity are not two different things; woman brings prosperity when she is properly treated and respected. The holiest object in the world is a good woman; a tear of sorrow rolling down from her eye will be a great portent even for a mighty tyrant" (318). The above passage no doubt expresses very fine and chivalrous ideas about women. Women are the support of the universe; it exists on account of, and through them. In fact, a home without wife is a hell. Wife is the keystone of the arch of the husband's happiness. On the whole the position of woman was fairly satisfactory in the Vedic age.

To analyze the issue of research, this study makes a narrative review of literature especially dowry inputs from the feminist thinkers structurally and has been divided into three chapters. All the chapters concentrate on studying the hypothesis of the novel that resists patriarchy and explores the female self through spiritualization from mortal to goddess.

II. Redefining of Kumari Myth in Rashmila's *From Goddess to Mortal*

In the book *From Goddess to Mortal*, Rashmila Shakya presents of the unique Nepali culture of Kumari tradition. Rashmala's valorization of the Newari culture of worshipping a girl as the living goddess challenges the Western stereotypes against the non west. From the age of four till twelve, she stayed in the Kumari house and maintained the rich cultural aspect of Non West. Every year during the Indra Jatra, even the head of the nation the King, when country was monarchy and president in present time seek blessing from her. This very tradition of non western culture has significant position in the third world literary canon. Like no western studies demonstrates the limitation of the classic Western canon of literature, sheds light on its silence in regard to other regions and cultures and reveals its biases and inabilities to accept and celebrate cultural/ethnic difference. It also addresses questions of cultural diversity, celebrates difference, cross – culturalism and multiculturalism, and uses stereotypical perspectives of marginality or otherness as vehicles for change.

There are series of stories and the accounts of her real experience as told to Scott Berry in this autobiographical book *From Goddess to Mortal*. In most of the beginning chapters, she tells her real life experience as living goddess and her duties during the stay of Kumari house where as the rest of the chapters present analytical view on Kumari tradition. She shares all her bits and pieces of the activities she participated while being Kumari. Some critics Kumari as a goddess is an ideological construct of patriarchal society. Culture and traditions are established as the integral parts of society but these traditions manifest the dominant ideology of oppressor, hence Marx's concept of ideology is created and regulated in society by those who are in power position. But the third world feminists like Uma Narayan, Gayatri

Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha opine that the third world cultures and traditions have to be understood and read in its context and rich cultural values.

Feminism is a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social rights for women. This includes seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to such opportunities for men. Feminism is an interdisciplinary approach to issues of equality and equity based on gender, gender expression, gender identity, sex, and sexuality as understood through social theories and political activism. Historically, feminism has evolved from the critical examination of inequality between the sexes to a more nuanced focus on the social and performative constructions of gender and sexuality. The third world feminism deals with women in the third world countries. However, it is important to define, in feminist terms, what a third world country actually is. Third world countries are, "a group of 145 developing countries of Asia, Africa and the Middle East, that are characterized by low levels of living, low-income per capita, low education provisions, poverty, and starvation. It is also important to note that third world feminism deals with extreme and taboo topics. Some of these topics include: foot binding in China, *Sati* (Self-immolation by Hindu widow on the funeral pyre of her husband) in India, veiling in Middle East, and female genital cutting in Africa. These, among many other things, make third world feminism a truly unique form of feminism. Also, this form of feminism is deeply rooted in the specific local and historical regions throughout third world countries that tend to be overlooked.

The feminist "first wave" is generally identified with the mobilization of strong feminist movements in the mid nineteenth and early twentieth century in Europe and North America which were concerned with a number of egalitarian and

radical issues and which included equal rights for women, educational and legal reform, abolition of slavery, and "suffrage" (the right to vote). Although the first wave is often characterized as the struggle for women's suffrage, a plethora of feminist, humanitarian and radical politics were advanced during this period--especially those which were identified as falling under the rubric of "the tyranny of men." Issues of sexuality and pleasure, for women, as well as reproductive rights and birth control, for example, were highly contentious dimensions of the first wave. It is within this context that many young women, in particular, began to question the institution of marriage, in which women and children were literally the property of men.

During the initial rise of western feminisms, pro-feminist philosopher and feminist writer and partners John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Harriet Taylor (1807-1858) penned a number of essays apart and together, including Taylor's "The Enfranchisement of Women" (1851) and "Mills the Subjection of Women" (1869) which advocated more egalitarian partnerships in marriage, based on full citizenship, voting rights and equal educational opportunities for women. Taylor, especially, supported the rights of women to work outside of the home in the "public domain", but asserted that working wives with children could only do so with a number of servants to look after her domestic responsibilities. This kind of perspective characterized the more elitist attitudes of some of the first wave. Regardless, it is hardly surprising then that numbers of first wave feminists not only demanded the right to vote, but also fought for massive reforms in the arenas of property rights, labor, education, divorce laws, child custody, prison conditions and sexual liberation, to name a few. Numerous first-wavers also addressed the mostly legal, inhumane practices of rape and the abuse of women and children, especially by husbands and fathers.

Radical cultural reforms in the arenas of women's art, dance, literature, journalism and music were also a large part of the first wave feminists (Isadora Duncan, Virginia Wolf and Josephine Baker, to name a few). Although much of the European first wave feminisms' finds its rudiments in the libertarian and enlightenment principles and practices of the French Revolution, the anti-slavery movement, especially in the United States, is identified as one of the most important influences in the development of this feminist first wave. It was the anti-slavery movement, many contend, that inspired numerous white women and women of color to politically organize against their own oppression.

In fact, the first U.S. women's rights convention, in Seneca Falls New York, in 1848 - which demanded an end to all discrimination based on sex -- was initiated in response to the prohibition of women's participation in the 1840 World's Anti-Slavery convention in London (an organization which supported equal rights for black men, but not for women). Many of the most powerful and influential first wave feminists were black women, some of whom were ex-slaves like Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) and Harriet Tubman (1843-1913), who were also involved in abolitionist movements and the Underground Railroad (a covert escape route to the North and Canada from the Southern slave states).

The end of the first wave is often associated with the periods in the early Twentieth century during and after World War I (1914-1918), when most women, in the Western world, were granted the rights to vote.

Although feminist, human rights and social justice struggles continued throughout the early 1920s to the mid 1960s, it is not until the 1960s that what is called the "second wave" of feminisms rolls in. One of the most contested debates, concerning the feminist second wave, involves the false characterization of the second

wave as a predominantly white, middle-class liberal movement. Although numerous second wavers, followed in the footsteps of some of their first-wave "grandmothers," and continued to press for reformist/liberal agendas, many more advocated far more radical ideas, actions and programs (Tong23). Indeed, the multifarious dimensions of feminisms are reflected in the highly diverse philosophies, practices and politics embraced by what has been identified as the feminist second wave.

A large majority of second wave feminists were young women and girls who were part of the massive baby boom generation (1946-1964) born during the period of economic prosperity that followed the Second World War. Many were the first in their families to receive university educations and were highly influenced and/or involved in civil rights struggles and radical youth cultural movements. Others were disenchanted with social conventions following the war that had forced women back into traditional roles, especially those that idealized women as full-time wives and mothers. At the same time, there were limited opportunities for employment outside of the home, for those in the usual feminized low-waged arenas.

Consequently, many women's dissatisfaction with their societal and economic positions, as well as with a host of sexually discriminatory attitudes and policies provoked what many refer to as a new feminist wave of awareness and protest. Moreover, unlike the first wave, the politics of the family, reproduction, and sexual liberation of women became central concerns of second wave feminisms. In fact, the controversial "Sex Wars" which addressed "political and cultural battles over sexuality" in the 1980's also characterized some of the key feminist debates (Duggan, 1995, 1).

Initially the term "third wave feminisms" characterized a feminism mediated by the terrains of race and multicultural alliances, rather than age. Often it "talked

back to" and challenged dominant and exclusionary forms of white feminisms, while incorporating dimensions of "consciousness raising" in powerful narrative an autobiographical style. This "coming to voice," many explained, was a unique mode of "everyday theorizing" which made apparent the importance of a central feminist idea that "the personal is political."

It is this kind of insurgent feminisms, which exploded in the 1980s, and examined not only the intersections between race, class, culture, sexuality, but also the celebration and coalition politics – of difference. Within this context, the relevance of what has been called the "politics of hybridity" was of central concern. Indeed, the "new hybridity" is a term used to express the "multiple identities" of many contemporary girls and women, especially in the United States. This concept has been central to describing a new generation of critical insurgent feminists -- primarily women of color – with multiple ethnicities, cultural and class experiences whom, in the early 1990s, began to describe their work as third wave. Many of these younger feminists had grown up during or after the 60s and 70s era of social movements and consequently had the advantages of either formal or informal feminist education. Translating from the theories and writings of their insurgent feminist predecessors, their own particular personal, socio-political and economic contexts are taken into account and mediate their feminist perspectives” (Echols 132).

Third world feminism is a relatively new stream of thought, developing primarily out of the work of the postcolonial theorists who concern themselves with evaluating how different colonial and imperial relations throughout the nineteenth century have impacted the way particular cultures view themselves. This particular strain of feminism promotes a wider viewpoint of the complex layers of oppression that exist within any given society. Third-wave feminism is also inspired by and

bound to a generation of the new global world order characterized by the fall of communism, new threats of religious and ethnic fundamentalism, and the dual risks and promises of new info- and biotechnologies. A common American term for third-wave feminism is "girl feminism," and in Europe it is known as "new feminism." This new "new" feminism is characterized by local, national, and transnational activism, in areas such as violence against women, trafficking, body surgery, self-mutilation, and the overall "pornofication" of the media. While concerned with new threats to women's rights in the wake of the new global world order, it criticizes earlier feminist waves for presenting universal answers or definitions of womanhood and for developing their particular interests into somewhat static identity politics.

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In itself diverse and chaotic, third-wave feminism is consequently not one, but many. The common denominator is the will to redefine feminism by bringing together an interest in traditional and even stereotypically feminine issues, while remaining critical of both narratives of true femaleness, of victimization and liberation. They

flaunt their femininity and seek to reclaim formerly derogatory labels such as "slut" and "bitch," while stubbornly venturing into male-dominated spaces with third-wave confidence to claim positions of power: We—the new feminists—embrace power, said new feminist Natasha Walter in *The New Feminism* (1998). Third-wave feminists want to avoid stepping into mutually oppressive static categories, and they call for acceptance of a chaotic world, while simultaneously embracing ambiguity and forming new alliances. Thus, third-wave feminisms are defined not by common theoretical and political standpoint(s), but rather by the use of performance, mimicry, and subversion as rhetorical strategies.

Gender theorist Judith Butler signaled this paradigmatic feminist shift in her books *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993). She fueled new emergent movements such as queer and transgender politics, which take an interest in the intersections of gender and sexuality and help to articulate "performance third-wave feminism" as a theoretical framework of the politics of transgression. Central to this perspective is the understanding of gender as a discursive practice that is both a hegemonic, social matrix and "per formative gesture" with the power to disturb the chain of social repetition and open up new realities. Focus rests on the sustained tension between structure and agency, spelled out as a tension between performance and performativity, in order to overcome the split between society and subject and to situate the possibilities and means of agency and change. The possibilities for change are found in the "fissures" of deferral and displacement that destabilize claims not only of identity but also of truth and "the real" (Butler 1990). Of immense importance to feminism, however, is that the approach further destabilizes the distinction between the social and the material, discourse and body, and, not least, sex and gender. These conceptual pairs are now seen as inextricably linked discursive practices, anchored in

the heterosexual matrix, which is now being challenged.

Third-wave feminism is tied up with the effects of globalization and the complex redistribution of power, which challenge feminist theory and politics. It also mirrors the diversification of women's interests and perspectives and the breakdown of master stories of oppression and liberation. For example, postcolonial, third-wave feminism is concerned with establishing a new critical global perspective and creating alliances between Black, diasporic, and subaltern feminisms, whereas queer theory and politics create a platform for what has now split into the lesbian, gay, bi-, and transsexual and transgender movements. Queer and transgender feminists attack what they see as the crux of the problem: hetero-normativity. They call for recognition of queers: not only gays and lesbians but also drag queens, drag kings, transsexuals, masculine women, and feminine men (Halberstam 27). Emi Koyama summarized some of these concerns in "The Trans-feminist Manifesto." Here, the primary principles of trans-feminism are defined as the right (a) to define one's own identity and to expect society to respect it and (b) to make decisions regarding one's own body (Koyama 245). Trans-feminists believe that individuals should be given the freedom to construct their own gender identities as they see fit and that neither the medical establishment nor cultural institutions at large should intervene. Finally, they resist essentialist notions of identity in particular.

An interesting and important contribution to third-wave feminist thinking is the notion of "transversal politics." Nira Yuval-Davis, the author of *Gender and Nation* (1997), who is herself a British Jew, launched this notion, which is based on the possibility of dialogue between women across national, ethnic, and religious boundaries. Theoretically, her work has been inspired by Gayatri Spivak's theory of strategic essentialism and Patricia Hill Collins's theory of the partiality of standpoints

and of situated and unfinished knowledge. Yuval-Davis has also been inspired by the politics of feminist activist groups such as the London-based Women Against Fundamentalism (WAF), which includes Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and others, and the Bologna feminists, who work with women from groups in conflict, such as Serbs and Croats or Palestinian and Israeli Jewish women. What defines transversal politics is not only the fact that differences in nationality, ethnicity, or religion—and hence in agenda—are recognized but also that a commitment to listen and participate in a dialogue is required. Yuval-Davis has qualified these methods as "pivotal," because they encourage participants to participate in a process of "rooting" and "shifting" and thus to explore different positions, engage in different negotiations, and eventually join different alliances.

In the book *Feminism without Border*, Chandra Talpade Mohanty describes Any discussion of the intellectual and political construction of "Third World feminisms" must address itself to two simultaneous projects: the internal critique of hegemonic "Western" feminisms and the formulation of autonomous feminist concerns and strategies that are geographically, historically, and culturally grounded (17).

For westerner Kumari practice is against the human right but in Nepal Kumari is a living God. From the beginning, Kumari is worshipped as the *Isthadevi* (personal deity) of Nepalese king. She is represented as the living incarnation of great goddess of energy, *Kali*. On the occasion of *Indra Jatra*, Nepalese kings used to worship her and receive blessings to rule the nation and maintain the rules and order in the kingdom. King as the head of the nation worshipped the virgin goddess *Kumari*. Mohanty focus here on globalization as a process that combines a market ideology with a set of material practices drawn from the business world. In this context the

politics of difference, the production of knowledge about (and the disciplining/colonizing of) difference, how we know what we know, and the consequences of our “knowing” on different realities and communities of people around the world is one of the ways we can trace the effects of globalization in the academy. Feminist literacy necessitates learning to see (and theorize) differently—to identify and challenge the politics of knowledge that naturalizes global capitalism and business as-usual in North American higher education. Specifically it involves making.

Racialized gender visible and acknowledging its centrality to processes of governance in the “new” corporate academy. While we have access to a wealth of feminist and antiracist, multicultural scholarship on curricular and pedagogical issues in U.S. higher education,¹ there is very little scholarship that connects pedagogical and curricular questions to those of governance, administration, and educational policy; it is this link that this chapter explores.

Respect and devotion of both Hindu and Buddhist people toward Kumari worship represents a symbol of cultural unity of Nepalese society. In this respect, Kumari, the living goddess of Nepal can be interpreted as a uniting force that integrates multi-dimensional religious and socio-cultural sentiment thereby performing unity in diversity.

Reviewing on the book written by Narayan Prasad Shrestha, Tri Ratna Manadhar writes in the *Journal of Nepalese Studies*, in following way:

About Kumari, who represents the eternal fecundity along with the statehood of Nepal, the writer aptly writes that "nowhere is the bond between Hinduism and Buddhism more clearly demonstrated than in the concept of Kumari", she is the symbol of the eternal motherhood

which gives birth to everything in the universe. (24)

Some postcolonial feminists, such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Black feminists, such as Angela Davis and Alice Walker, are critical of Western feminism for being ethnocentric. Chandra Talpade Mohanty criticizes Western feminism on the ground that it does not take into account the unique experiences of women from third-world countries or the existence of feminisms indigenous to third-world countries. This discourse is strongly related to African feminism and is also associated with concepts such as black feminism, womanism, Africana Womanism, Motherism, Stiwanism, Negofeminism, Chicana Feminism, and Femalism. Lazreg examines academic feminist scholarship on women in the Middle East and North Africa in the context of what she calls a “Western gynocentric” notion of the difference between First and Third World women. Arguing for an understanding of “inter-subjectivity” as the basis for comparison across cultures and histories, Lazreg formulates the problem of ethnocentrism and the related question of voice in this way:

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We can find the Talpade’s idea in the character of Rashmila Shakya, Mohanty described In her own work she has argued in a similar way against the use of analytic categories and political positioning in feminist studies that discursively present Third World women as a homogeneous, undifferentiated group leading truncated lives, victimized by the combined weight of their traditions, cultures, and beliefs, and

“our” (Eurocentric) history. She was goddess when she was young and now she lives like ordinary girl. Certain religious and cultural panorama made her goddess when she was age of four and she remained goddess till twelve years. Whole eight years she is respected as goddess and later she returns back to home. It shows the key point of her life as well as life of other female child in south Asia. In south Asia before puberty or the first menstruation female child is known Kumari, a virgin goddess. The practices can be seen even in some communities that when the purifying celebration of house in Tamang community, the virgin girls are kept for a week in that house as a symbol of goddess. In the case of Nepal especially in Kathmandu valley there is long run tradition of Kumari and she is respected as incarnation of Taleju Bhabani. Each time there is Kumari near Taleju temple because Taleju is appeared as form of virgin child. It is long run tradition of Kathmandu valley. Rashmila Shakya is one of the parts of tradition she performed the roles whole eight years and returned back to home as mortal girl.

Mohanty further describes that difference, diversity, multiculturalism, globalization, and how we think about them complicate my intellectual and political landscape in the United States, and I turn to theory, and to the potential of political education, for some way to link my “personal” story with larger stories. For a way to understand the profoundly collective and historical context within which my personal story and journey through difference, and through the inequities of power, privilege, discrimination, marginalization, exclusion, colonization, and oppression, make sense. Mohanty further described To take inter-subjectivity into consideration when studying Algerian women or other Third World women means seeing their lives as meaningful, coherent, and understandable instead of being infused “by us” with doom and sorrow. It means that their lives like “ours” are structured by economic, political, and

cultural factors. It means that these women, like “us,” are engaged in the process of adjusting, often shaping, at times resisting and even transforming their environment. It means they have their own individuality; they are “for themselves” instead of being “for us.” An appropriation of their singular individuality to fit the generalizing categories of “our” analyses is an assault on their integrity and on their identity.

In the case of Kumari, both Buddhist and Hindu are equally convincing and respected Kumari as virgin goddess. As she says, "Some of us are Buddhist and some are Hindu, and we are tolerant enough that many of us participate in both Hindu and Buddhist festivals and we share our temples"(14). Kumari is participated in various auspicious occasions at that time both Hindu and Buddhist are participated and celebrated the festival by doing various rituals. She is put in the middle of the females. Thus this Kumari tradition is not like what some feminists claim to be the female exploitation. The myth of women plays a considerable part in literature and culture in which women are perceived to be immanent, passive, static, mysterious etc. So for Simone de Beauvoir Kumari tradition is "myth" which is constructed and regulated in society to subjugate women continuously. In her book *The Second Sex* Beauvoir insists against "the cultural identification of women as merely the negative object or "other" to man as the defining and dominating subject who is assumed to represent humanity in general" (Abram 88). This idea of female inferiority is not entirely prevalent in all the worlds as the indigenous culture traits differ. In third world countries, the position of women is far better. Adrienne Rich, speaking to the students of Smith College in 1979, said:

There is a false power which masculine society offers to a few women who "think like men" on condition that they use it to maintain things as they are. This is meaning of female tokenism: that power withheld

from the vast majority of women is offered to few, so that it may appear that any truly qualified women can gain access to leadership, recognition, and reward; hence that justice based on merits actually prevails. (145)

In the last few decades there has been a blossoming of feminist discourse around questions of “racial difference” and “pluralism.” While this work is often an important corrective to earlier middle-class (white) characterizations of sexual difference, the goal of the analysis of difference and the challenge of race was not pluralism as the proliferation of discourse on ethnicities as discrete and separate cultures. The challenge of race resides in a fundamental re-conceptualization of our categories of analysis so that differences can be historically specified and understood as part of larger political processes and systems. The central issue, then, is not one of merely “acknowledging” difference; rather, the most difficult question concerns the kind of difference that is acknowledged and engaged. Difference seen as benign variation (diversity), for instance, rather than as conflict, struggle, or the threat of disruption, bypasses power as well as history to suggest a harmonious, empty pluralism. On the other hand, difference defined as asymmetrical and incommensurate cultural spheres situated within hierarchies of domination and resistance cannot be accommodated within a discourse of “harmony in diversity.” A strategic critique of the contemporary language of difference, diversity, and power thus would be crucial to a feminist project concerned with evolutionary social change. Kumari tradition is somehow different from the first world feminist view as well as view of Manu. There are, however, a large number of passages in Sanskrit literature, both religious and secular, which are of an opposite nature and cast serious reflections upon women's role and their character. Of course, the ancient law-giver, Manu had

chanced upon a strong sentence on the woman's dilemma. Pilo Nanavutty writes, "The relegation of women to a subordinate role came much later with the formulation of the 'Laws of Manu'" (135). According to Manu, woman was created for the propagation of the species and to minister to man's wants. She had no existence outside of man. When she married, her husband was her god, and she yielded to his every wish. She has the passive role, her greatest virtue the worshipful adoration she accorded her husband. Rey E. Baber observes Manu's views thus: "There is no other god on earth for a woman than her husband. The most excellent of all the good works that she can do is to seek to please him by manifesting perfect obedience to him. There she should lay her sole rule of life" (76). Noteworthy is the use of word 'god' to refer to the husband. A woman's husband is her lord, and it is her religious duty to see that he is happy and comfortable by yielding to his every wish. The woman is defined primarily in relation to her husband and her household, and her interest and active participation in domestic matter is expected. Manu would not allow woman to be independent in any state. Ranjana Kumari quotes Manu to show his views towards woman as: "In childhood a female must be subject to her father; in youth to her husband, and when her lord is dead to her sons. A woman must never be independent" (Chatterjee 8). The dependence of women on man is total and absolute, and if they dare to break through these bonds of control, they are severely punished. Manu even allows man the liberty of beating his wife if she dares to disobey him. Manu advances the extreme views that the wife's marital tie and duty do not come to an end even if the husband were to sell or abandon her. These perspectives of Manu and the Western critics are subverted. The same idea is reiterated in *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. In a woman's case, her traditional task is strictly to help a man accomplish his duties. So while his emphasis is one spiritual life, to a

woman her husband is her lord. Manu's diction can be seen as prevailing in many quarters even today, and women are seen as helpless non-choosers.

In the book *Feminism without Border*, Chandra Talpade Mohanty describes one in which democratic and socialist practices and institutions provide the conditions for public participation and decision making for people regardless of economic and social location. In strategic terms, this vision entails putting in place antiracist feminist and democratic principles of participation and rationality, and it means working on many fronts, in many different kinds of collectivities in order to organize against repressive systems of rule.

It also means being attentive to small as well as large struggles and processes that lead to radical change—not just working (or waiting) for a revolution. Thus everyday feminist, antiracist, anti-capitalist practices are as important as larger, organized political movements.

According to Mohanty:

In the 1970s and 1980s, socialist feminist thinkers including Michelle Barrett, Mary McIntosh, Zillah Eisenstein, Dorothy Smith, and Maria Mies pointed out the theoretical limitations of an implicitly masculine Marxism. These scholars clarified the intricate relationship between production and reproduction, the place of the “family” and the “household” in the economic and social relations of capitalist society, and the relation of capitalism to patriarchy. (13)

From the above mention lines we can say that the work of these U.S. feminists of color. The Barnard Conference in the early 1980s inaugurated the so-called sex wars, which brought the contradictions of sex, sexuality, erotica, pornography, and such marginalized sexual practices as sadomasochism to the forefront of feminist

debate. The Kumari tradition is different from the U.S. culture, so we should analyze from the third world feminism. Rashmila represent the third world which is different from from First world.

According to Mohanty:

I offer this partial history of ideas to anchor, in part, my own feminist thinking and to clarify the deeply collective nature of feminist thought as I see it. Let me now turn briefly to the limits and pitfalls of feminist practice as I see them in my own context and then move on to a discussion of decolonization and feminist anti-capitalist critique.(14)

Above lines indicate that Feminist practice is understood it operates at a number of levels: at the level of daily life through the everyday acts that constitute our identities and relational communities; at the level of collective action in groups, networks, and movements constituted around feminist visions of social transformation; and at the levels of theory, pedagogy, and textual creativity in the scholarly and writing practices of feminists engaged in the production of knowledge situation that Rashmila faces in her life. Her memories seem that she faces the life similar to the ordinary girls except some occasion of Puja. The conservative and constructed myth is legitimized in society through many institutions and is considered as natural. Devaki Jain discusses about the chain of institutions that helps to formulate female inferiority to men. In her essay *The Household Trap: Report on a Field Survey of Female Activity Patterns*, she writes:

The link between myth, methodologies and reality is obvious. The myth pervades the perception of both men and women, the perception gives values to the activities, and the methodology depends on the values and presents the reality in formulations which further strengthen

the myths. Apart from reporting this fact, they also perceive these activities as having less value which indeed is how society perceives them. (410)

In Mohanty's context, she would identify three particular problematic directions within U.S.-based feminisms. First, the increasing, predominantly class based gap between a vital women's movement and feminist theorizing in the U.S, academy has led in part to a kind of careerist academic feminism whereby the boundaries of the academy stand in for the entire world and feminism becomes a way to advance academic careers rather than a call for fundamental and collective social and economic transformation. This gap between an individualized and narrowly professional understanding of feminism and a collective, theoretical feminist vision that focuses on the radical transformation of the everyday lives of women and men is one she actively works to address. Second, the increasing corporatization of U.S. culture and naturalization of capitalist values has had its own profound influence in engendering a neoliberal, consumerist (protocapitalist) feminism concerned with "women's advancement" up the corporate and nation-state ladder. This is a feminism that focuses on financial "equality" between men and women and is grounded in the capitalist values of profit, competition, and accumulation.¹⁰ A proto capitalist or "free-market" feminism is symptomatic of the "Americanization" of definition of feminism—the unstated assumption that U.S. corporate culture is the norm and ideal that feminists around the world strive for. Another characteristic of proto capitalist feminism is its unstated and profoundly individualist character. Finally, the critique of essentialist identity politics and the hegemony of postmodernist skepticism about identity has led to a narrowing of feminist politics and theory whereby either exclusionary and self-serving understandings of identity rule the day or identity

(racial, class, sexual, national, etc.) is seen as sustainable and thus merely “strategic.” Thus, identity is seen as either naive or irrelevant, rather than as a source of knowledge and a basis for progressive mobilization.¹¹ Colonizing, U.S.- and Eurocentric privileged feminisms, then, constitute some of the limits of feminist thinking that I believe need to be addressed at this time. And some of these problems, in conjunction with the feminist possibilities and vision discussed earlier, form the immediate backdrop to her own thinking.

However, Mohanty’s argument does not suggest that these are discrete and separate histories. In focusing on women’s work as a particular form of Third World women’s exploitation in the contemporary economy, she also wants to foreground a particular history that Third and First World women seem to have in common: the logic and operation of capital in the contemporary global arena. She maintains that the interests of contemporary transnational capital and the strategies employed enable it to draw upon indigenous social hierarchies and to construct, reproduce, and maintain ideologies of masculinity/femininity, technological superiority, appropriate development, skilled/unskilled labor, and so on. Here she has argued this in terms of the category of “women’s work,” which she has shown to be grounded in an ideology of the Third World women worker. Thus, analysis of the location of Third World women in the new international division of labor must draw upon the histories of colonialism and race, class and capitalism, gender and patriarchy, and sexual and familial figurations. The analysis of the ideological definition and redefinition of women’s work thus indicates a political basis for common struggles and it is this particular forging of the political unity of Third World women workers that she would like to endorse. This is in opposition to a historical notion of the common experience, exploitation, or strength of Third World women or between Third and First World

women, which serve to naturalize normative Western feminist categories of self and other. If Third World women are to be seen as the subjects of theory and of struggle, we must pay attention to the specificities of their/our common and different histories.

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In the book *From Goddess to Mortal*, the central character Sharmila described that girls are misbehaving by boys. This is the common problem faced by both first and third world girls and women. According to Sharmila:

I can almost tell what subject they are studying from what they are writing in their notebooks. Of course not everyone is writing intensely. Some especially the boys, are misbehaving, things at one another, or annoying the girls. Occasionally I hear rough voice of a teacher, a teacher more energetic than mine, bringing them to order. It looks like fun. In fact at the moment, it looks a lot better than standing around waiting for everybody else to finish school.(29)

From these lines we can say that Third World women workers in the global arena: it writes a particular group of women workers into history and into the operation of contemporary capitalist hegemony; it charts the links and potential for solidarity between women workers across the borders of nation-states, based on demystifying the ideology of the masculinized worker; it exposes a domesticated definition of Third

World women's work to be in actuality a strategy of capitalist decolonization; it suggests that women have common interests as workers, not just in transforming their work lives and environments, but in redefining home spaces so that homework is recognized as work to earn a living rather than as leisure or supplemental activity; it foregrounds the need for feminist liberatory knowledge as the basis of feminist organizing and collective struggles for economic and political justice; it provides a working definition of the common interests of Third World women workers based on theorizing the common social identity of Third World women as women/workers; and finally, it reviews the habits of resistance, forms of collective struggle, and strategies of organizing of poor, Third World women workers.

Another third world feminist Gayatri Spivak's in "Theory Of Subalternity" describes the term "subaltern" from Gramsci, to refer to the unrepresented group of people in the society (Gramsci 55). In the Indian cultural context, the term "subaltern" acquires more significance as the people have struggled hard for Indian independence. She prefers the term "subaltern" as it encompasses the exact picture of the lower class people. Morton quotes the words of Spivak as:

I like the word subaltern for one reason. It is totally situational.

Subaltern began as a description of a certain rank in the military. The word was under censorship by Gramsci: he called Marxism "Monism", and was obliged to call the proletariat "subaltern" That word, used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that doesn't fall under strict class analysis. I like that, because it has no theoretical rigor. (115)

From the above mention lines we can say that Subaltern is the situational concept. In the book *From Goddess o Mortal*, the central character Rashmila is taken as the living

virgin goddess and a powerful goddess. Rashmila memorizes, "Indra Jatra is a festival that is unique to the Kathmandu Valley, and commemorates an occasion when Indra had come down from heaven to pick flowers for his mother who wanted them for a puja" (44). During the festival time her own mother also worshipped as goddess with Bhairav and Ganesh.

Spivak's writings on feminism had an iconoclastic effect as she challenged some of the basic assumptions of feminism in general. All women are not the same and there are a lot of variations existing even among women with regard to class, color and creed. The will and aspirations of the European women are totally different from the women of the Asian Continent. The European women are more or less liberated from their patriarchal dominance whereas women from the Third World Countries are struggling to cope with the European women. It would be very difficult to create a universally agreeable female gender and the time has now come for the people to respect the differences within the gender. Spivak is not against feminism but her very arguments strengthen the fundamental principles of feminism. She reiterates the fact that there are differences in the case of race, class, religion, citizenship and culture among women. Feminism needs to concentrate on this variation that exists among women and help them to achieve their personal goals for Spivak, "The concept of the "Other" is a universal phenomenon, in which the concept of "Self" is claimed to be the subject and all the rest come under the category of the "other". The term „other" is highly relative and it goes on changing its significance according to the context"(129). Mohini Chatterjee also asserts to dissolve male centered tradition. In her essay, *Feminism and Women's Rights* writes that as a mother, sister, daughter or wife the role of the women in the development of a human being's personality in particular and growth and progress of society cannot be either denied or

underdeveloped. "But for centuries man, that is the male of species had kept her under his thumb, allowing her own development to stagnate". Similarly, Kumari tradition for Chatterjee is also institutionalized, even the government appoints administrative staffs without considering it as an institutionalized violence against women's right. Chatterjee writes:

History, as code of male leadership, has been used perhaps subconsciously to reinforce the idea that women are insignificant and subordinate and therefore belong to the private sphere. Specially, in societies where literacy is low and women's organizations are apolitical male dominated history and traditions maintain the existing social and political order. Of course even Rashmila herself agrees that there should be some changes in Kumari tradition as the movement of time. But it doesn't mean entire Kumari worshipping culture should be vanished or it has only the form of male domination and way of deprivation of child rights.

While talking about third world feminism during the time of 20th century in the context of Rashmila Shkaya's autobiography, she is present as respected girl history. Enthusiasm for political freedom gained in intensity and with it came the realization that freedom for women was an integral part of freedom for the nation through cultural nuances. She says, "But you must go, Dyah Maiju," said one of my brothers, to my surprise. "You are always welcome here, but this is not your home anymore, it is time to grow up" (74). Rashmila's difficulties over coming to terms with the simple ways of life is rather touching as until then she had believed that nothing would happen to her the goddess who had the power to help others get over their suffering.

She further adds, "In spite of the discomfort of the buses, the world was full of new experiences for me. I had known about sickness, but only from the outside, since so

many people had come to pray for their sick children"(77). Living without family in childhood age is discomfort such discomfort is overloaded by cultural and religious tone. Nobody talks about such part of private life of Kumari. In this regard, she says, "Nepalis are people who are fond of speaking their minds, and it was not uncommon for someone on a bus to notice my bald spots and ask right out," what's wrong with that girl? Has she been sick? Did she have typhoid? Some patients of the typhoid lose hair" (78). It shows the situation how Rashmila faced in her life while she had been Kumari in Basantapur.

In her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak states that the subaltern cannot speak by attaching a special emphasis on the element of noise. The communication that takes place between a subaltern and a non-subaltern is actually lost due to the element of noise. The element of noise is influenced by the racial, cultural and socio-economic factor. The goal of communication is achieved only when the desired message is conveyed to the receiver.

Kumari is the long practice of Nepali culture. Kumari myth is subverted by the autobiography of Rashmila because before this book, nobody knew about the reality of Kumari's life and her personal experiences.

The concept of third world feminism in the context of Kumari is a little bit different because Myth of Kumari is guided by cultural and religious aspect, third world feminism particularly Indian feminism is somehow related to political movement of India as Congress leaders saw the advantages of mobilizing women and always exhorted them to join the nationalist struggle as equals. The ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru played a vital role in uplifting the role and status of women. Nehru's views on the status of women were more in keeping with those of enlightened reformers of the time. He particularly emphasized the necessity for

women to work outside the home, to be economically independent and not to regard marriage as a profession. He said, "Freedom depends on economic conditions even more than political, and if a woman is not economically free and self-earning, she will have to depend on her husband and someone else and dependents are never free" (97).

Nehru also urged women to participate in the nationalist struggle. He further argued, "In a national war, there is no question of either sex or community. Whoever is born in this country ought to be a soldier" (98). However, he was quite conscious that women had to engage in a double struggle against imperialism and against oppression by men and that these struggles were intimately linked.

Rashmila tries to subvert the myth of Kumari that is overloaded by both positive and negative myth. Nobody realizes the fact except Kumari but there are various myths on Kumari which is subverted by this book. After returning from Kumari Ghar she lives happy life as, "When I had been the centre of attention, it had seemed normal, and I didn't realize until I saw it as an observer just how strongly I had felt my responsibilities" (98). Many foreign scholars meet her and asked about many things but she only expresses the experiences that she mentions, "Though we never actually ask for anything in return for granting an interview except for a copy of the article, foreign journalists have often offered to compensate us for our time, calling this, logically enough, a donation towards my educational expenses" (99). The Supreme Court said that all Kumaris can enjoy children's rights as per with other children. "There are no historic and religious documents that say Kumari should be denied their child rights granted in the convention on the rights of child", the court said in a judgment upholding the rights of the living goddess (1).

Even while visiting Kumari Chhen, most of the tourists view Kumari a child who is in a caged like house in the name of goddess and the same queries are aroused

to the guides that she should not get married, needs to fulfill thirty two bodily perfections, has to undergo a demonic night with hundreds of buffalo heads etc. The myth which was in the past presented by the outsiders is still ruling the inner reality of the Kumari Tradition.

In fact, Rashmila feels that the tradition of the living goddess should continue with a little ramification. Like providing proper education, as she believes Kumaris will not have any problem with adapting to the ways of real world if they are provided proper education. The latter part of the book consists of answers Rashmila was asked a number of times by people from all over the world. She completes the book by saying that she has no regret about being a Kumari rather says that she enjoyed her life. She highlights the one event as, "As anyone would be on a first flight, I was a little nervous, and wished I could have had my old Kumari equanimity back"(119). She faces difficulties when she was in a hotel room that she highlights, "Though I missed my family, the solitary splendor of my hotel room was a little reminiscent of my eight years as Kumari when I had always slept in a room by myself, thought the street here was a bit further away"(121). She feels she was fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to help preserve the tradition of the nation. She says, "After going all the way to New York and back on an airplane, a school trip to Changu Narayan, the oldest temple in the valley on a hill north of Bhaktapur, might be seen as a bit of a let-down" (123). She is not a girl but she is addressed by given the name of Kumari that she says, "I was no longer the girl who was so out of place that she had to sit and look out the windows at the other kids playing at recess time" (124). In New York, she was with Samjhana. The situation she mentions, "With Samjhana, I joined the unruly crowd grabbing at pages until I finally got hold the page with my number on it, but in the wet and the scramble, my result had been torn off"(127).

Rashmila's interpretation about Kumari is different from first world feminism because first world feminism interprets Kumari as tradition of child slavery. More than that, it is claimed as using female body as commodity. In reality Kumari is goddess not object of male satisfaction or a moderate form of child slavery.

The legend behind the origin of Kumari Tradition and its social importance has a great value in Nepali society. So, Dor Bahadur Bista, in his book *Peoples of Nepal* focusing on Indra Jatra writes that "although the greater part of this festival is quite old the Rath Jatra is said to have begun in the year 1756 A.D. during the reign of king Jaya Prakash Malla" (22). He further says that such a unique traditional performances keeps a social harmony and helps to smoothly moves the society. Since Kumari was taken as the protector of Nepal valley, people worship her with great respect even at present. Especially, during Ghode Jatra, the festival of horses which falls around the late March also requires the presence of Kumari. On the twelfth day of waxing moon in Bhadra, the day of pole raising outside of Hanuman Dhoka, is another occasion to carry the goddess Kumari outside of the temple. This day marks the beginning of Indra Jatra. Kumari accompanied by Ganesh and Bhairava is taken to Mucuka to be worshipped by the Achaju priest in charge of Taleju temple. Two days later Kumari Jatra begins when thousands of people gather in the square before Kumari house. Army band, political leaders, local dignitaries march with musical bands in front of her chariot. The president at present receives blessing from her and then the chariot is pulled out around the city. So this very tradition of Kumari in non-western culture is viewed by the third world feminists as the way of cultural coexistence.

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The cult of the Goddess Taleju and the tradition of worshipping Kumari as living goddesses are central to the belief system that has sustained the culture of the Kathmandu Valley for seven centuries or more. In the throne room at the front of the house, behind the famous golden window overlooking Durbar Square, he prostrates himself before the Kumari's lion throne, touching his forehead to her feet. This very public acknowledgement of the innate power of the divine feminine is echoed in many of the most important rituals and traditions of the Valley. Though other living goddesses still exist in the valley today, in modern times the focus has fallen primarily

on the Kumari of Kathmandu, the embodiment of Taleju and the living goddess who has, since the unification of Nepal, been regarded as the root of political power in the country. Living in an exquisite 18th century courtyard overlooking the old royal palace of Hanuman Dhoka and the temples of Kathmandu's Durbar Square, the 'royal' Kumari has granted her blessing to generations of kings, imbuing them with 'shakti' - divine energy - and authority to rule.

III. Subverting Western view of Kumari Myth

Kumari tradition, the worshipping of living virgin goddess manifests the third world unique culture that maintains the social harmony. The identity of woman and their status is not same in the entire world and also cannot be always understood generalizing all the women. The certain castes, ethnic groups, various regions and belief inherent in the society should be examined while studying the certain culture like Kumari Tradition of Nepali culture. As Kumari, for the many westerners is only like a caged girl and means of attraction but the value and the importance in Newari culture and Nepali society it plays is greater and that is what Uma Narayan states as "Eurocentric" view of westerners. Due to such belief and the myth heard in the society Rashmila Shakya tries to subvert the perception of Kumari myth establishes it's important in the context of Nepal.

While feminist scholarship is moving in important and useful directions in terms of a critique of global restructuring and the culture of globalization, Mohanty wants to ask some of the same questions she posed in 1986 once again. In spite of the occasional exception, she thinks that much of present-day scholarship tends to reproduce particular "globalized" representations of women. Just as there is an Anglo-American masculinity produced in and by discourses of globalization, it is important to ask what the corresponding femininities being produced. Clearly there is the ubiquitous global teenage girl factory worker, the domestic worker, and the sex worker. There is also the migrant/immigrant to service worker, the refugee, the victim of war crimes, the woman-of-color prisoner who happens to be a mother and drug user, the consumer-housewife, and so on.

There is also the mother-of-the-nation / religious bearer of traditional culture and morality. Because social movements are crucial sites for the construction of

knowledge, communities, and identities, it is very important for feminists to direct themselves toward them. The anti-globalization movements of the last five years have proven that one does not have to be a multinational corporation, controller of financial capital, or transnational governing institution to cross national borders. These movements form an important site for examining the construction of trans-border democratic citizenship. But first a brief characterization of anti-globalization movements is in order. A transnational feminist practice depends on building feminist solidarities across the divisions of place, identity, class, work, belief, and so on. In these very fragmented times it is both very difficult to build these alliances and also never more important to do so. Global capitalism both destroys the possibilities and also offers up new ones.

Through this book Rashmila has revealed insights on the tradition and practices, history and about the significance of this unique Nepalese cultural tradition. Given Ms. Shakya's knowledge of this practice, this is an authoritative book that provides first-hand information and insight that no others have been able to provide yet. Living Goddess of Nepal is a representation of Tulaja Bhavani for the Hindus and Vajradevi for the Buddhists, both of the religious groups worship her with their own tradition and values. The Kumari is selected from the Shakya clan from one of the 18 Bahas. There are signs of divinity even before the births of living goddess, indicating her future destiny as the true embodiment of the goddess. She is endowed with 32 auspicious signs and displays the signs of her divinity. She undergoes a series of tests to confirm that she is a Kumari. This research is able to illustrate the importance of Kumari tradition in Nepal. In Nepal, worshipping of a virgin girl is a typical cultural practice which establishes harmony and dignifies woman in the society and challenge the Western feminist perspective towards Kumari. This research is not only able to

valorize the importance of Kumari in Nepali culture but also able to challenge the misconception still prevalent in the society, the first world view towards the third world culture.

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