

I. Cartoons of Batsyayana in light of Subaltern Theory

Cartoon is regarded as the most fascinating and universally well-accepted genre of visual art. Apart from this, it is also the key and indispensable ingredient of modern journalism. Bold and expressive lines, allegorical indications, satirical and hard hitting arrows with humor, persuasive and informative in theme, exaggerated images and comic appearances are some of the key features of cartoon art. Due to the unique quality of self expression and mesmerizing potentiality of entertainment, the art of cartoon not only attracts the children through its humorous and entertaining quality but even the intellectuals and people from old generations also regard it as a striking tools for conveying the useful messages in a very comprehensive manner. Like an innocent child, it can capture the attention of public from all status. Abhi Subedi, while defining the cartoon, says:

A cartoon can capture, just in few lines, which is liable to be expressed in the thousand of words. Due to the cartoonist's imaginative power, his ability to comprehend the satire and his skill to trace the common sensitivity of the time, this medium gets its voice. Cartoon is the most powerful medium in capturing the broad time and bringing it into minimal size. (My Translation VII)

Here, Subedi regards cartoon as such art which can speak thousand voices just by drawing only one sketch on the paper. That is, a single work of cartoon art is sufficient to deliver the huge amount of information than that of thick book or long editorial which needs more than thousand words to deliver the expected message. A single work of cartoon comprehensively delivers enormous amount of messages through the art of pictorial representation within short period of time. Cartoon, in this

way, is powerful mode of art that can deliver messages in very striking and vibrant way.

Abin Sherstha, a prominent and well-known young cartoonist of Nepal says, “cartoon is the reflection of what we are experiencing in society, it is not necessary that we should laugh while looking at cartoon or it should make people laugh. Even pain and compassion are inherent in it” (My Translation 33). So, Abin Sherstha believes not only humorous and satirical aspects of cartoon. He rather wants his readers to take their attention from humor to serious sides of cartoon, which is, for him, most of the time, mixed with compassion, empathy and care for the ignorant and innocent people of society. In this regard, cartoon has become the medium for articulating the problem faced by poor and innocent public. Peshal Pokhrel in his article, “Power of Cartoon, Pride of Cartoonist” asserts:

It is said that cartoons have already become striking medium for articulating the public complains which are particularly faced by them but not uttered yet. It is also said that a single work of satirical cartoon can communicate huge portion of messages than that of five editorials or a deep analysis of twelve hundred words. It carries the ability of attracting the common to intellectual readers even in its first single glance. (My Translation 29)

Today, cartoons are used to fulfill multiple purposes. Aesthetic aspects like humor, satire, entertainment, pun, parody, irony are some of crucial motives behind the art of sketching cartoons. The art of cartooning is sometimes blended with politics in order to satirize the loopholes and cracks found in political figures, sometime with social so as to satire the inherent social evils and ills and sometime for conveying the messages in comprehensive manners. Moreover, it is also used as an intellectual arm so as to

protest the existing exploitation, suppression and dehumanizing tendencies of our social life. Accepting the multidimensional use of cartoon, Sudhan Dhungana in his thesis, “Aesthetics of Cartoons” views that:

Cartoons, whether animated or print, are [nowadays] a part of the daily lives of millions of people throughout the whole world. They encompass a broad range of subject matters that can be humorous or serious, realistic or fanciful, purely entertaining or bitterly satiric. People of all ages and backgrounds enjoy the some forms of cartoons.

(26)

Nowadays, cartoon has become integral part of journalism. Durga Baral says that both cartoons and journalism have become indispensable parts to each other. Rather he likes to claim that cartooning in itself is journalism which needs several processes like editing, writing, printing before publishing it on magazines. He states, “cartoon is an inseparable part of journalism and [rather] it is a journalism in itself which is basically done through by means of caricatures and satirical drawing” (My Translation V). Due to the immense popularity of cartoon, some people, in these modern eras, are taking the act of cartooning as fertile land for their career. Nowadays, an act of cartooning has become an industry in itself for which huge amount of money has been invested for the economic benefit.

The term cartoon basically originated from the Italian word “cartone” and Dutch word “kartone” which refers to the strong heavy paper or pasteboard (*The New Columbia Encyclopedia*). In this way, these historical facts about the beginning of cartooning take us back into the middle ages when the cartoon was described as the preparatory drawing for a piece of art, such as painting, fresco, tapestry, or stained glass window. In this sense, an act of cartooning in the middle ages was not an

autonomous entity; rather it was taken just as mere practice of illustration before starting painting or other forms of usual art. But cartoon art, in this modern society, as an autonomous genre, is not only successful in drawing the attractions of public through its unique and persuasive potentiality, but previously so called canonical genres have been over-shadowed by the dominance and growing popularity of cartoon. But the tentative historical facts regarding the cartoon, on the contrary, take us far back to ages of stone from where human civilization began to initiate some tricks for the easy surviving. Ram Kumar Pandey in his book, *Nepalese Cartoon: A portfolio of cartoons of Nepal by representative cartoonists*, states that:

Man since the beginning of civilization, is presenting some sort of exaggerated forms knowingly or unknowingly. Egyptian artists drew amusing animal cartoons in 3000 B.C. Distorted and exaggerated figures of such nature were regarded as the primary creation of mankind. This is evident in Greece and Rome. Rome had tradition to display satirical frescoes during the time of festivals. (11)

The practice of stamping and engraving during the stone ages for communicative purpose was highly based on the technique that now what we call an act of cartooning. That is why; we can presume that the history of cartooning is as old as the human civilization when the traces of cartoon like arts were regarded as the some of the basic modes communication.

Along with the span of time, the development in the process of making cartoons has undergone different changes and modifications by the second decade of 21st century, that is, it has been used to fulfill multiple purposes. This project, considering the multiple dimensions inherent in the cartoon art, particularly aims at excavating the hitherto unexplored issues of subaltern and their representations in the

cartoons of Batsyayana. Despite being the most fascinating and indispensable genre in the field of art and literature, there are few researches and studies on the cartoon available in the intellectual and academic sectors. Ram Kuamar Panday, a noted humorist in Nepalese literature, in his book *Nepalese Cartoons*, writes that:

Cartoon as an amusing drawing in a news paper or magazine is becoming popular all over the world. Nepal also has been affected by this interesting and informative art of humor. But till today nobody has studied on cartoon in Nepal. So there is a lack of an introductory study to guide as well as learn about Nepalese cartoons. (Preface)

In spite of this fact, Pandey asserts, nowadays cartoon is taken as the widely well-accepted form of literature and an inalienable part of newspaper publishing all over the world. And in this present scenario, cartoon has already become the heart of Nepalese public and newspapers publishing all over the nation.

While talking about the institutional development of cartoon in Nepal, it seems pretty late. But, some of the native traditional practices of Nepal are highly based on the artistic practices like cartooning. In this sense, the history of drawing cartoon on the basis of cultural and religious analysis is very long and exciting. Abhi Subedi in his article, “About the Nepalese Cartoon”, interestingly declares that:

The native tradition of amusing satirical pictures and images in Nepal is very long, but cartoon as a genre of satirical drawing in the occidental and now universal sense has appeared pretty late . . . the modern history of cartoons in Nepal though short has a strong functional basis of its origin. (Preface)

In this way, it is believed that some traditional practices of Nepal have strong affiliation with the act of cartooning. Gaijatra, Ghodejatra, Indrajatra, are some of the

main Nepalese festivals which regard sketching cartoon like art as their vital ritual practice. Humorous mood and gesture of god in painting, the erotic postures of deities on the strut of old Hindu temples, the comic appearances of deities and worshipper are some of the cultural and religious practices that tremendously helped to promote cartoon shape and figure of various natures. These facts about the cartoon, indeed, not only show profound connection between Nepalese public and cartoon art, but they also show the respect and reverence of Nepalese people towards it.

Modern history of cartoon in Nepal is short. It is said that the development of cartoon is hugely indebted to the growth of press and paper. That is why, press and mass-media are said to be theatre of cartoon. But, due to the different political steers and instability, development of modern cartoon in Nepal has undergone various ups and downs from its very beginning point of germination. In spite of this fact, cartoon in Nepal has already taken its way to success and prosperity. Nowadays, it has been taken as serious and fascinating literary genre.

Due to the growing popularity and acceptance of the cartoons in Nepal, people nowadays find the art like cartoon not only as a serious and interesting field for their career, rather so many individuals have already invested so much time and toil for doing something new and innovative in the field of cartoon. It has been taken as competitive and laborious profession since many active Nepalese youth are on the path of cartooning with the enthusiastic mood and manners. In such situation, some have already got their high position, some are still struggling, and some have just initiated their career as a cartoonist. Among them, Tek Bhahadur Mukhiya, Durga Baral (Batsyayana), Balaram Thapa, Rabin Sayami, Rajesh K.C., Abin Shertha are some of the leading and prominent figure in cartooning in Nepal.

In this way, this study particularly seeks to explore the multiple issues inherent in cartoons of Batsyayana, a prominent cartoonist of Nepal. By bringing the cartoon book titled, *Batsyayana and his Barbs*, compiled and published by Ajit Baral, into the fore, this project attempts to dig out the issues and voices of subaltern and marginal people rooted into the depth Batsyayana's cartoons. Durga Baral (well-known to the people in the name of Batsyayana), who has contributed more than 4 decades in the field of sketching cartoons in the famous newspaper of Nepal, is a very familiar and well-known name in the Nepalese society. Ramesh Nath Panday in his article, "Cartoon Story", published on *The Kantipur Post*, praising the Batsyayana's role in escalating the popularity the Nepalese cartoon, asserts that, "each and every way, the full credit for bringing the cartoon in the field of Nepalese journalism goes to Durga Baral (present as Batsyayana)" (2). Batsyayana, in this way, is distinguished as an experienced and, probably the first successful professional cartoonist in Nepal. His main focus in his cartoon is to satirize loopholes found in Nepalese politics and to unveil the social injustice prevailing in Nepalese society is the primary purpose of sketching cartoon. Supporting Batsyayana's capability to represent the Nepalese social reality, Ram Kumar Panday in his book, *Nepalese Cartoon*, says that:

Batsyayana has special role in the field of Nepalese cartoons. He has been influenced by R.K. Laxman of India. Baral has three unique things in cartoons: (a) he presents Nepalese characters, (b) selects meaningful objects in the clean atmosphere and (c) humors touch gives in life. Some cartoons created controversies in the parliament and court. His cartoons are to the point and touching . . . (57)

In the same manner, Netra Acharya in his article, "Satirical Arrow of Batsyayana" glorifies the mesmerizing potentiality of Batsyayana's cartoon and says, "to provide

the full entertainment portraying represented character very humorously, to pour the anger and detestation of public towards it and to use humor as the weapon expecting better changes are some of the basic features of Batsyayana” (My Translation 2).

The name of Batsyayana is now synonymous to Nepalese cartoon. His ability to internalize the tiny basic details regarding life of Nepalese public and transforming them into colorful sketches with ironic and satirical touch, has now made him public celebrity. His brushes of cartoon have never halted for free expressions and nor they seem as if they are running in accordance with the rhythms of power. They have always, despite the several hindrances during the course of free expressions, kept on satirizing the social evils and ill rampant in our social life. They, at any cost, have fought for the suppressive culture of modern life, realizing the need of awareness for the emancipation of subaltern groups whether it is in term of genders and regions or castes and classes. Ajit Baral, in the introductory essay of his published and edited book, *Batsyayana and His Barbs*, accepting Batsyayana’s bold and standing role even in the period of autocracy, writes:

After the October 4 move by the king, *Kantipur*, *Himal*

Khabarpatrika and *Samay* had all carried articles which were as much, if not more, critical of the monarchy as the cartoon, yet they never created a stir. Why did the cartoonist then alone ruffle feathers of the monarchists so? . . . Kundan Aryal, who has written a history book on Nepali cartoon . . . said that the hue and cry over the cartoon was raised because it was the work of man who had been creating cartoons for four decades, who has become an institution unto himself. (VII)

Batsyayana is now Batsyayana not because of his power-worshipping tendency rather his not-giving up courage and sincerity towards his goal has made him heart of Nepali

readers. Even during the period of autocracy, he does not run from free expression and always speak in favor of public exposing the pains and difficulties poor, underscore the need of awareness and unity for fighting against the suppression and makes people alert about their basic rights and duties through the satirical and humorous mediations.

But, Batsyayana and his cartoons are generally linked with the Nepalese politics, and the potentiality of satirizing the loopholes found in Nepalese politicians through his art of cartoons has always been the matter of scholarly debate. It is well-known to all that the cartoons of Batsyayana have always something to do with Nepalese politics and it is also one of his fundamental dimensions. But to gear up all the cartoons into the single direction of politics will be an act of overlooking other potential dimensions of his art. In this way, this research tries to incorporate different unexplored dimensions of Batsyayana's cartoons. Thus, this research assumes that the cartoons of Batsyayana, along with humor and satire, speak for the poor, dominated, marginalized and innocent public. Apart from being severely critical and satiric in tone, they most of the time speak in favor of subaltern voices, views and visions. It is in light of subaltern theoretical modalities, this project tries to analyze the cartoons of Batsyayana.

The term subaltern indeed denotes the rank of soldier, especially the soldiers from lower rank. Particularly those soldiers who were below the rank of captain were called as subalterns. But, an Italian neo-Marxist, Antonio Gramsci used this terminology for the first time to represent peasant groups of Italy, who were subordinated and subjugated by the elitist classes of the society even without the awareness of their subjugation and subordination. In this way, the term subaltern now represents such groups of society who, despite their remarkable contributions in the

overall development of society, are ignored, suppressed and marginalized from the each and every possible aspects of the society.

Towards the end of the 1970s, the term 'subaltern' came into currency in very dynamic way when the South Asian intellectuals began to publish subaltern writings as the form of book reviews under the editorship of Ranjit Guha, a prominent figure in the development of subaltern studies. Later it became a successful interdisciplinary approach to promote subaltern voices, views and visions. David Ludden, in his book, *Reading Subaltern Histories*, writes, "By the late 1970s, a rapid decline in state centered historical research had already occurred and social history 'from below' was flourishing" (5). Different prominent figures like Ranjit Guha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Dipesh Chakravorty, Gyan Prakash, and Partha Chatterjee are spending their tremendous amount of valuable time to study the subaltern conditions. These South Asian intellectuals, through their several researches and studies, not only want to revisit the elitist historiography with the critical lens of acute mind but they also regard that inclusive historical writing from below is must so as to emancipate the long-period-chained and suppressed subaltern groups of society. David Richard in his essay, "Framing Identity" writes about the institutional invention of subaltern studies group in following manners:

The Subaltern Studies Collective or Groups (SSG) . . . comprises a number of South Asian intellectuals and academics . . . concern with the rewriting of the history of India, not as the traditional narratives of elites engaged in heroic struggle with the British Empire, but as small-scale local insurrections (often failing) enacted by groups and individuals- workers, peasant, women- ignored or 'written out' of the historical grand narratives. (23)

An act of subaltern studies, that is why, is taken as the critical practice which not only brings the exclusive historiographers' trend of elitism into the arena of critical scrutiny but it also tries to deconstruct it by unveiling the cracks and fishers inherent in the so-called 'inclusive' mainstream historical culture.

An attempt of subaltern studies, as mentioned above, is a new mode of historiography which critically questions the existing mode of historiography. And to recapture the fragmented and scattered subaltern histories, which are, most of them, situated outside the metaphoric grand-narratives of mainstream history, is regarded as the primary agenda of this subaltern studies. While doing so, it also revisits the established and state centered, generally magnified and glorified historical facts, and it also tries peep out the indistinctive subaltern voices through the gaps and fishers inherent even within mainstream historical culture. Antonio Gramsci, in his book *Note to Italian History*, while defining the features of subaltern groups, writes that:

The history of subaltern groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the ruling groups; . . . subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up; only 'permanent' victory breaks their subordination. . . .(54)

A subaltern studies, in this way, tries to recaptures the history from below. In doing so, it not only takes mainstream historical interpretations as the points of critical study. Rather it, in its extremity, also turns back and tries to excavate hitherto undiscovered historical facts which, despite their enormous contribution, have not yet been brought into the fore for the overall analysis of history writing. David Ludden, in his book, *Reading Subaltern Studies*, while defining the research nature of subaltern studies, quotes the methodological statements provided by Amin, Ckrabarti,

and Pandey in this manner: “Its [subaltern studies] search for hidden past evokes textual criticism, fragmentary testimonies, and lost moments, to restore the integrity of indigenous histories that appear naturally in non-linear, oral, symbolic, vernacular, and dramatic forms” (17). This means, several historical facts of subaltern groups, undoubtedly, are suppressed and subdued under the depth of so-called ‘Reality’ in such way that their feeble conditions cannot be realized just by using ordinary intellect of human mind. To understand their true conditions, one should go beyond the surface reality, which indeed in itself is not an easy task. By using white mask to conceal the ugly reality, elitist historiographic trends, most of the time, deceives the subaltern people through its metaphoric and rhetoric languages.

As Ranajit Guha says that there is an “invariant notion of resistance to elite domination” (4). So, it will be an illogical argument to say that there are no voices of subaltern that are raised, during the courses of history, to resist the generation long domination. But it can be said that those voices never have got easy and direct means for go against the exploitative and dehumanizing structure of autocratic elitism. The long arm of power in the name of censorship restricted and kept them within the periphery of their own pathetic conditions. Moreover, some of those voices which are raised somewhere in the cone and corner of remote areas have not got chance to be discussed in intellectual and academic sectors due to the play of power and politics. In such conditions, the acts like censorship play the role of legal crimes in the elitist society to repress the voice of margin. How censorship works to strengthen suppressive elitist rule and how it makes the people to be ruled, D.B. Gurung, in his article writes:

What effects can ‘censor’ afflict to a nation? First, it deadens the intellectual potential activities of the elite citizens. Second, it scoops

out intellectual based on lies, and keeps people in the dark. Third, people die unofficial deaths. Censorship is form of corruption that defies truth; it is crime against intellectual freedom and a grievous injury infected to democracy. And thus intellectuals, who take an opportunistic swerve to meet their vested interest at times of crisis, are intellectuals gypers. (5)

So, autocratic elitism can take help of several mediums like censorship, cultural and economic hegemonic trends and even the military force of arm and ammunitions to cover their crooked face of deception. There are several voices, views and visions of subaltern that are raised in society. But all of those voices come in fragmented, episodic and blurred forms. Despite their tremendous amounts of contributions throughout overall developing process of the society, they are ignored, underestimated, and marginalized. In this way, a true subaltern studies scholars, must go beyond the surface level. He should have capacity to see the things which are basically remained beyond the surface reality; they should find out the intermediate space reading the text going against the grain. Javeed Alam in his essay, “Peasantry, Politics, and Historiography: Critique of New Trend in Relation to Marxism” lights on the role of peoples’ historians as follows:

. . . there is a kind of mental space within which the social forms of existence and consciousness of the people are all their own . . . free of manipulation by the dominant social groups. However much the ruling classes may control the theme and content of politics or the sources of history, the subalterns, that is, the people, will always manages to make themselves heard . . . this intermediate space represents the subjectivity: the active source . . . on which they act as subjects of

history. . . . It is the task of people's historians . . . always to keep their antennae directed towards the intermediate space from where comes the voice of the people. (44)

While considering the above stated statements of Javeed Alam, the voices of subaltern or subjective identity of subaltern group, despite the several attempts of domination, are come through different modes and mediations, which he calls in his own word as "intermediate space." To find out that "intermediate space" is, as per the Alam, must be the fundamental project of subaltern studies historians.

Generally, subaltern voices do not get the place in the lines of mainstream history. Metaphorically, they are such an unheard melodies which, indeed, exist but without having their own existence. Moreover, sometimes in the process of making those subaltern voices louder with great effort, they are muted and subdued before they come into the fore. Apart from this, some of those voices which are raised somewhere in the cone and corner of remote areas do not get chance to be discussed in intellectual and academic sectors due to the play of power. Accepting the play of power and politics in the moment of counter reactionary force of subaltern, Ranajit Das Gupta writes in his essay, "Significance of Non-subaltern Mediation" writes that:

In contrast to the dominant tendencies which have obscured and even ignored the place and role of the consciousness and politics of the lower orders or subaltern groups, the central focus of subaltern studies is on these groups and their activities. . . . A fundamental theme is . . . to view the subaltern as the subject of history, 'the maker of his own destiny.' (108)

According to Neo-Marxist and cultural critics Antonio Gramsci, the history of subaltern is as complex and vital as the history of elitist. But due to the repressive

power and politics of autocratic elitism, subaltern history can be recollected either from those unwritten and scattered oral myths or from others mediums in fragmented and murky forms. Moreover, in course of rewriting the history of subaltern from below, one should go beyond the roadmap demonstrated by the mainstream historical culture, that is, one should adopt multiple strategic approaches to cope with this very hard-knotting endeavor. Dr. Tara Lal Sherstha in his book, *Shakti Srastha ra Subaltern*, writes that, “if history of subaltern is really in fragmented or in pieces forms, there is no alternative except addressing this field from multiple disciplines” (13).

Therefore, an attempt of recapturing the history from below by addressing just some canonical genres will be reductive and unfruitful act. It won't be all-inclusive once again, and the goal of rewriting the history of subaltern, will remain unfulfilled again. To include the multidimensional approaches along with the help of multiple disciplines is the crucial act in course of subaltern studies. In this regards, different questions like “What would be the surest and striking medium to represent the voice of subaltern?”, “Through which process, the subaltern voices get its strengthen?” and “What makes subaltern people more free and independent even in the time of autocracy?” are some of the crucial points for the intellectual argumentations that basically need to be solved before involving one into the subject matters like subaltern freedom and independent co-existence.

As we mentioned above, subaltern voices are still alive in myths and others several ignored verbal and visual artistic disciplines in the form of fragmented and indistinctive manifestations. And it is said that the only thing that subaltern scholars must do for empowering the subaltern groups is to excavate those hitherto undiscovered voices, views and visions of subaltern. Although it is not easy task to

find out the “intermediate space” as stated by Javeed Alam, some find point in incorporating the issues of subaltern with the different sub-disciplines of art and literature. Art and literature, which is regarded as the inseparable part of our social life, has become medium not just for entertainment but even for expressing inner feelings and emotions of human life. Why art is closely related human emotions and how it makes people can use it as powerful mean to raise voices, Dr. Tara Lal Sherstha in book, *Shakti Sharatha ra Sabalturn*, writes:

Art and literature raise the voices against exploitation, suppression and social injustice. Since it has long- lasting and great effects, even the autocratic rulers, making some artistic personalities as a puppet of their hand, take the help of art and literature for the propagandist expressions. (My Translation 82)

Moreover art and literature too cannot escape from the long arm power network. As Michel Foucault says, power scatter everywhere and no one is free from the network of power. In such circumstances, how art and literature works in the network of power and politics is huge matter of inquiry. However, art and literature can be effective mean to raise marginalized and dominated voice.

Keeping above mentioned facts about art and literature into consideration, some subaltern scholars stress on the other numerous genres of art and literature for the efficient studies of subaltern issues. This is why, it is said that most of the subaltern people find literary and artistic fields like cartoon, folk songs satire and irony as an appropriate medium to fight against long chain of suppression. Therefore, Dr. Sherstha, in his same book, *Shakti, Sharatha and Sabalturn*, argues:

Even in the period of autocracy the representation of subaltern voice gets its life through the art and literature. In this way, folk literature,

cartoon literature, satire and irony, slogan, pamphlets, drama and different festival are some of the medium in which common people can speak more freely than other artistic genre. (My Translation 43)

Art like cartoon, in this way, as mentioned by Sherstha, not only can be used as the powerful means to raise the voices against the autocratic elitism but it can also be used as the crucial landmark for the overall study of distorted and miserable conditions of subaltern groups. In this way, subaltern studies scholars now should draw their attention towards the act of fathoming out new and novel disciplines in which subaltern people not only get the platform for their agency but they also strengthen the voices by making them louder and revolutionary in nature.

This research assumes that the century-long chain of suppression on the life of subaltern has been channelized through the different modes and medium in a very indirect and artistic manner. Among those several medium, cartoon has become striking tool to represent the subaltern voices. Therefore, by bringing the cartoon book titled, *Bastyayana and his barbs*, this project assumes the art of cartoon, since from a long time, has been the effective and surest genre for subaltern and voiceless people. It also regards cartoon as a powerful weapon not only to raise voice of resistance but the social awareness channelized by cartoons can also play the vital role in flaming the revolution fire for the dynamic transformation in social structure.

The issues of subaltern in themselves are very vague and controversial. Thus, this project cannot offer a comprehensive analysis of subaltern literary theory while studying cartoon, and different aspects of subaltern issues cannot be included in this little project. As this project will be experimental and avant-garde in the field of cartoon analysis, it will have to face various obstacles during the courses of resources

analysis. Moreover, this project can not include all the cartoons sketched by Batsyayana due to nature of research, available time and limitation of resources.

The fundamental rationale and anticipatory accomplishment of this project is to explore the hitherto untouched issues of subaltern prevalent in the art of cartoon in general and cartoons of Batsyayana in particular. Considering the previous approach of looking at Batsyayana's cartoon only through the spotlight of politics, this research attempts to excavate how the subaltern voices get widespread in cartoons of Batsyayana in particular and in the field of cartoon art in general. By doing so, this research aims at inaugurating the new and innovative approach to explore the new dimensions rooted in the art of cartoon.

II. Voices of Subaltern in Batsyayana's Cartoons

As we all know that humor and satire are the primary feathers of cartoons. Obviously most of the cartoons are satiric in tone and humorous in nature, let alone Batsyayana's art of cartoons. In this way, to satire the ills and evils of society for corrective purpose can be taken as the one of the primary anticipatory accomplishment of cartoons in newspaper generally published in all over the world. Though, there are also so many cartoons which are published in newspapers and broadcasted in mass-media for the entertaining purpose. The main motive of these cartoons is to provide as much entertainment as they can. The entertainment through satirizing and humorous tendency of cartoons, Batsyayana says, is not only basic facts that a cartoon wants to deliver. He compares the humorous touch of cartoon with sugar in medicine. He further says:

To include entertainment and humor in cartoons art is similar to the act in which sugar is mixed into the bottle medicine. Rather, it is like an act of changing bitter and sour medicine into sweeter one. It is this way . . . to strike against ills and evils of society, cartoons are normally presented in satiric and humorous ways. (Lamichhane)

Generally it is said that the role of satire and humor in cartoon is prime and crucial. Obviously, it can be said that these both humor and satire are key ingredients of cartoons but to say they are the only goal that a cartoonist wants to accomplish will be an illogical argument. Despite being humorous in nature and satiric in tone, cartoon art, most of the time, tries to provide certain kind of messages. It talks about the evils and vices, weakness and flaw rampant in our social life. Rather cartooning, as an art, takes the serious issues of our society and presents them with humorous touch. That's why, there is an amalgam of tears and laugh in the work of cartoon.

Abin Shertha, a prominent figure among young cartoonists of Nepal, says that “It is not necessary that cartoons should make people laugh and people should laugh while looking at cartoons. The amalgam of pain and compassion is also there in cartoons” (17). So, to look the cartoon only through the spot light of humor will be an act of blinding our eyes towards the other potential dimensions of cartoons. A good reader, as far as possible, must go beyond humorous and entertaining periphery of cartoon and should dig out under-rooted sides of cartoons. Furthermore, while explaining the role of humor and satire in cartoons, Batsyayana views that:

Satire and irony, for me, are only the mediums of cartoons. But, to strengthen the voices and views of marginalized, poor, suffering and suppressed public through the mediums of satire and humor is the primary task and goal of cartoon art . . . it brings the voices of subaltern into the fore and also speaks in the favor of majority public.

(Lamichhane)

So humor and satire are two prime aspects of cartoons. Moreover they are such mediums of cartoon art which makes cartoon friendly, comprehensive and more acceptable. This is through the help of both humor and satire, a cartoonist can expose the social reality in such way that even lay and ordinary man can comprehend issues raised in a work of cartoons. Generally parody, caricature, irony, paradox and animation are some of the techniques which provide satiric and humorous touch in cartoons. Caricature is one of most crucial factors of cartoon in which a person or an action is depicted with exaggerated or distorted features. On the other hand, parody refers to the act of comic imitation of person and situation, which is generally done humorously. But the final goal of these all technique is to present serious subject matters of society with humorous and satiric touch. As most of the cartoons are satiric

in tone, they always have something to do with corrective purpose, that is, the goal of the cartoon is to laugh at the ills and evils of people so that they can rectify their faults and evil deeds.

The given cartoon (I) of Batsyayana, in this way, here uses all the techniques of caricature, exaggeration, image and symbol so as to expose the social ills and evils which have to endure by voiceless and poor subaltern public due



to the erroneous act of crooked and corrupted government. The cartoon also highlights the fact that how Nepalese publics are exploited and how corrupted government is snatching common right of having electricity from innocent Nepali public. This cartoon, in this way, not only uncover the fact of Nepalese innocent publics' obligation of paying tax to fraudulent government without privileging any sort of benefit from government side, but it also vehemently satirizes evil tendency of Nepalese government.

Here in this cartoon (I), by using all rhetorical devices, Batsyayana is able to depict one of the burgeoning and ugly social realities of load shedding or power cut, to which Nepalese innocent public generally have to undergo, in very satiric and comprehensive manner. In this cartoon, the young man with bag full of electricity bill typically represents a government employee, who with his pointed nose and cock-like neck, peeps at the electricity meter box so as to calculate amount of tax. On the other hand, another man with bare foot and typical tattered cloth of '*daura and*

surbaal’ represents the Nepali innocent public of village life. The irony, here in this cartoon, lies in two objects: lamp and electric bulb. The bulb which should be bright to make light in dark room of meter box is not working. Instead of that, the old man shows the light of ‘Latin’ in order to make government bureaucrat easy to find out electricity meter for billing in the dark room of meter box. Moreover, it is for that very light that all Nepalese are paying tax but unfortunately without using it properly. It is due to the load shedding or government inability to provide the sufficient electricity, actually for what they are paying the very money which they have to collect from their hard toil and labor. So this cartoon not only parodies or satirizes the crooked Nepalese government’s tendency in humorous and satiric manner, it also exposes the pathetic and compulsive condition of innocent Nepalese public who have to pay tax to government without privileging any benefits from government side. It is in this way, this cartoon speaks for the subaltern’s suffering, and their miserable condition and raise the voice against the corrupted tendency of Nepalese government expecting better result and improvement by using its satiric and humorous weapons.

To answer the questions like how subaltern people strengthen their voice or how they get agency is vast matter of critical study. But we cannot say that voices of subaltern are completely subdued and they have sunk under deep Ocean of exploitation in such way that they will never come in surface level. Rather, subaltern voices, despite the several counterattacking hindrances from suppressive power, come into the fore through different mode and mediums. Among those several mediums, art and literature is one of the most crucial tools to represent the subaltern’s voice. Although most of the subaltern characters, in art and literature, represented with sympathy and compassion, they always speak against repressive nature of elitist’s power. Tara Lal Sherstha, in his book, *Shakti, Srastha ra Subaltern*, writes:

The representation of subaltern [characters], even in the period when autocratic structure of the rulers is in its active state, gets its life in a form of sympathy and compassion...the representation of subaltern in the counter art like black art movement, ethnic literature, progressive literature or literatures which are written beyond the mainstream literary culture seems more effective. . . . (My Translation 43)

In this way, subaltern people have spoken through different modes and mediums. Cartoon as being striking form of art and literature, it seems more inclusive and favorable for subaltern. So, Batsyayana, through his following cartoon, demonstrates the hitherto not effaced elitist exploitation prevalent in village life by presenting subaltern character sympathetically. It also uncovers exploitive nature of local bourgeois who, each and every possible ways, are always in the process of suppressing those innocent villagers. Despite living in the age of 21st century, where other countries are undergoing through different scientific and material development, naïve Nepali villagers are still exploited by

the local bourgeois, who are also known as a *Muhiya*, *Jimmawal*, *Jamindar*, and *Kazi* at the local level. Therefore, Batsyayana through the cartoon (II), although in the form of compassion or sympathy, successfully presents the pathetic state of Nepalese villagers with satiric touch. Therefore, either through compassion or through sympathy,

Cartoon II



NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: Man Has Reached the Moon

subaltern people, in or another way, are getting the platform to raise their voice.

In the cartoon (II), a thin old man is carrying a big fat man inside the bamboo bucket on his back. The old man seems very weak. But, still he is carrying the huge man even in the steep stony road of hilly village. The old man has no shoe to put on but the fat man, who is sitting on the back of old man, is reading a news-paper in his suited-booted appearance. In the magazine, the fat man is reading news of “Man in Moon.” The very irony of this cartoon remain on the fact of success and material accomplishment that developed word have achieved and the fact of Nepalese poor who are still under the extreme exploitation from local elitists. They, being illiterate and innocent, have to be donkey like servant of their masters. Despite presenting the old man through sympathy or compassion, Batsyayana is also success in disclose the rampant extreme exploitation, dehumanization and autocracy of local bourgeois in remote Nepalese villages. This is how Batsyayana is raise voice of subaltern in this cartoon.

Deconstructive in nature is another one of the prominent characteristics of cartoon art. Paradoxical statements and ironic interpretations in cartoon not only creates humor but they also deconstruct established idea, so called ‘Reality’ and essential ‘Truth’, which are generally nowadays regarded as a products of power and political practice, thereby paving out the way for new interpretations. That is why, being deconstructive in nature, cartoons subvert the essentialising tendency of elitist culture and run towards the active practice of digging out the erroneous and exclusive gaps rampant in very historical culture of elitism. Of course, standing in that very internal gaps, primarily prevalent in the established ‘systematic order’ of elite culture, cartoonists, like that of deconstructionists’ practices, salvos their cognitive bullets of deconstruction so that initiating new critical ventures and paving the way for

marginalized, suppressed and dominated voices. How deconstructionists try to find out loopholes and initiate their extreme practice of deconstruction in the very system and how they challenge the orthodoxy of dominant belief system, Jacques Derrida in his book, *Of Grammatology*, says that:

Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in certain way falls prey to its own work.

Like a deconstructionist's practice, as mentioned by Derrida, cartoonists also go inside the society and find out erroneous hidden ills and evils rampant in our social life and social system. After finding the corrupted holes of social system, cartoonists try to rupture the pre-established reality as mere fake and documented abstraction of some people who are in power. In that sense, cartoonist always let the people interpret the situation in different ways, particularly diverted from that of past ones. The most important job of cartoonists is change subject position by rupturing pre-established subject agent of elite interpretation. The fundamental task of subaltern studies groups while recovering the subject, Rosalind O'Hanlon, in his essay "Recovering the Subject: *Subaltern Studies* and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia" regards the act of deconstructing:

This is first [job], because we apply exactly the same decentering strategies to the monolithic subject-agents of elite historiography; and the second, because it is the creative practice of subaltern which now becomes the focus of our attention, his ability to appropriate and mould

cultural materials of almost any provenance to his own purpose, to
discard those . . . which no longer serve them. (146)

As mentioned above, Batsyayana through his cartoons, as a deconstructionist, disrupts divinity of established subject-agents and discloses inherent dark sides of their life. He exposes crooked reality thereby rupturing the previous notion of reality and truth. In the following cartoon (III), deconstructing the previous notion, Batsyayana presents the pathetic and ignored martyrs' family members who are extremely in poor condition after the death of their patron. It deconstruct the political leaders' showy respect and their fake promises by exposing discrepancy between what they looks outwardly and how corrupt they are from inside.

Martyrs are supposed to be the great personality of human society. A nation is nation due to the blood and sacrifices of martyrs. In this way, it is the responsibility of nation and rulers not to devalue holy blood of martyrs. Rather it is also the nation's first and foremost duty to look after the martyrs' families. But contrarily, Nepalese martyrs and their families have not been given anything which should have been provided to them. After the death of bread-winner in family, martyrs' families are in very miserable condition. They are without clothes to put on, without food to comfort their empty stomach, and without home to live in. Nation and Politicians just only take the example of martyrs and their good conducts just for the sake of strengthening their argument in speeches. Rather, they just show their fake respect and reverences so as to win the heart of public.

In the following cartoon (III) too, one of the martyr's family members, probably the wife and son are begging in front of the statue of their patronage, who faced the death while fighting for the sake of nation. The tattered clothes of martyr's wife and son without cloth and proper sanitation expose the pathetic condition of

Cartoon III



martyrs' family who, after the death of main family member, has to take the help of begging in street due the negligence of government and politicians. This cartoon, in this way, not only disclose the ugliest reality of Nepalese society, but it, by using extreme satire and ironic statement written in caption balloon, also deconstructs fake reality of Nepalese government, who each and every action

promise to do something good with those martyr family by providing certain facilities but fails to do so and limits its bogus act just in the practice of putting garland on them. This cartoon, therefore, makes people think differently and destabilizes the government's fake trend of just putting garland on the neck of martyrs, and it also bitterly depicts that political leaders are not fair and serious at all regarding the contributions of martyrs. Here, subaltern martyrs' families seem to have got their voice through this cartoon.

System of demarcation on the basis of caste is probably the unique characteristics of Hindu culture. Caste, to which we generally call as 'Jatis', is such practice of Hindu culture in which people are distinguished according to their certain feathers, distinctive quality and profession. Since Hinduism is one of the majors religions of Nepalese society, Nepal is also not untouched by this very fact of caste system. This system, generally, creates hierarchy and certain demarcations leveling the people of different caste in different orders. One of the most vicious sides of this

system is not just its demarcating practice on the basis of profession; rather it divides the human society in 'touchable' and 'untouchable' categories. Hierarchic schematization in term of 'touchable' and 'untouchable' among the people of different castes has created horrific and terrible consequences in the face human culture. In this way, those untouchable 'Dalits' of Nepal are one of the most suppressed and subordinated subaltern who have to live terribly backward life due to the practices regulated by caste system. While defining the 'casteness' as a hierarchy based on specific division, Partha Chatterjee write in the essay called, "Caste and Subaltern Consciousness" writes:

The most powerful candidate in sociological literature for the definition of 'casteness', is hierarchy. According to this argument, hierarchy fixes a universal measure of 'casteness' so that . . . the immediate qualitative diversities of Jatis can be ordered as a quantitative ranking in a scale of hierarchy. The universal measures appears for each particular caste as a determinate position, quantitatively fixed (higher/ lower) and hence comparable, in the hierarchy of all castes. (199)

That is how caste system cannot be just mere demarcation on the basis of profession. It is the hierarchic division which divided people not only in terms of quality but also in terms of quantity like lower and upper caste. What makes people to be remained under such hierarchic schematization? Some view that the hegemony created by the cultural practices is the fundamental reason behind the existence of such practice in society. In the same essay, "Caste and Subaltern Consciousness", Partha Chatterjee views that: ". . . the force which holds together the different within the whole of the caste system is the ideological force of *dharma*. It is the construct of *dharma* which

assigns to each *Jatis* as the simultaneous unity of mutual separateness and mutual dependence” (200).

Cartoon (IV)



Batsyayana, in his given cartoon (IV), exposes the pathetic condition of ‘dalit’. By presenting the one of terrible consequences of hierarchic division created due to caste system, he is able to uncurtain the socially out-casted and miserable condition of Nepalese dalit subaltern. To expose how subaltern dalits are treated and how they are ostracized from their own society just being lower caste seems the fundamental target of this cartoon. This cartoon, though without having any caption balloon and statement, is very striking in deciphering real condition of ‘untouchable’ caste people of Nepal. In this cartoon, the man with tattered cloth without shoes to wear represents the dalit community of Nepal. Most of the dalit people are supposed to be socially untouchable for upper caste brahmin and chhetry community. On the other side of the cartoon (IV), the woman, who represents the upper caste strata, is giving a dalit man drinking water keeping distance so as to remain safe from being touched and impure. Batsyayana, here in this picture point of analysis and focus keeps in the position of the dog and man shown in this cartoon. The point of irony lies in this fact

that the dog, despite being an animal, can go inside the house and touch anyone but contrarily the position of man unfortunately is worse than that of dog. This very irony exposes our social reality underscoring the position and condition of dalits subaltern in our social life. Moreover Batsyayana satirize upper caste's tendency of keeping animal with them and position so called 'untouchable' people under the basic limitations. He also makes the dalit people aware about their conditions by making them think about the position of animal and man. In this way, this cartoon represents pain of humiliation that subaltern *Dalits* have to undergo as being lower caste.

It is said that cartoon as a symbolic sword resists attack the authority thereby subverting the state's power of domination. Batsyayana accept that the main focus of cartoon is also rested on the fact of making people aware about their conditions and cautious about their fading rights. Govinda Prasad Sharma, in his thesis, views that:

In the most of the countries ruled by authoritarian regimes, the basic democratic principles such as human rights, rule of law, freedom of expression and common rights are systematically undermine. . . . In such a situation, the suppressed voices come on the fore to resist the government with various methods and approaches. (35)

So, most of the cartoons of Batsyayana, despite taking Nepalese politics as a primary thematic aspect, are always in the process of awakening the people from generation-long domination and ignorance. As we all know that politics is the key factor in determining the conditions of nation and its public. If it is used by true handed politicians, whole nation will be proliferated and public will be in good condition. But if it is handed over to those crooked politicians, they will ruin the whole nation within short period of time. The case of Nepal, in this matter, is applied to latter fact. Due to the corrupted and self-centered nature of Nepalese politicians, whole Nepalese public

has to undergo through hardest time that they have never expected in their lives. In that sense, whole Nepalese public seems to be politically subaltern to whom the political leaders not only deceive by using their flowery promises but also quench the thrust of power and property making the Nepalese public ladder of their self-centered success.

Batsyayana, in the cartoon (V), satirizes vicious tendency of Nepalese politicians and also ridicules them displaying pathetic condition of innocent Nepalese public. The huge irony of this cartoon rests on the fact of what public want and what they are given. This also depicts the reality of our politicians who have not yet understood what *Janata* expect from them. Therefore, it is said that whole Nepalese publics are under the access of basic needs due to the corrupted and self-centered nature of the politicians.

Cartoon (V)



In the cartoon (V), a man is sitting on stone putting his hand on the head, which is also the symbol of pain and helplessness; typically represent Nepalese poor man of village life and, the woman, in front of him, holding good-will greeting card

from the politician leaders seems like his wife. They both represent the poor and desperate couple of Nepalese village. On the other hand, three suited and booted people with Nepali *dhaka topi* and *daura surbal* are typical representative of Nepali politicians. The tattered clothes, leaking roof of their house and the man's sitting style of putting hand on his head show the pitiable and miserable state of their living. Moreover, the caption given in the cartoon, expose the reason behind the pitiable situation of the man which is not other than his inability to buy a goat even in the main festival of *Dashain*. Not to have money or to be poor is the only reason which has made him buying a single goat at *Dashain* unaffordable. But, political leaders are sending good-will greeting cards just so as to pretend how much caring they are for Nepali *Janata*. But the contrary remain on the fact that what they want and what they are given. Though politician promises to upgrade the life style level of public eradicating the poverty for forever, their promises always remain within their speech. Rather, the condition of Neapli *Janata* is being degraded day by day. This is how, this cartoon speak for the poor Neapli subaltern who not only have to live their life miserably but also have to be deceived from their vicious political leaders.

As we all know, censorship in autocratic regimes, as its right hand, is conducted so as to control the free views and visions of public life. During the period of autocracy, no work of art could remain untouched from long arm of censorship, let alone the work of cartoon. Nepal has also undergone through several such autocratic regimes- whether it is Rana regime or Mahendra's Panchayat system and or it is Gyanendra's autocratic rule after April 1, 2005. In report entitled "Coups, King and Censorship" issued in February 2006, the International Federation of Journalist (IFJ) declared that "half the cases of censorship in the world in 2005 were in Nepal" (6). But the genre of cartoon, during the strict period of king Gyanendra, seemed to be less

afraid of free expression than other news and editorials. Accepting the role of cartoonist and their fearless cartoons in the era of cruel regime, an international magazine name called *The Taipei Times* of 11 March, 2006, claims: “Nepal cartoonists say what reporters can’t say” (4). In this way, during the autocratic regime of king Gyanendra (from April 1, 2005 to April 24, 2006), the symbolic and bold art like cartoon counteracted the repressive tendency of the state authority more vibrantly than any of the news, editorials, mass media and critical writing.

As being the master of allegory, parody, metaphor and irony, cartoonists protest regressive nature and exploitative tendency of autocratic state power in very indirect and metaphoric manners. They never let their head go down in front of cruel and regressive power of government. Rather they continuously speak in favor of silent and voiceless Nepalese public through their art of satire and irony. Peshal Pokherel, in his article published in *Himal Khabar Patrika* “Power of Cartoon and Pride of Cartoonist” writes:

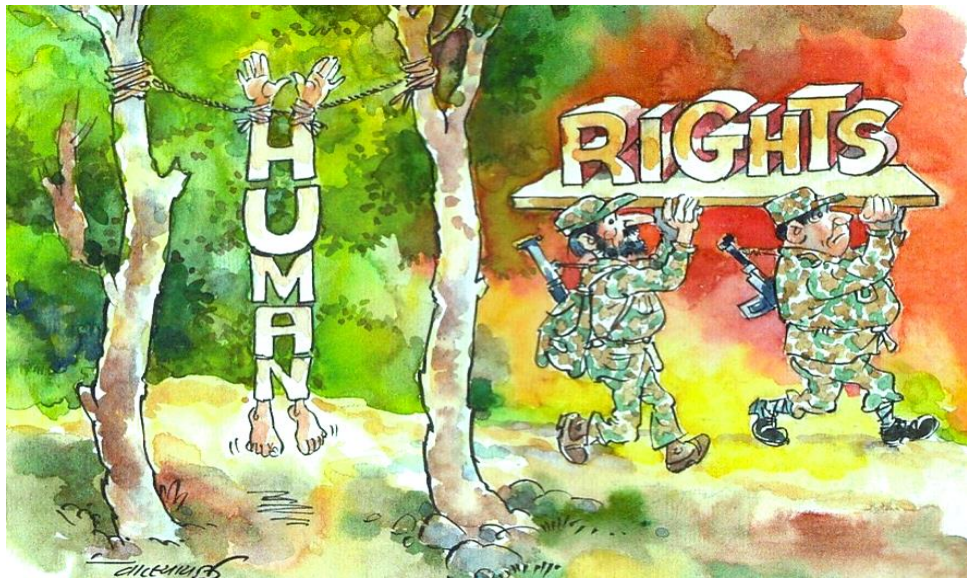
The period after April 1, generally taken as the dark period in the field of Nepali media, was quite challenging even to cartoon journalism but cartoonist, with their creative efforts and courage, were more successful than the reporters, columnist and editors in term of attacking autocracy and regression along with various political, social and administrative evils. (My translation 26)

In such circumstance, how cartoonists became able to let all intellectual personalities remain on back in the act of protesting the regressive power of domination in itself is a remarkable subject matter for inquiry. One of the remarkable cartoons that Batsyayana drew during the midday of autocratic regime of king Gyanendra created political tsunami and strike the then chief political leader and the rein of king

Gyanendra simultaneously. So Batsyayana, through his art, despite the different obstacles and hindrances, seems to have spoken for suppressed, censored, voiceless and marginalized Nepali people even in the period autocracy.

In the following cartoon (VI) too, Batsyayana is not only successful in protesting the regressive regime of king Gyanendra; during the moment of emergency, he also does not go back in criticizing the rebellious nature of the then politically undergrounded Maoists who, challenging the state power, were in the bloodshed path of gun and bullets (to which they also call as Janabidroha) in order to capture the state power.

Cartoon (VI)



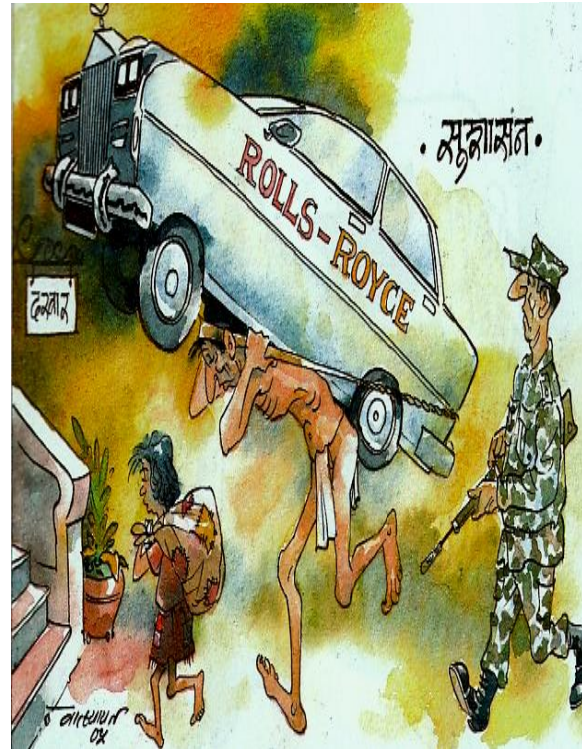
Here in this cartoon, Batsyayana present the condition of human rights during the period emergency or army regime, which was practiced by king Gyanendra. Two officers who have shown in this cartoon represent the army officers at the army regime. Though Gyanendra, after being the king when king Birendra's whole family members wiped out in a massacre at the Narayanhiti Palace, advocates good governance, human right, corruption free society etc., Nepali *Janata* never realized as such anytime.

Moreover, Nepalese public had to be victim of several cruelties from army officers, government officers and administrator. Army killed many innocents in the name of Maoist and Maoist murdered many innocent in the name of royal supporter. In such circumstances, innocent and naïve public were oppressed as being the sandwich of two big platoons. As shown in the cartoon, Nepali *Janata* were hanged on the tree, which is presented as ‘HUMAN’ and, ‘RIGHTS’ of human, to which the government of Gyanendra used to advocate, were in the hand of army officers. The irony of this cartoon rests on the fact that the army officers’ holding of the word ‘RIGHT’. It asserts the fact Nepalese society, particularly during the emergency period, that army officers snatched the basic right of citizens by misusing the power. The hanging of the word ‘HUMAN’ signals the innocent death of public who were killed and hanged from army officers without any reason. This cartoon, in this way, presents the loss of human right and how army officers, during the period of emergency, brutally victimized the innocent public by misusing their power. Thus, this cartoon is successful in giving the voice to those muted subaltern voices.

In the same manner, satirizing the luxurious and sophisticated life style of royal palace when a large number of people were under the line of extreme poverty, Batsyayana, through this painting, courageously protest the royal regime even in the period of emergency. The following cartoon (VII) expose royal tendency of spending the treasure of nation on sophisticated and expensive materials and ignoring extreme poverty rampant in the life of innocent public.

Cartoon (VII)

This cartoon (VII) bitterly presents the corrupted and crooked nature of royal palace. This also extremely satirizes the sophisticated passion of royal family member, who misusing the power and ignoring poverty of public life, extravagantly spends treasure of country on internationally branded and luxurious cars. The man without cloth, who is holding the luxury car for royal family members, represents the poor Nepali



IN THE BIG LETTERS: Good Governance
ON THE BOARD: Palace

worker. The thin and weak muscle of old man and tattered and incalculably tidy cloth of his daughter mirror the extremely pathetic life of Nepali workers. On the other side of cartoon, army officer holding gun and, who also directs poor guy in holding the car, represents the fact that how power is misused in Royal Palace. That is how, this cartoon ridicules the sophisticated life style of royal members and expose the extreme poverty under which a large number of Nepali *Janata* had to live their life without having proper food, cloth and place for stay. That is why, poor, innocent public of village life, helpless workers etc. have found place in art of cartoon; it has become common platform to resist the exploitative and dehumanizing tendency particularly inherent in autocratic regime.

Capitalist market economic policy is one the causes behind the degraded life subaltern people. In capitalism, the slogan of “no money, no life” is applied. People who are under the extreme poverty have to face so many hard obstacles in their life.

Rather they are exploited each and every aspect of their life. That is why the voice of subaltern in capitalism is highly obscured and subdued under the monetary value of capitalists' market economic policies. But some subaltern are speaking through cartoons even in the helpless time of capitalism. Batsyayana cartoon presents the negative consequences of capitalists' market economic policy, in which several poor and desperate people have to undergo through extreme exploitation.

In this cartoon (VIII), Batsyayana presents the rampant negative effect of capitalist market economic policy, even in

the sensitive fields like medicine, in which customers are looted and exploited as much as capitalists can. The old man, who seems ill, comes to private nursing home for treatment with his carrier. But the carrier, who was there in private hospital carrying sick old man in his bamboo bucket, now cannot carry the old man due to over-load of medicine prescribed by private doctor. Now, instead

Cartoon (VIII)



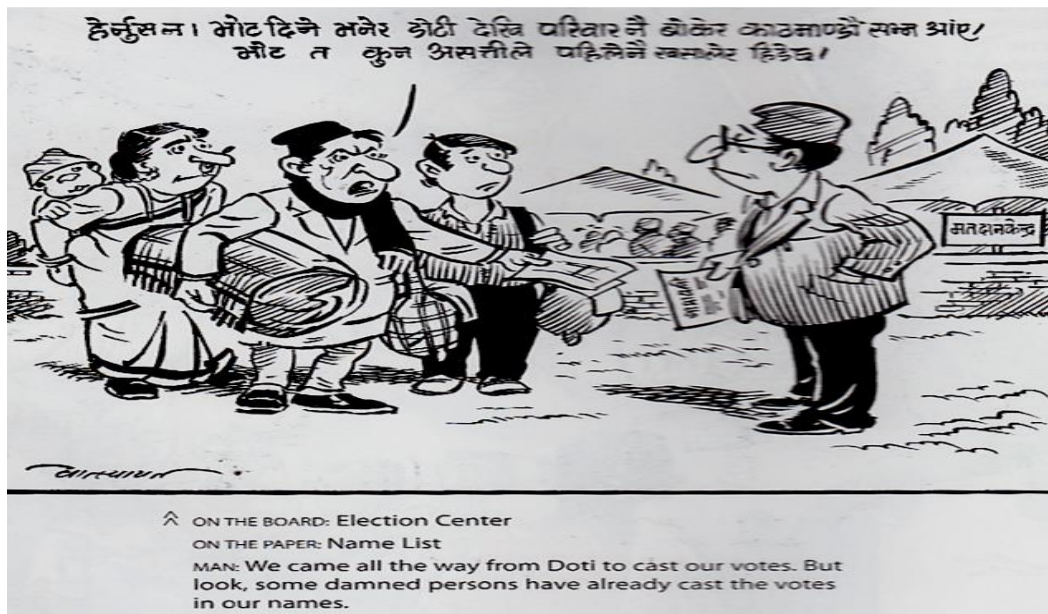
of carrying the helpless old man, he has to carry huge load of medicine. In this cartoon, Batsyayana humorously uncurtains the conditions of poor, helpless and destitute subaltern class who has to be exploited in each and every aspect in the era of capitalism. Moreover, this cartoon also vehemently criticizes the vicious nature of capitalists' market economic policy, which probably has not left any field untouched from its long arm of exploitation. This is how this cartoon of Batsyayana speaks in favor of subaltern.

While analyzing the subalternity from the different issues such as caste, class, ethnicity, tribe and many more, geography also functions as one of the determining factors. The living place, where human are inherently connected since the time of their ancestors, plays the pivotal role in determining the status of human being. Moreover, in the country like Nepal, most of the people are geographically subalterns. People from remote regions are politically, culturally and economically left behind. Due to the centralized politics run by hegemonic power of center, most of the people from geographically remote regions like ‘Karnali’ are ignored, marginalized and discriminated from mainstream power of center. Despite being a citizen of this country, they generally disregarded and devalued in each and every program run by state power.

Therefore, Tara Lal Sherstha, in his book, declares that “if the questions like who is the true subaltern in Nepal? is asked, in the context of Nepal, the one example that can be easily provided is, a poor female *dalit* widow from the remote *Karnali* region is number one subaltern in Nepal” (My Translation 15). Realizing this bitter truth of Nepalese society, Batsyayana, in his following cartoon, tries to present the real conditions of people who, despite being same citizens of Nepal, are not like that of urban citizens and therefore, have to live in very deplorable life just because of being geographically alien. It also discloses fact of how geographically remote subaltern are ignored, devalued and exploited due to weak and feeble mechanisms of government who cannot secure the common rights of people who are belonging to the remote area. It also discloses the fact of how geographically remote citizens, in the centralized country like Nepal, are deprived from the right of vote to elect and of participating in the policy making process of state.

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Cartoon (IX)



In the given cartoon (IX), one of the village families from *Doti*, a remote district that is situated in Far Western region of Nepal, has come to Kathmandu just for to cast their vote in election. Through the caption written in the cartoon, we come to know about their situation. The only reason to come to Kathmandu travelling long journey from *Doti* is non other than casting their vote. But, all their efforts go in vein when they know that some cheaters already have casted the votes of their names. On the other side of cartoon (IX), a man with coat seems like an election officers to whom the desperate family is complaining. In this way, this cartoon is very much successful in disclosing the pain of remote villagers who cannot even use their common rights like casting a vote in an election easily. They have to suffer a lot just being far from the center. Moreover, this cartoon also satirizes the feeble role of government in securing the common rights of geographically subaltern people and it also presents the bitter reality of how innocent villagers of remote region are deceived, ignored and oppressed from using their common rights.

Art and literature, especially cartoon art, in this way, can be the crucial landmark for the overall analysis of subaltern studies. Subaltern voices, despite being

fragmented and episodic, get agency and their freedom of expression on the platform of art and literature. But it cannot be said that art and literature are totally free genre that can remain untouched from any sort of power and politics. Michel Foucault, while defining the nature of power, says that nothing can escape from the network of power and power is scattered everywhere. Considering the substantiations regarding the nature of power provided by Foucault, the idea of true ‘representation’ of subaltern voice even through art and literature will be a fallacious argument. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her seminal essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” raises the issues of violation in the ‘true’ representation of subaltern. She accepts that writers and critic, during the process of representing the subaltern, can present ‘reality’ of subaltern life by distorting and misrepresenting them.

Realizing this bitter truth, Batsyayana in the given cartoon (X), presents power-worshipping tendency of literary writers and intellectual personalities. He, through this work of art, tries to expose how the intellectual personalities, who are supposed to be the right individuals to represent the actual facts of society, bow their head down in front of power. In this

cartoon (X), the man, who is offering his respectful obeisance to political leader or probably the minister, represents the typical example of writers and intellectual personalities. On the other side of cartoon (X), the man who is in his Nepali *daura surbal* and coat with spectacle, typically represents political leader, who is also the symbol of power. Batsyayana, in this

Cartoon (X)



BANNER: Sri Blah Blah Blah Felicitation Program
CHIEF GUEST: No, no you don't have to do that. I am supposed to honor you today

cartoon exposes the fact of how writers are loyal and subordinate to power. The caption written in the caption balloon humorously satirizes power-worshipping tendency of intellectual personality, who even in his felicitation program offers his respectful obeisance to political leader. He is under the trap of power. The possibility of raising the voice of subaltern from such writers is little. That is how, this cartoon mirrors the extremely power-dedicated condition of intellectual writers, who ignoring the voice and views of minorities and subaltern groups, praise the people of power in their writings.

It is obvious to all that people, who are utilizing the power, suppress the voice of subaltern minority. In such condition, representation of subaltern people in the work of art and literature, providing agency and platform of expression, is apparently discarded due to play of power and politics. Particularly subaltern are muted and made absence in such work of art. But, while analyzing the Derridean deconstruction of “absence/ presence”, the representation of subaltern even in their absence state is possible. In other words, in a work of art and literature, much of the meaning of a text comes from what is left unsaid. Derrida, while deconstructing the category of “presence/ absence”, says:

Neither part of binary opposition can exist without other since both are interdependent and related. To give anything an identity, to say what is, is necessarily also to say what it is not. In this sense, presence contains absence. That is to say that the quality of present depends upon implying what is absent. (107)

So, we can say that ‘not to be represented’ is also to be represented. Despite the absence of subaltern voice in work of art and literature, subaltern are still speaking through their silence. While talking about the issues of subaltern studies, Tara Lal

Sherstha, in his book, *Shakti, Srastha ra Subaltern*, claims that “the state of subaltern being ‘silence’ or ‘absence’ in the work art and literature can be crucial space for the overall studies of subaltern life” (My Translation 9). In this way, muted and absent state of subaltern can be representative signpost for raising the voice of subaltern. In the same manner, while analyzing few cartoons of Batsyayana at the surface level, they seem not favorable for subaltern. He, in his few cartoons, presents urban characters as major figures. But implicitly, he seems successful in adhering subaltern issues without representing subaltern characters. The use of irony, paradox and satire makes his cartoons completely different from what they are seemed in surface level. To provide voice to subaltern even within deep silence and absence is another vital feather of Batsyayana.

In the following cartoon (XI), Batsyayana represents two urban women of sophisticated family. The luxurious sofa and other expensive materials presented on

Cartoon (XI)

the background of cartoon signal to the high



profile family background of city life.

The caption written there in cartoon ironically state that the child from urban life can speak English language fluently since they are admitted in boarding school. The exposition luxurious urban life and the privileges that inherently children get as being member of the rich family automatically takes our mind towards the pathetic conditions of village children, who, even in their school age,

have to go hilly meadow so as to look after their domestic cattle. Moreover, the irony of this cartoon (XI) lies on the child's error which he does while saying letters A, B, C, D . . . He spells 'I' after 'F' and forgets to utter 'G'. It shows, though they seem good outwardly, they are just opposite from inside. Rather it also satirizes the corrupted and parochial thinking of city life, which immeasurably overemphasized the English language and takes it as a sign of intelligent. But, more interestingly this cartoon makes us think about those who are not represented in cartoon. Children of city family go to English medium school and utilize modern facilities in sophisticated environment. This presented very fact of the cartoon (XI) indirectly compels us think about, "what is for those village children . . . ? This is how silenced voice of subaltern, despite being absence, finds their place for articulation in the cartoon art of Batsyayana.

III. Cartoon as Space for Subaltern Voice

As we already analyzed the diverse ranges of cartoons, particularly sketched by Batsyayana, in order to recapture the silenced voices, views and visions of subaltern, this thesis has come into the conclusion that subaltern people not only can speak more freely in the art like cartoon but this very art of cartooning also can be the striking platform to resist and attack the oppressive authority thereby subverting hegemonic power of domination, marginalization, exploitation, dehumanization and so forth. Cartoon art, by using its rhetorical weapons like irony, satire, caricature, parody, imitation, imagery, paradox and metaphoric statements, humorously deconstructs repressive power of domination thereby paving the way of expression to those unheard and generation-long subdued voices of subaltern class. Subaltern people, whether in terms of class, caste, geography, gender or culture, get their agency in the work of cartoons sketched by Batsyayana particularly and in the works of almost all cartoonists in general. Moreover, if subaltern studies groups assume that the history of subaltern, as mentioned by Gramsci, is “necessarily fragmented and episodic” (54- 3), then there is no alternative than tackling the act of rewriting the history of subaltern from the multiple disciplines like cartoon.

The painful experiences of subaltern resulted from the dehumanizing, repressive and hegemonic power of autocratic elitism are generally disseminated through different mediums in indirect and artistic manners. In this way, art like a cartoon, even in the period of autocracy and political repression attack the repressive power and expose the negative effects of repressive rule on the lives of innocent public. Despite being metaphoric or indirect but comprehensive in nature, it becomes able to raise the subaltern voices and experiences. Providing a striking platform for

subaltern agency, it presents subaltern experiences which are generally ignored and underestimated in the elitists' discourses and historiographic trend.

Cartoon, unlike Marxist literature, does not talk about the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletarians, but the struggle between castes, seen from the point of view of lower caste, the haves and haves-not, the minority, the marginal, the subaltern. Thus, it can be taken as the subaltern literature which does not just speak for subaltern but also makes them conscious and aware about their hegemonic conditions through the art of pictorial representation. Jim Masselos, that is why, in his essay "The Dis/appearance of Subaltern: A Reading of Decade of Subaltern Studies" views that:

Guha's critical objective is of course to change focus, to make central the subaltern and subaltern consciousness. The insight of the project is not concern with putative elites but to focus on the subaltern, the "autonomous domain" (4) of the people, to demonstrate that they had their own consciousness, their own politics of resistance, their own mobilization and their own ideologies of opposition.(192)

While analyzing the Jim's view, most of the cartoons sketched by Batsyayana in particular and drawn by other cartoonists in general, incorporate subaltern characters, their experiences, their conditions and different ways of resistance. Thus, it can be said that cartoon studies can be the crucial landmark during the process of retrieving the fragmented and silenced voices of subaltern.

In the context of Nepal, those newspaper reporters, editors and columnists, who were supposed to be right mediums to articulate the social reality, became desperate and puppets during the different political turmoils of Nepal. They were trapped under the network of dominant power and they started to worship powerful

ones by ignoring writing on real issues of social life. But while considering the perceptions of international magazines where it is said that Nepalese cartoonists say what reporters cannot say, Nepalese cartoonists seem brave and bold enough to go against the repressive power thereby strengthening the voices of innocent public. Even in the period of difficulty, Nepalese cartoonists had not halted their pencil and brush, and till today, they seem of speaking for the voiceless people.

In this way cartoon mirrors and comments the society. It exposes the ugly realities of society and expects better result by using striking rhetorical tools like satire, irony and humor. Due to attractive pictorial representation and humorous quality it can capture the mind and heart of all people from different status. Moreover, in the cartoons of Batsyayana, voices of subaltern people get primary places. Apart from being political in nature and humorous in tone, cartoons of Batsyayana speak for those innocent, ignored, exploited and marginalized public. This thesis has come to the conclusion that cartoon art, whether it is political or social, can speak for subaltern. And, cartoon can play the striking role during the process of rewriting the subaltern historiography, which is also known as the attempt of retrieving “the small silenced voice of history” (Guha 45).

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