

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

**A Comparative Study of Representation of Nationalism and Ethnicity in
Koirala's *Sumnima* and Pradhan's *In the Battle of Kirtipur***

A thesis submitted to

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,

Tribhuvan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts in English

By

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March, 2010

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Pritiman Thada Magar has completed his thesis entitled “**A Comparative Study of Representation of Nationalism and Ethnicity in Koirala's *Sumnima* and Pradhan's *In The Battle of Kirtipur***” under my supervision. He carried out his research from March, 2008 to March, 2010. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva-voce.

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TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “**A Comparative Study of Representation of Nationalism and Ethnicity in Koirala's *Sumnima* and Pradhan's *In The Battle of Kirtipur*”**

submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Pritiman Thada Magar has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

The present dissertation makes a comparative study of representation of nationalism and ethnicity in Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima* and Hridaya Chandra Singh Pradhan's *In the Battle of Kirtipur*. These literary texts present the relationship of conflict between nationalism and ethnicity. The reason of conflict is either to preserve the prehistoric identities or to possess power. In construction and representation of nationalism and ethnicity, Koirala gives emphasis on their religious aspects while Pradhan focuses on historical and political aspects.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Nepal is a country of diversity. It is very rich in socio-cultural diversity. Socio-cultural diversity is characterized by diversity in caste, ethnicity, language, religion and culture.

The proverb 'Nepal is a garden of four Varnas and thirty-six castes' is not merely proverb. There are four Varnas: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. These are the social categories previous Nepalese rulers set them, on the basis of Hindu religion, in a hierarchical social ladder defining their different duties and responsibilities to the nation: Brahmin is kept at the topmost level of the ladder who, being the priest, has to preach others and regulate Hinduization. Kshatriya falls under second position whose duties and responsibilities are to rule the kingdom and fight for the nation. The third Varna, that is Vaishya, has to perform business, farming and trades so that the nation could be powerful economically. Shudra, the lowest Varna, has to serve all above mentioned groups. But later on such socially constructed hierarchical system was widely opposed by social reformers and ethnic groups, especially those who belong to the lower rank. Thus the social concept like touchable and untouchable castes were abolished legally. But it is not eradicated totally in practice. It is still evident in some communities, especially rural.

Regarding the issue of religion the census of 2001 has listed eight religions: Hindu, Buddhist, Islam, Christian, Jain, Sikh, Muslim and Kirat. Despite the existence of so many religions, Shah dynasty defined Nepal as 'True Hindu Kingdom' neglecting all others. Further more, the census report of 2001 has revealed that Hindu comprises 80.6 percent of total population of Nepal. But non-Hindu ethnic groups

claimed the data to be false. They also raised voice for declaration of the secular nation.

Modern Nepal has experienced different kinds of ruling system from autocracy to the federal republic democracy. Before completion of the project of Gorkha expansion or unification of Nepal by King Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1769, it was divided into 22 and 24 principalities and other independent nation-states of ethnic groups. Then Nepal experienced autocratic Rana rule for 104 years from 1846 to 1950. After its fall, Nepalese people breathed democratic air for some years. But unfortunately king Mahendra dismissed the 18-month old parliament led by Prime Minister Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala. This system collapsed in 1990 due to people's movement. Thus, the democracy was again reintroduced in Nepal. After the royal massacre of June 2001, king Gyanendra ruled and his ambition for absolute rule began to flourish. The Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) had already initiated people's war on February 13, 1996 against autocracy, corruption and social injustice. People's movement part –II , that extended for 19 days, buried the absolute monarchy system into its grave in May 28, 2008. Federal Democratic Republic as per Interim Constitution of Nepal is implemented in Nepal in the present.

During such a number of ruling systems, ethnic groups are also treated in different ways. Nation exploited ethnicity in the name of nationalism. For example, Prithvi Narayan Shah colonized many ethnic principalities including Kirtipur. Many Kirtipures' lives were taken; some of their nose were cut off and others were compelled to surrender in front of the Gorkhali. Similarly nation also declared ban on the cow slaughter giving no consideration to the ethnic groups, like Tamang and Bhote, who traditionally used to slaughter cow. Nation also brought the slogan like, as

Krishna B. Bhattachan quotes, "one king, one country; one language, one dress" (21). Ethnic groups were compelled to speak Nepali language in the public places and official duties. All these were done in the name of unification and homogenization of Nepal.

Though the rulers were successful in imposing their power with gun and sword, they could not grasp ethnic writers' pen. It means ethnic writers and social reformers have recorded and reflected such issues – nationalism and ethnicity – through their powerful writings.

Thus, this present dissertation is an attempt to study the representation of ethnicity and nationalism along with their relationship in Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima* and Hridaya Chandra Singh Pradhan's *In the Battle of Kirtipur*.

Nationalism and Ethnicity

Different scholars regard ethnicity as well as nationalism in a varied ways. Some of them take them as ideologies and others as discourses. Further there are some people who define them as cultural or historical product or even as imagined community or psychological construction. Again some of the scholars regard nationalism and ethnicity as opposing groups but others as supplementary or closely interrelated concepts. However, the reason behind such multiplicity in the way of defining them is the difference of glasses they wear while looking at them. Thus, it is better to discuss about the approaches to nationalism and ethnicity at first.

Theoretical Approaches to Nationalism and Ethnicity

There are three approaches to nationalism and ethnicity namely primordial, instrumentalist and constructionist. Primordialist assume the durability, even permanence, of ethnic communities and ties, and argue that nations too are products

of the primordial ties of race, ancestry, religion, language and territory. This approach emphasizes the emotional ties of individuals to ethnic groups. It also focuses on a presumed primordial need for shared identity that is fulfilled by culturally defined groupings. Identities of inhabitants are defined in cultural terms exclusively. The primordialist conception of nation postulates that nations are real, not imagined, entities. To primordialist, national identity is immutable. It cannot be created or altered through social construction or through purposeful manipulation. Craig Calhaun says, ethnic identities are "in some sense an ancient primordial, possibly even natural or at least prior to any particular political mobilization" (214). He takes it as a base of a modern set of categorical identities. To paraphrase his statement, these categorical identities also shape everyday life, offering both tools for grasping pre-existing homogeneity and difference and for constructing specific versions of such identities. Anthony D. Smith, the eminent sociologist and an exponent of primordialism, also points to the failed nation-building efforts of the communist elites as an example of cultural and primordial limitation on instrumentalist efforts to construct a new national referent.

The constructivist position, on the other hand, sees nothing that is fixed or predetermined in the concept of the nation. Hugh Seton-Watson writes "I am driven to the conclusion that no scientific definition of a nation can be devised. All that I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to be a nation" (5). This process of recognition occurs as a result of a complex labyrinth of social interactions. It shows that national identification can change if these social interactions change. Concept of nation is wholly subjective, dependent on psychology rather than on biology. It could be conceived almost as an

affair of the heart, a spiritual communion born out of the complex web of social structures constituting people's interests, conceptions and identities. In this way, this approach emphasizes the socially created nature of nationality and of shared interest.

To the writers and analysts of the instrumentalist conception, the spiritual and social linkages do not just happen. They are shaped and nurtured specifically for political and material advantages. Traditions are emphasized, sometimes invented to cement a group's collective identity and endow it with historical continuity. Ernest Gellner, for example, takes similar position when he says,

Nationalism uses the preexisting, historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth, though it uses them very selectively, and it most often transform them radically. Dead languages can be revived, traditions invented, quite fictitious pristine purities restored. (55-56)

Instrumentalists assume that ethnicity and nationality provide convenient and resonant bases for competing elites to mobilize large numbers of people for the pursuit of partisan interests of wealth or power. According to instrumentalism, emphasizing ethnic distinctiveness is to gain some political or economic advantage.

Concept and Definition of Nationalism and Ethnicity

As mentioned above, different analysts and sociologists perceive nationalism and ethnicity differently as they use different approaches to them. In the academic discourse, in anthropology and sociology, perspectives on ethnicity have in recent years been increasingly problematic and open-ended. Ethnicity fades into race, nationalism, multiculturalism, identity politics and as such for example, Jan Nederveen Pieterse finds many similarities between multiculturalism and ethnicity:

Multiculturalism, like ethnicity, is a moving target - an ongoing cultural flux and an institutional arrangement, a target of criticism or a reform platform. Ethnicity is a contemporary vocabulary for various notions of group boundaries; multiculturalism, likewise, is a discourse that negotiates group boundaries. Thus both ethnicity and multiculturalism address the underlying theme of the politics and discourse of groups boundaries.(27)

In this sense, longing for inclusion into any ethnic group necessarily has some politics of gaining advantages.

Ethnicity is highly relational and contextual. It does not have its existence in isolation but only in relation to others. Pieterse quotes Dwyer's lines that "Ethnicity is a product of contact, not of isolation" and argues "Since social ethnicity is relational it necessitates the scrutiny of relationship; and since social relationship change over the time this gives rise to different types of ethnicity"(32). He regards it as situation and comes to conclusion that "Ethnicity and multiculturalism [. . .] are two ways of describing the same situation" (36).

On the other hand, Thomas Hyland Eriksen takes ethnicity as a concept of socio-cultural phenomena constructed in relation to gain and loss. To quote his own words:

ethnicity refers to the social reproduction of basic classificatory differences between categories of people and to aspects of gain and loss in social interaction. Ethnicity is fundamentally dual, encompassing aspects of both meaning and politics. Ethnicity is,

however, a concept which refers to a multitude of socio-cultural phenomena. (264)

Taking primordial stand, J. Milton Yinger assumes ethnicity as a minority group. He regards race, ancestral homeland, language, myth and culture as defining elements of ethnic group and says:

I will define an ethnic group [. . .] as a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves and/ or others, to have a common origin and to share important segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients. Some mixture of language, religion, race and ancestral homeland with its related culture is the defining element. (159)

In fact, communal feeling is necessary to form the concept of ethnic group, and that is what we call ethnicity. The elements that create feeling of oneness among dispersed people and bind them under a group can be from shared culture, language, religion, territory myth of origin and class to race and caste. In other words, all psychological, physical, cultural and even biological aspects are responsible in giving birth to the sense of solidarity that leads to the concept of ethnicity. Thus, Anthony D. Smith is right in arguing that every ethnic category has the following six categories: "a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity" (48).

Different sociologists' understanding and the ways of defining nationalism are similar to the case of ethnicity, that is, they regard it differently. One's way of defining 'Nationalism' differs from others'. To take some of them, Earnest Gellner analyzes

Nationalism as a cultural phenomenon dependent not only on state formation and industrial society, but also on certain transformation of culture, such as the creation of "high culture". At the same time, Gellner is clear in arguing that nationalism is distinctively modern and that it is not strictly the result of prior ethnicity, "...nationalism is not the awakening and assertion of these mythical, supposedly natural and given units. It is on the contrary, the crystallization of new units, suitable for the conditions now prevailing, though admittedly using as their raw material the cultural, historical and other inheritances from the pre-nationalist world" (49). He also says, "a high culture pervades the whole society, defines it, and needs to be sustained by the polity. That is the secret of nationalism" (18). These lines suggest that nationalism is a pervasive high culture. It defines other social categories itself. But it cannot remain pervasive forever if polity doesn't protect it.

Anthony D. Smith has tried to show that nationalism has stronger roots in pre-modern ethnicity. He acknowledges that nations cannot be seen as primordial or natural but they are rooted in relatively ancient histories and in perduring ethnic consciousness. Smith focuses on *ethnie* - communities with their myths and symbols - and shows that these exist in both modern and pre-modern times, and with substantial continuity through history. Smith argues:

Myths, symbols, memories and values are 'carried' in and by forms and genres of artifacts and activities which change only very slowly. So ethnic, once formed, tend to be exceptionally durable under 'normal' vicissitudes, and to persist over many generations, even centuries, forming 'moulds' within which all kinds of social and cultural

processes can unfold and upon which all kinds of circumstances and pressure can exert an impact. (16)

In fact, nationalism plays a central role in the shaping of individual consciousness, beliefs, and self perception. Nationalism involves myths that relate to and encourage feeling of loyalty to an identification with a group's consciousness of itself and cause the group either to have or desire political independence under its own government and in its own territory. Nationalism is the political utilization of the national symbols through discourse and political activity, as well as the sentiment that draws people into responding to this symbol's use. It is quintessentially homogenizing, differentiating, or classifying discourse. Thus, Smith rightly says, that nationalism is "a doctrine of the history and destiny of the 'nation', an entity opposed to other important modern collectivities like the 'sect', 'state', 'race', or 'class' (13). He considers nationalism to be mostly an elite project, elaborated by politicians and intellectuals who indoctrinate the masses. The power of nationalism, argues Smith, should be attributed to the fact that membership in nation provides "a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world through the prism of the collective personality and its distinctive culture" (17). Richard W. Miller also supports that "nationalism is political favoritism towards whose inherited cultural background makes one feel at home with them or towards the cultivation of that cultural background" (168).

Benedict Anderson regards nationalism as a distinct mode of understanding and constituting the phenomenon of belonging together, comparable to kinship or religion. For him:

it [nation] is an imagined political community [. . .] It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion [. . .]The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations [. . .] It is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm [. . .] Finally, it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. (6-7)

In this way, the emotional aspects of cultural identities become the motor to move the project of the nationalism.

Some analysts also have propagated the contention that nations are essentially narrations. Nations are created, nourished and sustained through the telling and retelling of their pasts. This process includes the myths, the heroism, the unsurpassed achievements; the many obstacles that are confronted and overcome; the flowing of literature and language; the self-inflicted wounds; the civil wars, massacres, and human atrocities. It is such a grand narratives, which are embodied in purposeful historical and literary representation, mold the imagined collective identity called nation.

Although Anderson is more interested in the imagined aspects of cultural identities than in detailed empirical accounts of communication system or narration, he also assumed that communicative processes create the cultural contexts in which nationalism can develop. Thus, he states, "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness but by the style in which they are imagined" (15). The imagining of nations may take any forms including the narratives of national novelists, the stories in national newspapers, the maps that students study at schools, and even the interactions between colonial government and their subject populations.

Homi Bhabha also emphasizes the importance of communication, language and writers in the construction of nationalism. He also suggests that nationalist narratives are comparable to most other discourses. For Bhabha, the nation is a text, much as Anderson suggests in his discussion of 'Imagined Communities'.

To cite his own line, "Nationalisms, like narratives, loose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizon in the mind's eye" (1). Bhabha goes beyond Anderson and insists that the narrators of this text must deal with contradictions and alien supplements that can never be fully coherent nation. He himself says, "What I want to emphasize [...] is a particular ambivalence that hunts the idea of nation, the language of those who wrote of it and the lives of those who live it" (1). The text of the 'nation', like all other texts, relies on unacknowledged sources of assumptions, represses issues or ideas of people that would call its assertions into question.

To make it short, nationalism is a whole complex of ideas, attitudes, events, political movements, and force. It is both negative and positive. The negative aspects of nationalism define the separateness and exclusiveness of a group and stress antagonism to others. The positive aspects try to give meaning to the community of

interests of a given group and to define the rights of membership in the group of all who belong to it. Nationalism is a belief held by a group of people that they ought to constitute a nation or that they already are one. It is a doctrine of social solidarity based on the characteristics and symbols of nationhood. To conclude with David Steven's remark:

The stories, symbolism and ceremony of the nation - the rituals and the myths - are of very considerable importance for they engage the deepest popular emotion and aspirations. Myths tell the story; rituals re-enact it. Thus memories and stories of historic events and parades, remembrances ceremonies, celebrations, monuments to the fallen oaths, anthems, coinage, uniforms, flags - all the aesthetics of nationalism - are the things that provide a strong community of history and destiny. They are the things that bind people together. (256)

Relationship between Nationalism and Ethnicity

The relationship between nationalism and ethnicity is complex. Some scholars argue that they do have binary relation like minority/majority, while others as just the continuation. But while it is impossible to dissociated nationalism entirely from ethnicity, it is equally impossible to explain it simply as a continuation of ethnicity.

Thomas Hylland Eriksen states:

Sometimes ethnicity becomes nationalism historically, . . . ethnicity can, if sufficiently powerful, provide individuals with most of their social status, and their entire cultural identity can be touched in an ethnic idiom. . . By implication, nationalists and ethicists will, in a situation of conflict, stress cultural differences vis-à-vis their

adversaries. The distinction between the two may therefore appear to be one of degree, not of kind—particularly since many political movements are commonly perceived as being both nationalist and ethnic in character. (264-265)

In this way, the conceptual differences between ethnicity and nationalism are not obvious to the naked eyes. Some of the scholars treat them interchangeably. For instance, Pieterse regards "ethnicity is minority nationalism. If nationalism takes the form of mono-cultural control it may be considered a form of ethnicity, or ethnocracy" (31-32). It indicates that these two concepts are just situational identities.

Calhaun also says:

Nationalism, in particular, remains the preeminent rhetoric for attempts to demarcate political communities, claim rights of self-determination and legitimate rule by reference to "the people" of a country. Ethnic solidarities and identities are claimed most often where groups do not seek 'national' autonomy but rather recognition internal to or cross-cutting national or state boundaries. The possibility of a closer link to nationalism is seldom altogether absent from such ethnic claims, however, and the two sorts of categorical identities are often involved in similar ways. (235)

It implies that difference between nationalism and ethnicity is that 'Ethnic movement' may be wholly cultural in intent, without any aspiration to national status but successful nationalisms require an institutional backing which allows them to be imposed on or at least to impinge, large number of people. In other words, 'Ethnic movements' may only seek recognition and support from the state whereas 'National

movements' seek their own state, or at least their own administrative unit within the state.

National identity is related to the culture and tradition of ethnic minorities.

Where a group is large enough to dominate a given political unit, or may reasonably aspire to form its own, we have a nation. Where we are dealing with a minority, it is labeled as an ethnic group or community. Most nationalism builds on the ethnic identity of the majority while rejecting or containing minority identities. Nation always tries to homogenize the cultural differences and build a 'High culture'. But ethnic groups always seek their own individual distinct cultural traits and identity. In such a situation they have the relation of conflict otherwise relation of compromise.

Nationalism and Ethnicity in Nepal

Generally ethnic groups are considered to be minorities. But some sociologists apply the term to all distinctive groups, even majorities. By this later criterion the dominant Parbatiyas of Nepal - the Brahman, Thakuri, and Chhetri castes - and their associated low status castes- are also ethnic groups, though it is certain that they did not usually think of themselves as such. However, with the publication of the 1991 census, Parbatiyas have discovered themselves to be a minority in the country as a whole - 40% of the total population, about 30% if low castes are omitted. Since they are increasingly under attack from other groups, they have come to see themselves as ethnic group. It is recently evident that they have formed their association. What this illustrates is that ethnic feelings develop in very specific contexts of opposition and competition.

Ethnic politics of Nepal in the 1990s seems to have elements conforming to both the primordialists and the instrumentalists' models. In a democratic set-up the

ethnic groups of Nepal feel an urge to discover pride in their ethnic identity. At the same time, however, they are also conscious that they can take advantage of the democratic situation and bargain for a good share in the political and economic pie, which fits the instrumentalist model.

Formation of Nepali National Identity

We find an element of history behind all concepts of specific nation-states and the formation of national identities based on them. Such a historical process cannot ever be ignored or completely set aside from the consideration of nation-building. Sense of political identity is key characteristics of nations. Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka also states:

". . . Nepal's notion of national identity, as promoted by successive rulers/governments have differed in the course of history. Obviously, nations are historical products. Over the time, historical conditions change and so do the cultural context within which social constructions are based.[. . .] I propose to distinguish three different models of national integration [namely] the empire model, the nationalistic model, and the patchwork of minorities' model. The first model relates to what is usually known as the period of Shah and Rana rule. The beginning of this period is marked by the forceful 'unification' of Nepal, where about 60 former political units were combined to form one polity under the sword of the Shah rulers, themselves forced by the Rana to give up their *de facto* power in 1946 [. . .] Second model refers to the period between 1962 and 1990 when Panchayat system of a "guided democracy" was established. With the Nepalese King of this

period holding *de facto* power over the executive, judicial, and legislative bodies, as well as army, Nepalese politics was characterized by a high degree of power concentration.[. . .] Panchayat era is characterized by the rulers' claim to national homogeneity under the aegis of the cultural traits of those in power, i.e. of high-caste Parbatiya Hindus. [. . .] The third model pertains to the very recent democratization process characterized by the institutional enforcement of numerous civic rights, and especially by vesting sovereignty in the people rather than in the Kings.(421-423)

The modern state of Nepal was created in the second half of the eighteenth century and was very largely the work of one man, Prithvi Narayan Shah. For this, Prithvi Narayan is considered as 'The Great' by Nepali nationalists. Before unification, there were a number of independent principalities. For example Kumau, Gadawal, Gorkha, Baise and Chubise kingdoms.

The modern history of Nepal is generally divided into the early Shah Period (1699-1846), the Rana period (1846-1951), the period of transition (1951-1962), the Panchayat Period (1962-1990) and most recently the period of multi-party democracy introduced by people's movement or revolution of 1990.

Rana period was inaugurated by Jang Bahadur Kuwar's seizure of power in 1846. He subsequently raised his family to Thakuri status and took the title 'Rana'. He made the Prime Ministership hereditary within his own family and he also began to define the country they ruled as a nation-state called 'Nepal'. Before that 'Nepal' referred only to the 'Kathmandu Valley'. As part of the construction of the new national identity the dominant language, having been known as 'Gorkhali' or '*Khas*

Kura', was renamed as 'Nepali' in about 1933. The motivation for the official adoption of the name 'Nepal' for the whole kingdom and of 'Nepali' for its principal language, replacing *Gorkha* and *Gorkhali* respectively, may have been the encouragement of a wider sense of identification with the nation. The official government newspaper has retained its old name, *Gorkhapatra*, to this day.

The ethnic backbone of the new state was formed by the Parbatiyas or 'Hill people', both they and their language were, and still are, known as '*Gorkhali*'. They have a simple caste system consisting of Brahman, Kshatriya at the top and some untouchable artisan castes at the bottom. In addition, there is a small royal caste, called Thakuri. The Chhetri used to be known as *Khas* and the language was therefore known as '*Khas Kura*'. The *Gorkhali* or *Parbatiya*, or *Khas Kura* language is known as 'Nepali'.

The Nepali identity which the education system sought to inculcate continued a long pattern established long before 1951, being based on the culture of the dominant Parbatiya rather than of other groups within the population. In 1955, a landmark report on education planning conceded the need to use minority languages for oral communication with students just starting primary school but advocated a switch to exclusive use of Nepali as soon as possible so that other languages would gradually disappear and greater national strength and unity will result. Whelpton argues:

An emphasis on the Nepali (Parbatiya or Gorkhali) languages is as old as the founding of the state (even older, in that Parbatiya was already in use as a lingua franca before the Gorkha conquest), though formal declaration of Nepali as the official language was only made under

Maharaj Chandra Shamser (1901-1929). The case is similar with Hinduization [. . .] Nepal was only formally proclaimed a Hindu kingdom in Mahendra's 1962 constitution, but this is merely modern expression to a long-lasting reality, as witnessed by Prithvi Narayan's *asal Hindustan* formulation or by Maharaj Chandra Shamser's 1913 description of the country as 'an ancient Hindu kingdom. (48-49)

Religion as Key Factor for Nepali Nationalism

The cultural concomitant of this 'unification', as Nepali nationalists call it, was a gradual process of Hinduization: festival, the values; and many of the social practices of the Parbatiyas have been adopted along with the Nepali language by other Hill Nepalese. A key factor right from the start was the use of the Hinduism as source of legitimation.

Prithvi Narayan Shah himself described his kingdom as an *asal* (real) Hindustan. The spread of Hinduism as a religious ideology also meant social ordering according to the Hindu framework based on a hierarchical caste system. Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka also says, "In their efforts to centralize and to expand their polity, Shah and Rana rulers created a Hindu state, combining diversity with hierarchical organization" (420). She further says:

From the point of view of the rulers, the plurality of Nepalese society was conceived of within a uniform sociopolitical framework: divers castes and ethnic categories were incorporated into a holistic framework of a 'national caste hierarchy' [...] Rather than seeking to establish a national unity through a vision of a culturally homogeneous population, the rulers sought to define a national identity which

allowed for cultural variation but which had Hinduism as its major pillar[...] The two major elements in this process identity formation were the premodern form of patriotism expressed via loyalty to the king (being true to the salt of the king) as well as the prominence of the Hindu religion. The subjects, as opposed to 'citizens' were not asked to participate in the process of national identity formation.(425-426)

The founder of the modern state of Nepal, Prithvi Narayan Shah, called his new kingdom as 'a garden of four *Varnas* and thirty-six *Jats*'. *Varna* refers to the four scripturally sanctioned status group of Hinduism: the *Brahmans* (priests), *Kshatriyas* (rulers or warrior), *Vaishyas* (traders or herdsmen), and *Shudras* (servants). *Jat* means caste. Conventionally Prithvi Narayan's this phrase is taken as endorsing a policy of ethnic harmony and coexistence. Goal behind Prithvi Narayan's statement, as David N. Gellner says, ". . . was to keep Indians out of the country. To this end he wanted to prevent his kingdom from becoming a garden of 'every sort of people': only then it would remain 'a true (*asal*) Hindustan of the four *Varnas* and thirty-six *Jats*'" (24).

The National Legal Code, promulgated in 1884, imposed Hindu caste rules on various ethnic groups. The main significance of the *Muluki Ain* was its scope, the fact that it encompassed all people under the Gorkhalis' rule. It also reflected the political dominance of three Parbatiya namely Brahman, Thakuri and Chhetri. State advocacy was the primary vehicle for the spread of Hinduism in Nepal since punishments prescribed in the *Muluki Ain* were according to the caste ranking. John Whelpton says:

A sense of community generated by religion can provide the basis for a distinct ethnic or national identity, and, even if religious faith diminishes, the explicit ideology of nationalism can offer the sense of

continuity through history which religion formerly provided. The fuel may change, but the same flame remains. (70-72)

By consolidating their political and economic power, the dominant Hindu elites in the centre were creating a specific ideological framework which linked prestige to high-caste Hindu status. Within the framework of the emerging Hindu-polity, ethnic population, notably ethnic elites responded with the adoption of specific cultural symbols of those in power.

The polity and society of Nepal was indeed devised in the image of Hindustan. The etymology of the place-name Gorkha itself was rationalized as *goraksha* (cow protection), symbolic of the sanctity of the cow for Hindus. As a preservation of Hinduism the ban on the cow slaughter was probably first enforced in the whole kingdom in 1805. Slaughtering yak was also banned. According to Alex Michaels:

The reason for the yak ban was, it seems, that the Bhotia people of the border areas needed to be brought within the moral kingdom of Nepal, at least symbolically, and thereby remarked as subjects of Gorkha, not of Tibet [. . .] The ban on cow and yak slaughter saved an integrative rather than a practical objective.(92)

National Symbol and Myth

States often adopt symbols and myths to promote a sense of oneness. In the case of Nepal, to take an example, the Panchayat regime devised a set of national symbols. These were the Crown, Scepter, Royal Crest, Royal Standard, Coat-of-arms, Cow, National Flag, Pheasant, Rhododendron and Red blob. The first four, which are not regarded as national symbol now, are associated with dynamic monarchy, while

the cow, and red color are symbolic of Hindu dominance. Visible symbols always played a crucial role in the process of Hinduization. For example, in Nepal, the 'cow' did get included among the national symbols, mentioned above. In the early Eighteenth and the late Nineteenth centuries the newly forged Nepali state relied on Hinduism as its main religious legitimation and 'Cow' was, and is still, a key symbol. The cow in Nepal played a very special role in the process of defining both Nepal's Hindu identity and the limits of centralized power. On the other hand, as Alex Michaels says, "enforcing strictly the general ban on cow slaughter could (and, in fact, did) endanger Nepali political cohesion" (81). Thus cow has both integrative and disintegrative functions.

Myths like discovery of the national holy site called Pashupati Nath and prominent role of cow on becoming Dravya Shah the king of Gorkha are also found. We also find the myths related to the formation of Kathmandu valley, previously known as 'Nepal'.

Changing Identity

Nepal's notion of national identity, as promoted by successive rulers/governments have differed in the course of history. Obviously, nations are historical products. Over time, historical conditions change and so do the cultural contexts - the base of social construction. Pfaff-Czarnecka says:

Cultural change whether consisting in assimilation to a new, dominant culture or revitalization of one's own old one, or in combination of both, relates to social dynamics at four different levels. First, within the ethnic group themselves struggles occur over their material and symbolic resources. This does not only involve defining the group's

boundaries and its rules for inclusion and exclusion; struggle may occur over defining a proper public image of given culture as well as over establishing who is in charge of defining and promoting a specific image of an ethnic minority group. The second level pertains to the enter-ethnic competition for rights, privileges, and resources where, among, other things, culture can become a 'political currency'. Thirdly, struggle occur between the state and the groups that dominate it, on the one hand, and the population that inhabit its territory when attempts to participate in the state's resources and the decision-making process are counter balanced by the state that seeks to maintain and to extend its control. Finally, ethnic representations are increasingly being geared to promote images not only in the national context but also to 'fit' into valid international models . . . or publicly to resist them. (420-421)

By dividing their subjects into castes, the pre 1951 rulers united large section of Nepalese population under the aegis of a Hindu ritual framework, thus allowing for diversity. After 1951, when King Tribhuvan emerged as the icon of the revolution, the Nepalese political outlook changed considerably. More or less Nepal entered a democratic process: equality of all citizens under the constitution, the political process was constituted through popular elections, the former subjects turned into citizens.

Despite the egalitarian rhetoric, cleavages persisted: the caste system could not really be abolished, and caste/ethnic distinctions were reinforced by the fact that ethnic groups largely lacked networks giving access to high position and displayed cultural models differing strongly from those prevailing among the elites in the center. Within the particular political contexts of the Panchayat era, only the state, dominated

by the high-caste Hindus, had opportunity publicly to develop its definition of the national culture. With civic rights such as freedom to organize and freedom of expression seriously restricted, the members of Nepalese ethnic groups were prevented from displaying any diverging visions in public. But now that is drastically changed. People play vital role in decision making process.

Level of punishment to those people who slaughter cow is also lessened with the passage of time. The ban on the cow slaughter was probably first enforced in the whole kingdom by the order of Rana Bahadur Shah in 1805. Capital punishment would be given to such slaughter. But there were many minorities and ethnic groups who hadn't adopted specific Hindu elements and sometime ate beef. Beside culture, they would consume beef as a revolt against the king. Alex Michaels says, "The northern Magars say that they used to kill cows especially at time when they had trouble with government in Kathmandu: they attacked as it were a symbol of the state rather than the state itself" (86).

Related to ethnic group's resentment against Hinduization, Gellner says:

Controversy erupted after the Minister of Health in the Communist government, Padma Ratana Tuladhar, made a speech at a meeting on human rights in which he is alleged to have said that Muslims and Tamangs, whose traditional customs is to eat beef, were being denied religious freedom by the ban on cow slaughter [...] As a result, until a compromise was engineered, and the strike were called off, there were fears of severe ethnic violence.(36-37)

Thus later in the *Muluki Ain* of 1854, capital punishment was reduced to imprisonment for life, and then only fine. Some of the ethnic groups were allowed to consume '*sino*' if condition, supply of hides and skin, was fulfilled.

The years 1989 and 1990 marked a watershed: the new constitution of 1990 changed the previous definition of Nepal as 'an independent, indivisible, and sovereign, monarchical Hindu kingdom', to 'a multi-ethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and constitutional monarchical kingdom.' The new Nepali Constitution doesn't merely shift sovereignty from the king to the people, re-introducing a multiparty democracy. It's declaration of the kingdom to be multi-ethnic and multi-lingual is a drastic departure from the governmental measures aimed at the homogenization of Nepalese society during the preceding decades. In a further step towards pluralism, on August 14th, 1994, Radio Nepal began broadcasting the news in eight minority languages for the first time: they were Rai (Bantawa), Gurung, Magar, Limbu, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Tharu and Tamang. Maithili had been already been used from January 1993 and Newari from 1990.

The democratic movement of 1990 was successful in inducing crucial political changes, especially by stripping the king off his dominant role and re-establishing a multiparty system. After 1990, the fierce public debates as to whether the constitution should continue to describe Nepal as a Hindu state or declare it a secular one was an important rallying point for many organizations. Buddhist activists, the Muslims, the Christian, and some communist fractions were united against the force which demanded that Nepal remain a Hindu state. Though there are large disparities in their demand, several political aims are common: a higher representation of ethnic members in political and administrative bodies; a higher degree of decentralization

with a greater scope for self government, abolition of 'Nepali, language as the only national language; preservation and quota system in bureaucracy and politics; and correction of the national statistics which present the Nepalese population as approximately 85% Hindus, with most of the rest classified as Buddhists and Muslim. Ultimately, identity of the nation has been changed from Hindu Kingdom into secular one.

Ethnic activists have increasingly claimed that Nepalese society has undergone a process of differentiation. In this process, old grievance is coming into the open such as resentment over the abolition of the *Kipat* system among several Kirat groups. The century long migration of Hindu population into ethnic areas has been increasingly branded as 'internal colonization'. Political symbols that have been propagated by the state as well as- increasingly- symbols that have been attached to the crown, previous taken as symbol of authority, power and unity, have acquired a new dimension: in the process of the opposition political mobility, they are increasingly understood and openly labeled as symbols of oppression. One such symbol is the annual Durga Puja or Dashain, a major state power ritual. Supporters of Hindu interpret Dashain as a celebration on the victory of good (Goddess Durga) over evil (demon Mahishasur). But non-Hindu ethnic activists have started to reinterpret it as celebration of Hindu's (some of them also call the victory of Brahmin and Kshatriya) over other non-Hindu ethnic groups. Thus they are gradually rejecting to celebrate it , especial to put red *Tika* on their forehead. Any homogenizing effort linking the idea of national unity with high-caste Hindu cultural element is increasingly resented among ethnic activists.

Resentment against statistical distortions (especially since those who embrace neither Hinduism nor Buddhism are not presented) is an important indicator of the present direction of the changing cultural orientations. Since 1990, the democratization process has been accompanied by a sort of 'back to the roots' movement. The 'back to the roots' movement in Nepal is at present strongly reinforced by changing attitudes among many development organizations which publicize their work with slogans such as 'small is beauty', 'people's participation' and 'community involvement.'

Many ethnic activists currently claim that their cultures have been subjected to Brahman oppression for centuries. During the Shah and Rana periods, the rulers created an ideological framework based upon Hindu rules and customs. Some rules and mores were forced upon their subjects. Even though the majority of the ethnic people continue to carry such heavy loads of identities, an increasing number of people now dare to assert publicly that their cultures are not inferior, but different. Stressing minority cultural traits should be seen, among other things, as a reaction to former governments' stand on cultural matters. Such reactions consist in displaying a sense of pride in a particular ethnic group's contribution to the national culture. As Prayag Raj Sharma says, "Ethnic leaders of the 1990s allege that they have been subject to political oppression, economic exploitation, social subjugation, and cultural annexation by the Hindu state in the present as well as in the past" (474).

Many Nepalese are concerned to redefine their national identity. Until the end of the Panchayat era, the rulers and/or the government had focused on the task of defining the essential characteristics of the 'nation', but in the present context people insist on participating in this process. Ethnicity, so far as understood as opposing the

national idea, is being propagated by some ethnic activists as one intrinsic aspect of Nepalese society, calling for a redefinition of what should be considered national culture. To take Pfaff-Czarnecka's statement, "Growing interest in one's own culture, the search for origins, new cultural projects, public discussion of culture, and cultural competition are partly a reaction to earlier neglect, partly tactical maneuvers, and partly a new type of hobby among the intelligentsia" (460).

In short, identity of Nepal as 'a yam between two boulders' has been changed into 'a bomb between two rocks', 'pure Hindu Kingdom' into 'secular', 'the birth place of the lord Buddha is no more peaceful land but the battle field' and the identity of 'autocracy' has been changed into 'federal democracy'.

Ethnic Polity

Almost every Nepali is keenly aware of his or her membership of a particular castes or ethnic group and a degree of such identities may obviously increase within changes in circumstances. Towards the end of the Panchayat era, some ethnic activists started to adopt the internationally current label 'indigenous people' initially just hinting at specific minority rights.

Since the political changes of 1990s ethnic politics have become a permanent fixture in Nepal's multi-party democracy. Today every ethnic group has a cultural forum or association of its own. A larger organization called the Nepal Federation of Nationalities was established in 1990 to bring all the smaller ethnic forums under a single umbrella. "Although it calls itself a non-political organization, the 17 point character it submitted to the government in 1993 includes unmistakably political demands" (484-485), says Sharma.

So far four ethnic political parties based in the hills are known. They are the Limbuwan Mukti Morcha, the Khambuwan Mukti Morcha, the Mongol National Organization, and the Rastriya Janamukti Party. Although Nepal's 1990 constitution prohibits the Election commission from recognizing ethnic or regional parties, the principle apparently followed has been to deny registration only to parties whose name or constitution makes their ethnic or regional objectives too explicit. Thus, in 1991, of the parties appealing specifically to the hill minorities, the Mongol National Organization and the Nepal Rastriya Janajati Party were refused the recognition and the Limbuwan Liberation Front announced a boycott of the election in protest against the restriction.

Hill ethnic demands fall into three main categories: institutional, cultural and economic. Many activists call for recognition of the separate national identity and right to self determination of all Nepalese ethnic groups. They are also demanding for proportional representation and preservation quota system at all levels from below to the very top in both the administration and political parties. Issue of Federal democracy on the basis of ethnic group is also a current burning issue.

On the language issue, the constitution declared Nepali 'the language of the nation (*Rastriya Bhasa*) and official language' but made consensus to pluralism by declaring that all languages taken as mother tongues in Nepal were 'nation language' (*Rastra bhasa*) and that any community had the right to operate primary schools in their own language. But minorities are still raising the issue of use of mother tongue in all levels in education system and in the courts and administration.

During 1990 when the new constitution was being drafted, ethnic and minorities joined forces to oppose the idea of Nepal against being declared a Hindu

state. The next battle waged by the *Janajati Mahasangh* was over the teaching of Sanskrit as a compulsory subject in Nepal's middle and high school, which they opposed tooth and nail, with eventual success. They demanded the right to education in mother tongue. "They want political units be established along ethnic lines with defined boundaries, and to have the right to self-rule determination, and full autonomy" (489), as Sharma argues.

In this way, the homogenizing efforts of the high-caste Hindu elites have been increasingly opposed throughout Nepal for a variety of reasons. It is precisely in systems claiming to be egalitarian that those dominant groups presenting themselves as guarantors of equality at the expense of others are increasingly taken into task.

Pfaff-Czarnecka states:

since the mid 1970s the state has been losing its legitimacy. The state claimed for itself a focal role in the development process and proved a failure. After the modernizing euphoria of the early Panchayat days started to subside, large section of Nepalese society came to realize that they could hardly get ahead through the government. The highly centralized state apparatus dominated by high-caste officials and politicians has proved successfully in instigating economic growth and/or extending welfare measures beyond the capital and a few other economic centers [. . .]. It was claimed that the educated members of the ethnic groups were not able to find employment within the central organs due to their lack of personal networks. Within the political and administrative bodies, ethnic elites were not able to compete with high-caste Hindu. (441-442)

To conclude with Sharma's remark, "To the ethnic activities, Hindu rule amounts to internal colonization. The Hindus are regarded as refugees fleeing from India and as followers of the religion and culture of India" (487).

Chapter 2

Representation of Ethnicity and Nationalism in

Sumnima and *In the Battle of Kirtipur*

Representation of Ethnicity

We find both - instrumentalist and primordialist ethnicity in both texts, *In the Battle of Kirtipur* by Hridaya Chandra Singh Pradhan and B.P. Koirala's *Sumnima*. But B.P. Koirala gives more emphasis on religious aspect whereas Pradhan focuses on politics. To state in other words, both Pradhan and Koirala attempt to reinterpret the ethnic identities in their texts *In the Battle of Kirtipur* and *Sumnima* respectively. But their field is different- former reinterprets the true political history, that is, unification of Modern Nepal especially war between Kirtipure and Gorkhali whereas the latter reinterprets the religious myth about Vishwamitra's great penance in new pattern. Aryan and other ethnic culture; relationship between them and influence on each other are also found in the novel.

In both texts, *Sumnima* and *In the Battle of Kirtipur*, authors have taken female characters - Sumnima and Kirti Laxmi respectively, as main representatives of ethnic groups. Sumnima represents Kirat ethnic group whereas Kirti Laxmi stands for Kirtipures, possibly 'Newar' ethnic group.

Kirti Laxmi, in disguised form of Bhairav Singh, fights bravely for the dignity of her own community. But Sumnima is devoted to serve Somdatta, a Brahmin. Furthermore, Kirti laxmi is imprisoned into a jail room whereas as Sumnima is in her full freedom. This means Pradhan sees ethnic group as being imprisoned within the limited boundary of the nation but Koirala doesn't.

Pradhan has presented the Kirtipure ethnic group as truly more nationalistic than the Gorkhalis as Kirti Laxmi is dressed in *Daura*, *Suruwal*, and a *Patuka* over it, *Bhattgaule Topi* on her head, *Palanchoke Jutta* on her feet. But no other Gorkhalis have such Nepali dress. We also find bitter irony that only Kirti Laxmi has 'Khukuri', a symbol of Bir Gorkhalis (Nepalese), but not with any Gorkhali soldiers.

Kirti Laxmi is presented as a bold person. Even in such imprisoned situation, she discusses with armed soldiers in a brave way. The bravery is, in her own words, "a saga, a eulogy for the Kirtipure Birs" (5).

Kirtipures have pride on their own dignity and freedom. They prefer to die to surrender. They despise enjoying worldly pleasure under other's domination. "Kirtipures are not only bereaved but also ashamed of having [been] forced to surrender" (6). Kirti Laxmi has penchant for death than surrender before the enemy. When she falls under Khadga Bir's grip, she plunges the weapon deep in her own chest wishing "Long Live *Kirtipure* [. . .]. *Jaya Kirtipure* ! Long Live *Kirtipure* !" (29) Her last word of such wish itself makes readers clear how much she loves her territory and community. Kirtipures do not like any interfere but want to keep their ethnicity pure long lasting as Kirti Laxmi argues, "You [Khadga Bir] can't assault the chastity of Kirti Laxmi" (26). They give priority to their communal unity than their lives. Thus, when Khadga Bir advises Kirti Laxmi to escape quietly and save her life, she is ready to defend enemies than to escape being scared of them. She says, "If all of my countrymen have been cut their noses, then I don't regard it an honour to save myself only. So, I look upon it as a humiliation to save my nose in assurance of some one's mercy and with illegitimacy [...]. I don't have any passion for living when I couldn't have my own [. . .] Kirtipur" (21).

Koirala presents ethnicity in such a way that it has its existence only in relation to another ethnic group. These ethnic groups are always in struggle for their existence. In the novel, we find specially two ethnic groups, namely Brahmin and Kirat, which are always in struggle to pervade directly or indirectly their own cultural and religious traits on others. Somdatta, representative of Aryan or Brahmin, tries to continue Hinduization but Sumnima opposes it. Finally, Somdatta's pure Hinduism falls into crisis. Binary relationship between different ethnic groups changes into relation of compromise as Sumnima says Somdatta's son:

Today, you have made a Kirat's daughter your wife. [...], if you understand her ethnical tradition and see the way she is traversing, you can understand my daughter very well. The daughter, too, by understanding your ideas must be prepared to abandon her path somewhat. In the same way, you must also try to compromise, being prepared to abandon some of your ways. May you prosper! May your descendants be such to be able to find out the ways of compromise!

(114)

Koirala reconciles these two ethnic groups and writes, "A Brahmin had mixed his blood also in the ethnic blood current of the Kirats"(115).

In this novel, ethnic groups have hierarchical relationship based on conventionally well known four categories: Brahmin as priest at topmost, Chhetriyas are rulers and others' role is to perform such activities which help above mentioned groups.

Kirat and Bhilla ethnic groups are treated as inferior groups by Somdatta. Brahmin is assumed to be civilized, educated, cultured and rational who possesses

"wonderful power of memory" and is "Very intelligent" (3). Somdatta boasts that they (Brahmin) are able to acquire divine power through their cultural performance. They are also able to get freedom from human weaknesses. But the members of other ethnic groups, namely Kirat and Bhilla, are unknown about all these things. Somdatta says, "Sumnima you ignorant girl, we are Brahmins who can achieve divinity by the power of penance. All our fire sacrifices, religious activities are fused together for achieving salvage from human weaknesses" (8). Sumnima also accepts her ignorance: "I am not a well read and well informed person like you" (10). However, Kirats are presented as more nationalist than Barhamin, as Pradan does to Kirtipures, since most of the Kirat women, gathered in front of the prince in his royal order, have "thrust bright red rhododendron flowers into their hair" (11).

Koirala also presents Aryans being more patriarchal in comparison to Mongol or Kirats. While Sumnima wants to know who he is, Somdatta introduces himself as 'Son of Suryadatta, a Brahmin belonging to the Aryan stock' (7). He further explains that "a son receives his life as a gift from his father and, therefore, we never commit a sin of neglecting this liberal relation of the gift of life. This is the way we express our gratitude [towards father]" (7). But when Somdatta gives emphasis on father's role and importance, Sumnima says, "You are given birth by your mother and, therefore you have to respect her, [. . .]. It is for this reason that we Kirats first get to know our mother and the man she shows becomes our father" (7). It means, father is secondary person and it can be any "male shown by mother" (7). As Sumnima gives priority on mother to father, he accuses Sumnima of being ignorant. He also brands Kirat as a wild community devoid of culture. To state his own words. "We are the descendants of the Aryans, we are well cultured. You are wild Kirats, a community devoid of any

good culture. Therefore, your concepts are different from ours" (7). And he further adds that "Mother is field, you stupid girl. The master of the field is father. You are ignorant of this truth [and] the system of introducing oneself from mother is beastly" (7-8). Puloma, his life-partner, is also treated as if she is just a servant whose duty is to keep Somdata satisfied at any cost. Even the innately personal matter like sexual intercourse is not consumed according to her will. Once, when he takes such physical relationship with her, she is suggested not to take and feel physical satisfaction but just to think that they are going to fulfill their religious duty. Similarly, next night, he comes in the disguised form of Bhilla and rapes her without her knowledge that he is her husband.

Koirala presents the Aryan as very dynamic and well cultured ethnic group whereas the Kirat as static.. He narrates about Vishwamitra's penance, his hermitage, its disappearance, revival of the hermitage with Somdatta's penance, his life, his death and again destruction of his hermitage. With the passage of time he becomes more liberal and accepts Kirats' advices. But other ethnic groups like Kirat and Bhillas are quite static. There is no change in their culture, life style or religion through generations. "The Kirats in the northern mountainous region continued on in their old situation [. . .]. Exactly the same happened to the Bhillas who were in the South Eastern region. Their smaller settlements that thrived with the jungle went on in their old ways as always" (2). Kirat people, who do not know wearing clothes, allude to their primitive state. In fact, they don't like to see any change in their culture and customs. So, Sumnima says, "I feel ashamed when I cover my body, its quite uncomfortable [. . .]. I feel that I have added make-up and so I feel shy !" (22-23) In contrast Somdatta suggest, "You should feel ashamed only when you are naked" (23).

In this way Kirats are presented to be very primitive and uncultured who have not developed the culture of wearing clothes. But Somdatta , who claims himself to be well cultured, suggests Sumnima to use clothes and cover the natural body.

Brahmin regards any act of taking one's life as violence but Kirats gives emphasis on the reason behind it but not the act itself directly. One when Somdatta saves a pigeon from hawk's attack, he is satisfied and proud of it. But Sumnima is very worried about it as he violates the natural phenomenon - hawk, being carnivorous, is naturally compelled to prey small birds to survive. But if the hunting is just for enjoyment it's violence. So, she remarks, "A hawk doesn't commit any violence, even the killing of cows by us [Kirat] is not violence. But the hunting for sport by your princes is real violence" (21). In response, Somdatta expresses his anger and dissatisfaction, "Hey, ignorant Kirat girl ! This is the result of your lack of cultured upbringing that you don't have any knowledge of the difference between violence and non-violence [. . .] That's why you say the slaughter of cows is also acceptable" (21).

Sumnima gives focus on physical satisfaction and beauty whereas Somdatta regards 'spirit' as truth. Thus, when Somdatta sees Sumnima's naked body, he accuses Sumnima of being an obstacle in his penance. Your body is an obstacle to the development of my soul" (30). Even during the act of sexual intercourse, they avoid sense of physical pleasure and regard it just as an act of fulfilling religious duty.

Somdatta says:

Only for fulfilling our religious duty the occasion for our bodily union has presented itself today just to get a son. According to our Vedic canons and religious scriptures we must perform the fire sacrifice and special ritual to fulfill that particular religious duty [. . .] the bodily

union performed for getting a son doesn't have the physical element. If there is even a slight awareness of physical element and of physical pleasure the duty of the union vanishes, religion melts away.(44-47)

He also conforms Puloma that she didn't enjoy the physical pleasure and didn't become attracted to sensual passion during intercourse. Sumnima says her daughter, "They [Brahmin] are the creatures of air [. . .] they are even prepared to abandon luxurious physical pleasure and their body [. . .] and your blood is of different kind. We Kirats are creatures of soil, we love soil. We are fully absorbed in the enjoyment of the pleasures of life"(114) . The rejection of natural phenomena is the reason behind failure of their Hinduization and they, ultimately, should live as refugee in Kirat's house. "The more they find their bodily conjugation's failure, the more they increase their religious activities and the fire sacrifice [. . .] But even then all their efforts failed" (49).

Brahmin and Kirat ethnic groups think the ways of making God happy in different ways. Thus they raise question on others' way of worshiping god. Kirats offer piglets to appease god. But Somdatta argues, "god and goddess will be pleased if you perform fire sacrifice and other charity" (18).

A number of Hindu cultural and religious rituals are performed by Somdatta. From his childhood Somdatta is taken to hermitage for abstinence. Before starting penance "the sacred thread ceremony befitting the Brahmin tradition" (3) is performed. He is well educated and recites Veda's verses before and during any activities like bathing, having meal, sleeping, and even having sexual intercourse. He follows his religious discipline of not uttering anything through his mouth before talking a bath in the river. Then he prays to "The sacred river Ganga and put[s] on

three lines of Sandal paste on his forehead and smear[s] holy ashes all over his body and sit[s] down on his *kush* grass seat on the clean sandy bank of the river facing the east on the lotus pose in a calm manner to repeat the sacred words of *Gayatri* for a long time" (5). As soon as the sun rises he prays to the Sun God.

Somdatta is religious devout; and he doesn't like even very slight change in the cultural pattern. Even putting oil on hair and inserting flower into hair is not allowed to his wife. Once when he finds her doing so he scolds, "Having abandoned self-restraint and patience and using oil in your head and inserting a red azalia flower [. . .] you have turned into a savage like a non-Aryan Bhilla woman [. . .] The whole Aryan culture, religious instructions and moral teachings have disappeared from you; God has abandoned you, . . ." (98) Even the natural happenings in female like menstruation is regarded as religiously unacceptable period. Thus Puloma is not allowed to touch any thing in hermitage and she hides herself in the cowshed during the period. Related to such religious belief Puloma says, "During the forth quarter of the night I happened to have a menstrual flow, and so according to our religious custom I am staying in a secret place" (44).

Aryan family also indicates that one must have a son to get salvation after death. The 'ghostly food' offered by female is not, according to Hindu religion, accepted by spirits. So daughter or female are not allowed to offer 'ghostly food' after one's death. It is the reason until and unless a couple doesn't have a son, its duty is said to be unfulfilled. That is why Somdatta calls the act of having son as their religious duty. Puloma also tells Somdatta, "You need a person to offer you your ghostly food after death, that I am going to give you that person" (100).

However, he is not able to success in giving birth to a son and goes to take help from the very Kirat whom he has previously branded as ignorant and uncultured. Only when he finds himself "exhausted, zealous and incapable after the efforts of getting the son through their regular monthly act of torture, the desire of appeasing the Kirat gods awaken[s] in his mind" (53). Finally, he is able to give birth to a son with the help of Kirat, mainly Sumnima and her father. As Sumnima's father suggested him, he goes with Sumnima and take a dip into the man's pond. She decorates Somdatta and changes into the form of Bhilla. Only then he is sexually motivated and is able to make his wife pregnant.

Ultimately such a very strict Aryan culture happens to face crisis. After Puloma's death, Somdatta is not able to prepare his food himself due to old age. Thus, he depends on food sent by Sumnima for survival. After the ritual of burning the dead body of Somdatta, Sumnima takes Somdatta's son to her village with her. She asks people to carry the pots and pans, clothing and all and even the cow of the hermitage is united and taken to mix with her cattle in her shed. The hermitage ruins and there is no fire sacrifice and the other religious rituals also are no more performed.

Aryan culture is no more regulated then. When Sumnima asks Somdatta's son whether he wants to keep the things like loin cloth, water jar, the string made of *Kusha* grass, straw scat, seat made of *Kush* grass as the memory of his father, symbolically Aryan culture, he denies to keep any of them.

Kirats seem to follow middle path. Bijuwa is in favour of preserving their ethnical culture and customs but not with violence. He favours peace and compromise. He tells Bhilla:

We have been defeated several times in war. Due to that our community is getting thinner and going to go extinct [. . .]. Therefore, the advice to go to war is like a message of all out destruction of our people [. . .]. If they do not permit us to kill cows within their boundaries, it's not proper for us to try to be butchered ourselves for standing in favour of our act of slaughtering cows. Let us move the place of our cow slaughtering a bit higher up away from their borders. Their prohibition can not work there. And if we do not want to move our settlements away let us stop killing cows, too. (15-16)

Sumnima also expresses her wish to her daughter, " May your descendants be such to be able to find out the ways of compromise" (114).

A Bhilla is of the opinion that they should not discard their customs and traditional manners of life they have been following. They should rather destroy the hermitage and drive the Brahmin family away. He says, "if the Kshatriya returned there to keep them (Brahmins) we must declare war, yes, we must fight back [. . .]. It is better to face extinction rather than sheepishly up with injustice" (15). In this way, Bhilla ethnic group is presented to be more radical than Kirat.

Representation of the Nationalism

Pradhan redraws the notion of a bravery through this text. Previously only people living in Gorkha were taken as very brave persons and the very notion was generalized to all over the Nepalese,. But in the text, *In the Battle of Kirtipur*, Kirtipures are presented as more brave people than Gorkhals. In the play there is only one Kirtipure female imprisoned in a jail. But Gorkhali soldiers are found in full-armed condition as if they can't face her if they do not have arms. So, Kirti Laxmi

herself ridicules their bravery, "What a bravery ! Menace of bullets for an unarmed imprisoned soldier of a surrendered country. . . "(10).

Gorkhalis are proud of their bravery and asks her whether she has experienced Gorkhali bravery. But she hints that Kirtipures are more brave than Gorkhalis because Gorkhali Birs like Kalu Pande is already killed and Sur Pratap Shah's one eye is plucked out by Kirtipure. Thus, in response to their question, she orders Bahadur Khatri and Sete Pande rather to "Go and ask with the soul of Gorkhali Bir Kalu Pande, and the left-eye of Sur Pratap Shah !"(2) how much they experienced Kirtipure bravery. However, notion of 'Nepali Bir' is not avoided since Kirtipures are also Nepalese. To write in other words, the text supports Nepali national identity that Nepal is the nation of brave people.

Nationwide famous statement, related to Gorkha, '*Nyaya Napaye Gorkha Janu*' (Go to Gorkha to have justice) is also challenged in the text with Kirti's statement: ". . . if anyone tries to kill justice, then Kirtipure will of course bereave" (5), indicating that Gorkhalis are violating justice.

However, besides some impurities, by the end of the play, Pradhan presents Gorkhali King as a just king who is ready to punish his own followers if one does wrong, and to respect any other ethnic group's member who is ready to die for his/her own ethnicity. That is evident when Prithvi Shah respects Kirti Laxmi, an enemy to Gorkhalis, addressing as "Brave girl ! *Birangana* !!" (30). He also upholds her bravery to the worldwide level" not only. . . a *Birangana* of Kirtipur or a comprehensive Nepal of my imagination but a *Birangana* who could light the whole world" (33). King Prithvi Narayan Shah orders Sur Pratap Shah to give Khadga Bir and a traitor death penalty and further king says, "This girl is not only an idol of *Kirtipur* but also

of our 'Gorkha Government and of the comprehensive Nepal of my imagination [. . .] I honor, bowing my head, to the bravery of *Kirtipur*" (41). He orders commander-in-chief Sur Pratap Shah to perform her funeral ceremony with royal honour and according to her racial rites and rituals.

Nation attempts to play the role of forming identity of ethnic groups and distorts it in such a way that it favors the nation's goal. Despite Kirti's disagreement to surrender in front of Gorkhalis, Bahadur Khatri says that he will convey King that she has regretted for her doings and she has said, "I will bow your legs but please don't cut my nose" (14). It means, though Kirti Laxmi is not coward, Bahadur Khatri, the representative of nation, wants to distort her real identity and to report his king that she is coward.

Inability of the nation to recognize real identity of any ethnic group is presented in an artistic way. In the play *Sete Pande* and Bahadur Khatri, Prithvi Narayan's soldiers, are not able to know Kirti Laxmi's real identity and they assume her as Bhairav Singh.

As a whole, Pradhan redraws the socio-political identity of Kirtipure and Gorkhali. Gorkhalis are not so brave as they were assumed to be in the past and Kirtipure, who were unknown in the field of bravery, is taken into foreground. Kirti Laxmi, representative of ethnic group, wins Gorkhali morally though not politically.

Koirala presents ethnicity and nationalism as historical product. He relates myth of Vishwamitra's penance and his reincarnation as boar and relates it with Somdatt's hard penance. He doesn't talk only about a generation- Sumnima and Somdatta - but from their parents to their grand children. It means, it includes four generations and changes that took place in the field of culture, territory and religion

which construct one's identity. Tara Nath Sharma, who translated the novel into English, says:

It is an attempt at re-interpreting the development of modern Nepalese nation. The novelist is firmly convinced that the Nepalese people of modern time are a historical product of the physical and cultural amalgamation of various communities, particularly, the Kirat and Khas races. The Kirat race and its cultural historicity is represented by the main female character Sumnima and the Khas, or the Aryan people, by Somdatta.(Foreword)

The nation described in the novel is based on hierarchical caste system ranked on the basis of Hindu religion and finally it is blurred. Brahman is kept at the topmost step of the social ladder and his main responsibility is to give continuity to the Hindu religion or Aryan culture, like cow protection, worshipping Hindu god and goddesses and performing different Hindu rituals. Somdatta complains Kirat of slaughtering cows, he cares very much and takes her to graze everyday. Somdatta and his wife address cow as 'Mother' ! They also use cow dung and cow urine to purify the place where they perform their rituals. The very cow is given to him by local Kirat and by the end of the novel, after Somdatta's death, she is taken by Sumnima. But how much Kirats care the cow is not mentioned.

Kshatriya is given ruler's role, and to serve Brahmin respectfully is his duty. The prince himself says, "this Brahmin family living here establishing its hermitage is highly respected by us. Therefore, our main objective is to provide protection and comfort to this family by all means at our disposal" (12). Prince always addresses Somdatta respectfully as "Your Reverend superior Brahmin! Divine Brahmin !"(10-

11) and as such. He doesn't hunt in the jungle just for Brahmin though his main purpose of coming there is no other than hunting. In this way, he gives more priority to preserve Hinduism and serve Brahmin than his own hobby. He declares the ban on slaughtering cow in front of the Kirat and Bhilla ethnic groups. "From today on you are notified the King's order that killing of cows is prohibited in this area. From today on any kind of violence or killing cow near this land of religious penance is declared illegal by the king's order" (12). He also expresses his determination not to accept any opposition and declares that royal order is inviolable. Which indicates the Hindu notion that 'King is messenger of God and shouldn't be opposed'.

Not only Kshatriyas but also other ethnic groups namely Kirat and Bhillas, representative of Mongol, are found to be engaged in helping Brahmin. Bijuwa of the Kirat says:

Since the time this Brahmin family came to this land of ours we have been extending protection and whatever help we could. We helped the family establish this hermitage. It was again we people who cleared the jungle and prepared the things required for the hermitage and constructed and erected all these cottages with our manpower. We offered them the black cow, which gave the largest amount of milk in the village [. . .]. And we have been providing whatever things this family needs all the time.(12)

Koirala, being himself a politician, also hints towards political issue as the element of nation-building but not only Hinduization or religion. We can feel it through prince's statement stated to other ethnic group: "Bhilla and Kirats present

here, our ancestors have conquered the whole land extending up to the Himalayas and, therefore, it is under our protection" (12).

Koirala also fictionalizes the process of celebrating Chatara as religious place - a process of nation building. In response to the local ethnic groups' resentment against Hinduization, prince states:

All right if you specifically need the place for religious purposes of traditional worship, let that particular space remain yours. But do not butcher pigs there. The place will now on be called the Varahakshetra or the region of the boar-god [. . .] and it will be a pilgrimage site symbolizing the incarnation of Vishnu as Varaha as propounded in our religious texts. (13)

Brahmins were, and still are in some communities, regarded as a superior ethnics who should not eat the things touched by others and make them their companies. Koirala hasn't missed to bring such social tradition into the light. When Sumnima wants to offer him something to have, Somdatta replies that he doesn't feel the necessity of any food at all. So, Sumnima hints at social hierarchy set religiously, "Or is it that being a Brahmin you feel that you can not eat food items touched by a Kirat ?"(63) Similarly, Puloma's friend, a Bhilla boy, was scolded by Puloma's mother and was not allowed to play with Puloma even to call her and give any fruit to her. As a social reformer, Koirala blurs such social hierarchy and forms a single family.

Representation of Relationship between Ethnicity and Nationalism

Struggle between ethnic group and nation is found in both texts- *Sumnima* and *In the Battle of Kirtipur*.

When the play, *'In the Battle of Kirtipur'*, begins we find Kirti Laxmi being imprisoned by the state (Gorkhali). Even in such situation she is in national dress. This hints that even under the suppression of the state, no ethnic group is ready to give up nationality. Rather the ethnic group uses the very national cultures or symbols as weapon to fight against enemy.

Nation, that is in power, assumes itself as complete and provider whereas ethnic group as always incomplete, that needs nation's help as Sete Pande asks to Kirti "Means you need something also ? Tell me what do you want ?" (5) But ethnic group assumes to be replete with all things and the nation should be able just to establish justice in the nation. That is the reason behind Kirti says, "I do not bother mercy, Kirtipures don't have habit of begging either, ..." (5).

Resentment against Prithvi Narayan Shah's forceful and violent unification of Nepal is prevalent in some ethnic groups. Such resentment is also found in the play when the nation, represented by Sete Pande, claims Gorkhali's victory is just and in response to it, Kirti Laxmi disagrees that "Killing and Winning a battle is [. . .] injustice"(5) and unfair.

Pradhan stands in favor of relation of difference but not hierarchical between nation and the ethnic group or minor and major groups. Ethnic group is not inferior to nation but difference and both have their own distinct value and identity. There should not be hierarchical ranking between nation and ethnic group or victory and defeat. "Victory and defeat is inevitable in battle, there is nothing right and wrong in it" (5). Both of them are true in their own perspective. "If there is importance in victory, then there is equal importance in defeat also . . ." (6).

Nation identifies any ethnic group in its own way so that it would fit to achieve its goal. But now ethnic groups are not ready to accept such ready-made identity. They are trying to redefine their identity and feel pride of their ethnic group. This is clearly indicated in Kirti's dialogue with Bahadur Khatri. Despite Kirti's disagreement to surrender Bahadur Khatri says that he will convey his king that she has regretted for her doings and surrendered to them. But in reality neither she has surrendered nor regretted for her doings, rather she is proud of it and she says, "This warrior has guts enough to die, so this [wo]man will never stoop before anyone for defending [her] life" (14).

In *Sumnima* too, daily activities of the ethnic groups are disturbed by the presence of nation. Sumnima and Somdatta go to Koshi bank every day and share their feelings. But once, with the arrival of prince, Somdatta is not able to go to the river bank as usual. Sumnima is restless on such unusual event, that is absence of Somdatta and their separation.

Koirala also shows Kirats' resentment against Sanskritization. Somdatta uses the Sanskrit term '*mata*' instead of '*aama*'. He also says that the Sanskrit language is "language of gods" (8). But Sumnima doesn't like the use of Sanskrit term for such a relative person like mother. She blames Somdatta, "Instead of calling a person so dear as mother, mother you call her *mata* and distance her" (9). She also accuses Somdatta of distorting others' real identity and creating false one. To use her own words "You people put clothes on anything and cover their real identity. You hang a mask on the face of an undamaged person with recitation of sacred words, penance and rituals of fire sacrifice and fasting..." (9).

'Internal colonization', the term most of the minority groups use, and minority groups' resentment against it are also clearly depicted in the novel. Chatara is presented as minority group's habitation. Bijuwa of Kirat, Sumnima's father, claims the land belonging to them (Kirats and Bhillas) and the people living there are his: "this Brahmin family came to this land of ours [and] the he Kirats gathered here are all my community brethren" (12). They do have their culture of slaughtering cow and worshipping god. But with the arrival of Somdatta Hinduism is tried to be imposed upon them. Kirats and Bhillas are forced to give up their traditional religion. But Bijuwa opposes prince's declaration of ban on slaughtering cow arguing that there will be a great obstacle in their traditional customs if they accept this order. Further a Bhilla male stands up and resists, "On the top of the small hill up there both our communities perform special worships. We have been sacrificing piglets according to our religious customs. Honourable prince, if we are disallowed to offer our sacrifices divine anger will fall on us" (13). Sumnima's father also says Sumnima, "Sumnima! Your Somdattas are quite well, rather its us who find it extremely difficult to continue living here because of them" (14).

Prince, who has come to the jungle for hunting with his armed followers, treats the different ethnic groups differently. He treats Brahmin as a group whom one must serve neglecting all others. He is keenly devoted to facilitate Brahmin. When the prince comes to know that there (in the jungle) is a hermitage of an ascetic Brahmin, he keeps his followers, body guards and chariots at a safe distance with a view of not disturbing the peace of the place and he goes to meet the ascetic alone. He wants to know whether Brahmin's fire sacrifice and other rituals are going on without any obstacle; whether there are any oppositions and restrictions in his activities from the

non-Aryans ! He says, "Please. . . allow me to offer my service to you as befitting from the son of a king" (10). When the Brahmin complain about the slaughter of cows and other violent actions by the non-Aryans, he orders his followers to call chiefs of Kirat and Bhilla. Further he sways, "It is the religious duty of a Kshetriya to serve the Brahmin, and as such I will certainly fulfill my duty" (11).

To conclude, relationship between ethnic groups and nation is always that of struggle and compromise. Local ethnic groups are not satisfied with the king's declaration of ban on cow slaughter. Thus, even after prince's declaration that the killing a cow is illegal act and is prohibited, the Bhilas and Kirats hold meeting whole night on the very subject matter. They also feast by slaughtering a cow and drink the home brewed beer to their fill.

Chapter 3

Conclusion

Both *Sumnima* by B. P. Koirala and *In the Battle of Kirtipur* by Hridaya Chandra Singh Pradhan reinterpret the ethnic as well as national identities. But the difference lies in the issues they give emphasis: Koirala gives emphasis on religious aspect and in contrast, Pradhan focuses on political aspect of nationalism and ethnicity.

Pradhan dramatizes historical war that took place during the process of unification of this modern Nepal by King Prithvi Narayan Shah, between Kirtipur and Gorkha. He redraws the identities of Kirtipure ethnic group and Gorkhalis. In the play Gorkhalis are no more brave in front of the Kirtipures. Rather a single Kirtipure, Kirti Laxmi, is enough brave to tackle with a group of armed Gorkhalis.

Ethnic people have their emotional or spiritual unity and they assume their ethnic identities as more precious than their own lives. That's why Kirti Laxmi is determined to suicide herself than being raped by Gorkhali soldier, Bahadur Khatri. Kirti Laxmi also doesn't find any value of her life in the absence of other Kirtipures. Neither she is ready to escape from jail secretly being coward.

Ethnic groups' rejection of false identity constructed by the nation and act of redefining it are also reflected through Kirti Laxmi's reaction to her ready-made identity constructed by Gorkhali that she has surrendered in front of them. But she presents herself as bold and brave person in front of the Gorkhalis.

In this way Pradhan presents such relation of conflict only between nation and ethnic group. But Koirala, in addition to it, presents the relationship among different ethnic groups, too, who have the relation of both compromise and conflict.

Giving focus on the religious aspect of the ethnicity and the nationalism, Koirala presents process of Hinduization and Sanskritization, and other non-Hindu ethnic groups' resentments against such processes. Somdatta, a representative of Aryan, performs Hindu religious activities. As he is devoted to give continuity to his religion so does the Kirat ethnic group. However the relationship between them is not so problematic till now. It is the arrival of the prince, the representative of the nation-state, that creates problem in their relationship. As Somdatta blames Kirats for slaughtering cow, the prince declares ban on cow slaughter.

Ethnic groups' resentment against Hinduization and Sanskritization is also clearly reflected in the novel. It is evident in Sumnima's reaction against Somdatta's use of Sanskrit term '*mata*' instead of '*aama*' to mean mother. She accuses Somdatta of distancing the relationship with mother who gave him birth. Similarly, Kirats and Bhillas revolt against Hinduization slaughtering cow and having feast whole night on the very night of prince's declaration of the ban on cow slaughter.

Koirala also ironizes to the Brahmin culture. Somdatta claims himself to be well cultured, civilized, able to understand god's language and even to be able to be free from human weaknesses. He gives emphasis on the spiritual aspect to physical pleasure. He also regards Kirats to be inferior, ignorant and uncultured. But he is not able to give birth to a baby until and unless he obtains help from the Kirats.

Finally, as a social reformer, he tactfully merges these two different ethnic groups into a single family blurring all social hierarchy. Sumnima takes Somdatta's son and get him married with her daughter.

All in all, both Koirala and Pradhan present the relationship, the relationship is that of conflict, between nation and ethnic group.

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