

## **Chapter: I**

### **Non-Codified Representation of Women in Popular Photography**

The present research work analyses the non-codified representation of women in popular photography. The phrase 'non-codified representation' refers to those modes of representation, which do not comply with the social norms and the values. The term 'non-codified' goes for those values that are not regulated by and do not comply with the normative society. The photographic representation becomes non-codified especially when it represents women in the spaces traditionally reserved for the men. When the women are shown in the so-called public or males' space the patriarchal codification gets dismantled. Taking this dismantling into account, the research work analyses the popular photography in the light of feminist criticism.

Photography, as a genre, has fascinated a great many debates and discourses. It is often argued that photography is free from the photographer's biasness and perspectives. It is regarded as a neutral recorder that records the things and events that are in its view. Invented by Fox Talbot and Daguerre in the year 1839, photography has drawn various criticisms. Valorizing its neutral position, Derrick Price and Liz Wells argue, "it was celebrated for its putative ability to produce the accurate images of what was in front of its lenses: images which were seen as being mechanically produced and thus free of the selective discriminations of the human eye and the hand" (20). But with the changing wave of time it is no longer regarded as a neutral phenomenon; it is now taken as an art loaded with the politics of the time of its production. Taking this politics into account, the research analyses how the photographic representation of women helps to challenge the gender norms and makes itself non codified.

The social convention divides the entire humanity into male and female, attributing the former with the positive images and the latter with the negative images. This demarcation has conventionally subordinated women to the men. For a long time photography has been used as the medium to “validate that inequality” (Theresa Stephens 255) But the changing course of time has assigned photography a different function. It has been used to empower the women.

Many researchers concerned on different aspects of females. But none of them have tried to carry research on how popular photography has contributed in woman empowerment. Thus, present research work analyses how photographic representations have contributed to empower the women by subverting the traditional stereotypical roles. In order to carry out the historical burden, photography has tried to capture the changing roles, prevailing in the society. Women are no longer locked inside the four walls, they have ventured into the public space in order to assert their self. Photography has become a true medium to capture the transition of women from the oppression to liberation.

But photography cannot accomplish this historical burden until and unless it is taken merely as a technology. Despite the neutral status assigned in the past, it has transformed itself into artistic phenomena. But the term “art” presupposes the politics, perspectives or attitude of the one concerned to it. Taking the politics of art into account it has been argued that the photography has been used instrumentally to empower women. In photography, the traditional notion of gender representation has been questioned along with the advancement of technology. Females that used to be absent in popular photography are now occupying a considerable public spaces challenging the age long patriarchal stereotypes. Defying the traditional gate-up, make up and roles females have been presented alluring, attractive, guiding, commanding,

confident and bold body and mind. Rejecting their stereotypes females are seen in government services security agencies, and educational institutions, technical, political, social and economic fields. Their hands that are supposed to be engaged in cooking food, washing clothes and pots, nurturing and caring babies are occasionally seen to be handling AK-47 rifles, making sculptors, repairing stoves and bicycles, mending the punctures and ploughing the field.

Women entered into males' space subverting their stereotypes especially after the World Wars. World wars cultivated a sense of independence in women in the absence of their husbands. Gradually women entered into industries as laborers and started to earn money. As a result, they became economically liberated and free. But women in the East like Nepal, India, and other south Asian countries did not share the same fate except Japan and China. After the end of colonial era, India as a nation state realized the importance of women's involvement in income generating activities. But in Nepal women started to come out of the domestic space only after the political changes of 1991 and 2005. While doing so, they have defied the codes prescribed by the patriarchy. They are involved in income generating activities and become economically free. As they are becoming economically free and liberated, changes are sure to take place in our culture because independency enables them to be socially recognized, politically strong and economically sound and able.

A series of questions arise: Why does mass media represent women in such non-codified social activities? What is the politics behind such representation? Famous Greek Philosopher Aristotle in his essay, "Economics" states that men are stronger, women are weaker, men encourage, women cautious; men outdoors type, women domestic: men educate children, women nurture them" (1968-69).

Under a patriarchal regime, women are by definition excluded from positions of power and authority except where that power and authority works to support individual man or the social system as a whole. In this connection John Berger says:

Men act and women appear, men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The survey of women themselves is male, the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object and most particularly an object of vision sight. (47)

Patriarchy always wants to see women confined within the boundary of stereotypes designed and imposed upon them. Defining stereotype Stuart Hall says, “Stereotyping is a part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the normal and the deviant, the normal and the pathological, the acceptable and the unacceptable, what belongs and what does not or is the other, between insiders and outsiders, us and them” (258). Stereotype is a political practice that aims at dividing the world into like and unlike, self and other. Regarding identity Hall asserts, “Identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past” (225). *Manusmriti*, a Hindu scripture, confines the women as animals that need a watchful eyes or surveillance. It says, “Women should be under the strict control of their fathers until marriage, under the control of their husbands after the marriage and that of the sons after the death of their husbands. Supported by the principle of such disciplinary theories and practice, the high caste males justify themselves in limiting the freedom of their women” (Dor Bdr.Bista, 2001). Taking the similar course Bajracharya says, “Though patriarchy is the Hinduized social tradition, even the

matriarchal society of Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups known as Janajatis too follow the same patriarchy tradition in the Nepalese society due to their religious assimilations in Hinduization because of the state policies for centuries” (15). Shedding light on patriarchy and the condition of Nepali women Gurung asserts, “Patriarchal structure, inheritance laws, social exclusions and political marginalization all have subordinated women to a low status in the society” (i).

But the photographs selected for the content analysis resist the stereotypical female gender identity. In this research work, the term “stereotype” refers to the attributes given to the males and females in patriarchal social structure. “Gender” is a set of roles and cultural meanings acquired in course of ego formation within the family set up. Likewise, the term “sex” refers to the anatomical composition as male and female. The term patriarchy is a male dominated social agency that always wants to rule over women through certain stereotypical roles. Similarly, the term “subversion” is used to mean the incompatibility inherent in those stereotypes. “Empowerment” has been used to indicate how the women have questioned the patriarchal demarcation and occupied the position, traditionally reserved for the women. Popular photography, advertisement photography, digital photography, fashion photography and documentary photography are the genres of photography. Photography through producing permanent images by means of the action of light on sensitized surfaces, gave rise to a new form of visual art, historical document, and scientific too. The history of photographic image is the story of the diverse applications of a new and constantly evolving technology. It is a history that includes images at every point on the scale between utilitarian scientific and historical documents and pictures conceived with the highest artistic ambitions.

But the present study concerns only with the popular photography. It does not attempt to offer genre –wise description and analysis of the photography. As it attempts to analyze the empowerment of the women through the subversion of gender norms represented in the popular photographs selected from the weekly magazine, *Samay* and *Nepal*, national dailies like, *Anna Purna Post*, the *Kathmandu Post* and *Kantipur* vernacular and *online resources* published in the year 2008 A. D., the present study does not look into other aspects of women like their inner feelings, problems they face while defying the norms and during the process of transformation. In addition it does not analyze the photographs from the other marginal perspectives like race, class, religion and other forms of subalternity.<sup>1</sup> For research purpose, only selected photographs, which reflect the gender empowerment, have been taken.

In this research work the term 'popular photography' refers to only those photos that are taken to mark the occasions like marriage, birth rituals, mourning and so on. In this sense the research has used only the occasional photographs. But the research does not offer any detailed analysis, history, production processes and any other technical background of the photography, since it has been only concerned with the content analysis. In addition the term 'empowerment' stands for the women 's encroachment into the public space traditionally occupied by the men and build up their self and subjectivity.

The research has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter elaborates research problems, analyses the views of the critics on the photographs, gender identity, and states the hypothesis along with the point of departure taken in this work. Apart from it, it clarifies the meaning of some of the terminologies like, stereotypes, role reversal and empowerment with the due focus to their use in the research work.

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<sup>1</sup> An attribute of subordination in terms of caste, class office etc

The second chapter analyses the factors that subvert the stereotypes with Chris Beasley, Valerie Bryson, Nussbaum, Anne –Francis, Judith Butler, Nancy Chodorow, Halberstan, and I. M. Young and so on in special reference. Third chapter analyses the selected photographs with the help of the theoretical base established in the second chapter. It shows how the photographic images have contributed to the empowerment of women by subverting the gender stereotypes. Chapter four or the final chapter draws the conclusion with the findings of the entire research work.

Researchers in Nepal have worked on gender and photography but none of them has focused their attention on the subversion of female gender identity and their empowerment. Thus, the present research work contends that Nepali women have subverted their stereotypical roles and empowered themselves. With the rupture of their identity, women are seen in the process of empowering themselves.

## **Chapter: II**

### **Feminism, Subversion of Stereotypes and Women's Empowerment**

Feminism is a movement that started in the early eighteenth century giving focus on the emancipation of women from all kinds of disparities, inequalities and injustices prevailing in the society. In the past, women were not given rights like voting, keeping property, doing official jobs, joining social organizations and activities. In fact, they were considered to be subordinate to their male counterparts and their voices were suppressed, bodies objectified and, presence ignored, and discarded and unheard. Individual woman intellectuals across times and Maoist combatants in the western Nepal raised their voices against social injustices, disparities and inequalities imposed up on women with emancipatory mission. These women intellectuals are known as feminist and the movement that they launched at different times became familiar as feminism in latter days.

Chris Beasley argues that, “feminism has a history and it starts from a critique of the mainstream of ‘the norm’ of what is taken for granted” (16). Beasley further defines feminism as, ‘a critical theory that refuses what it describes as the masculine bias of mainstream western thinking on the basis that this bias renders women invisible/marginal to understandings of humanity and distorts understandings of men’(16). Feminism, from its beginning, has tried to dismantle the normative construction of gender. It is critical stance that always tries to decentre the notion of centre (men) periphery (women). Beasley opines, “feminism not only decentres the usual assumptions about what is central and what is at the margins, but also shifts the subject of the analysis, in that the notion of women is placed centre stage” (17).

Under the different names like, liberal feminism, first wave feminism, second wave feminism, Marxist feminism, modern feminism and postmodern feminism



feminists have spread their voices and visions across the world. Liberal feminism gave the idea of universal standard for social and political rights and selfhood. Liberal feminists, says Beasley, “proposed women’s inclusion in the liberal universal conception of the Human,” (19). First Wave Feminism, with emancipatory orientation, focused on compensatory reversal exposing the masculine bias. Its aim was to emancipate women incorporating and assimilating them into the society. Second Wave Feminism too paved the way to emancipate women. They introduced terms like power, oppression, patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality. They proposed to abolish macro structures of power, men’s authority, which oppresses women. Modernist feminism argues that underneath power lies the truth of freedom for a free self to be liberated. Feminists like Nussbaum and Wollstonecraft are against the convention and reason because they think, “convention and reason are the women’s enemies” (41).

If we go back to the primary stage of feminism and compare with the present day activities of feminism we find similarities in their goals. However, the trends are different. Still women are marginalized and ignored in mainstream socio-economic space. They still are excluded in decision making levels. For Valerie Bryson, “feminism is based upon the belief that women are individuals possessed of reason, that as such they entitled to full human rights, and that they should, therefore, be free to choose their role in life and explore their full potential in equal competition with men” (159). Valerie advocates for equal space for females in a male dominated society.

Nussbaum is in favor of right political strategy to bring social change in the society. However, she emphasizes on pragmatic and realistic political strategy. The main aim Nussbaum sets for is to ‘decontextualize Humanity’ (41). Feminist vow to

invent and discover tactics and strategies to dismantle stereotypes which have always hindered women's self development. It is a common experience everywhere in the world. Loving, compassionating, submissive, shy, caring, nurturing, sympathetic, sexy and beautiful are the few noted female stereotypes. And it is argued that marriage and reproduction fulfill the mission of stereotypes.

The social bondage of marriage has always entrapped a woman and confined her within a domestic periphery. Chodorow argues, "Women's mothering contributes to the perpetuation of their own oppression" (168). The involvement of men in parenting may minimize the rift but they are not ready to do it. Chodorow further asserts, "Unless there is a greater involvement of men in parenting the chain of its effect cannot be disrupted" (Chodorow, 168). Male's stereotypical role is to be financial provider, assertive, competitive, independent, courageous, career focused, bold, and handsome and initiator of sex.

Patriarchy has given subject position to the males and object position to the females. As a result, of this women have been sidelined from mainstream socio economic and political activities claiming them inferior to men. But a lot of changes have taken place in women's position after Maoist's struggle in Nepal. Women have struggled to dismantle age long patriarchy and its agencies that have othered women. They have questioned the stereotypes like masculinity and femininity and the patriarchal tendency privilege the first term over the second. But the changing social issues have illustrated the fact that masculinity and femininity are the socially constructed fictions. This realization has enabled them to question the natural site of gender. The old stereotypes are slowly melting away. And that rupturing of the stereotype has paved the way to women's empowerment and questions the stereotypes like masculinity and femininity, constructed by patriarchy in order to subjugate

women to men. Anne Francis argues that, “the theorists explore the ways in which we think about gender-how binary understanding of femininity and masculinity shape the ways we perceive gender, and how the assumption of heterosexuality determines the ways we constitute the femininity and masculinity” (ix). Since gender has become a much debated and controversial terminology, theorists have devoted their time and strengths in defining it and secured their locations respectfully. The term “gender” refers to the social process of dividing people as men (male) and women (female). Masculinity and femininity, in fact, are identities that are socially constructed in the field of power.

According to Anny Francis “gender is a conventional formation and gendering a cultural process” (15). For Judith Butler “gender is the process of embodiment which results from the repeated performance of acts of gendering” (18). She says, “Being a sex or a gender is fundamentally impossible” (19). Despite the wide spectrum of debates regarding the notion of gender, the critics unanimously agree on the fact that gender is a social construction having nothing to do with the body. Critiquing the gender stereotypes, Butler argues:

The binary oppositions, male/female and masculine feminine are incompatible with the continuous variability of human characteristics, constructing a false opposition between the sexes and an artificial coherence within each term of the binary. Stereotypical genders, then, must be understood as, “ontological locates that are fundamentally uninhabitable. (146)

Similarly, rejecting the old dream of symmetry, Judith Butler argues “gender must be understood, not as a noun, nor as a set of attributes, but as a doing, a performance that constitutes the identity that it purports to be” (24). Butler further claims gender to be

the process that constructs the internal coherence of sex, (hetero) sexual practice within the modern subject. The heterosexualisation of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between “feminine and masculine understood as expressive attributes of “female and male” (17). For linguists, gender is a puzzling term simply because it is not universal or invariant. In some languages, gender is central or pervasive, while in others it is totally absent. The number of gender, according to Robert Greville, is not limited to three; four as common and twenty is possible (5). He further insists that in some languages gender marks the distinction masculine/feminine/non-sexed; but in other languages the division animate /inanimate, human/non-human, rational/non-rational, male human/other, strong/weak, augmentative/diminutive, male/other, female/other function exactly as does the division into male/female (30). Likewise, Mary Hawkesworth defines gender as, “an analytic category”. Presenting her argument a bit differently in this context, Nancy Chodorow asserts, “Gender is a set of roles and cultural meanings acquired in the course of ego formation within family structures, and that significant changes in child rearing practices and kinship organization can alter the meaning of gender and close the hierarchical gap between the genders of man and woman” (8).

The aforementioned views from various theorists have given, somehow, a unanimous definition of gender that combines the feminist agenda as well. All of them are of the view that gender is a social construct that does not have any connection with their anatomy. It is not their physical condition but their personal as well as social practices that construct their identity. Butler claims that “one cannot be a woman overnight simply putting on a dress, it is the acceleration of a series of performances” (169). To sum up, gender is a social construct; a psychological term

in the sense that one's gender is not based on the anatomy but the practice. It means a woman can be a male if she acts like a man. It is obvious that according to the desire expressed and roles played in the society, one's gender is identified. The researchers have shown that masculinity has been traditionally linked with the power position and the privilege. The masculinity, which has been reserved for males, "Conjures up notions of power of and legitimacy and privilege [ . . . ] represents the power of inheritance [ . . . ] and the promise of social prestige" (2). Halberstan Judith is aware of the privilege linked with the masculinity traditionally reserved for the male sexed body. But she also realizes that the masculinity as the synonym for men is inadequate. By the same token, "the categories available to women for racial gendered and sexual identifications are simply inadequate" (7). She reaches to the contention that masculinity and femininity cannot be the essential features of male and female sexed bodies respectively. In this regard, women can be as masculine as men if they occupy the position of power and privilege, historically occupied by the males.

Sex refers to the man's anatomical composition as male and female. It is a natural term that refers to a person's biology. Simone de Beauvoir is of the point that "males and females are two types of individuals which are differentiated within a species for the function of reproduction" (35). Similarly Mary Hawke worth refers sex as, "the biological features such as Chromosomes, hormones, internal and external sexual and reproductive organs" (656). Sex is a biological given whereas gender is a social construct. It means a woman's gender cannot be identified in terms of her anatomy but on the basis of her activities and performance. Likewise, a man can have women's codified attributes by his birth. His 'penis' and her 'vagina' cannot be the gender markers. Gender roles are "socially and culturally defined prescriptions and

beliefs about the behavior and emotions of men and women" (Anselmi and Law 1998, p. 195). Many theorists believe that perceived gender roles form the bases for the development of gender identity. Likewise, women may be constrained by standards of femininity, such as the pressure to have children. Hobsbawm labels women as "the per political people [. . .] who have not yet found [. . .] a specific language in which to express their aspirations about the world" (qtd . in Guha's Introduction from the Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency of Colonial India 141). In fact patriarchy thinks that women do not have any language as well as consciousness. They only speak male's language even if they are given words. In this connection, I. M. Young claims:

Patriarchal society defines women as object, as a mere body, and that in sexist society, women are in fact, frequently regarded by others as objects and mere bodies. An essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living the ever present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere body, as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object another subject's intentions and manipulations rather than as living manifestation of action and intention. (172)

Patriarchal society always regards woman as a play thing, a toy, and an object for entertainment. They are supposed to be made for the pleasure of men. Gender stereotypes can also affect men's and women's performance. Research indicates that stereotype threat can negatively affect performance by increasing anxiety. For example, Steven Spencer, Claude Steele, and Diane Quinn (1999) found that women performed significantly worse than men on a math test when the participants were led to believe that the test would probably produce gender differences.

In contrast, women and men performed equally well when the participants were led to believe that the test did not produce gender differences. These findings suggest that negative stereotypes can and do negatively affect performance even when the stereotype has not been internalized or incorporated into the view of the self. According to Francis, “gender and sex are overlapping constructs that differ in analysis, where our understanding of biological sex is likely to be shaped by our culture’s notion of gender. Francis argues, “ there is no body, no biological sex, outside gender; that is becoming human, one is always already gendered” (3). Regarding gender as the cultural construct, gender studies questions the prevailing social stereotypes.

Stereotype is a term frequently used in the printing culture to define multiple copies of the same thing repeatedly. In the printing press a metal, known as stereotype, is used to make exact and multiple copies of any particular matter. Such stereotype is a poured metal which cannot be changed. "Stereotypes", says Francis , "function by simplifying, by reducing classes of people to a few characteristics by which they are generally said to be identifiable” (140). Giving the best example of the icons used on the toilet doors as a stereotype Francis et al., argues, “the reasons the icons on the toilet doors function- a woman in a skirt/ a man with a trousers- is that it is assumed there is a visible and identifiable difference between men and women” (140). This distinction between two sexes is imposed upon by the authority as form of stereotype.

The skirt stands for the secondary sex features, breasts and sexual organs that are usually invoked as the obvious signs of difference between man and woman. “A stereotype is a radically reductive way of representing whole communities of people by identifying them with a few characteristics” (Francis et al., 141). It is true that an

individual cannot produce and circulate the stereotypes alone. “Stereotypes function within groups of people as knowledge which is shared, a kind of databank.

Importantly they are usually produced by people who are positioned to circulate their ideas widely, so that even the group stereotyped may then come to take on this simplified bit of visual shorthand. Patriarchy assigns different stereotypical features to men and women so as to continue the oppression to the weaker as they think one. But they, due to compulsion for the survival, always try to defy the stereotypes for the liberation of women, the mission of feminism.

Men and women have been assigned different stereotypical images. Women, as Francis et. al argues, are seen naturally nurturing, sensitive, emotional and differing, men are seen as removed, rational and authoritative” (141-142). By constructing such contradictory images, patriarchy manages to subordinate women to men. The primary target to differentiate the women is to sideline them from mainstream social set up. In this context David Glover and Kaplan Cora argue, Women get described as unfeminine when they expose the “supposed coldness, aggression, ambition, neglect of children or high intelligence” (3). In this regard, the stereotypical images set up by patriarchy has, no doubt, subdued women’s agency.

Once the patriarchy constructs the stereotypes they are imposed upon women. It is the women’s job to dismantle or question those stereotypes that are making their lives uncomfortable and burdensome in terms of discrimination and inequalities. Taking the risk of being social outcast women, nowadays have shown their innermost desire and ability to resist the stereotypical images imposed up on them. Patriarchy wants to deprive women from their rights and make them independent on the mercy of men for the economic and social existence which according to Wollstonecraft is, a domestic tyranny and imposition of men’s authority over women is destructive. She



claims, “If women are not free, then no one is” (40). The mission of stereotype is to alienate women from the mainstream social set up, Stuart. Hall calls it, “ a strategy of splitting” (258). Stereotypes create symbolic boundaries in between the normal and the abnormal and the acceptable and the unacceptable that people use to distinguish one group from the other. Relying on this fact, Hall further asserts:

Stereotyping [ . . . ] is part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the ‘normal’, and the ‘deviant’, the ‘normal’ and the ‘pathological’, the ‘acceptable’ and the ‘unacceptable’, what ‘belongs’ and what does not or is ‘Other’, between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, ‘Us’ and ‘Them’.(258)

All groups in the society receive stereotypes be it negative or positive. A marginalized one receives negative stereotypes where as powerful receives positive stereotypes. Marginalized groups get more suppression and discrimination but the powerful one is benefitted by the stereotype. Patriarchy regards woman as naturally nurturing, submissive, shy, meek, sensitive, weak, emotional and deferring. In this context Stuart Hall opines, “Women are seen to be natural mothers in the sense that by having womb they are also possessed with patience, a natural predisposition towards children, a nurturing, affectionate and nature and so on” (143). Society constructs stereotypes to divide humanity rather than unite them. The researches have shown that these stereotypes are the arbitrary constructions, having nothing to do with the human organisms. In this context, Janet Saltzan Chafetz argues:

It should be clear that when the terms masculine and feminine are used, it is assumed that the characteristic in question are socially prescribed and individually learned and hence changeable, phenomena;

they are not innate to the organism. Since they are not innate, they cannot be directly related to the sex in any necessary fashion. (4)

The analysis above illustrates that one's gender has nothing to do with one's body. It is merely an attempt to subordinate women to the men. Stereotypes are subject to change. But the society wants us to conform to these arbitrary stereotypes. One is socialized to confirm them rather than question. Pointing the pitfalls in the socialization process itself, Chafetz further argues, "The individual is pressured, rewarded and punished to accept and internalize certain roles and not others during the process of socialization" (3). In this regard, the society produces the binaries but the human body is immune from the binary thinking. Chafetz ruptures the stereotypes, arguing that the stereotypes are [. . .] descriptively inaccurate" (37). But he admits that they may influence one's behavior and activities.

With the changing course of time, the stereotypes are being questioned. The women are empowered only when they question the stereotypes, constructed for their representations in the literature and any other types of discourse. Taking this concern into account, M.R. Habib argues that "the depiction of women [. . .] as angels, goddesses, whores, obedient wives, and mother figures- was an integral means of perpetuating these ideologies of gender" (667). Habibi suggests that patriarchy constructs the arbitrary stereotypes in order to render the women subservient to men. If so, women can be empowered only by rupturing those arbitrary binaries not only in the society but also in the entire mode of representation.

Photographic representation could have been motivated by this politics of empowerment, especially when the women are shown outside the kitchen space. Women now a days have defied the stereotypical social norms. They are no longer interested to marry and rear children even after their marriage; rather they seem to

join business and professional jobs that help them in their empowerment process. This is a clear indication of their effort in securing their location in society challenging the age long social power relation. In a sense, there is stereotypical failure or stereotypical conflict constantly working in the society. The dynamics of power relation changes along with the change in stereotypes. Realizing the rupturing of stereotypes, Chafetz claims that women can be empowered and liberated through this mode of social change. Changing social roles would make the females “more rational and psychologically and intellectually confident and competent” (257). For him, empowerment lies in the subversion of gender roles.

Quite in tune with Chafetz as Francis et al argue that the stereotypes have the baneful effect in the man’s career and the personality. They obstruct the personality development of the individuals. So, those who want to change their structural position in society “will focus on stereotypes as a point of protest [ . . . ]” ( Francis et al., 148). It reveals that women should question or resist the stereotypes in order to uplift the social status.

Judith Butler is also aware of the arbitrariness lying in the so called gender identities of the patriarchal social structure. Critiquing the notion of compulsory heterosexuality, she argues that one is neither homosexual nor heterosexual but sexual. It is the society that makes us heterosexual. If so society produces us as the male and the females. In her analysis, gender is constructed out of performance. Referring to Butler, Francis argues that Butler offers an analysis of gender [ . . . ] not in terms of inner capacities, attributes and identities, but a set of repeated performances that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance” (168). To regard gender as a performance is to nullify ever existing stereotypes. Butler reaches to the extent of opposing the essentialist notion of gender.

In Nepal's context, women have gradually come out of their traditional location, especially after the ten year armed conflict, simply because they came to realize the obstacles created by patriarchy and the need to subvert existing patriarchal notion. For instance young girls are seen to be queuing to register their application for the recruitment in government security forces. The dynamics of power relation and social forces keep on intersecting. As a result, females are in the process of dismantling the frontiers of patriarchy. Dismantling the frontiers of patriarchy is not an easy job. Their effort of challenging the status quo prevalent in their society builds confidence in them and leads towards the path of empowerment. Patriarchal social structure also victimizes the women by locating their space and making them to accomplish their predefined household jobs. Women are expected to maintain order and cleanliness as well right things in right place. The men want to find the house in a particular domestic order, that they object when what they view as women's work is not done. The patriarchy expects women only in the role of homemakers. It objects them if they are found to be doing otherwise.

In a society different groups trying to change the structural position within the society focus on stereotypes to protest the existing social set up and its own position. Some groups try to reverse a stereotype in the hope of women empowerment. Women who defy the patriarchy and its stereotypes for the sake of bright and independent life can be the exemplary model for those who are in between. As a result, women clad in a white mourning dress are seen to be performing death rituals of their parents along with offering the funeral pyre. Such practices have questioned their prevailing gender identity and finally led them to the destination of empowerment. Women's domestic duties make them more dependent on their male counterparts. Their duty and loyalty

would not earn the economic liberation and independence as such duty and loyalty do not have monetary value in the market.

Similarly, a boy working as a male domestic servant performs females' work. It is difficult to carry the tasks as females do. However, he performs well. Such intersection of class sexuality and gender within the domestic sphere gives a patriarchal kind of invisibility to this man. The private domestic space of the home is made public as the work place, and also becomes a place as, Chayankita Shah, claims, "Where the gender identities of these men are muted to enable cross-sex and cross-class interactions between male worker and female employee" (114). This, no doubt has created new form of masculinity. And feminine masculinity has challenged the existing definition of identities. Likewise, girls are doing many difficult and masculine works that earlier were thought to be masculine. To plough the field is considered to be quite hard and difficult. Men are supposed to handle this job. But nowadays women are actively tilling the land and hammering the stones that need manual labor and energy. Both male and female are occupying reverse space questioning the stereotype and their identity too. As a result they are enjoying an independent life style giving a signal of their changed identity to the society.

The exploration of their space is a positive signal to make them independent. Their exposure has made them ignore their limited space provided by patriarchy. Their exposures in every sphere of human life and activities have automatically built confidence and self motivation in them. The images selected for the research have shown how women have come up with their own decision and how they have defied the patriarchy and led towards empowerment gradually. Our society always cages women like a parrot ignoring their fundamental rights. Patriarchy always wants a passive role from women. It does not want to listen to women's voices only to

prolong their vulnerability and victim hood. They are not only sentenced but also unheard that marginalizes women. In this context Leela Gandhi asserts, “Gendered subaltern disappears because we never hear her speak about herself. She is simply the medium through which competing discourses represent their claims” (90). But contrary to this, women seem to be raising their voices against disparity. They chose political discourse to seek their space subverting the patriarchal set up.

Expressing his views on women’s independence and liberty a British traveler, James Massie claims, “At no point of life, in no condition of society [. . .] a woman is affirmed, is never fit for independence or to be trusted with liberty” (157). But Massie fails to notice the gradual changes in the status of women due to the presence of increasing educational institutions and the women’s involvement into them. But as the gradual extension of educational institutions pressurized women to join educational institutions, their level of awareness and intelligence have grown beyond their expectations. As a result, they have ventured to come out of the domestic sphere and involved in financial, academic and professional activities that encouraged them to shoulder the males’ burden. They have proved that they are able even to handle A-K 47 rifles.

No doubt their role reversal has raised many questions regarding their predefined identity. Even the theorist like Chattarji has become puzzled to see their performances that are not thought to be "eaten, drunk and smoked in the same ways as men, they must continue the observance of religious rituals that men were finding difficult to carry out” (256). Patriarchy emphasizes on males’ active role in production and distribution mechanism in every society. It discourages women from joining in such mechanism simply on the basis of their anatomy only to make them subservient to the males and economically as well as socially paralyzed and

handicapped. However, young women are playing an active role in financial as well as other income generation activities. They are gradually handling banks, co-operatives, private institutions as well as government offices. It is a strong blow to the patriarchy that has never expected to have such upheaval in women's life. This upheaval is the result of women's rejection of the age long patriarchal set up.

Women have occupied masculine spaces and with occupation of males' space their identity has been subverted and the subversion has paved the way to empowerment. Stereotypes are usually maintained and developed by people who have little contact with the group being stereotyped. Contesting or refuting stereotype in a society is not an easy job. However, women are trying their level best to dismantle the patriarchal boundaries that have sidelined them from the mainstream social set up.

The act of blurring their identity somehow encourages them to struggle against social injustice and discrimination. As a result, the patriarchal boundaries and the so called social pillars no longer remain as strong as in the past and the shaken pillars and the cleft foundation cannot support the stereotypical norms and values. It is true that Nepalese masculinity still demands a faithful, submissive and uncomplaining wife.

The features of women as M. Dala Costa and Selma James assert:

All women are housewives, and even those who work outside the house continue to be housewives [. . .] (it) is precisely what is particular to domestic work [. . .] as quality of life and quality of relationships which it generates, that determines a woman's place wherever she is and to which ever class she belongs. (102)

Though Costa and James claim that women cannot get out of the domestic space even after they get outside job, it has been proved false as women of twenty first century have become quite clever and in a sense rebellious like. Due to

'Cultural Revolution,' women have succeeded to outsmart patriarchy. Juliet points, "the struggles against patriarchy must take the form of a cultural revolution," (414). That is why women are seen to handling masculine activities. Taking part in competitive sports tournament, going for rafting and enjoy Bungee jump, have questioned the existing gender identity. Occupying the males' space females are trying to claim their masculine female attributes. It is no doubt the subversion of their identity. It has encouraged them to be more professional and unique.

In tune with Costa and James, I. M. Young argues that "the patriarchal social structure refuses to give a subject position to the woman. Referring to the subdued agency of woman as object, as a mere body, and that in existing society women are in fact frequently regarded by others as objects and mere bodies" (172). She further argues that "the society presents her as the potential object of another subject's intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention" (172). Young's arguments suggest that a woman can empower herself, if she manifests her actions and intentions, breaking the oppressive cage of patriarchy. Critics have admitted that women have begun to invade into the public space, the Space of creativity, innovation and the self, where the women can assert their worth.

Realizing the gradual domination of public space by the twentieth century women, Sandra M Gilbert and Susan Gubar appreciate "women's unprecedented invasion of the public space as a battle of the sexes, a battle over a zone that could only be defined as a no man's land" (4). These critics envision "the possibility of women's triumph" in this battle (4). Gilbert and Gubar ensure that women must transcend the limits of private space in order to empower themselves and assert their self. They argue that women are winning only because they have taken writing as the device of self assertion. Though primarily concerned with women writers, still they



suggest that the empowerment can be ascertained only through their active and influential encroachment into the public domain.

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process which should enable individuals or a group of individuals to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making to enable them to have greater ability to plan their lives and free them from obstacles imposed on them by customs, beliefs and practices. A woman becomes empowered only when she builds confidence and confidence is built up if the stereotypes are broken. Women have been ignored by the society in terms of their independent life. They should be given certain power to be independent but power should be acquired, exercised and preserved.

The struggles against patriarchy must take the form of a cultural revolution. Otherwise, it cannot function in favour of the marginalized. Socio-economic and political oppression against women create gender gap that compels women to be dependent on males. The patriarchal social structure of Nepali society has always treated women as second class citizens. As a result, women are compelled to accept a low and subordinate status in the society.

This theoretical discussion has been used as the modality to make the content analysis of popular photographs chosen from the newspapers and magazines like *The Kathmandu Post*, *Kantipur*, *Nepal and Himal*, on the basis of their relevance. The focus lies in the representation of females in the respective images. The photographs represent women in the public space traditionally reserved for the males. The women are shown as the drivers, politically dedicated combatants, adventuress, political activists, doctors, lawyers and other professionals. This mode of representation brings women out of the kitchen space traditionally reserved for the by the patriarchy. The

roles that were designed and prescribed only for the males and the denial of access to the females had widened the gender gap in the past but great many pillars are in the process of falling and fading. As a result, females have come out of the patriarchal boundary defying the social norms and codes prescribed only for them. Such reversal of roles and stereotypes have empowered them and led them to an independent life. Women have invaded men's space and questioned the heterosexual norm that has always wanted women to be men's object. With the occupation of public space, women not only empowered them but also heralded the message of their potentials and infallible courage that have led them to the subject position and challenged all the institutions and agencies that always sidelined them from mainstream. The thesis contends that the reversal of the roles contributes to the empowerment of women.

### **Chapter: III**

#### **Empowerment through Subversion of Stereotypes in Popular Photography**

The present research work offers the content analysis of a few selected photographs that represent the women's invasion into public sphere and its consequent effects upon their social status. Being based on the theoretical modality, derived from feminist criticism, the present research argues that the domination of women in the public sphere made in the photographic representation is an indication of Nepali women being empowered. Although women account for more than half of the population of men in Nepal they are not proportionately included in important constituents in decision making positions, in government offices, the media, government security forces, career oriented trainings, academia and political parties' top posts.

A study conducted by 'Anjana Shakya' concludes, "90 percent of parents desire to have a son in case they are going to have only one child" (Shakya 1994). It is obvious that the mindsets of the Nepalese society are biased towards the female child though a daughter is always a daughter to the parents even after the marriage where as son inherits the parental property. However, gradual changes are experienced in their status and activities and they are demonstrating their inner capabilities to come out of the stereotypical domestic space especially separated by the patriarchy. They are occupying males' space and enjoying male stereotypical roles like financial provider, assertive, competitive, independent, courageous, career focused.

This rupture of stereotypes can be taken as indicator of new social and cultural context where women are being self empowered and independent. Women have often been the victim of religious and cultural stereotypes. But women have come out from private space to public space in all sphere of life. Religiously, culturally, socially,

professionally, politically and educationally women are gradually getting empowered. In this process, they have dismantled all sorts of traditional roles and adopted new values. This paper tries to present how women are gradually taking over the patriarchal stereotypes and encroached male's space in the process of role reversal and subversion of their identity.

The first photograph selected for the content analysis, represents the woman in mourning posture in a white robe. In Nepali, society gender discrimination can be easily seen by some of the traditional rituals and practices, which is performed within the family itself. There are several *Samskaras* or sacraments performed from birth till death. Patriarchy in the past used to perform *pumsavana* – ceremony in the third month of pregnancy through which a male child is produced. The family that performs *pumsavana* prefers the first born child must be a son. It shows that from the womb gender discrimination starts and women are the victims. Traditional Hindu culture envisions male in superior posture and women are not allowed even to perform *antyasamskar* (funeral initiation) and *kiryakerma* (funeral rites) by offering funeral pyre and Pinda<sup>2</sup> for the soul of the deceased.

Patriarchy does not allow women to be actively engaged in the performance of death rites but the lady shown in the figure has defied the norms. Nepali women mourn their relative's death but are not supposed to put on such ritualistic paraphernalia as Asha Mgrati, a school teacher presented in fig one, has done in the picture. This kind of mourning is a unique and challenge for the stereotypes that prohibit women from performing death rituals as their male counterparts do. The posture shown here has traditionally been reserved for the males. But the woman, who represents woman community and female gender according to the division, has

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<sup>2</sup> Rice pudding offered to the deceased.

subverted the stereotypes and occupied males' space. Deeply rooted cultural and religious norms always try to bind women in their roles defined by the patriarchy and in the name of norm women used to be oppressed. The lady is mourning her mother in spite of the societal objection. She does not see any difference between her and men. She seems not bothering societal criticism and objections. This is a severe blow to the patriarchal norms and values.

**Fig. 1. Woman Mourning Father's Death, *Nepal* 7. 2 (2008): PP. 83**

Traditionally she has to undergo a simple sort of mourning for 5 days as a daughter but she intends to undergo rigorous mourning for whole 13 days eating limited food stuffs and observing strict rules and regulations. Patriarchy always makes women feel lesser important than men and they cannot tolerate hunger and other physical problems. It makes women feel weak not because they are weak in real so that males hold greater spiritual power.

Asha Magrati in this state of the mourning is challenging what **Pillai claims**, "Women lack competitiveness, self-confidence, low self esteem and assertive behavior" (25-49). She shows before the society that women can do whatever comes

in front of them. No doubt she has anxiety, frustration, perplexity, and sorrow over her parent's death but she ignored the social set ups and stood in favor of social transformation. Her face betrays her sadness but her posture speaks against the patriarchal boundaries and obstacles. At present women are just opposite to what the early predictions regarding them were made. They are becoming ambitious, dutiful and successful in handling any sorts of social, religious, cultural, and political responsibilities. Talking to the positive line, Prof Ruth Weiner suggests young women to set high goals for themselves and set them independently of their sex.

The stereotyping of women as the second sex, biologically fragile, emotionally unstable, sensitive, subjective, intuitive and irrational has been proved wrong. The vigilant daughter in the image signifies that women can do whatever their male counterparts do. What they need is courage, strong will power; confidence and will to renounce the stereotypes prevailing in the society. There lies a risk to be out cast<sub>s</sub> socially and alienation. The priests may not be ready to handle the business either in the name of woman's participation. But her deliberate decision and firm determination could not prevent her from performing death ritual of her mother.

If the deceased has not his/her own son person near to his family and clan has to perform death rites but daughters are not allowed perform the same. Asha Magrati in the picture ruptures the stereotypes that never accept her role as religiously acceptable and along with the rupturing she regains power to be independent. She by rupturing stereotypes develops a power and is comparatively independent. Religious and culture stereotypes are the most problematic in the sense that denial or rejection may worth a lot and no one can escape social entrapment. They are the real hindrance in the overall development of a woman. So the denial and rejection of the social norms and values set by patriarchy can empower women and lead them to live an independent life.

Another picture selected for content analysis is an example of the rupture in religious set up. In the background a lady Sanskrit scholar and religious preacher who not only speaks Sanskrit fluently but also holds command over English and Nepali is preaching the locals. She is computer literate and can use computer while preaching the devotees.

**Fig. 2. A Girl Reciting Purana, *Samae* 7. 9 (2009):PP. 40**

In the past ladies were not given the responsibility of reciting Puranas and telling the stories during a weeklong ceremony known as Saptaha<sup>3</sup> or a nine day long ceremony known as Nawaha<sup>4</sup>. Reciting Gayetri Mantra<sup>5</sup> is thought to be the prerogative of males. Patriarchy does not want to see a lady reciting Puranas sitting on the altar. In the initial phase, people may not accept a lady priest because patriarchy does not entertain her to be the chief Pandit in the Saptaha or Nawaha. But the very presence of lady with scripture in her hand before a mass subverts the stereotypical roles given by the society. At present young women are gradually entering into the males' space rejecting the so called societal codes. Determination,

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<sup>3</sup> A weeklong Hindu scripture preaching ceremony

<sup>4</sup> A nine day long Hindu scripture preaching ceremony

<sup>5</sup> Mantras given to a boy during Bratabanda.

hardworking capacity, efficiency and positive outlook towards life helps woman in realizing her potential and professional career.

The lady priest is in the lead, sitting in front of men not behind them, preaching and convincing them. Therefore, she is no more in the object position. Her position challenges the very norms and values of a Hindu society that is predominately a male centered. Through preaching and reciting Puranas she earns not only name but also money importantly power position in the society. She gains economic freedom and this freedom makes her liberated from the bondage of male domination. She does not have to be thankful to the males for their gratitude and kindness. Defying religion and culture is a difficult task in our society. Woman should face a lot of challenges and hindrances if they venture to stand against the code and conduct of the society. To reject means to be ready to suffer any sorts of adversities and misfortune. In this case, the lady priest and preacher deliberately dismantled the stereotypes set by the patriarchy. She has subverted her identity in the sense that she has come up with the so called masculine role being a female.

**Fig. 3. Women\_Playing Sahanai and Narsinga, *The Kathmandu Post* 3. 23 (2009)**



Similarly, the figure presented can be taken as an invasion of women in patriarchal cultural set ups. In a mass gathering two women are actively playing traditional *Painchay Baja*<sup>6</sup> and are imposing a challenge on their male counterpart. Culturally women in the past denied their involvement in playing during ceremonies. Two ladies in the lead position are playing *Narsingha*,<sup>7</sup> a copper made musical instrument and *Sahanai*<sup>8</sup>. It is quite difficult to play both instruments as they need strength, continuous practice and skill. Very few people can play them. The question of females' involvement is unexpected. *Narasingha* is one of the musical instruments popularly known as *Painchyai Baja* in Nepal. During wedding ceremony, *Panchwali*<sup>9</sup> offering ceremony and other merrymaking occasions *Sahanai and Narasingha* are played.

The young lady who is blowing *Narasingha* to her level best and her friend is playing *Sahanai*. In fact both instruments are quite difficult to handle as one needs good breathing and control of breath. *Sahanai* is a popular instrument in Nepal and India. It produces melodious note that allures and wins peoples' heart. It shows that women are coming with the new skills and professions. They are in the process of invading and encroaching males' space and questioning their subject position and the existing gender identity. Such act has opened more possibilities for women to carve out new identities. As a result they get empowered and independence. They no longer desire any blessings and kindness on behalf of their male counterpart.

Patriarchy demands active role from male in the society and passive role from females. The same rule is expected to be followed in terms of production and

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<sup>6</sup> A set of five musical instruments traditionally played during auspicious occasion including Damaha, Temko, Sahanai, Narshinga and Jayali.

<sup>7</sup> A musical instrument.

<sup>8</sup> A traditional musical instrument.

<sup>9</sup> Five sacrificial offering consisting of he- goat, he- buffalo, lamb, duck and cock.

distribution mechanism. It always discourages women from joining in production and distribution process may it be service sector or other. As a result females are economically paralyzed and they find no way to escape the man made trap. Patriarchy always wants to make females surrender before males. But young girls and woman are playing an active role in males' space. Although the number involved in outer world, that patriarchy claims to be of males, they are motivating their fellow women to defy the social barriers, come with the ideas, and step to fight against patriarchal stereotypes.

Likewise, the next photograph shows a rural woman ploughing the field. Women were not allowed to till the land using bulls and wooden plough in the past claiming that they are physically weaker. It is true that it needs strength, skill and patience to till the earth using bulls. One has to be attentive during tilling. To break the hard field pushing the plough in a proper way is quite a difficult task.

**Fig. 4. Woman Ploughing Field, <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/globalissue>**

But the young lady in local Nepali dress has shown her ability, power and confidence in proving the claim false and baseless. As a result, women are being able

to earn 300 rupees per day. Along with her earning, she has subverted the patriarchal notion regarding gender. She has raised a question, who is she? A male or female? With this subversion of her role, she is in the process of becoming empowered and independent. Male dominated society is taking women's involvement in tilling the field as a challenge to their social codes and setups. Patriarchy always creates a kind of false fear in women labeling them physically weaker than males only to let males enjoy all possible chances of income generation. To keep females under its surveillance and control in limited space is its mission. But women like in the above figure have entered the male's space forcefully and ensured their occupation. Women are deliberately encroaching male's domain to make them independent.

**Fig. 5. Woman Tempo Driver,** *<http://www.everestucensored.org.np>*

The photograph presented above represents a woman three wheeler driver who earns her livelihood driving tempo in the city. This is another equality power image that defies certain stereotypical roles that patriarchy has set for female. Driving is not

an easy profession as it requires some mechanical knowledge, driving capacity and courage. Before plying a vehicle on the road he/she has to undergo written and oral test to obtain driving license to be a legal driver.

The woman in the figure seems to be in her early forties and quite satisfied with her profession. With her inclusion in this profession one male is deprived of driving a tempo which is naturally a shocking incident to the males and encouraging step to females. The lady driver's entry in to this technical field not only empowers her but also encourages all women to be like her. One woman's involvement in new space means chances of hundreds in the near future.

**Fig. 6. Women Traffic police, [http:// www. gorakhatra. org. np](http://www.gorakhatra.org.np)**

Her smiling posture in the figure and her confidence in her job prove that women are able to handle a difficult task like driving. Her involvement challenges the existing gender identity and her empowerment encourages the females to follow her in the way to gain independence and freedom. All the women shown in the figures

above have ruptured their identities through invading male's space in religio-social level. As a result, they are in the process of empowerment and independent.

The four figures representing women's involvement in government security services can be taken as their unexpected leap and revolt against traditional norms and values. Traditionally women were not free to follow certain jobs and activities as they desire. Fig. 6 has presented two young lady traffic police checking drivers' license and other related documents. They are entertaining their stately power. They are physically and psychologically sound and have proved that they can handle any sort of difficult job. People have taken women's presence in Nepal Police and other security agencies in maintaining law and order as a positive step in mainstreaming and empowering women.

Their entry in traffic police was not easy as her parents would not permit them to join if they asked for their approval. In their late teens they joined the service defying societal probable criticism. But to join the traffic police is not as easy as in other services. It needs height, qualification and confidence. They underwent different stages of physical test, written and verbal tests to be selected among many competitors. In the past it was a bit easy to enter the security job but nowadays it has been quite difficult due to the growing number of competitors. Clad in a traffic uniform they perform their duties day and night. They have to accomplish their duties as a male traffic police does. Police senior officers are of the view that lady traffic police are found to be more useful in checking the violation of traffic rules. They are compelled to struggle with the growing pollution, noise and traffic congestion. Sometimes they have to arrest drivers and others for their mistake and crime. They have to throw feminine attributes like kindness, sympathetic, and lovable and be male like, aggressive, strong and strict.

Similarly following photograph represents young girls interested to join Nepal army. They are going to register their applications. After Nepal army started to recruit women in the initial phase maximum of the women did not like to join. But their gradual entry encouraged others and now it has tempted and allured all. The entry in the Nepal army ensures their present and future life. Young girls are queuing for their turn to register their application. Earlier only males used to join army. Physical fitness, education background, family background and cleverness are considered to be the qualities for a person to be recruited.

**Fig. 7. Girls Queuing for Application Registration in the Army, *Samaye 7.***

**9 (2008): PP. 43**

Pressure given by the females and the need of females in Nepal army, Nepal police, traffic police, and armed police started to recruit ladies. In the initial phase only technical hands like engineers, overseers, doctors, pilots and mechanics were recruited. But gradually in general service too women are recruited. However, recruitment and the desire to be recruited are different. To be an army personnel

means a person to be fit to fight the war if need be. They should undergo an ordeal during their training period. During their duty they have to be clever and dutiful. Chances of becoming handicapped or a martyr are higher. Police have to maintain law and order for which they have struggled a lot, Stones are pelted at them, abusive words are used, and sometimes they are beaten by the hooligans, cheated by the gangsters, threatened for their strictness and left by their husbands due to inconsistent job schedule. But the women security forces have constantly proved their ability and skills in handling cases prudently.

Although Nepal army has not given a role of battle to the women army but the purpose of the army is to maintain reliable security and protect nation against foreign invasion. It means each and every army personnel should be psychologically and mentally ready for any sort of responsibility.

In the past women were not allowed to join security forces like Nepal Army, Nepal Police and Armed police. Patriarchy always wants to keep women under their perpetual surveillance and confine them within a narrow domestic boundary. Patriarchy tries to cultivate in women the seed of fear and havoc to limit and curtail their access. But with their involvement in security forces, they are becoming economically liberated and psychologically strong and independent. Women in Fig. 8. are two high profiled female police officers, Bimala Thapa Sharma and Parvati Thapa Magar. They have entertained top post in the force and their honest performance has been rewarded. Both are commissioned officers in Nepal police have proved their ability to command the force. It is the challenge for the patriarchy. Patriarchy always tries to limit the women in their stereotypical roles and space allocated to them so as to make them dependent on men. But the gradual changes seen in women's involvement in so called males' profession and space have raised multiple of

questions regarding the supremacy of men over women. Women have broken the age long man made cage aimed at confining women eternally.

Young women's and girls' entry in government as well as private security forces is rupture, in gender identification. Women's hands that are supposed to be confined within the periphery of kitchen and garden have turned to handle rifles. We can perceive the paradoxes between a woman handling a baby on her lap and a rifle on her shoulder simultaneously.

**Fig. 8. High Ranking Women Police Officers, *Nepal* 7. 2 (2008):PP. 24.**

Photographs shown in fig. 9 (A) and 9 (B) represent Maoist's combatants in combatant dress performing different roles. The lady in Fig. 9 (A), most probably a Maoist commander, is holding a baby and a rifle while her friends are busy in reading books and cultivating paddy seedlings during rainy season. She seems to the company commander.



The paradoxes seen in the figure suggests that women are not confined within traditional roles. They have multiple roles to perform and are able to bear any sorts of responsibility. Her hands are equally capable of handling two divergent natures love and destruction. She is not only a mother but also a responsible figure under Maoists army. She can provide motherly love to her baby and at the same time, she can shoulder her duty and treat her enemy to the extremity rejecting her feminine attributes like kind, passive, caring and submissive.

**Fig. 9. (A). High profiled Maoist combatant, <http://www.usnepalonline.com>.**

They can provide motherly love to their babies and perform their duties if need be. They perform, no doubt, their household duties in spare time but they are more responsible in their duties. Fig. No. 9 (B) has presented young women Maoist combatants undergoing shooting training. All are in the combat dress and handling AK-47 rifles. Their mass presentation and training is a challenge to patriarchy that

does not want to give woman the privilege to carry their desired profession and training. They are under strict and hard training as it may take their life too. Women have been presented as a mother as well as a fighter too.

**Fig. 9 (B). Maoist Combatants Undergoing Shooting Training, <http://www.usnepalonline.com>**

Their confidence, *deep longing*, infallible will power and devotion are praiseworthy attributes. They have proved that they are not inferior to men. Men can perform a single job where as a woman performs double jobs, taking care of the family and carrying her duty loyally and reliably. It is a challenge to the existing stereotypical roles given by the patriarchy. Women have been aggressive, strict, bold, power exercising, fearless and dictating and proved that they can rule the masculine world if a chance is given.

The women in their twenties are ready to sacrifice their life in the name of their party and nationality. In the past even Nepali army did not give warfare roles to

the women but Maoists have subverted this role too as women are made ready to fight against any foreign invasion. They all are their fate maker and are married about the fate of the common people than an individual. The feeling of oneness is also a challenge to the existing male dominated society. It has certainly questioned the stereotypes labeled against females. Women presented in the figure represent women in different professions and status. They are no longer the puppets of male and do not have to live under their mercy. They are economically liberated and free from any financial tension. The main difference between a Nepali woman and European or American woman is their financial status.

Women of the west are free to decide their future as they are financially liberated and independent. They can opt for their suitor and choose their jobs and apart according to her choice and interest. She does not need to wait for the approval of her father or husband to decide on her future. But maximum of the Nepalese woman are under the shadow of their husbands or fathers only because they are economically dependent on them. The gradual entry of women in government as well as private sector in Nepal they are gaining independency and freedom. They are exhibiting their potential and ability before the society rejecting the patriarchal stereotypical roles. Their involvement in income generating activities has empowered them and their fellow women are also trying to dismantle the age long tradition. As a result, the traditional way of defining gender has been subverted. Since all are performing masculine roles, they have defied the traditional notion of gender. They are neither males nor females. They need to be redefined.

In the same way photographs given in figures 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 represent female mechanics, sculptor, tailor, carpenter and pilot respectively. All have dismantled the traditional division of labor and occupation. They have proved that

they are no more a mangy dog that wanders for a piece of bread and become afraid of other dogs walking along the path. Fig. 10 represents a woman, in her mid forties, busy with mending the puncture of a bicycle in her small workshop. She is surrounded by tires and tubes being hung and placed here and there. She earns her bread working as a mechanic in her own workshop. Her hands are busy at repairing the bicycle of a customer. She has not only challenged the patriarchy but also forced all women to work for their survival. She might not have chosen this profession deliberately in the beginning. She might have faced many obstacles.

No males might have been to her workshop to get their bicycle repaired. But gradually she might have won the heart of all and became a successful mechanic. The same case is applied for the woman stove mechanic, presented in her Fig. 11. who has run her workshop independently.

**Fig. 10. Woman Bicycle Mechanic, *Nepal* 8. 52 (2008): 34**

The woman in her late thirties is busy repairing brass stove. Gas stove, its accessories, kerosene stove and its accessories are there in her workshop. Clad in

traditional Nepali dress, Sari, Blouse, Bengals and Pote<sup>10</sup> she is confidently performing her job to satisfy her customers who are the sources of her livelihood. She does not have any inferior feeling in doing her job as it is related to her profession. She is independent woman and she does not have to rely on her husband's earning. She can decide independently to utilize and spend the earning.

**Fig. 11. Woman Stove Mechanic, *Nepal* 8. 52 (2008):PP. 5**

This independency has been possible only after her involvement in stove repairing job. The job empowered her and made her financially free. Along with the economic freedom and independent life style she gains social prestige and recognition that can allure other women and men. In her small workshop, accessories of stoves are seen hung and her devotion in her profession is praiseworthy. She encourages women of her class to be engaged in income generation.

The lady presented in Fig. 12. Is a woman mechanic who repairs motor bikes. She is trying to undo the nut bolt to take out the tire of a bike. The owner of the bike

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<sup>10</sup> A garland used by married women

has asked her to mend the puncture and she is doing her business. Mechanical work in the past was performed by males in our society. Women's involvement as an assistant could be seen rarely in this field but after the people's war, women became conscious towards their life and the restriction imposed by the patriarchy. They do not like the roles prescribed by the patriarchy. As a result, they are out of their private space to the public.

The lady earns a considerable amount of money to run her life and there is no need to be a house wife or something like that. Her life is satisfied and successful. She proves that the delicate hands to be used in child caring can be used in repairing vehicles. As a result, the process of substantial transformation in the overall life of the women is getting certain acceleration.

**Fig. 12. lady Motor cycle Mechanic <http://asiafoundation.org/resources>**

The young lady from Chuadhari community directly and indirectly persuades ladies of her age to follow her path to be independent in the future. As a result, women come out of the net woven to confine them. Clad in boys' dress shirt and pants and plastic slippers her hands are busy untying the nut bolts. Her involvement in

this profession automatically brings changes in her way of life and she should not accept patriarchal slavery and oppression through stereotypical roles. Certainly, she has encountered many usual and unusual ups and downs in her life before entering to the mechanical job. But her courage and deep longing for her better future and independence is being materialized.

The lady in Fig. 13. Is a woman sculptor who is busy in making a sculptress. The lady seems to be in her early twenties and deliberately chosen her profession as a sculptor. No woman in the past used to make such sculptor. It was thought to be the patent rights for the males but nowadays women have invaded the males' space even in sculptress making job.

**Fig. 13. Lady Sculptor, *Nepal*, 8. 52 (2008):PP. 19**

It is not easy to be a professional sculptor. But the lady has ventured her courage, time and money in making her stands in a bit different and difficult world. This makes her an independent woman worthy to imitate. Her success in the field has a message to all the women who want to be free from male domination on the basis of income and profession. Empowering women by males is a joke in reality. They

should be aware of their personal role and interest in making them fit in the society where women are given limited choices. To be a sculptor is in itself is not easy and there is no certainty of success. However, the lady is taking a risk making her involved in such occupation. Her courage and dedication to art is commendable.

**Fig. 14. Lady Tailor, *Nepal*, 9. 19(2008):PP. 4**

Similarly, the lady presented in Figure No. 14 is a woman tailor by profession. She is stitching Duna<sup>11</sup> and Tupari<sup>12</sup> in a shop. She earns her livelihood and has become independent. Along with her altogether 20 women works in the factory where Sal leaves are stitched to make dishes like Duna and Tupari that are used to put edible things like Beaten rice, vegetable and meat. Many ladies like her are motivated in stitching leaves' of Sal and earn their livelihood. Their work gives them bread and social recognition. Patriarchy tries to discourage ladies involved in males' job and activities in their initial phase but hope for transformation inspires to

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<sup>11</sup> A kind of small leaf dish used in serving vegetable

<sup>12</sup> A kind of big leaf dish used in serving rice or beaten rice



their better lives. Their entry in this profession leads them to open their own factory and may shift to tailoring.

In fig. 15 a woman is engaged in wood carving. Her delicate hands are busy at making beautiful carvings. It is a difficult task to carve any image on the wood. It needs skills, concentrations, strengths and patience to accomplish the task. She earns a lot after she accomplishes her work. Her profession gives her satisfaction, money and recognition in the society. In patriarchy no woman is thought to have such occupation as it is hard and complex.

**Fig. 15. Wood Carving Lady, *Kantipur*. Mangsir 24, 2065**

She has invaded the males' space and stood as an independent career oriented lady in the society. She has proved that she is no longer a subordinate to her husband. She can look after the family financially without her husband's support and mercy. This is a rupture because she has broken all the traditional norms and values that patriarchy has set. The binary of bread earner and subservient, active and passive, aggressive and shy have proved false. The binaries set by the patriarchy, and its stereotypes have completely dismantled.

A young lady in fig. 16 is a pilot who flies planes over the sky. To undergo pilot training it not only needs money but also needs courage, and intellect. One should be physically and mentally fit to be a pilot. Money is subsidiary to other factors. Without money one can be a pilot but without physical and mental fitness one cannot be a pilot. It is a risky job to fly in the high altitude. In fact the lady in beautiful complexion has proved her ability and courage to occupy males' space. The risk bearing capacity in young girls are getting higher in comparison to the males. This capacity automatically leads them to empowerment.

A pilot earns a handsome salary as well as well package of fringe benefits. As a result, she becomes economically liberated and independent.

**Fig. 16. Lady Pilot, *Nepal* 9. 8(2008):PP 28**

They earn their prestige and recognition that lead them to the successful end. Since all the women engaged in different professions earn money, the binaries like financial provider and dependent are ineffective. Their involvement in so called males' domain has certainly ruptured their gender identity. The encroachment and invasion of male's sphere by females leads them to empowerment. The lady pilot

breaks the norms and values of patriarchy and its stereotypical roles. They all have proved themselves brave, courageous, intelligent, patient, hard working and dedicated to their jobs. Their involvement in income generation has proved that they are no more relied on the heterosexual normatively. Denial of traditional roles given by the patriarchy is the departure for the successful and independent life. All the figures selected for the research represent different professional women who have come up with new energy, goal and dynamism in our society where they have to compete with their male counterpart. In case of failure they have to bear double risk, to be oppressed further more and live completely subordinate life. They have proved that they can survive in this complex world without males.

The women shown in the figures have different gate ups ranging from *Palpali Dhaka Cholee*<sup>13</sup> and Sari to a modern hip hop dress. However, they have shown their utmost capability to perform difficult jobs that traditionally used to belong to the males'. All have dismantled the pillars of patriarchy and its agencies. They are independent and are having different jobs and occupations no matter how small in size and nature. Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive whereas women as emotional, weak, nurturing and submissive. But all the women presented in the figures have ruptured these roles occupying males' space. It means that women are not born feminine and males are not born masculine. Their gender categories are socially constructed on the basis of their performances. Patriarchy does not want to see women socially, politically, economically and culturally more powerful than males.

A woman in fig. 17 is getting ready for a bungee jump, an adventurous game to be performed. A young lady in boys cut hair style, loose full neck vets and pants is

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<sup>13</sup> Traditional cloth for Nepali women.

ready to enjoy bungee jump. It is a difficult game and very few can accomplish it as it needs a lot of courage and will power. Person having no confidence cannot jump down hillock. But the woman around in her mid fifties is testing her heart whether it palpitates or no during a difficult task.

**Fig. 17. Woman Bungee Jumper, *Kantipur*, Kartik 22. 2065**

She is carefully watching the way Bungee jump instructor or guide is locking the strap around so that she may be safe and sound. In fact, a person having high and low blood pressure cannot entertain the game. It is far more unexpected incidence if it is related to a woman. The woman has really questioned the very stereotypical roles given to the females. Crossing the boundaries of patriarchy, she has presented her as a powerful, fearless and energetic woman who wants something new and adventurous experience. Bungee Jumping does not belong to the female's domain and hardly woman does take initiation in it simply because it demands courage and willpower.

The photograph given in this page presents a young lady archer/ shooter who is taking part in an archery competition. The lady with well built smart physical posture, hair style and dress is pulling the bow string to hit the mark. She seems to be a completely modern player who has regular exercise and dietary behavior.

**Fig. 18. Woman Archer, *Samay*, 8. 52 (2008):PP. 28**

It is also an adventurous game that only interested people enjoy. The lady seems to be confident in her performance. She is occupying males' space defying the traditional labels tagged on females. Her involvement in shooting is the outcome of her keen interest and willpower. Otherwise, she could not have chosen it. The caption asks the question related to the ability of a lady. It suggests that a woman can perform male's job without any difficulty and hesitation. It gives her courage to lead an independent life in the society.

**Fig. 19(A). *Nepal*, *Nepal* 9. 11(2008):PP. 42**

In figures 19 (A). and (B) a group of ladies are undergoing rafting in the Trishuli river. The rafting instructor, a lady, is providing training to the competitors of rafting in fig. 19 (A) whereas women are participating first all Nepal Kayaking competition.

Rafting is an adventurous task that is very popular among the western people. In Nepal the rafting competition among Nepali women is the first of its kind. Most of the women are wearing life jackets and water proof swimming robes. They have put on helmet on their head to protect their heads from injury. The person who participate it should know how to swim in the river. It is a risky work to be performed unharmed. The courage shown by the females is praiseworthy in the sense that they have surpassed males to some extent.

Traditionally only males from high class used to go for rafting as it needs money, time, courage and confidence. Taking part in rafting the women participants have crushed the patriarchal boundary and subverted their identity. Their encroachment of males' space has questioned the patriarchal set ups and its agencies that always try to cage women.

Their occupation of males' sphere has paralyzed the stereotypical roles and norms. Women gain economic freedom through which they become independent and successful. A lady photographer shown in fig. 20 is taking snaps amidst a function. Clad in traditional clothes she is handling a digital camera. Her position is not less than of a male photographer. Photography is also considered to be the males' job but the lady has challenged the traditional demarcation and identification of a job on the basis of gender.

**Fig. 20. Woman Photographer, *Katmandu Post*, October 24, 2008**

There are males around her and watching her. She is in the lead and she has subject position. She is proving her professionalism in photography. Males are looking at the way how she is taking photos. Her practice encourages her to do any work independently and free from fear and domination. In the field of sports, too females have shown their talent and strength in the society. They play football, basketball, tennis and cricket beautifully. Playing different sorts of games women of Nepal have proved that they are not weak. They need a proper environment and encouragement from people. Likewise, Fig. 21 (A) (B) and (C) have represented young girls participating in the volleyball tournament, basketball tournament and group of female cricketers. A girl has smashed the ball and the opponent girl is

checking it. Both of them have a good jump and stamina to play volleyball in a court. They have broken the tradition of male supremacy in volleyball. Their jump, emotion and concentration in the competition do not seem to be weaker than that of the males. Their gate ups and every activity has ruptured the stereotypes.

**Fig. 21(A). Women Volleyball Players, *Annapurna Post*, 26 Paush 2065**

Traditionally women were not allowed to play outdoor and indoor games. They had to be confined within domestic space. But now adays girls in tight and transparent sport dress play indoor and outdoor games with full power and enthusiasm like that of the males. In fact, there is a u- turn in women's participation in the games. The hands that are supposed to be cleaning dishes are smashing volleyball. Young college girls shown in fig. 18 (B) represent basketball players taking part in tournament. Both the teams in their respective sport dress with sport shoes. Most of them are in their mid teens and showing their potential to prove that sports like volley ball and basket ball are not males' games. Their involvement in sports has certainly



encouraged them to lead a life full of competition and challenge. The games teach them to be disciplined, punctual, and honest and dedicated to the profession. Girls develop their sense of professionalism. This sense of professionalism empowers them more to become independent and free.

**Fig. 21. (B). Women Basket Players, *The Kathmandu Post*, Jan 5, 2008**

Girls taking part in a basketball tournament as shown in fig 21(B) with utmost power and concentration have challenged the traditional attitude towards females. Their gender cannot be identified simply on the basis of bodily structure and game except their black and long hair. They are in their early twenties and wearing sport shoes, half pants and sport T-shirts. The girls are seen to be active, enthusiastic, clever, confident and dedicated. They can play continuously for a long period of time. It means they are not physically and mentally weaker than the males. Patriarchy always prevents women from participating any competitive games.

These girls have subverted their identity and as a result they have been on the way to empowerment. After the empowerment process, they become independent.

**Fig. 22. Cricket Team. *The Kathmandu Post*. Dec, 23, 2008**

Their level of consciousness rises and its impact will be resulted in their fellow women too. Along with their personal awareness and consciousness, other women too start following them. Therefore, empowering one leads to the empowerment of hundred.

Young girl cricketers presented in fig. 22. Have returned from U-19 girls cricket tournament held in Thailand representing the national team of Nepal. The young cricketers not only play cricket in domestic pitch but also familiarize Nepal in international arena. The figure suggests that they all are in happy mood as if they have won the match. Playing a game in the local level, national level and international level certainly has its gravity in terms of its long term value. Patriarchy does not allow young girls to go out of the demarcation drawn by the parents as mythological Sita was confined within *Lakshman Rekha*<sup>14</sup>. But all have defied this boundary and have shown their ability, inner potentiality and have proved that they can lead a happy and

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<sup>14</sup> It alludes to a boundary line drawn for the first time by the mythical character Lakshman, brother of lord Ram

independent life. All girls are in suits, leather shoes and ties with their particular hair styles. They have subverted the patriarchal stereotypes, stereotypical roles and all agencies that limit the field of women socially, culturally, religiously and physically. Probability of multiple identities from the rupture cannot be negated. Their participation has proved that girls can do anything that males do if chance is given. Their sense of rivalry, competition and longing to defeat the opponent help them in cultivating the habit of new idea formation, strategic performance and exhibition of their hidden talent.

Traditionally girls are expected to be in *Dhoti, Blouse* or *Choli, Kurta* or *Salawar*. But the young cricketers have denied their traditional dresses and make ups. They play in half pants, T-shirts, sport shoes and shocks socks. It does not make any sense to them to have transparent dresses. They are in the process of achieving professional skills in order to be a professional cricketer. Amidst cheering, clapping and hooting they play confidently as males do. Their involvement in the games like cricket certainly empowers them. Their level of consciousness and sense of independent life always lead them to the success. To attain overall change in women's position they are making them active in all sorts of activities. Feelings of superiority and inferiority are due to the patriarchy as it always creates havoc in women so that they may not come out of their domestic space. Moreover, women are role overloaded. As a result, they sometimes feel difficulty in performing certain roles effectively. But their involvement in every sphere of social, political, cultural, religious and financial life has completely overturned the old concept regarding women. Their active participation has built a kind of nexus among fellow women and the nexus help them bind in the sense of sisterhood.

They know each other, identify each other's problems, and explore new ideas and methods and finally fight for the common cause. As a result, they are recognized and the recognition in every sphere of human life ensures their invasion into the males' space. The occupation of other's space is not a simple task as it needs a lot of courage, confidence, effort, money, time and environment. Patriarchy always hinders women in their new way of life through the activities of its agencies. The agencies try to keep women under their control if not in status quo position and the denial of its move may result badly. The fear is always lurking in every move of women.

However, all the women presented in the figures dismantle all the patriarchal agencies and plan to make women subordinate to the males has failed. Apart from performing certain activities women have seen in social activities and service sector working not only for the money but to gain social recognition and fame. Figures 23, 24, 25 and 26 represent women working in medical field and, government service and teaching field respectively.

As an example of transformation a young woman doctor shown in fig.23 works working for the health of general public. She is riding a motorbike and a young boy is beside her. It seems that she is in an urgent mission because there is a Red Cross flag in front of her bike. During mass strike, she has to go to the hospital for her regular duty. In white medical uniform the lady is driving the bike although there is a boy behind her. She is in the lead and bravely driving it. Her world is not confined within the domestic periphery.

**Fig. 23. Lady Doctor Riding Bike, *Kathmandu Post*, Chaitra 23, 2065**

She earns a handsome salary and her identity as a doctor is the subject for pride not only to her family to all women. She is independent and free to decide about her and her family affairs. There is no question of subordination or subjugation. Fig no 24 represents a young nurse busy at treating her patient in ICU center of a hospital. The patient seems to be in critical position and the lady is carefully applying all sorts of available medical equipments and medicine to avert adversities. Patriarchy does not see any importance of women in curing the ill people. It prefers witch doctors, *Lama*, *Dhami* to medical persons. But a growing number of women doctors and nurses have proved that they can be of great importance to the ailing people. Their patience, devotion, hard work and co-operative attitudes normalizes the pain of the wound. The patient feels a bit relieved from pain if they speak politely and kindly. It does not mean that they always share the same feelings. If needs be they can be strict and harsh in this field.

**Fig. 24. Female Nurse in ICU, *Kantipur Bhadra 5, 2065***

Sometimes, they put on pressure on the patient if he/she disobeys them. It means they do have multitude of identities. Their profession has got public and worldwide recognition. Their income is also satisfactory and life comfortable and independent. If women come out of their private space to the public, it empowers them. They no longer seek males' assistance to run their lives.

Fig. 25. selected for research represents a woman handling high responsibility in government office. Clad in national dress of Sari, and Cholee the young woman is checking her work. Modern official gadgets like computer, telephones, and fax along with necessary things are in her office. She is well versed in computer and her official job. The young lady in fine posture is in standing position and handling a document. She has a pen in her hand that suggests that she going to write some on certain subjects. Her standing position suggests that she is active, dutiful and honest in her duty. She is independent in the sense that she earns handsome salary to manage her expenses.

**Fig. 25. Woman Officer in Govt. Office, *Samay*, 7. 5 (2008): PP. 21**

She goes to office early in the morning and returns after five. Her official routine certainly shocks patriarchy and the stereotypical roles set by it. Patriarchy operates differently in different countries. Furthermore, within the boarder of a single nation cultural differences affect women's experience of patriarchy. In Nepal, rural Brahmin and Kshetri women do have different experiences of Patriarchy in comparison to the lower caste women. However, all women are subject to patriarchal oppression one way or the other. Individual woman's desires, needs, and problems are shaped and designed by her race, socio-economic condition, political ideology, sexual orientation a, religion, family,culture, nationality and level of education. In course of their struggle against patriarchy, women in Nepal are joining different jobs ranging from government clerical jobs to high level security personnel. Moreover, they have joined political parties as a cadre, activist, member, leader and even army under Maoists army, their involvement in aforementioned areas and fields has questioned the existing gender identity and patriarchal stereotypes. In spite of their nominal

presence, they are successful in making their fellow women aware of their rights and duties.

In course of their struggle against patriarchy they have attacked the males' space and occupied it for their betterment. Along with their occupation of public space, women are making themselves more powerful economically and socially. As a result, their identity has faced a crisis. Then questions arise, who they are, male or female. Does the encroachment of public space by women pressure the patriarchy to rethink and revise the traditional gender notion? Income generation activities empower women and build in them a kind of hatred against patriarchy that kept them inside a powerful cage forever. One they realize the reality they raise their voices against oppression and disparities prevailed in the society. Consciousness is the most important factor of social transformation.

Women in the past were not conscious about their rights and duties. Their ignorance had been a boon to patriarchy that could lengthen its life. That is why patriarchy does not entertain girls to join educational institution for their better life. Why should patriarchy raise axe on its back by sending girls to the schools, universities and offices? It wants to keep them always ignorant and tries to separate them from mainstream. But women in Nepal have raised their level of consciousness through political affiliation and have defied the stereotypes.

The woman in Fig. 26 is a school teacher who is teaching a group of students out the classroom. The picture suggests that there is a lack of class rooms in the School and the number of students is quite low. She is teaching to primary students who seem to be below ten years of age.



**Fig. 26. Lady School Teacher, *Samay*, 1. 20 (2008): PP. 22**

The lady teacher is not sitting *on* the desk but teaching the students in a standing position. She has to stand at least for 45 minutes to finish her class. There are thirteen students in her class and out of the total students there are eight girls. The gender ratio in her class also suggests that girls are getting more conscious than the boys. The lady teacher is a model to the whole village as she has enjoyed her independent life. In the past women were forbidden from taking formal classes in schools. But their presence in teaching profession is increasing and their level of consciousness is also on the rise. Education brings change in human being's life. It teaches them to be honest, hard working, independent, co-operative, loving and kind. Educated woman can run her life better than uneducated one. Educated women can create their own world where they are free and independent to carry any sort of activities.

**Fig. 27. Woman Democratic Leader. *Samay*, 8. 6 (2008): PP. 24**

A devout democratic woman presented in fig .27 is Chaya Devi Parajuli , who kept on struggling for human cause and democracy. During second peoples' movement, (*Dosro Jana Andolan*) 2005/2006, her role became dominant among other activists. She kept on walking along the roads and alleys of Katmandu with the move carrying national flag and shouting slogans. She became the source of inspiration for other women of different age. Her involvement in the movement aimed at building awareness among women regarding their rights became fruitful at the end. The old lady in her early eighties did not give up in spite of police intervention and obstruction. Her role in subverting the gender identity is notable in the sense that she broke the domesticity and entered into the public space. Her participation is not for her betterment but for the broader betterment of the people of Nepal.

A group of social workers shown in figure 28 are warning the politicians not work against sovereign people after Nepal was declared a federal secular republic.

**Fig. 28. (A). Woman Activist Shouting Slogans, *Kantipur* Baisakh 5, 2065**

Women from all walks of life participated in the second peoples' movement 2063/2064, popularly known as Second People's Movement (Jana Andolan) and even the marginalized people participated in it I the hope of their emancipation. Women actively took part in constituent assembly election 2064 and became able to send their representatives in the legislature parliament to draft statute and formulate sustainable development policies. All the political parties provided 33 percentages of total seats to the women in inclusive basis. Women from downtrodden castes and communities have been able to represent in the parliament. Unheard voices have got chance to be heard in policy making level and left behind communities also got the opportunity to send their representatives. Maximum number of women's presence in the constituent assembly from different political parties have changed women's status and the traditional label tagged on them. This successful story of women has led us to accept that the "increased popular participation empowers women in particular" (Linberg

28). Realizing the importance of mass participation, women have made the significant contribution in the formation of republican state. The photograph above illustrates how the women had questioned the tyrannical regime from the domain of so-called man's land. Their role in the photograph is twofold: to challenge autocracy and to establish their self hood by challenging patriarchal gendering of space.

**Fig. 28. (B). Women Observing Women's day, *Kantipur*, March 24, 2064**

Similarly, women participating a mass gathering during International women's day as shown in figure 28 are proving that they have come up with united voice for their common cause. There is mass gathering and official function and women are patiently listening the speakers. There is a flag hoisted in between the mass. They all are aware of their rights and all promise to fight for the common cause of women. They have raised their peoples' voices against disparities and inequality.

Their presence in the parliament is a u-turn in women's empowerment process. A woman became the deputy prime minister and minister for foreign affairs; another became minister for defense and there are a few other women ministers in

present cabinet. This is a milestone in the all-round development of women. All have contributed in making women aware of their active role in nation development as well as common cause of the females.

**Fig. 29. Women from Madhesh, *Samay*, 5. 3 (2008): PP. 23**

A group of women from Madheshi Community are raising their voices against domestic violence in figure 29. In the Terai, women are oppressed and discriminated in all spheres of their life. From womb to tomb, women from Madhesh Community are victimized and discriminated. Every month young women commit suicide being unable to bear the torture of their husbands and in laws regarding the issue of dowry.

They are shouting slogans to make the authority hear their pain and anguish. To stand against men in the Terai is to chew iron. The torture and brutality that women are compelled to internalized are unbearable in the Terai region of Nepal. Women have to fight against all sorts of inequalities and discriminations prevailed in their society. Domestic violence has been a major problem. Women in the past were unable to raise their issues frankly and openly before the authority. But after the 2063, political change women are slowly raising their voices against social injustice.

Madheshi women empowering them as well as their fellow women through consciousness rising. They have fully come up with the conclusion that unless they bind all women in a net work to fight against patriarchy they will not achieve remarkable success in women's empowerment. In this sense, their courage to come to the street against their men is really an unexpected and surprising event in the Terai. It shows that women think that they are not simply a puppet of their men.

Two photographs shown in fig. 30 A. and 31 B belong to Badi women from Badi Community<sup>15</sup> protesting the securities forces against their interference during their peaceful protest. Badi people have been living in Banke and Bardiya district under utter isolation and insult. Badi women are traditionally recognized as prostitutes as they are compelled to involve in prostitution for their survival. They have been politically, socially and psychologically marginalized in the society and they are no more than prostitutes in the eyes to the public. But now they have come out of their traditional profession and started to fight for their rights as a human.

**Fig. 30. (A). Badi Woman Protesting The Police, <http://asiafoundation.org/resources>**

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<sup>15</sup> A community of marginalized people settled in Bardiya and Dang district

They have been politically, socially and psychologically marginalized in the society and they are no more than prostitutes in the eyes to the public. But now they have come out of their traditional profession and started to fight for their rights a human. Political awareness has built in them a sense of revenge and sense of sisterhood in women. They no longer tolerate injustice, disparities, oppression and torture in any form and intensity. Their united voice has shaken the very pillars and foundation of patriarchy and the whole patriarchal set has felt a powerful blow in its course. Opposite to the patriarchy the roles have been changed due to their level of education and awareness. The reversal of their roles and activities has destabilised the stereotypical setups supported by my male.

**Fig. 30. (B). Badi Woman Protesting The Police, <http://asiafoundation.org/resources>**

As a result, of their continuous anger over males' discriminatory attitudes and behaviour a sense of revolt emerges in women and with this sense they no longer seek

refuge in males' lap. Political awareness has built in them a sense of revenge and sense of sister hood in women. They no longer tolerate injustice, disparities, oppression and torture in any form and intensity.

Their united voice has shaken the very pillars and foundation of patriarchy and the whole patriarchal set has felt a powerful blow in its course. Opposite to the patriarchy, the roles have been changed due to their level of education and awareness. The reversal of their roles and activities has destabilised the stereotypical setups supported by my males. Their continuous anger over males' discriminatory attitudes and behavior a sense of revolt emerges in women and with this sense; they no longer seek refuge in males' lap

Fig. 31. has presented a group of women members of legislative parliament representing from different political parties undergoing computer training. Since they thought the importance of computer and internet in their daily life, they join a computer institute to make them computer literate and updated with the current affairs in the world through internet. Women MPs do not hesitate to learn computer in their old age. They think it will empower them if they learn how to operate computer and link with the rest of the world via internet. All women seem to have crossed their learning age. However their deep longing to learn something is certainly another blow to patriarchy that wants keep women under utter darkness in terms of knowledge as they think knowledge of recent development will empower women and patriarchy will sustain heavy loss in its age long legacy.



**Fig. 31. Women Parliamentarians Learning Computer, *Samay*, 7. 3 (2008): PP. 13**

The caption suggests that even they can speak mixed language; English and Nepali. In their late forties and early fifties women are learning computer and English language to make them fit in this modern age where both computer and English are equally important. Even in their old age their effort and enthusiasm in learning new things to compete the males is quite notable. Their presence in these fields inspires young generation to learn new things to be independent. Their acquaintance with modern technology and knowledge increases their will power. As a result, the mission of transformation in their lives becomes possible. Clad in traditional Blouse and Sari Mps Kunta Sharma, Shushila Sharma, Shanta Manvi and others are subverting their real identity. Along with the subversion they are on the way to empower themselves. Two words of English, where and learn have been used to show that they are learning English too.

A physically handicapped girl in figure 32 is handling her computer with her foot. She lost her hands in an accident but did not lose her courage to survive an independent life. Her physical disability did not make her lose her courage. Due to her infallible courage and continuous effort, she achieves proficiency in computer operation and found job. Even in her pitiable condition she does not need others kindness but love. She does not have to live under the mercy of males. Her space, though uncertain, has been created by no one but herself. She has become a model for physically disabled fellows.

People follow her path to be independent and self sufficient. Her attempts for learning computer shows her realization that “literacy continues to be determinant in women’s access to leadership opportunities, resources and learning inputs” (Ghose 193). The lady even having lost her hands has proved that she can do something for her life. Her success can be an example to all the girls and women for their independent life. The lady inspires those women who are under threat of their future due to their physical weakness.

**Fig. 32. A Physically Disabled Lady Handling Computer, Kantipur, 19 Chaitra 2065**

The photograph of a modern women in figure no. 33 belongs to a member of parliament standing against money, power and personal facilities.

**Fig. 33. Woman leader, *Nepal*, *Nepal* 9. 8(2008): PP 28**

Hishila Yami, a renowned name in Nepali Politics promises to work in favour of women renouncing personal welfare and facilities. She claims she does not prefer money, post and facility to peoples' welfare. No one can claim her to be woman simply on the basis of her physical posture. She is wearing modern clothes, high neck sweater, Coat pants and leather shoes without shocks. She is carrying a bag designed for males and her hair style matches to males. How can we enlist her in female's category?

She performs male's activities. Her presence in public space allures women to follow her. She has been the sources of inspiration to all who want to have meaningful change in women's life. She enjoyed the post of minister for physical planning and construction. Her activities not only empower her but also inspire all women to follow her.

**Fig. 34. Women Sipping Alcohol, *Nepal* 9. 10(2008):PP 12.**

A group of women as shown in figure 34 are attending an evening party in a restaurant. They are not only taking food but also sipping alcohol. A waitress is pouring alcohol down a jar, popularly known as Karuwa in Nepal. All the participants seem to be from different age groups and communities with different interest. Varieties of foods and drinks can be seen in front of them. Traditionally women were not supposed to be sipping alcohol. Even going to the hotel was considered to be immoral and unsocial and stereotypical roles. With this denial and rejection, they have been psychologically powerful and financially sound to be independent and free of the so called male domination.

**Fig. 35. Women Maoist Combatants, *Nepal* 9. 7(2008): PP 11**

But as time advances, women have defied their traditional roles and entered into the modern world. However, the researcher is not trying to justify alcohol drinking but showing women's gradual denial and rejection of the patriarchal set ups. Fig. 35. aims at analyzing the representation of women in Maoist insurgency. Out of the total 11 combatants walking along a rural walkway there are six women combatants. All are in combat dress, carrying rifles and guns along with their luggage. Maoist combatants are marching towards their destination shouldering their bags and rifles and guns. There are altogether 11 combatants marching along a rough rural road. Out of them 6 are the girls. Their representation suggests that women are becoming more conscious about national issues. They have sacrificed their fruitful days of their life in hope of transformation of Nepal in all sectors. They are there not for the sake of food and shelter but for the sake of better life of Nepali people. Their involvement has been a token of their intense love for freedom and liberation from all sorts of disparities and injustice. Ignoring their personal happiness and progress they have are involved in unascertained war against feudalism. The level of women's consciousness has increased after the armed conflict in the country in spite of great human and material loss.

The content analysis, given above nullifies the proposition that "the portrayal of women in photography" has served "to define otherness" and express male's "sexual fantasies in socially acceptable ways" (Schick 346). And it has established the contention that the photographic representation can even empower them.

## **Chapter: IV**

### **Documenting Subversion and Empowerment in Popular Photography**

The photographs were meant to record the moments of pain and pleasure in the past. But with the changing course of time, change has come in the function the photos carry out in the society. At present, they represent the politics that the photographer intends. Taking photographers' politics into consideration the research has been tilted towards empowering women by subverting the gender stereotypes. Thus, the photographs, selected for content analysis, represent the politics of empowerment. The politics of empowerment can be noticed in the photographs, representing the vast spectrum of life ranging from mourning, ploughing, driving, fighting to handling the government posts and cabinet. In a way, they represent women's movement from repressive private space to outstanding and open-aired public space. In addition, they represent almost all the sectors of society, including, cultural, social, political and economic phenomena.

The momentum gained during their journey into new space and their thirst of financial liberation ultimately leads them to empowerment. With the occupation of public space, women have broken and shaken the foundation and pillars of patriarchy, and probability of rooting out in near future cannot be denied. Entering in government job, driving, tilling land, undergoing rafting and bungee jumping, carving wood, making sculptor, handling AK-47 rifles are some of the examples of women's attempts for economic liberation. Fig. 4,,5,6,7,8 and 9 illustrate this attempt, by showing women's involvement in income generating activities. Their testimonial function was considered from the pages of the album, they were supposed to give us the flash back. In socio-cultural level women have become able to transform them as per the demand of the time. By performing death rituals, reciting Puranas, organizing

a get together party women have empowerment socially and culturally. Fig 2, 3 29,31 and 33 clear witness to this fact. Making them professionally involved in government services, security bodies, medical field, technical fields like flying planes, repairing stoves, bicycles and motorcycles and teaching women have not only invaded males' occupation but also gained economic liberation and secured their independence. The researcher claims that unless women are economically liberated efforts to empower women are meaningless. Women's involvement in government security bodies like Nepal Police, Nepal Army, Armed Police Force women have ruptured their traditional identity prescribed by patriarchy and the rupture has pushed them into new but independent world of their own as Butler claims, "Women can be emancipated only when she can take part on a large social scale in [. . .] degree" (86).

Politics is the most important apparatus in raising women's level consciousness and making women aware of their rights and duties. Patriarchy always wants to confine women in a narrow sphere and their effort to cross the boundary is against its norms and values. But with women's gradual involvement in politics in Nepal patriarchy has suffered a powerful blow. Women have reached in decision making level like Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers, Secretaries, Chief District Officers, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Vice-Chairperson of Constituent assembly and legislature parliament and holding top rank in political parties like Vice-chairperson and secretary, the photographs shown in fig 1, 20, 31, and represent women with the high political awareness and consciousness. Patriarchy always tries to break the pace of transformation of women.

In connection to the females' invasion into males' space Yami claims, "In reality, the vehicle of transformation of the society lies with women. Hence, the status-quoists will always try to jam this vehicle with religious rust" (9). But women

presented in the figures are being able to erase the patriarchal rust making them involved in different professions.

Education is the light of life without it life becomes completely dark and meaningless. Patriarchy always wants to keep women in ignorance and only education, the web of ignorance can be broken. Nepalese women have realized the importance of education and internalized its role in transforming them. As a result, women are found to be studying engineering, medical science, aeronautics and undergoing pilot trainings. Their level of consciousness has increased and they have become independent. All women presented in the figures have not only subverted their identity but also empowered them to lead an independent life. Their transformation has encouraged other females to follow their footprints and paths.

To sum up, the photographs, selected for content analysis, represent women's transition from the ignorance to knowledge, private space to public space poverty to prosperity, submission to independence. Thus, the photographs are infused with the photographer's politics of empowerment.



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