

I. War Literature: Misrepresentation of Socially Marginalized Issues in Nepalese War Stories

Every event becomes a source of creative exposure for the creative minds. The conflict and war also might be one of the apt sources for such writers, who try to depict the unavoidable sufferings of the war-torn society. The writing about war experience is called war literature. This writing about war takes us far back to the human civilization since epics like *The Odyssey*, *The Iliad*, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* were written about the war experiences. Categorically speaking, the trend of war writing in non-epic form began just before the World War I when some of the English poets composed few verses in order to express their patriotic feelings before the war and disillusionment after it. In the same way, Nepal also had to face a decade long internal conflict from 1996 to 2006. This conflict was initiated by Maoists with guerilla war. During and after that conflict, some of the creative writers started to express heart-touching experiences of violence through the medium of literature. To talk about those cataclysmic experiences, most of them have used fictional writings especially short stories.

The short stories came to be the surest means to unfold the sorrowful experiences about the destructions of decade-long conflict. During that decade the peace loving Nepalese people had to face the unimaginable events in their lives. Everywhere there were the news of sufferings, indiscriminate killings, bombings, raids and migrations. Thousands of innocent people had to suffer for nothing. The whole country drowned into the restlessness and disorder. Even the individual enmity was also attached with politics. Describing such horrific experiences, which are subject matter of war stories, Govind Raj Bhattarai argues:

From the beginning to the end of the 'people's war' led by the Maoists, almost all rules and laws that regulated society were suspended, safety and security were disrupted and consequently untoward events started taking place. Extortion, threat, detention, abduction, disappearance and death became the headlines of daily news. Appealing battles were fought, there were clashes and cross fires; countless were trapped in the ambush, many died and others were maimed or mutilated. Many fled the country. Armed forces clashed, transportation was disrupted and strikes became more frequently. Everyone was everyone's spy and enemy. The Nepalese people who had lived a peaceful life for centuries became the victims of unimaginable conflict. (7)

This statement reflects the real picture of war terminated Nepalese society of the time. There was no rule of law in the country as it was dysfunctional. The whole country plunged into the bloodbath and chaos. Every right of the individual was suspended in the war affected society. Even after that decade-long conflict, the country remained in the traumatic experiences of that devastation. After that horrific decade, the country came out with the new devastated scene which is yet to be reconstructed. Describing the outcome of that decade-long catastrophe, Govind Raj Bhattarai further says:

By the time it was over, more than thirteen thousand innocent people had lost their lives, many were maimed, many were displaced, others were left homeless and many fled the country being unable to bear torture and trauma, several villages turned vacant, desolate and deserted, even towns were no less terror stricken. The factories and industries were locked; much of the physical infrastructure was

destroyed. All this is beyond description. It was the greatest shock that a poor nation was forced to suffer. (9)

Every violence is destructive and it leaves life-long psychological problems. Though the physical wounds may be cured up in the long span of time, it is not possible to cure the mental trauma. Such experiences of devastation are the subject matters of war stories. During and after that decade-long conflict the writers have used those horrific settings in order to depict the conflict-terminated social experiences. The socially marginalized issues like ethnicity, women, children, Madheshi, Dalit and other religious minorities are also the subject matter of those war stories. Those people were equally tortured in that decade-long violence but the main stream writing trend has depicted such issues with certain kind of biased mentality and politics behind them.

Those marginalized social groups are not given ample spaces in the short stories written about that decade-long insurgency. The depiction of those issues is also not far from the writer's ideology. So, they are misrepresented because of the writer's own situatedness. The writer's background influences his/her creation, which turns out to be a matter of politics rather than containing the pure aesthetic form of pleasure. Despite their genuine attempt to depict the horrific outcomes of decade-long violence and to describe the socially marginalized issues like ethnicity, women, children, Madheshi, Dalit and other religious minorities in their stories, the short story writers have been misrepresenting them knowingly and unknowingly and using them for the purpose of individual writer.

The short story writers like Dhruva Chandra Gautam in "The Conclusion," Parashu Pradhan in "Sitas 23," Ramesh Vikal in "A Pair of Innocent Eyes," Mahesh Vikram Shah in "Chappamar Ko Chhoro" and "Bhatkeko Ghar ra Sapanaharu," Illiya Bhattarai in "Biplavi," Padmavati Singh in "The Silence of Violence," Sanat Regmi in

“The Curfew,” Raj Kumar Dikpal in “Liwang 2063” and “Rukubung,” Rajendra Parajuli in “The Void” and Ammaraj Joshi in “The Bond of Blood” are trying to depict the conflict-terminated Nepalese society in their respective stories. Using the same theme other story writers like Pradip Nepal in “The Motherly Doctor,” Pradip Gyawali in “Jamkavet,” Chandra Prakash Gajurel in “Pratisodh,” “Some,” and “Naya Khalka Manchheharu,” Rajendra Bimal in “The Lankuri Tree will Blossom Again,” Kalpana Adhikari in her Story “Hatiyar,” Ram Mani Pokhrel in “Hariman Ko Aatmahatya,” “Chhitari Budha,” “Chhorile Dekhayeko Maya” and “Saraswati Pashwan Ra Unko Gaun” and Saru Pokhrel in “Ajhae Parkhiraheki Chha” have used the sentimental issue of violence as the subject matter of their stories.

While depicting the effects of violence, those short story writers’ socio-cultural situatedness does not allow them expressing the social issues in real sense. Their individual biasness is reflected in the text knowingly and unknowingly. The individual writer has certain ideological influence, which is inevitably reflected in a literary text. In this context, the representation does not remain a real representation at all but misrepresentation only. When that very misrepresentation functions for certain purposes behind the text itself, that turns out to be politicization of the issues. In this context, Slavoj Zizek in the introduction of *Mapping Ideology* claims that, “An individual subjected to ideology can never say for himself “I am in ideology,” he always requires another corpus of doxa in order to distinguish his true position from it” (20). Every ideologically inspired writer projects oneself as the real harbinger of the truth and adjacent party or member as the demon. This ‘othering’ tendency helps to define him/her but the existence of ‘other’ is negatively presented. As Zizek says, in order to understand the influence of ideology upon the individual writer, the adjacent writer is essential and it is being tried in this analysis too.

The 'othering' tendency of Nepalese war stories is very similar to politicization of the issues. Because of the politics lurking behind the representation of those socially marginalized communities like ethnicity, women, Dalit, Madheshi, children and other religious minorities, the depicted issues turn out to be misrepresentation. For example, Raj Kumar Dikpal in his story "Liwang 2063" presents Dilsara Gharti Magar as a psychologically affected person, who had lost her son in the war six years ago and she is still pondering over that sorrow. The physical infrastructures are rebuilt, the wounded people are cured and everything is in normal condition after a long course of time. Though everything is rehabilitated at present, Dilsara's mind is fractured and bleeding forever. It is not possible to rehabilitate her psychological state. For Dilsara like psychologically affected person every relationship carries fears and uncertainty:

Every relationship posses new stress; every encounter may set off new fears; even friends and family now respond with blank stares and faltering conversation. The process is a turbulent one marked by feeling of guilt, then of hatred, then of fear. Nothing in the day is predictable, nothing in life is certain. (Cote and Simpson 163)

Violence causes life long mental retardation along with its physical destructions. The physical wound may be cured up in the long span of time but it is almost impossible to cure the psychological problem created by the violence as in Dilsara Gharti Magar's case. Posing Dilsara in "The flow of tears by the governmental arm bearer" ("Liwang 2063" 70) the writer Raj Kumar Dikpal is trying to win the sentiment of the readers. Dilsara, an ethnic character, is presented as a meek and weak figure who knows nothing about the ways to lessen her pain. While making her a victim of the then system, Dikpal is unknowingly exposing his attachment with the then rebellions.

The adjacent situatendess of the writer is clearly seen in Padmavati Singh's story "The Silence of Violence." Unlike Dikpal's description of mental suffering, Padmavati Singh talks about the physical threatening. She plays with the reader's sentiment when she projects Nirmaya, the central female character as a submissive figure before the rebels as the following statement shows:

After a moment, two rebels entered the house "Where have the people of this house disappeared . . . ?" One of them roared. Trembling with fear Nirmaya curled in her bed, "hey! Get up. We are hungry. Cook for us whatever you have" the other ordered.

Nirmaya got up with no words at all and began to kindle firewood in the hearth. She cooked the food and fed them. (80)

Nirmaya is presented as a defenseless bearer of the threatening as shown in this statement. Padmavati Singh, a woman writer, presents Nirmaya as a mouthpiece of violence-victim. It is not surprising that Nirmaya, a female character, is terrified and voiceless before the rebels with guns. Giving the traditional gender role into the kitchen for the central female character, the writer has been unable to come out from the patriarchy. The noteworthy point in the story is that the rebels are presented as the demons as "one of them knocked her down, gagging the hem of her sari into her mouth and the other stripped her naked and raped her" (Singh 81). The writer is using female body in order to demonize the then rebels. Behind the submissiveness of Nirmaya, the central character, the writer is using the anti-Maoist sentimentality. The traditional strategy of drawing the sympathy of the readers is functioning in the story, when the writer makes her female character as a victim of violence and draws attention of the readers. However, Singh has been successful to create terror stricken

image of the then Maoist warriors and such kind of image exposes the standpoint of the writer herself.

Raj Kumar Dikpal and Padmavati Singh have been successful to make the different images of the Maoists insurgency. From the contrary position of those two writers, it is obvious to acknowledge that the war story writers are also divided into two groups; a group of writers takes Maoist insurgency as the real harbinger of prosperity in the society and another group totally demonizes the so-called 'people's war' and depicts negative impacts of that decade-long insurgency specially caused by the then Maoists guerilla only. This division is caused because of the different ideological perspectives and situatedness of the writers. The ideology and situatedness of the individual writer leads towards the misrepresentation of the reality. When such misrepresented reality is used to fulfill the purpose of the writer, it turns out to be politicization of the issues.

Such kind of politics behind the representation can be seen in Chandra Prakash Gajurel's story "Sankalpa," in which a *Lahure* character Dhana Bahadur argues that, "it is our great fortune to involve in the great 'people's war' to free the nation completely, to free from the injustice and brutality and to change drastically in order to uplift the people from poverty" (My Translation 44). Gajurel's mouthpiece Dhana Bahadur lives in India to solve the problem of 'hand to mouth.' The sweet surrounding phrases like 'to uplift the people from poverty,' 'people's war' and 'to change drastically' give the direct influence of Maoist ideology and those were the main slogans of Maoists during the decade-long insurgency. That's why the insurgency sympathizers claim that the so-called 'people's war' was "an integral part of world's proletarian's revolution" (Dahal 255). The then Maoist would claim themselves as the real harbinger of equality and drastic change in the Nepalese

society. The same kind of claim is working in Dhana Bahadur's assertion also. While presenting Dhana Bahadur as a 'class conscious' figure, the story writer forgets the devastation behind the violence, which the writer is highlighting through out the story. The purpose behind such consciousness and self assertion of Dhana Bahadur is to hide the devastating effects of violence.

The same kind of positive image of the Maoist insurgency can be seen in Mahesh Vikram Shah's story "Bhatkeko Dhoka Ra Sapanaharu" also. In this story Shah demonizes the then security forces and unknowingly supports the insurgency, when he argues:

Jashmaya's family did not remain in peaceful condition for many years when her son Rane went to the jungle. Usually, attack of the security force's boot would open the door of her house and their tyrannical rule would spread in the house. The army would beat his (Rane's) father like to the yoked oxen in the pretension of Rane's departure to the jungle being a Maoist. He would vomit blood but could not speak out a word of pain. Jashmaya's daughter-in-law would be suffered because of army's lustrous gaze [. . .]. Army would come to her house frequently in alternate days in order to knock Jashmaya's door. In this way, one night they raided the whole village. Some villagers were arrested, among them one was Jashmaya's husband too. After that she did not know where her husband was taken. (My Translation 90)

Mahesh Vikram Shah is trying to win the sentiment of the readers by demonizing the army of the time through this statement. Thousands of Jashmaya like figures were tortured and battered by both conflicting parties of the time. Both parties; army and Maoists, were equally responsible for such kind of behaviour. The writer's politics of

playing with the sentimentality of the readers has been helping to create a positive image of Maoist insurgency. In this sense Shah's standpoint sounds political in his presentation of socially marginalized Jashmaya and "a political standpoint gives of its social content, which can prove totally wrong yet there is absolutely nothing ideological about it" (Zizek 7).

Mahesh Vikram Shah is not guided by Maoist ideology but highlights the political cause rather than Jashmaya's suffering. No doubt, she suffers because of politics. In this sense politics is indistinguishably mixed with literature. The same idea is further strengthened in Puspa Kamal Dahal's statement as quoted by Chaitanya, "Actually, politics is literature and literature is politics with their own standard values. Both have non-distinguishing struggling relation to be complementary with each other. Despite being so, politics leads and plays the superior role" (My Translation 89). This political statement, Gajurel's ideological influence and Shah's political exaggeration meet at the same point that the politics is superior to literature.

Chaitanya, Gajurel and Shah highlight the political issue forgetting the aesthetic value of literature. The 'othering' tendency is explicitly seen in them. When the politics is highlighted and the value of literature is undermined, the literary writing turns out to be a matter politics and depicted issues also do not get represented properly as we have already seen in the case of Gajurel's Dhan Bahadur and Shah's Jashmaya. The same kind of 'othering' tendency is seen among the writers who reject the then Maoist insurgency and expose the Maoist brutality with biased mentality. They create a negative image of Maoists insurgency. Their inhuman killings, threatening, sexual abuses, loots, robbery and terror in the mind of the people are highlighted and exposed in a greater extent in order to politicize the represented issues. This group of writers demonizes the Maoist insurgency and their guerilla

warfare and creates anti-Maoist sentiment in the reader's mind unknowingly supporting the then system. Such kind of politics behind the narrativity is seen in Rajendra Bimal's story "The Lankuri Tree will Blossom Again" too when he says:

He (Kaude) was only fed up with such everyday talks, but having returned to his village, he has begun to experience the entire village getting gradually enveloped in fear and terror all around. Having heard how the Maoist destroyed the lives of the youth in the 'people's war' by chanting the slogan of "one family-one person", could chill go down his spine. (60-61)

The Maoists are projected as the forceful recruiter in their 'People's Liberation Army' and Kaude, the central character, is fed up with such kind of fear arising everyday talks. He is frightened for "listening to the fearsome talks about the Maoist exploding the bridges, factories, telephone and electricity offices, police stations and offices, the killing of men in the ambush, the killing of countless Nepalese in the crossfire with the security force" (60). Such presentation of Maoists as the destroyer of every thing indicates the writer's own attitude towards them. The politics behind such demonic representation helps to create a negative image of the Maoist. Appropriating such demonic image of Maoists and their decade long insurgency, Dhruva Chandra Gautam in his story "The Conclusion" argues that, 'Every war is precisely faceless' (53). Parajjuli and Gautam sound anti-war writers and anti-Maoist as well. Here comes a big question, whether the Maoist war was 'faceless' and demonic as they presented or not? However, such negative representation is the outcome of the writers themselves.

Finally, it can be said that both groups of writers; insurgency sympathizers and the supporters of then state prevailed system are aware of creating such negative

images of the adjacent parties. The short story writers have been failed to present the issues factually because of their ideological bents and socio-politico-cultural situatedness. Though some of the writers are aware about the neutrality of their position, their bent is knowingly and unknowingly exposed in the war stories since every writer has certain situatedness within the certain socio-politico-cultural location. This negative representation of adjacent group clarifies the writer's position and his/her sympathy upon the certain party. This situation is inevitably related with politics, which misrepresents the certain socially marginalized communities.

II. Situatedness of the Text and Writer: A New Historical Reading of Nepalese War Stories

New historicism, a critical trend against the traditional historical perspective and new critical 'close reading', accepts the text with the certain context. The individual text can't be a 'self-sufficient entity' within itself, neither the writer can be truly objective towards the object which he/she describes because both the writer and the text have own situatedness. Every literary or non-literary text shapes and is shaped by the culture in which it is written. So, there is mutual constitutive relationship between the text and context because both overlap and help to form each other. The linear sequence of events and their objective analysis is impossible because of different perspectives looking at them. The context determines the perspectives towards the event. So, every text is an interpretation and there are various possible ways to interpret an event. The writer's ideology is consciously or unconsciously operated in a text. That's why a text turns out to be a mere representation of a certain event. So, the text itself can not be inevitably truthful but a representation. The same situatedness of the writers can be seen in Nepalese war stories also.

New historicism, as a critical tool, is originated from Michael Foucault and expanded with Stephen Greenblatt. This critical trend sprouted to reject the traditional definition of history as a "linear progression of events" (Tyson 283). The new historicism as a critical tool, "eschews totalities, teleologies and grand narratives" (Veaser 4). Even the historians, who claim to give the factual and objective analysis of the event also, can not do so because they have also certain situatedness and ideological bent. Casting the light on the same issue Lois Tyson says:

Like all human beings, historians live in a particular time and place, and their views of both current and past events are influenced in

innumerable conscious and unconscious ways by their own experience within their own culture. Historians may believe they are being objective, but their own views of what is right and what is wrong, what is civilized and what is uncivilized, what is important and what is unimportant, and the like will strongly influence the ways in which they interpret events. (Tyson 283)

As Lois Tyson says, human being is social animal and he/she lives within a socio-cultural boundary of a certain time and space. Because of being limited within the certain norms and values, the writer can not be truly objective towards the event. His/her individual judgment is more or less reflected in the text. The writer presents his/her individuality consciously or unconsciously. Even if the writer tries to be objective as far as possible, he can not be as such because of his own grounding. There are multiple socio-economic and cultural factors of an event for its analysis. For example, Pradip Nepal, a prominent short story writer, presents Relimai, an ethnic character, as his mouth-speak in story “The Motherly Doctor”. The writer presents this woman as a conscious character, who says that, “their (Maoists’) task is to kill and mine is to save” (125). The writer is presenting his own view through the voice of Relimai. From this statement Pradip Nepal clearly sounds anti-Maoist and knowingly and unknowingly supporting the then state prevailed system. The Maoist guerrilla abuse this social figure Relimae and say, “Hey Bhotini, don’t step on the door yard. You criminal, whore, you think you can hide your crime, keeping your mouth shut?” (ibid). Here the writer ventriloquizes the ethnic character Relimae.

On the one hand the writer demonizes the Maoist guerrilla as their “three bullets happened to pierce her chest” (126) despite having no crime of the central character Relimae. On the other hand he makes Relimae weak and meek as she ‘was

dumbfounded' while seeing the Maoist guerrilla though she was politically conscious figure. Pradip Nepal misrepresents both; Maoists and Relimae. It happens because of the writer's own situatedness and biased mentality. The crucial aspect in his representation is that Pradip Nepal bends one-sidedly towards Relimae while demonizing the Maoists but the same writer speaks through the Maoist guerrilla while inferiorizing Relimae, an ethnic character. So, the diversity in representation makes the writing controversial and the writer's ground is seen in such controversial situations. The same case is applied in historical texts also.

In fact, new historicism does not believe in distinct classification between historical and non-historical texts, since all the texts are cultural artifacts. Defining this idea Louis Montrose argues that, "the newer historical criticism (New Historicism) could claim to be new in refusing unexamined distinctions between "literature" and "history" between "text" and "context" in resisting a tendency to posit and privilege an autonomous individual-whether an author or a work to be set against a social or literary background" (398). As this statement claims, new historicism does not accept distinction between literature and history and text and context. Both are incorporated with each other. The literary texts are also colored with certain individual biasness. Both literary and non-literary writers, "take unusual pains to erase the elements in their works, which reveal their grounding in a particular time and place, their preferences in a controversy- the unavoidable obstacles of their passion" (Foucault 90). Michael Foucault, the pioneer of new historicism as a critical trend as such, opines that the individual writer is also not free from his prejudices. Though the individual, tries to erase such biased attitudes from the text consciously, some of the clues are unavoidable and come in the text unconsciously too.

When there is controversial situation, the writer knowingly or unknowingly bows towards a side, which does not allow him/her to be free. Such kind of unavoidable biasness can be seen in Ramesh Vikal's war story "The Pair of Innocent Eyes" too when he speaks through the perspective of army men and says, "These terrorists have already taken flight after the carnage. Today also we are late. We are always four steps behind the criminals" (31). In this statement Ramesh Vikal sounds sarcastic towards both conflicting parties; army and Maoists, but the dichotomy between the terms 'we' and 'criminals' discloses the real ground of the writer. The Maoists are termed as 'terrorists', 'carnage' creators and 'criminals'. Seemingly the army and Maoist both are criticized but the writer's anti-Maoist mentality is unavoidable in the story. Vikal is against of such 'carnage' culture.

New historicism believes that the literary text is both a product and producer of a culture. Like history, literary text also can not be independent but relative. Casting the light on the same issue M. H. Abrams argues that, "new historicists conceive of a literary text as "situated" within the institutions, social practices, and discourses that constitute the overall culture of a particular time and place, and with which the literary text interacts as both a product and a producer of cultural energies and codes" (183). The literary text is created within the certain context, which includes institutions, social practices, discourses, beliefs, cultural power relations etc. That very context helps to form a literary text and the same text turns out to be a documented proof for the culture. So, the text is both product and producer of cultural practices. The culture itself is situated within the particular time and space. The power is circulated within the culture and it functions to form a text.

Culture of a certain time and place governs the behavior of an individual and that very influence is seen in literary text also. The Nepalese war stories are also

based on the then violent socio-cultural experiences of the people. Casting the light on the same issue Stephen Greenblatt quotes Clifford Greetz, who argues that culture lies in “complexes of concrete behavior patterns-costumes, usages, traditions, habitual clusters [. . .] a set of control mechanisms- plans, recipes, rules, instructions[. . .] for the governing of behavior” (3). So, culture is a kind of control mechanism for the human behavior. In such cultural ground, the individual literary writer can’t be independent neither can create an autonomous literary text as Stephen Greenblatt further clarifies:

The cultural system of meaning (that) creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment. Literature functions within this system in three interlocking ways; as a manifestation of the concrete behavior of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which the behavior is shaped, and as a reflection upon these codes. [. . .]. If interpretation limits itself to the behavior of the author, it becomes literary biography (in either a conventionally historical or psychoanalytic mode) and risks losing a sense of the larger networks of meaning in which both the author and his works participate. If, alternatively, literature is viewed exclusively as the expression of social rules and instructions, it risks being absorbed entirely into an ideological superstructure. (314)

Greenblatt is of the opinion that the culture is such mechanism, which governs the individual from abstract potentiality to concrete performance. The individual deserves the abstract potentiality before but that is dominated by the culture when an individual is attached with certain culture. Because of the culture, the individual has to be

situated within the concrete historical embodiment. This is a system, in which the literature operates. On the one hand, literature exposes the individual behavior because of being a constitutive of a culture and on the other hand, the socio-cultural codes are manifested in the same text because of having the influence of same cultural practices. In such situation, the individual writer has the risk of losing the strength of literary writing. So, the writer has both “personal ambition and a complex involvement in the world of competitive enterprise and political compromise” (Foucault 55). Personal ambition and political compromise of the writer resemble with the individual biasness and political ideology. Because of those qualities Nepalese war stories have been like the political documents of the concerned writer. For example, Chandra Prakash Gajurel’s story “Some” turns out to be like a political document when he forms positive image by projecting his central character “Some” below the poverty line as he narrates:

Some had not been able to understand the fact that it is not the god or any lord to create such differences between true friends, who shared the same earth, same sky, same air, same water, same village and same place but the social system. No one had tried to persuade him that it is not the fate for such discrimination but dominant class and its system. Some had not known that it is not possible to eliminate such discrimination by hitting on one’s forehead but the whole society should be completely changed through struggle and fighting. (My Translation 33)

Through this statement Gajurel is directly and indirectly exposing political ideology and inspiring Some, the central character, to go to the war as he implies and the war is only the liberating force to uplift the poverty stricken condition of Some like figures

in the society. By taking the side of Some's poverty, the writer is forming a positive image of war, since "the dire state of the economy has been considered as one of the prime causes of the spread of violence and insurgency in Nepal" (Karki 447-48). In this statement the writer's personal ambition is to implant the political ideology in the mind of Some and to hide the mass destruction of the war. So, this story contains political agenda and turns out to be like a political document, since he directly highlights the violent struggle. The power of rebellious culture is functioning in the story.

That dominant power of culture is called 'discipline' by Michael Foucault. Casting the light on the same issue he further argues that, "the individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an ideological representation of society: but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called discipline" (204). As Foucault says human being is determined by the society. His/her behavior is shaped by the same society in the name of discipline. The individual has to follow certain norms and values in the name of the society because of which s/he is guided by. He/she can not exercise full freedom because of the society, in which he/she lives. Foucault further clarifies that, "Discipline "makes" individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individual both as objects and instruments of its exercise" (188). So, in reality the individual can not get his complete freedom. The society regulates the individual and he/she has to perform certain duties assigned by the society. That's why war story writers are also influenced by their respective society, which automatically operates in their stories.

Like individual behavior, the literary text is also socio-cultural artifact. The literary writing is located within the certain time and space. So, the matter of aestheticism is no longer there in the literary writing since the location and individual

biasness are reflected. Clarifying the same issue, M.H. Abrams talks about the temporal and spatial location of literary texts:

Literature does not occupy a “trans-historical” aesthetic realm which is independent of the economic, social and political conditions specific to an era, nor is literature subject to timeless criteria of artistic value. Instead, a literary text is simply one of many kinds of texts- religious, philosophical, legal, and scientific and so on- all of which are formed and structured by the particular condition of a time and place, and among which the literary text has neither unique status nor special privilege. (184)

As Abrams argues that the new historicism does not take literary text with its unique status neither it deserves any higher space but simply a dependent artifact of certain culture. The aesthetic quality is no longer there in a literary text because of its ‘situatedness’. In order to have aesthetic quality in an art form, it should be completely independent. In this context Jeremy Hawthorn states that, “the concept of the aesthetic has been applied to what are claimed to be universal and/or irreducible rather than context- dependent characteristics” (5). The aesthetic theory believes in the ‘trans-historical’ nature of a text, which means a literary text deserves equal significance forever and everywhere. Quite contrarily, new historicism denounces the universal and irreducible quality of a text. Unlike the claim of aesthetic theorists, new historicists believe in context dependent nature of a text. So, new historicism is anti-aesthetic critical trend too. That is the cause the war stories don’t have pure aesthetic qualities as they are bounded within the limited time and space.

New historicism, as a critical tool, believes in the exposure of hidden subtext, which is always disturbing and problematic for the ideologically composed cultural

artifact. In this sense new historicism has a focus on the historical narratives of the marginalized people. In this sense, it shouts the voice from the margin to the center. A text, whether historical or non-historical, has a dominant voice and other multiple voices are suppressed. In fact, new historicism exposes such suppressed voices but it does not mean that it discards the dominant voice. In order to analyze a text, new historicism uses both 'primary' and 'secondary sources,' whereas the traditional historicists use 'primary sources' only. Here 'primary sources' refer to those written form of texts, which are documented for the later generations like documents, written statistics, diaries, speeches, tracts, legal codes, letters, news articles, policies, producers etc. The 'secondary sources' are narratives of the marginal people and their forceful adaptation of the so-called dominant power.

The new historical idea of margin to the center resembles with Linda Hutcheon's idea of 'historiographic metafiction'. Linda Hutcheon, a postmodern cultural critic, believes that every text whether historical or non historical is 'historiographic metafiction'. She further says that, "historiographic metafiction incorporates all three (fiction, history and theory) areas of concern. Its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human construct (historiographic metafiction) is made ground for its rethinking and reworking of forms and concepts of the past" (246). Hutcheon's idea of 'historiographic metafiction' incorporates with new historicism as it has "a reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history" (quoted in Abrams 183). Every text is fictional because it is man made. Every text is history and every history is a text but they do not have any independent nature because both are related with each other and help to constitute each other. So, there is reciprocal relation between history and a literary text.

A text gives its historicity because it has certain backgrounds with certain temporal and spatial location and the same text tries to textualize the history. Each literary text incorporates with specific time and place, which is called history and it is written with certain theoretical background, which may be termed as 'ideology' in new historicism. So far the ideology is concerned; it is inevitable in a text, whether it is historical or non-historical. Defining the term ideology Louis Montrose states that, "Traditionally ideology has referred to the system of ideas, values and beliefs common to any social group; in recent years, this vexed but indispensable term has come to be associated with the process by which social subjects are formed, reformed and enabled to perform in an apparently meaningful world" (396). Montrose is of the opinion that the definition of the term 'ideology' is changed and no one is detached from being formed and is forming as it is a process. While forming a text, this process is inevitably reflected in the creation. So, it is not possible to find such texts, which are not affected from ideology.

The ideology "interpellates individual as subjects" (quoted in Montrose 396). When an individual is interpellated, he/she can't reflect the empirical reality rather interprets the reality as Ram Mani Pokhrel does in his story "Hariman ko Aatmahatya" when the writer wears the mask of a Dalit political leader and says, "what can we do by delivering the speeches about 21st century, there is nothing new in practices, we Dalits are always Dalits, untouchable and second class citizens" (14). While presenting the Dalit leader, who has been a minister also, with such defeated mentality, Ram Mani Pokhrel's *Brahmin* ideology is evident. Though Ram Mani Pokhrel claims himself as a progressive writer, his sense of superiority is clearly seen in his story. The depiction of a Dalit character turns out to be a biased representation

of the writer's own. Montrose further defines how the representation turns out to be a construction and imposition of ideology:

Representation of the world in written discourse participate in the construction of the world: they are engaged in shaping the modalities of social reality and in accommodating their writers, performers, readers, and audiences to multiple and shifting positions within the world that they themselves both constitute and inhabit. In such terms, our professional practice is, like our subject matter, a production of ideology. (396)

Montrose is of the opinion that the writer is inherently biased towards the object, which s/he describes. S/he represents the object in his/her perspective. That very representation itself turns out to be an ideology as we have already seen in Rammani Pokhrel's story. So, every text is ideology laden. Casting the light on the same issue Montrose further clarifies:

Ideology can be said to exist only as it is instantiated in particular in particular forms and practices, including those traditionally categorized as literature and as criticism. All texts are ideologically marked, however multivalent or inconsistent that inscription may be. And if the ideological status of texts in the literary canon is necessarily over determined and unstable, it is so precisely as a condition and consequence of their canonicity. (405)

Because of exposing the dominant ideology, new historicism tries to disclose the unacknowledged voices in the text. Those undermined voices are important aspects to find out the contextual meaning of a text. As new historicism raises the voice from the margin, it involves 'thick description' but it does not mean that it totally avoids the

center or 'thin descriptions'. Describing the attempts of new historicism Lois Tyson gives her idea:

In addition to its focus on marginalized historical narratives, new historical analysis involves what is called *thick description*, a term borrowed from anthropology. Thick description attempts, through close, detailed examination of a given cultural production- such as birthing practices, ritual ceremonies, games, penal codes, works of arts, copy right laws, and the like- to discover the meanings that particular cultural production had for the people in whose community it occurred and to reveal the social conventions, cultural codes, and ways of seeing the world that gave that production those meanings. (288)

On the one hand, new historicism accepts dominant voice or 'thin description' and on the other hand, that very thin description is analyzed with the help of the thick description. The text is analyzed with the help of subtexts. As other postmodern thinkers, new historicism also does not believe in ultimate truth but an interpretation. Everything of the time might be useful for such 'thick description' out of which an interpretation is made as M. Aram Veesser quotes Seen Wiletz who states that, "not just public verbal forms (speeches, sermons, parliamentary debates) but rather all kinds of signs and rhetoric- public and private, verbal and nonverbal- are open for interpretation" (8). So, everything might be a clue for further analysis, which is also one of the interpretations only. Interpreting any text is also a reflection of an ideology. So, "the academic profession of literature is impure" (Montrose 397).

For the new historicists, the very interpretation itself is based on language, which is also a construction of human beings. The language also has a sense of embeddedness as it is a collective construction. So, it also has not independent nature

like its compositions. Casting the light on the same issue Stephen Greenblatt further speaks about the linguistic construction:

Social actions are themselves always embedded in systems of public signification, always grasped, even by their makers, in acts of interpretation, while the words that constitute the works of literature (that we discuss here) are by their very nature the manifest assurance of a similar embeddedness. Language, like other sign system is also a collective construction; our interpretative task must be to grasp more sensitively the consequences of this fact by investing both the social presence to the world of the literary text and the social presence of the world in the literary text. (5)

As Greenblatt opines that the language is a system and it is also a product of culture. Highlighting the same idea Louis Montrose further claims that language is a “system of codes (that) regulates social life by “governing” the production of those ensembles of conventions, practices and artifacts” (399). So, both language and literary text have socio- cultural imbeddedness and new historicists should be aware of the sensitivity of such facts while making the interpretive tasks. From Greenblatt and Montrose, we come to understand that the new historical reading itself can not be purely objective in its analysis since the language itself has embedded nature.

Every text has context and the individual influence is knowingly or unknowingly exposed in the text. The subjectivity is unavoidable in an interpretation. The new historicists also might be prey of such own individual biasness. For that, the new historicists practise the method of ‘self positioning’. They are aware of the psychological and ideological self indulgence in the task of interpretation. The new historicists announce their own socio-cultural grounds to eliminate such biasness. For

example, Louis Montrose, a renaissance scholar accepts his own ground while interpreting renaissance literary figures, as Lois Tyson quotes and comments Montrose:

He (Montrose) tells us that he has a personal investment in those representations of the renaissance in texts for which he feels a particular affinity, such as those of Shakespeare and Spenser. Furthermore, he acknowledges that, in analyzing these texts, he writes about issues that are socially relevant today because he wants to participate not only in the current rethinking of Elizabethan culture but in the current thinking of our own culture. Finally, Montrose admits that although his writing works to undermine traditional historical approaches to literary scholarship- such as the traditional demarcation of a finite period called the renaissance to which specific cultural qualities are attributed- he has, as a professor and renaissance scholar, 'a complex and substantial stake in sustaining and reproducing the very institutions where operations [he] wish [es] to call in to questions'.
(290)

The individuality is unavoidable in an interpretation despite the fact that the interpreter is aware of his/her own groundings. Because of this awareness, the new historicists reveal their own situatedness. As in Montrose's statement, he himself foregrounds the renaissance issues, which are socially relevant for his contemporary society. While rethinking about the renaissance, he comes to think about his own society too.

Finally, the new historicism as a critical tool does not accept the historical events as in the form of events only but analyze their interpretations, ways of

presentation and the discourses, which help to form and are formed by the text.

Nothing is detached from the context neither the writer can be truly objective towards the object he/she describes. The individual ideology is operated in a text knowingly or unknowingly. Every text has certain situatedness as we have seen in Nepalese war stories too. So, it has impossibility of objective analysis. The readers also have to locate the text in that context in which it is written. That is why the text and context have mutual constitutive relationship with each other as both have certain situatedness.

III. Politics Behind the Socio-Cultural Representations in Nepalese War Stories

Literature is the reflection of socio-cultural condition of the time. The individual and socio-cultural milieu of the certain time and space help to create a literary text. So, the individual writer and the text have certain 'situatedness'. Nepalese war stories are also not exception in this context. The short story writers have used the devastating effects of the Maoist insurgency as the subject matter for their short stories. As we have already seen in the introduction of this dissertation, Nepalese war stories are divided in to two categories; war sympathizer and supporter of the then state prevailed system. However, they are essentially influenced by the ideology of the individual and socio-cultural practices of the time. Despite having numerous stories about a decade-long conflict and war in Nepal, all of them are not collected thematically, neither has anyone attempted to study about them to excavate their essence. The researchers have not cast their eyes towards this subject matter till the date. As a virgin field of analysis, this dissertation will try analyze socio-cultural representation, especially socially marginalized communities like ethnicity, women, Dalit, Madheshi, children and other religious minority groups in the Nepalese war stories, written during and aftermath of the Maoists insurgency.

The then Maoist party inaugurated guerrilla war on 13th Feb 1996 in Nepal with the motto of classlessness in the social structure and it lasted till 2006. During that decade-long period, the country had to face the unimaginable sufferings like killings, bombing, abduction, migration, rape etc. The country came out with new devastated scenes in terms of infrastructure, physical and mental sufferings among the Nepalese people. During and aftermath of that terrible war some of the creative writers have used short stories as a means to express those indelible sufferings of the people, who were directly and indirectly affected from that war. Because of their own

backgrounds, the short story writers have the influence of individuality, ideology and socio-cultural practices in their creations. While reflecting the socio-cultural issues the short stories have been creating and reflecting the discourses of the time. The issues of ethnic tribes, Madheshi, Dalit, women, children and other minority groups have been misrepresented in the mainstream war story writing trend of Nepal. The misrepresentations and one-sided interpretations further lead to the underestimation. So, the main concern here is that the short story writers have not been free from their individual biasness, socio-cultural influence, prevailed discourses and political ideologies in their stories while depicting those communities. This dissertation will try to excavate the politics behind those representations.

Ethnicity as Inferior Type

The issue of ethnicity is socially and politically marginalized in the context of Nepal. The same situation is reflected in Nepalese literary writing also. While talking about the main stream writing trend of Nepal the ethnic issues are taken as type.

Whatever the perspectives the writers use in war stories regarding the ethnicity, the first and foremost ideology is their tribal superiority. Before entering in to the domain of ethnic representation in the war stories, it is worthy to talk about the development of the ethnic consciousness because the development of ethnic sense itself is responsible for such kind of misrepresentation in the literary writing.

The issue of ethnicity is perhaps the latest field of study in the context of Nepal, though it has a long history in the western study. When the term 'ethnicity' started to get its recognition in Nepal, it was nearer to marginalization and that often seems to remain implied in the contemporary usages too. Defining the concept of ethnicity, Bill Ashcroft and others quote Schermerhorn and say that, "ethnicity refers to the fusion of many traits that belong to the nature of any ethnic group; a composite

of shared values, beliefs norms, tastes, behaviors, experiences, consciousness of kind, memories and loyalties” (80). The ethnic tribe should have a collective identity with a common myth of decent. It should have a shared history and culture in association with a specific territory. The ethnic tribe is supposed to have own language with a sense of solidarity among its members. For that solidarity they should have a common ground to be accumulated with. The same idea is further strengthened in David N. Gellner’s definition also as he states, “when a given population shares a common language, a common attachment to a given territory, or at least a historical link to these shared features, it thereby constitutes an ethnic group. And this is so even though it is made up of different castes, who believe that they have different origin” (16). Because of having different features in distinct tribal communities, the ethnic tribes are categorized according to the socio-cultural situation of that country.

In the context of Nepal, the government has distinguished 59 native and ethnic tribes. Most of them have their own distinct shared cultural practices, which help to unite themselves within the certain norms and values of their own though they are changed during the span of time. The Nepalese government had formed a council called *Janajati Utthan Pratisthan Karyadal 2053* to find out the real status of Nepalese ethnic tribes in 2053 B.S. That council has given a new definition of ethnic tribes as:

Ethnic tribes are those communities, which are having own mother language, having traditional customs but not included in the four *Varna* system of Hindu *Varnashram*, having own cultural identity, language, religion and customs, having own traditional social structure on the basis of equality with written or not written history, having the

feelings of “we”, not having the decisive role in the state affairs and having a claim of being natives. (1/2)

This definition is officially approved in the context of Nepal. The issue of ethnicity is gradually getting recognition in the country after the formation of that council.

Various ethnicity based political parties are formed though they are not acknowledged theoretically and thousands of national and international non-governmental organizations are working in the ethnic upliftment programs as ethnic tribes were marginalized in the Nepalese main stream politics before. The main stream political parties also have formed their sister organizations of those ethnic people but the sorrowful matter is that those ethnic based sister organizations have been only the vote banks for them. In fact the lives of those tribal people have not been changed and they are still marginalized. The same marginalized situation of ethnic people can be seen in Nepalese war stories too.

The issue of ethnicity in war stories is nominal though it is seriously raised in the Nepalese politics. The writers use bitter experiences of the decade-long war as the subject matter for their stories, but the ethnic issues are marginalized from the main stream story writing trend as in the socio-economic practices. Even the writers from ethnic tribes also do not present their own tribal experiences as the subject matter of their war stories. The writers, who present the tribal issues, are also not far from the dominant ideology of the society. Those issues and characters of ethnic tribes are presented either with defeated mentality or in insignificant way. Such tribal issues and characters are under the narrative domination of the writers. In his story “Liwang 63,” the story writer Raj Kumar Dikpal presents an ethnic issue in the following way:

In this way, there is no excitement in Dilsara Gharti Magar’s heart though Liwang is blooming in youth hood. The old woman’s heart is

restless since her only son Purnaman was taken to ask something by the governmental arm bearers from her own village Iriwang. The flow of tears went on from the eyes of Dilsara like the water of Dhansikhola but the condition of Purnaman became like the nun-returned water of Dhansikhola.

“Sir, mother’s condition became as such, when the son, who had been reared with trouble, didn’t return”.

While I was having meal, her daughter Baisamali said one day providing curry. (My Translation 70)

We can deduce the narrative domination and misrepresentation of Dilsara Gharti Magar, a member of an ethnic tribe. The narrator had gone there as a social worker funded by an INGO. He has a kind of superior status, which we can know from Baisamali’s address as ‘sir’. Dilsara has to do nothing else since she is mentally retarded. Such cases happen in war-torn country because the humanitarian values do not operate in proper way neither can function the law and order in such a country. No doubt, Dilsara is psychologically affected because of her only son who has been lost but the narrator, who had gone there for the purpose of ‘rehabilitation’ can do nothing else to rehabilitate Dilsara. It shows double politics in Dilsara's case. On the one hand the ethnic-upliftment program itself is questioned and on the other hand the narrator is pejorized.

Being sponsored by an INGO the narrator had gone to Liwang for adventurous task but the shameful aspect is that he seems as a weak person and can do nothing for Dilsara like people. Showing his weak condition, the narrator further says, “to peep through the window of the office and to see this statue like woman has been my extracurricular activity” (ibid). The big question can be raised from this statement

whether he was working for real rehabilitation or not if he has to peep through the window. The comparison of Dilsara's tears with Dhansikhola's water itself is dominating. However, Dilsara is presented as a meek and weak character, who has known nothing else about the national and international human right organizations, neither she is taken anywhere for the treatment. In this case also, the question returns to the narrator because he was working in an organization for rehabilitation. The narrator as a mouth piece of the writer can do nothing else for Dilsara and she has to pass her days looking towards the mountain range with mental disarray. The writer Raj Kumar Dikpal has not been fair in the presentation of Dilsara Gharti Magar because of individual ideology. His real politics behind such misrepresentation is to support the rebellious by demonizing the state army, who made Dilsara as a fractured person.

The narrative domination is reflected in a text because of the writer's ideology. The writer is not far from his/her socio-cultural and institutional influence as Lois Tyson says, "Every society constrains individual thought and action within a network of cultural limitations while it simultaneously enables individuals to think and act" (284). In Tyson's view the individual can not operate his/her complete free will, since he/she is limited within the framework of the society. Because of the social constrains, the individual thinking is also influenced. So his/her position is inevitably reflected in a text. While talking about the war stories, some of the writers are totally against of Maoists war and some are in favor of it. Such kind of 'othering' tendency is created because of their situatedness. We can see such demonizing tendency in "The Motherly Doctor" by Pradip Nepal, who knowingly and unknowingly exposes his own ground when he writes:

Relimai felt as if she were electrocuted. She had heard that sometimes the jungles come to the village but she had never imagined that she would encounter the gang of jungles in her own yard in the broad daylight. For some moments, storm of terror locked her heart. The day when she was parting from her husband flashed through her mind.

(123)

Pradeep Nepal presents Relimai Tamang, an educated woman from an ethnic tribe in a village setting. To pass 10th grade among the illiterate villagers was not less important for a village woman at that time, when Relimai is presented. She is married to a school teacher and given birth two children, who have been matured already. Relimae is a health worker and everyone calls her “Daktarni Aama” in the village. Her family seems educated in the context of village including Relimai. But the statement quoted above presents Relimai as a weak and innocent woman as if she knows nothing else about the contemporary socio-political situation in the country.

In fact, she was more conscious and self maker of her own identity. Her bold nature is shown in this statement, when Nepal narrates, “There was nobody to ask after her by the name of her husband or son” (122). She had made her identity by own self. Such educated and social leader like person startles when she sees the Maoists. Her fear is focused with the term ‘electrocuted’. Here, the writer’s politics of making her frightened figure is to demonize the Maoists. He cunningly uses Relimae’s fear in order to make the satanic image of the Maoists. Relimae feels shocked to see the ‘revolutionaries’, since she had already known that, “The jungles are also human beings” (121) and they will not harm her as she further questions, “for what reason should they take me as their enemy?”(ibid). From the presentation of Maoists as the demons, who are the sole cause of terror in Relimai’s mind, and use of pejorative

terms like 'Junglese' and 'gang' indicate that the story writer Pradip Nepal is against of the war launched by Maoists. Writer's position is exposed when he makes a myth like narrative about the Maoists who would have to come at night only.

In the process of making such anti-Maoist myth, Pradip Nepal as a writer is being unknowingly an anti-ethnic too because he demonizes not only Maoists but inferiorizes Relimai too. The shock of Relimai is also to see the Maoist at day time but not at night as she had heard. Nepal's situatedness is clear in his presentation of his mouthpiece Relimai as a savior and Maoists as the destroyer. In the same story, he further casts the light on the same issue when Relimai is killed by the Maoists for no cause, as he further argues "she had received two blows of the *khukuri* on her neck. Three bullets happened to pierce her chest" (126). A savior is murdered by the destroyer. The story writer is creating image of terror about Maoists through this statement.

The same image of terror is created by the writers, who have sympathy for the Maoists war too. Chandra Prakash Gajurel in his story "Naya Khalka Manchheharu" creates such image of terror about Maoists and says, "Suddenly, the constable's face turned out to be pale; when he heard the name of Maoists. He breathed long breath as Usss..! Constable's heart-beat increased suddenly. He remembered the event of Bethan. His hands and legs were paralyzed at a time. He desired to sit on the floor" (My Translation 21). The terror-stricken image of Maoists is appropriated knowingly or unknowingly by the sympathizers themselves. In fact, Gajurel is demonizing the then established system and valorizing the then Maoists war in his story, "Naya Khalka Manchheharu" but the image created in the mind of the constable about the Maoists is terror-stricken. Gajurel has unknowingly foregrounded this terrific image of the Maoists.

Pradip Nepal and Chandra Prakash Gajurel are presenting the Maoists war from the opposite poles. The former was totally against of it and the later was active participant but the terrific image of Maoists has been meeting point between the both writers. Despite having different socio-political situatedness, both have presented the terror-stricken image of Maoists at the time of guerrilla war. Nepal and Gajurel both are using the tribal characters Relimai and Thir Bahadur as the weak and terrified figures as though both are in social services. Both of the writers have knowingly and unknowingly imposing their own dominant ideology in the narratives, though they are presenting the characters from adjacent perspectives. In terms of representation of tribal people, both are in the same grounding. That very same cultural situatedness is functioning consciously and unconsciously to bring both to the meeting point in terms of ethnic representation.

The cultural influence is unavoidable in a literary text. Every kind of discourse, which is created to regulate the human beings according to the norms, is called 'ideology'. In new historical term that very influence is called cultural ideology. Casting the light on the same term 'ideology', Slavoj Zizek argues that:

Ideology is a systematically distorted communication: a text in which under the influence of unavowed social interests (of domination, etc.), a gap separates its 'official', public meaning from its actual intention [...] an unreflected tension between the explicit enunciated content of the text and its pragmatic presuppositions. (10)

Zizek is of the opinion that the ideological influence is unavoidable and it creates double layer of a text. The exposed narrative has certain intention behind it. A kind of tension is created in this gap between the exposition and intension. The same tension is sufficient to analyze the ideology of the writer. That sort of ideology of the writer

functions as a narrative domination in his/her creation too. That very narrative domination is also unavoidable in the text as Ram Mani Pokhrel presents ‘Chhitari Budha’ a character of his story as he says, “The system of *Bhat*¹ is far beyond. Many years ago, this old Chhitari had been exiled from his own village and society because of love affair with a *pariyar*² girl. He had taken the way breaking the darkness of the night with a *Damini*³ girl because of disrespect from own tribal people of ancestral village” (63). In this story the writer Ram Mani Pokhrel presents his own Brahmin ideology through this narrative.

The narrator of this story is a school teacher with whom the writer’s ideology is presented. The very title of the story “Chhitari Budha” itself is pejorative. ‘Chhitari’ is an ethnic tribe of Nepal and ‘Budha’ is an irrespective term for the ‘aged people’. In the above quoted statement, the narrator brings the reference of *Bhat* system, which is in fact prevailed only in Brahmin society of Nepal but not in ethnic tribes. The love affair between ‘Chhitari Budha’ and a girl from so-called untouchable caste has caused the exile of family. The old Chhitari has to leave his own ancestral village. Here, the main issue is related with the narrator’s ideology, which is inevitably the writer’s own. The teacher like narrator also can’t be far from the social misconceptions like untouchability, caste and *Bhat* division.

Ethnicity is not limited with certain cultural practices of a tribe within the specific time and place only. Those practices are changed along with the span of time and place. The same practices of a certain ethnic tribe are changed into useful human values because of education, political awareness and self realization of the members. So, there is dynamism in ethnicity too. Casting the light on the same issue, Sambriddi

¹ *Bhat* is division in Brahmin caste especially in Jaishi Brahmin. There are Upaddyaya and Jaishi in Brahmin caste and Jaishi are further divided into *Pahilo* (first) *Bhat* and *Dosro* (second) *Bhat*: the latter is considered lower than the former.

² A so-called untouchable caste, which works of tailoring.

³ A pejorative term for the Pariyar women.

Kharel writes, “Today Nepal is undergoing a deep structural shift; away from the determined and largely unchanging caste/ethnic identity as the economic and political power towards a more open-class structured education, wealth and political which (at least theoretically) can be attained through individual efforts (81). The same kind of dynamism of ethnic identity can be seen in Nepalese war stories too.

The ethnicity is no longer a matter of strict limitation but changeability. The ethno-cultural practices can be given a new strength through education, political awareness and economic empowerment. That might be the cause, Nepalese government also has managed the system of reservations for the certain ethnic tribes and various ethnic tribes have entered into the politics by forming ethnic based political parties. The main stream political parties also have given ample chances for the ethnic upliftment by forming the sister organizations of those ethnic people and by representing them in the main body. The tribal people do not limit themselves within the cultural practices of their own but slowly they are turning towards the greater area also. For example, Raj Kumar Dikpal presents a Gurung youth in his story “Rukubung” as a hopeful and extrovert character when he writes:

I was born and grown up in Pokhara. I had got an opportunity to travel eastern part of Nepal as an overseer in the course of Dharan-Dhankuta road construction. Son of Gurung and having prestigious job as an overseer youth age and frank natured man. That’s why it didn’t take long time for me to make friends and well wishers there. (15)

As this statement says, the Magar’s son has got a technical education and become an overseer. Generally Magars do have *Lahure* identity but the narrator of the story had been able to change his ethnic identity and become an overseer in road construction twenty five years ago. His education and frank nature helped him to be easily adjusted

in non-Magar community too. At present, he is organizing various awareness provoking seminars. There is changeability in Magar communal identity because of socio-political and educational awareness. As the above statement shows, the narrator was born and grown up in Pokhara and travels up to Dhankuta. He sees changes in Dhankuta bazaar in the course of time but the changes within him were also no less important. There are various external and internal factors along with time and space for such kind of changeability.

The ethnicity gets its wider arena in its dynamism. The educational, socio-political and cultural awareness promote the dynamic quality of ethnicity. However, the ethnicity is related to marginalization till the time. The short story writers from ethnic tribes can be counted in the fingers and the available writers also do not like to present their own cultural performances in the literary writing. If they tried, their individual biasness and ideological influence do not allow exposing the reality. The writers from so-called higher caste have also their own cultural situatedness and cannot present the ethnic issue in exact form. The cultural influence and individual biasness distort the meaning of their representation. That is why the issue of ethnicity in Nepalese war stories has been misrepresented.

Dalit as Constructed Identity

Dalits are excluded from the main stream socio-political setting of Nepal. They are taken as excluded type in comparison to so called higher castes. The same scenario is reflected in Nepalese war stories too. While depicting the Dalit issues, the sense of exclusion is evidently seen in such stories as Brahmin-Chhetri dominant writing trend is prevailed in Nepal. The dominant ideology continues in Nepal excluding the Dalits. Before talking about the misrepresentation of Dalit issues in Nepalese literary writing, it is worthy to trace out the history of Dalit exclusion in

Nepalese socio-politico-cultural practices. It may add strength to the misleading depiction of the Dalits in Nepalese war stories.

The term 'Dalits' is synonymously used for the '*Sudras*⁴'. When the concept of caste emerged in Nepal the term '*Sudras*' was used for the underprivileged and disadvantaged groups in the society. In the ancient time the tailors, ironsmiths and cobblers were called '*Sudras*'. They were identified as low and untouchable caste and not allowed to enter into the houses of so-called higher castes. Though the present law has forbidden the concept of untouchability in Nepal it is still widely practiced in the countryside. Now a day the term '*Sudras*' is replaced with 'Dalits' but the replacement of the term has not been able to change the social practices till the time. The hierarchy within the Dalits has been another problem for their upliftment. However, the situation of Dalits is still marginalized from the main stream politics and social practices. Hindu *Varna* system is the main originator of this caste hierarchy in Nepal since the society itself is Hindu dominant. The *Varna* system divides people according to their occupations.

It is difficult to give exact date of the beginning of caste hierarchy though it has a long history. The different writers have their own individual predictions regarding the origin of caste hierarchy. However, the same caste hierarchy has been the main hindrance of contemporary Nepalese society for its development. There is no uniformity among the writers about the origin of this social evil. Casting the light on the origin of caste concept, Dor Bahadur Bista in his book *Fatalism and Development* writes, "caste concept only entered Nepal for the first time in the beginning of the Licchavi era in the form of *Vaishnavism* and when it did arrive it had to adapt itself not only to *Samananism* and *Shaivism* but also to Buddhism" (35). As Bista says, the

⁴ A pejorative term for so-called low and untouchable caste in Hindu Varnashram. The Hindu caste hierarchy contains four *Varnas*; Brahmins, Chhetris, Vaishyas and Sudras.

sense of caste system initiated in Nepal from the Licchavi era, but it was not in the institutionalized form. When the then Gorkhali king Prithwi Narayan Shah divided the Nepalese society into 'four *Varna* and thirty six castes', the caste system was institutionalized. Though the concept of caste system and untouchability are removed from the laws at present theoretically, those are still in practices till the day.

The idea of Dalit is the result of Hinduization of the country, which began with Prithwi Narayan Shah. The then people were divided on the basis of their occupations. The very division was used in the distorted form and the concept of untouchability emerged. Quoting the idea of Dahal and Gellner, Sambriddhi Kharel tries to trace out the history of caste system in Nepal in this way:

The caste system was instituted in Nepal as a result of Hinduization only in the second half of the eighteenth century. The unification of Nepal under Prithwi Narayan Shah in 1768 and its consolidation during the Rana regime from 1846 to 1951 was based on the organizing ideology of the Hindu caste system by unification of diverse groups. This system classified four groups as distinct castes within the broad framework of the tradition. Hindu system of the four *Varnas* based on concepts of ritual purity and pollution. The top ranking priestly Brahmins occupied the top with the royal/military Ksatriya just beneath them, then followed the Vaisya merchants and the Sudra peasants and laborers and beneath them all a group of castes allotted occupations, such as leather work and sweeping, that made them "impure" and "untouchable". The later are collectively known today as Dalits. (81)

Kharel is of the opinion that the caste system was already originated before it was institutionalized by the then king Prithwi Narayan Shah. It was institutionalized for the momentary unification purposes of the people from different cultural practices. The caste system was “formally legalized through the *Muluki Ain* or National Legal code of 1854” (Sherchan13).

At present there is not a single law, which reinforces the caste hierarchy and the concept of untouchability existing in the implanted social practices. The state power was being operated directly and indirectly to marginalize the so-called lower caste people before. Shockingly, the case is similar till the date. Despite having some initiations of the Dalit upliftment now a day, the majority of them, as historically disadvantaged groups, lag behind in terms of their income, asset levels, education and other human development indications. In general, the Dalits are still underprivileged and far from the institutional advantages. The same kind of marginalized condition of Dalits can be found in the Nepalese war stories too.

The Dalit story writers are almost non-existent in comparison to so-called higher castes writers. Even the writers from so-called higher castes also have their own biasness of superiority. Their cultural background does not allow them to present the Dalits in true sense even if they try to be fair as far as possible. That’s why the dominating tendency is explicitly and implicitly reflected in the Nepalese war stories also. In her story “Biplavi”, Illya Bhattarai presents Dalits as the abductors and demons like in nature when she narrates:

Two of the abductors were familiar to her. They were the untouchable boys from her own village. In school, they were some grades senior to her. They had disappeared from the village for some years. The people had a sneaking suspicion that they might have been involved in the

gang that would enjoy in the game of killing and violence. No one else knew what the reality was though. After all, their suspicion came true.

(129/30)

Bhattarai's stand is explicitly exposed from this statement. Illaya Bhattarai, a Kathmanduist, tries to depict the situation of war-torn country while talking about the Maoists 'people's war'. She demonizes the war launchers (Maoists) and stands herself with the then established system, which Maoists wanted to overthrow. The matter is more than that in this analysis. While dehumanizing the Maoists, Bhattarai categorizes them as the abductors and they would enjoy killing. In fact violence was a means to change the society if we believe Maoists. Here Bhattarai's stand is different as she takes violence and killing as the games for them and the striking issue here is that they are untouchable. Shockingly, she takes Maoists and Dalits synonymously. Her Brahmin ideology of superiority is knowingly or unknowingly exposed while demonizing the Maoists and Dalits. Her situatedness is clearer when she narrates, "During the lunchtime, they (Maoists) had entered their (Brahmins') kitchen with their boots on. They had touched all provisions indiscriminately. And, they had eaten in the very plates, which her (Biplavi's) parents used to eat (131). Here also, she accepts the notion of untouchability. Entering into the kitchen with boots on, touching the things and eating on the parent's plates are striking matters for Bhattarai. Those are nothing more than the reflections of Brahmin ideology. Her politics of demonizing the Maoists indirectly helps for the Dalit misrepresentation. Bhattari's statements show the trend of main stream story writing tendency.

The higher castes writers have the sense of superiority. They can not avoid this concept even if they try to present the sense of equality because of their own cultural

backgrounds. The same kind of superior ideology can be seen in Rajendra Parajuli's war story "The Void" too:

Jit Bhaduar was barely literate. He would die for rites and culture. Jit Bhaduar was an ideal personality in the village. In the Brahmin and Chhetri dominated community, Jit Bhaduar was the only character on whom everyone else would keep their jealous eye. His way of working, the success he had enjoyed in the village, his sharp mind and well-built physique drove everyone green with envy. [...] In any meeting or socio-cultural function, Jit Bahadur used to receive an honored seat on the dais. The people were enchanted with his oratory skill and art. He was endowed with a sonorous voice, too. As the Brahmins and Chhetris failed to outdo him in any of such activity, they maligned him-*you untouchable don't be so full of yourself*. At this movement, he would choke back his outcry and would think of migrating from the village. (181)

Jit Bahadur, the central character of the story is envied by everyone in the village. He is presented as the most successful human personality in the village. He is able to materialize every thought and is honored by every one but the stigma of 'untouchability' is tagged with him. He is rather contradictorily presented since "whenever any high-ranked official from the city and any distinguished person of the district had to stay the night in that region, they mostly knocked at the door of his house"(180/81). On the one hand, Jit Bahadur B.K. is made the most successful and having very good relationship with distinguished personalities, on the other hand, he is made to think migrating from the same village, where he had been an ideal personality for everyone. If a *Dalit* gets such respected position in a village, the

concept of ‘untouchability’ also doesn’t function as it is seen in his relationship with the distinguished personalities. So, the situation of Jit Bahadur is over romanticized by the writer. The stigmatization of untouchability is also nothing more than the unconscious expression of writer’s Brahmin ideology. Despite making Jit Bahadur a successful figure in the village the writer has been still biased regarding the superstitious concept of untouchability.

The term ‘Dalit’ is constructed identity of underprivileged people as the term “Sudra” was derogatively used before for the same people. That is why Dalit identity can be negotiated and reformulated as the categories of representation. The direct and indirect power is functioning to formulate such identity. That very power has two-way-traffic in its operation but with unequal terms. Casting the light on the same issue, Sambriddi Kharel further writes:

In a Hindu society, acceptance by the majority of the exclusion of the lower caste according to principles of ritual pollution is elicited not by instrumental coercion but by a process of hegemony, in which consent is manufactured through the ideology of Brahmanism. A ruling group sustains its dominance not just by organization of force but through moral and intellectual leadership. Opponents of this view reject the notion [...] commonly attributed to the oppressed group. [...].

However, there are also accounts that resistance on the part of the oppressed is not necessarily revolutionary in nature. (83)

As this statement says, the Dalit identities are constructed through the Brahmin ideology. Various moral, intellectual and cultural practices are used to dominate the oppressed groups but the oppressed groups also try to resist that oppression. “There is a growing Dalit resistance against on going caste discrimination in Nepali society. In

this process, Dalits are both assertively deploying and redefining their ‘traditional’ identities” (Kharel 82). The socio-political awareness makes them able to resist the oppression as Illya Bhattari’s “untouchable boys” ask to the Brahmin Baje “Do you still segregate the people like us or allow them to step into your kitchen?” (131) from this question, it is clear that the “untouchable boys” also have the realization of being segregated. To enter into the kitchen is a kind of resistance for them. They want to redefine their traditional segregated identity. That’s why they “struggle for liberation of the proletariat” (ibid) in the name of ‘People’s Liberation Army’. The great question comes here whether they will be successful to redefine their communal identity or not. They are struggling with organized unity. The very organization (party) itself is full of political ideologies. So, the identity is not exclusive but relative. Since the relatively is there, the complete identity is not possible. Though the “Organizations play a key role in mobilizing their group members and the larger society” (Kharel 83) but do not help to create autonomous identity. That’s why, Illya Bhattari’s “untouchable boys” have joined the Maoists revolution. They want to change their identity by their struggle which itself is in question.

Dalits are excluded from the main stream politics and policies. The lack of access to the education, to job opportunities, to the health care facilities and state oriented resources have made the Dalits ‘disadvantaged group’. Casting the light on the same issue, Man Bahadur Bishwakarma states that:

Dalit community in Nepal is not only discriminated against the use of and access to public utilities and places, but also excluded by the legal system and public policies. On the one hand, there exists many contradictory legal provisions under the constitution (the fundamental law of the country) and on other hand, there can be found couple of

government policies and their implementations that enhance negligible inclusion of Dalits in the country. After the restoration of democracy, the government has promulgated some laws and plans to increase the participation of Dalit in local and central governance. However, the results of such nominal policies have been proved as window-dressing. In fact, all these have been taken as cosmetic plans. Substantially, these laws, policies and programmers do not have any significant role to contribute to real or genuine inclusion of Dalits in governance and development activities. (121)

The Dalits are excluded from the main stream of development. Neither have they had professional representation in the governance nor in civil services. The concept of “untouchability” is still in such places in implicit form. The same case is prevailed in Nepalese war stories too. The mainstream writers are from so-called higher castes and they do not raise the Dalit issue in their stories neither the raised issues are biasless from the Brahmin ideology. So, the Nepalese war stories are also practicing the concept of ‘untouchability’ in implicit way. The Dalit characters in such stories are victims of the Brahmin’s biasness. Such victimhood of biasness is more powerful than the victimhood of the decade long violence.

Ram Mani Pokhrel in his short story collection *Hariman Ko Aatmahatya* presents fifteen stories altogether but the issue of Dalit is raised in only one story. In this single but title story regarding the Dalit “Hariman ko Aatmahatya” also can’t be far from the Brahmin ideology and Hariman, the central Dalit character is made victim of oppression. Narrating about own condition in a rented house in Kathmandu, Hariman, a Dalit, says to the Brahmin narrator, “see, brother, while telephoning me or asking me near about from the room, please do not call me with my caste. I have lie

my caste and living with Chhetri's pseudo-caste. My house owner is strictly conservative and religious Brahmin from the west" (14). Here, Hariman has to lie down his caste because of the fear of being humiliated in the society. He can't present his own true identity because of the fear of segregation upon him. Hariman's situation is after the re-establishment of the democracy. Even in the democratic rules too, the Dalits are still marginalized. The true democracy has not come for them.

The Dalits are marginalized in the Nepalese society though they are considered equal in every legal code. Though the concept of inclusion is brought, the Dalits are still taken as 'untouchable' in the country. The war stories are also not exception from the societal practices in terms of Dalit representations. The Dalits issues are victimized by the so-called higher caste ideologies. Social practices regarding the Dalits are still biased and the same representations in literature are also not far from the biased attitudes. A kind of discourse is created by highlighting the concept of untouchability in the war stories too. So, the Dalits related issues are misinterpreted in the Nepalese war stories. The concept of untouchability in the society has affected the Dalit representations in the war stories too.

Women as Voiceless Victims

The study of women representation by a male will not be truly independent from the traditional patriarchal assumption because every interpretation is more or less guided by the individual biasness and his/her cultural situatedness. The traditional patriarchal notion has biased eye towards the women who are considered as irrational and submissive. The males are taken as rational and protective. Because of not having equal access to the educational and other opportunities, the women are made weaker sex. This notion has created a discourse and it is still prevailed in the context of Nepal, where the women are excluded from the equal access to the leadership and

decision making positions. The lack of access in every beneficial sector has kept the women within the limited periphery. The same situation of woman as weaker creature is presented in the Nepalese war stories too. The story writers present their female characters and women related issues from the perspective of patriarchal notion of gender roles. So, the women are misrepresented in the Nepalese war stories.

The mainstream writing trend is male oriented in the context of Nepal. The women storywriters are very less in number in comparison to males despite more than half of the country's population is covered with women. They are also not free from the traditional gender roles. The males have all the responsibilities in the family and society but their counterparts are considered as weak creatures in traditional gender roles. Casting the light on the same issue, Lois Tyson argues that, "Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing and submissive. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify inequalities, which still occur today" (85). As Tyson says, the males are more superior, controlling and powerful than women in traditional gender roles. The males are given the higher status where as their counterparts are lower. That's why, there is clear-cut hierarchy between men and women. The same kind of hierarchy is seen in the Nepalese war stories too.

The women and women related issues are presented through the perspectives of patriarchy in the Nepalese war stories. For example, Ramesh Vikal in his story "A Pair of Innocent Eyes" presents Birkha Bahadur as a protector and his wife Dilmaya as a dependent figure on her husband, when she says to her son Garve, "if you are hungry, what can I do? Your father has gone to collect money. He'll bring rice, flour, salt, oil and spices from the shop. Then I'll cook food" (28). Here, Vikal's female character Dilmaya can do nothing else except cooking and feeding her only son if her

husband managed the food items. She is protected by her husband. Her presentation shows that she is surviving on her husband, who has to perform all the duties to protect her. Dilmaya is presented as a weak figure that she can do nothing even for her hungry son until her husband does not bring the edible things. The writer's patriarchal mind is functioning in Dilmaya's projection as a weak, meek and submissive figure and her husband Birkha Bahadur as dominant and controlling type of man, who has to perform all the responsibilities.

The males are presented as the heroic figures in comparison to their female counterparts in the short stories too. The patriarchal assumption has been functioning directly and indirectly in such presentations. The war stories are also not exceptions from such presentations. Parashu Pradhan, a celebrated short story writer of Nepal, also can't be free from such male dominating ideology, even if he presents his war story "Sitas 23" from the female perspective. Pradhan is reinterpreting a legendary character Sita of epic *Ramayana* but his 'Sita' is made more submissive than in the *Ramayana* itself, when Pradhan's 'Sita' narrates own sufferings with the police inspector:

My husbands where about is all unknown. We had been surviving on his earning. The vehicle of the family was moving somehow. For some years, I feel myself paralyzed with regret and shame. When I came out into the neighborhood the familiar faces pretend to be unfamiliar. The relatives stay far away from me in case I should plead with them for help. Nobody has said anything about him. I see the tragic mystery written all over their faces as if all mistakes were mine and I was the cause for his missing. (50)

Parashu Pradhan's Sita is being suffered with the pain of losing her husband, who had gone missing in the Maoist war. More than that, she has been suffering from the behavior of the neighbors and relatives. Her husband was abducted by the 'junglese' three years ago. Sita categorizes those abductors as the demons and further says "they weren't human beings, the real monsters" (48). Parashu Pradhan as a story writer does not demonize the Maoists only but the women also. The blame of her husband's missing goes to the wife even if she knows nothing. The patriarchy defines her as the abductors like. The stigma is tagged with her as if she had abducted her own husband and creating a terror for the family and society.

This kind of stigmatization continues in the male oriented society because "it is patriarchy that will do the defining" (Tyson 89) the women's position in relation to males. Sita's husband is presented as the sole bread owner, who has to protect the wife and family members. He has been projected as the sole engine of the vehicle like family. The real shock comes to the readers when Sita is stigmatized without any cause. Her only crime is to be woman and wife of her husband. Sita is discriminated in two ways; on the one hand, she has been suffering from the absence of her life partner and on the other hand, she is being stigmatized for no cause. The patriarchal ideology is operating in her sufferings and the story writer Parashu Pradhan has not been completely free from such notion. Despite his attempt to re-interpret the myth in order to empower the women, Pradhan has fallen in the same boat, where he wanted to escape from. If he had to present Sita as in the ancient epic, it would be worthless. His intention was quite positive to re-interpret the myth but fails to attain the goal. This is caused because of his cultural situatedness, which does not allow him to be free from the patriarchy.

It can be said that, those male writers are always biased with the opposite sex, as the strong feminists say, but the case is similar with the women writers too. They are also not far from such assumptions of patriarchy in the war stories. The Nepalese women writers also have “internalized the norms and values of patriarchy, which can be defined in short as any culture that privileges male by promoting traditional gender roles” (Tyson 85). The woman writers also present the male as the heroic figures and female characters as submissive stereotypes in their stories. They have not been free from the male dominating psychology, while presenting war terminated female experiences too. The patriarchy, in which they are brought up, does not allow them the sense of equity.

The striking similarity in most of the women writers’ stories is that they have located the women within the kitchen and household chores as the male writers always do. For example, Padmavati Singh in her story “The Silence of Violence” presents her central character Nirmaya within the kitchen as she narrates, “Nirmaya got up with no words at all and began to kindle firewood in the hearth. She cooked the food and fed them” (80). Nirmaya is threatened by the rebels to cook the food for them and there was no option for her except following the command because she was a woman and cooking is her inborn duty as the patriarchy has assigned. The significant issue here is that the rebels are all males, who have come there to threaten Nirmaya, a wife of an army. This threaten is more than political but patriarchal.

The same kind of kitchen imagery is seen in Illya Bhattarai’s story “Biplavi” too when she argues that, “Hence, she (Biplavi) had to cook for the fighters to satiate their stomachs” (132). Biplavi, the young girl was forcefully taken into the revolution by the rebels and her revolution was to cook the food for the warriors. Bhattarai’s rebels are also all males. Explicitly, both of those female writers, Singh and Bhattarai,

are against of the Maoists war and demonize the Maoists activities in their stories but the important issue here is that, they locate their female characters within the kitchen and home. The patriarchal assumption is consciously and unconsciously operating in their stories too even if they claim for writing in favor of the women's upliftment. The women writers have been the prey of the same patriarchy though their motto is quite opposite. Rather than presenting the female characters as the strong and decisive figures, they also follow the same tradition of submissiveness. The Nepalese society is male dominated and that is inevitably reflected in each and every text even though the writers try to reject it. The hidden politics of both writers is that they have been using traditional gender role of the women to draw the sympathy of the readers and create the satanic image of the Maoists.

The charge might come that the anti-Maoist writers' representation does not reflect the reality of the Maoist warfare since they are guided by the different kind of ideology. But the writers of war sympathizers are also not far from the patriarchy as Chandra Prakash Gajurel in his story "Harkajit ko Sapanā" talks about Ganga, wife of the central character Harkajit. Gajurel further writes, "She (Ganga) would not feel any trouble to cook and feed available things in the house if they (Maoists) came hungrily even at night" (My Translation 52). The writer is very conscious to present the female characters in equal to the males. Consciously he presents Harkajit and Ganga equally but the implanted patriarchy in the mind leads him unconsciously to locate female character within the kitchen as this statement gives "the web of social meanings operating in the time and place in which the text was written" (Tyson 291). Unlike Singh and Bhattarai, Gajurel's politics is to create ideal image of the Maoist insurgency and to hide the carnage created by the violence. So, in the war stories too both men and women writers are not free from the discourse of patriarchy and

knowingly and unknowingly assign the traditional gender roles to the women in their stories as “no discourse by itself can adequately explain the complex cultural dynamics of social power” (Tyson 285).

The Nepalese society is male-oriented and males have got decisive role in the family and society as well. The women are taken as the ‘objects’ and their biological essentialism is shown as their weakness. The males claim themselves as “One” and women as “Others”, in Simon de Beauvoir’s terms. Casting the light on the same issue, Beauvoir claims that, “woman may fail to lay claim to the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity, and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the other” (216). The patriarchy makes the woman as weaker sex. She does not find the reciprocal role in the society, which itself is a patriarchal. The woman is within the limited boundary and she is not given access to the role modeling resources. Beauvoir is of the opinion that a woman is made but not allowed to act freely. A woman has to be pleased with the given roles because “she is defined and differentiated with reference to him” (210). This statement of Beauvoir comes to be truly applicable in the case of Nepalese war victims too. The war-terminated women are victimized by the then Royal Nepal Army because they are the wives of the rebels and Maoists also tortured the women for being the wives of the security forces.

The then army and rebels were equally troublesome for the women in the Nepalese war-torn society. The women of that society were mistreated because of being “second sex” but not for political cause in true sense. Though the politics is seemingly functioning as a cause of trouble, the fact is different than that. It is patriarchy, which mistreats the women but not the politics in fact. The atrocities of

the army are exposed in a story entitled, “Bhatkeko Dhoka ra Sapanaharu” by Mahesh Vikram Shah, when he writes:

The daughter-in-law of Jashmaya would be tortured by the lewd gaze of the soldiers. In the pretense of asking about her husband, the soldiers would hurt her sensitive organs of the body. She would curl on the floor tightly catching her son. The indoor environment would be sentimental with the shrill cry of a small baby. The soldiers would drag Jashmaya in the charge of feeding the Maoists”. (My Translation 90)

Jashmaya and her daughter-in-law are being tortured here because they are mother and wife of Rane, a rebel, respectively. Both women are defined and made victim of injustice because their identity is related with Rane, an underground rebel. Rane might be a criminal in the eyes of the then law but punishment goes for his mother and wife with out any reason. It is because they are women and they have to bear every just and unjust act of the soldiers because of their male relatives. So, this statement exposes the brutality of army upon the women but not upon the rebels, who are punishable according to their codes. Mahesh Vikram Shah is trying to win the sentimentality of the readers by making Jashmaya as a pathetic victim of the soldiers. While drawing the human sentiment, he is demonizing not only the soldiers but inferiorizes the women too, as Shah’s situatedness forces him to do so.

Every law had been dysfunctional and there was a kind of disorder in the Nepalese society at the time of decade-long Maoists war. Every one would be everyone’s spay and enemy. There were random punishments and killings. In that chaotic situation, the then Maoists were also no less responsible for such unjust killings and punishments. The innocent women had been victims of the rebels because of being wives of the police and army. Like Mahesh Vikram’s soldiers, the then rebels

also would torture the wives of the police and army, who were in the security services. The ‘othering’ tendency of adjacent group’s woman for being wife of the opposite is clearly seen in Padmavati Singh’s story “The Silence of Violence”, when she writes:

As she (Nirmaya) was about to turn round to go from there, one of them said with lewd gesture, catching her hand suddenly, “Where is your police husband? He might often come to sleep with you right?” The gales of lewd laughter echoed in the room [...]. If gone missing what happened then? Suppose we are your husband ...! Saying this one of them knocked her down, gagging the hems of her sari into her mouth and other stripped her naked and rapped her. (81)

The picture created in this statement is really shocking. The Maoists brutality is visualized through this statement. Though the Maoists had not made any policy to act so demonly for the wife of a police but the rules do not function at the time of disorder. In that decade the humanity did not function and “peace and order, safety, security and justice were disrupted; all moral and legal bindings were shattered and disconnected. This created complete chaos in the society” (Bhattarai 8). In such disorder Nirmaya had to be physically and mentally suffered for no cause. If there was any reason behind her sufferings, it was only being the wife of a policeman. To be his wife had been a curse for her. She does not have any distinct identity, in which she can claim for her individuality. She is an enemy of the rebels because she is defined in relation to her police husband. The politically ‘othering’ ideology is not functioning here since she is being raped but the male ideology.

The female characters of Mahesh Vikram Shah and Padmavati Singh represent the innocent women in the war-torn country. Jashmaya, her daughter in-law and

Nirmaya have to be tortured because of being mother and wife of the opponents. The remarkable point here is not to distinguish who are brutal and who are less atrocious but to see how they are represented in the stories. The noteworthy aspect is that in both of the stories all of those female characters are brutally treated by the males. The patriarchy is explicitly being operated in both stories. All of those female characters are representing the victimhood identity if there is any. They have been a symbol of maltreatments of the patriarchy. The big question comes here. If those males from both sides; army and rebels, were not guided by the patriarchy why did not they follow the international rule of war, though other rules were dysfunctional at the time of war. Here, it is only to say that the war stories are also not far from the patriarchy in terms of women representation. In this sense the women are misrepresented in the war stories because of male ideology. While presenting the female characters they have created a stereotypical discourse as “a discourse is a social language created by particular cultural condition at a particular time and place, and it expresses a particular way of understanding human experiences” (Tyson 285). So, the actual understanding of female experience in the war torn society has been impossible since monolithic discourse is created.

The male dominated Nepalese society and its trend of writing also can't reflect the true essence of women because of patriarchy. Both men and women writers are products of the same society and they have internalized the same kind of traditional gender role. So, the women and women related issues are underestimated. Males have certainly the assumption of patriarchy, which has already created a discourse and women are also brought up within the same socio-cultural settings. So, both are not free to present the issues in independent way. That's why the war terminated women

condition is ideologically influenced in terms of representation in the Nepalese war stories.

Misuse of Children

It is difficult to analyze the representation of children in war stories by an adult. Though it is a complex task to pick out the essence of child representation, an interpretation about their location in the war stories will be an asset to this analysis. Like other afore mentioned issues, the child representations are also has certain situatedness within the certain socio-cultural practices. So, the socio-cultural influence is an inevitable part in the representation of child related issue too. Since every text, whether it is child related or not, is a cultural artifact. So, the depictions of child's issues in Nepalese war stories are also guided by the socio-political ideology of the time.

The adults have their own perspectives to look after the children. In fact the development of the children's literature is in slow pace in Nepal. In the war stories, the issues of children are very less in number. Though these are nominal in quantity, the war-terminated pictures of children are really shocking and against of national and international child-rights related laws. The worldly accepted child- rights related laws are *Geneva Convention 1924* and *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989*. All the member countries have to follow those conventions and should make the national laws on the basic of them. The children should not be used for the arm related conflict and warfare according to those rules. The international war-laws also do not accept the use of children in the arm struggles. If used, such parties are worldly denounced for being against of worldly codes. Despite the fact that the children should not be used for any kind of political purposes, Nepalese political parties are using them as the following picture shows.

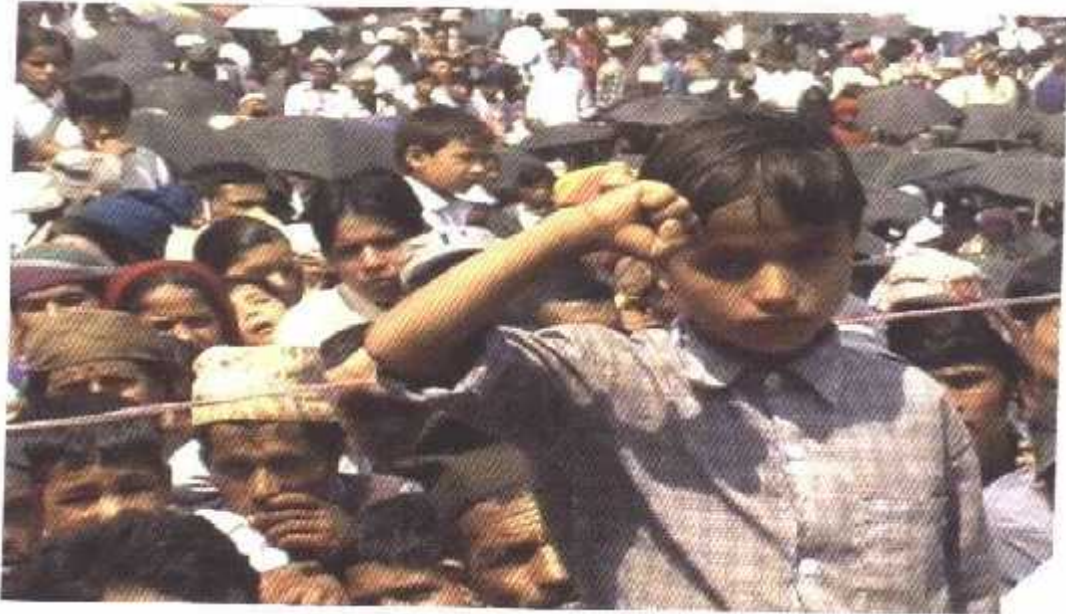


Source: *A People War, Images of the Nepal Conflict, 1996-2006*, Sundar Shrestha, P. 193.

A street child runs down the road in Kathmandu with a Nepali Congress flag during a strike called by political parties after King Gyanendra took over in February, 2005.

A kind of adult power is operated while talking about the children in war and their representation in the war stories. The conflicting parties use the children for their petty purposes and the children have to face physical and mental dangers. In the decade long war also, hundreds of innocent children were scarified for the adult ideology and thousands were victimized with physical and mental disabilities. The physical and mental injuries of the children may lead them to the dire consequences in their future. Those long-term effects were not considered while using them for the purpose of conflict and war. The then security forces are blamed to misusing the children as the war-spy and torturing them. The Maoists also get blamed for recruiting the children in the revolutionary army. However, both conflicting parties are equally responsible to impose their institutional and political ideologies upon the innocent

children. Such issues like use of children in the war fare, imprisonment of the innocent children with their accused parents, sexual abuses, and creation of revengeful and violent mentality can be seen in Nepalese political scenario as the following picture shows.



Source: *A People War, Images of the Nepal Conflict, 1996-2006*, Naresh Newar, P. 183.

A 10-year-old boy named Deb Gurung, namesake of a Maoist leader, joins the party at a public meeting in Rolpa in 2002 by giving the red salute. He says he wants to revenge police brutality against his family, and had convinced many of his classmates to join the rebel cause.

Both pictures of children clearly indicate the real political setting in Nepal regarding the children. The flag bearer and red saluteer are being misused and they are presented with political purposes. In fact to use the children for the violent kind of political activity is against of international codes, which are not followed by the main political parties of Nepal; Nepali Congress and Maoist respectively. The same kind of misuse of the children can be seen in Nepalese war stories too.

Among the war story writers, Mahesh Vikram Shah is the pioneer and one of the key figures to depict child related issues of war in the war stories. His prize winning war story collection *Chhapamar ko Chhoro* contains such use and misuse of children

for the petty adult purposes in the war. In his title story “Chhapamara ko Chhoro”, Shah presents a small child in the jail compound, where his mother is imprisoned for being wife of a guerrilla. This child has not committed any crime but kept in the jail with his mother. The child has not any fear of guns rather he points them and desires to have. The police commander’s psychology is reflected in the form of humanitarian sentiment as the narrator says:

The son of guerrilla is cycling violently and I’m looking and thinking. If this child got to run the cycle for a few days, he will forget the war related entertaining habits, which are against of child character, learnt from his father like crawling, stretching leaning and acting of throwing the bomb upon the innocents and crying “died-died”. Then I realized that the son of guerrilla did not learn those demerits from his father by birth. Those are the human learning forcefully imposed in the disillusioned time and ugly situations. (My Translation 54)

The behavior learnt from his guerrilla father shows that the child will learn violent activities. The narrator feels really sorry for the child and a kind of affection increases inside him. The narrator, who is a police commander, is guided by the humanitarian sentimentality. The child, who has to go to the school and learn creative performances is made victim of his parents and taught guerrilla training like crowing, stretching and learning to throw the bomb. The heart of the narrator melts. So, he says that, “after a long contemplation, I reached in to the conclusion that, it is not humanitarian to charge the crimes of guerrilla Raktabij upon his wife and son. The growth of child affection towards the guerrilla’s son had already sprouted in my heart. Realizing that I decided to free them from all the charges and safely returning to the village” (54).

Presenting the humanitarian sentimentality, Mahesh Vikram Shah is trying to highlight the importance of humanity in the security forces. He valorizes the security forces by making the jail commander full of fatherly love on the one hand and on the other hand he demonizes the rebellious Raktabij, who teaches arts of war to his son. Superficially, Shah's first person narrator seems to be guided by the humanitarian values but he has a kind of psychological fear with Raktabij. The very name 'Raktabij' symbolizes great significance in the Hindu mythology. If the narrator had punished the blood of Raktabij, thousands of other warriors would rise symbolically. So, Shah's unknown part of mind is functioning to send guerrilla's wife and son to their village rather than the humanitarian values.

A police commander's heart is melted by the innocent activities of a child and a sort of humanitarian feelings sprouted in him though the law of humanity does not function at the time of war. Shah's sentimentality towards the child is quite opposite of Ramesh Vikal's idea of presentation. Vikal in his story, "A Pair of Innocent Eyes" presents shocking and horrific situation before the innocent eyes of a four years old child Bhunte. His father and mother are slaughtered before him and he looks those events as if it was a play being staged before him as Vikal narrates, "Thus a heinous drama was staged here, it had no audience except two innocent eyes numbed with fear" (32). The child Bhunte is presented before the murder scenes. Certainly, it will hamper the psychology of a child. The war itself is terrible for every one but such horrific events before the innocent eyes may take the child towards abnormality. Vikal's presentation of Bhunte is sarcastic and he rejects such events before the eyes of a child implicitly.

Ramesh Vikal is trying to create balance in his position while depicting the reality. Such position is the feature of soothing kind of war literature and it is

considered as a good kind of literary writing. It is difficult to point out in which side Vikal is advocating for. On the one hand, he is demonizing the Maoists for slaughtering the parents of Bhunte before his eyes and making him an orphan and on the other hand he satirically presents the security force, which loots the house and leaves the child without any consideration as if it was not their task to preserve him. The bitter satire lies in his statement when an army man says that, “we are always four steps behind the criminals” (31). Army men loot the house and leave Bhunte saying “somebody else will discover him tomorrow morning. They would give him to next of his kin. If not, they would deliver him to the orphanage” (32). In fact it is duty of the government to protect such helpless child but the concerned authority does not pay any attention for this poor child. Both conflicting parties are equally responsible to make Bhunte helpless and both are no less than the demons in their natures. So, Vikal’s intension seems to raise the child-related issues truly as far as possible. He exposes the bitter truth from the midway without aligning any side directly but his politics is seen in the use of negative terms for the Maoists, where as Mahesh Bikram Shah seems visibly biased. Both writers Shah and Vikal are against of violence upon child though they are quite opposite in their depiction of a child. Mahesh Bikram Shah is more polished and formal where as Vikal is harsh and direct with bitter sarcasm.

The situation of lawlessness creates physical and mental terror among the people. The result of violence upon a child is more horrific than in the others. If a child is used or exposed before the violence, that may lead to the life long trouble for him/her. That’s why, the national and international rules of war have denounced the use of children in the war and violence related activities. The essence is focused in *U.N. Convection on the Rights of the Child, 1989* as it says that, “All the favor

countries will determine to use all the possibilities to denounce the direct involvement of the children in the conflict, who are below fifteen years of age” (Sharma quoted 297). *The Geneva Convention* is also a compulsion for the conflicting parties to avoid the use of children in the warfare. Those international rules of war, though other laws were dysfunctional, were also not followed by the conflicting parties of Nepal during the decade long war as it can be seen clearly in the following picture.



Source: *A People War, Images of the Nepal Conflict, 1996-2006*, Naresh Newar, P. 144.

Rabina and Rabin were traveling with their parents in a bus along the Mahendra Highway that was stopped and firebombed by Maoists in October 2002. Their father Bhakta Bahadur Regmi, who worked as a clerk in Simara, rescued his children but couldn't save his wife Anju. News of the plight of the children in the media brought an unprecedented outpouring of support from Nepal and abroad. A school offered Rabina and Rabin free education and a hospital is still treating them for free.

The humanitarian feelings were not operated neither were the internationally accepted war codes followed while bombing those two innocent children. This picture seems ironic to international war codes and an apt example of children's misuse.

In order to expose those ideological maltreatments the use of children in the warfare is depicted in the war stories. Describing the children's situation in the war-terminated society of the war-terminated decade, Govinda Raj Bhattari writes:

The young children were forced to drop out of their schools in order to join the armed forces, or they were compelled to desert the village and disappear from the scene. On the one hand, they were charged by the state for helping the Maoists, while on the others, they were charged by Maoists of spying for the government army or policeman. Many innocent people became victims of cruelty meted out by one or the other. They were stranded between life and death. (9)

Bhattarai depicts the real situation of war-terminated Nepalese society of the time. As he says, the children were tortured by the both parties despite the fact that the children should not be used and exposed in the war. The child sensitivity was not considered by the conflicting parties. They could not preserve the rights of the children even if those were compulsions for them. The shameful aspect during the war-torn decade was that the schools were the real residents of the arm bearers rather than making those places as sacred temples of education. The children were misused for the purpose of warfare whether it was for spying or using as the human barrier. So, concerned authority did not think about the misuse of children while taking them for their petty selfish purposes. The abduction of the children was common at that time. Not only the conflicting parties but the criminals, murderers and vagabonds also took the advantage of that critical situation. "There was no way one could distinguish them" (Bhattarai 9).

The cold scenario of abduction and its consequence is depicted in "The Silence of Violence" by Padmavati Singh, when she says, "The abduction of her two

young children has driven Lakkidevi emotionally disturbed; she is almost insane. She is living a half dead life with her breast feeding child” (83). The abduction does not damage the child psychology only but distorts the condition of a mother too. The child abduction itself is dire but its consequences are more terrible. Lakkidevi deserves the sympathy of the readers since most of her relatives have been the victims of cruelty meted out by the arm bearers and she loses the normalcy of her life. Padmavati Singh is trying to win the sentiment of the readers while projecting Lakkidevi like war terminated figures in the rehabilitation center in such pathetic condition. Her purpose is to demonize the Maoists through this sentimental presentation of Lakkidevi. It can be taken as her politics to arouse anti-Maoist feelings among the readers. Singh like war story writers are indirectly imposing their ideology while representing the children and their mother’s pathetic condition.

The similar kind of child’s condition is portrayed in Chandra Prakash Gajurel’s title story “Pratisodh” too. Nine years old Sanjeev is psychologically disturbed, when his elder sister Rachana is killed by the police before his eyes. He has been presented as a revengeful boy, who wants to kill the police, who had murdered his innocent sister as Sanjeev tells his father that:

You do not have to do other things, please, bring the *khukuri*, which is used to cut the he-goat at Dashain from Baburam uncle. I will go to the CDO office tomorrow with you. I stand by the side of the CDO’s table as the day before yesterday and when he moves his eyes in to another side ..., I take revenge for the murder of my sister. They might arrest and imprison me. It’s ok. It is only ten years to stay in jail. I will be only twenty two years old while being released. (My Translation 30)

The narrative exposes the bitter reality of the victimized child and his disturbed psyche because of being exposed before the human killing. He becomes revengeful, which leads him towards the violent future life. That's why, Sanjeev "packs up his school bag with his clothes, keeps the available money and small knife into the pocket" (My Translation 31) and leaves the house to take revenge. His departure to 'destroy the system' is analogous to Maoist war. Sanjeev's departure clearly indicates that he goes to join the rebellious army of the time. By sending Sanjeev, a twelve years' old child, to join the warfare and making him as a rebellious against the then system, Chandra Prakash Gajurel, as a story writer, is exposing his own grounding. Sanjeev's father teaches him to wait for sometimes patiently to take revenge. The fatherly teaching is also not relevant to calm down an emotionally guided child as he says, "we can really materialize the dream of Rachana and take the true revenge of (her) murder when the new system is established after the destruction of this system, which is against of the people and has caused this situation" (My Translation 31). This statement seems more like a political speech rather than a soothing advice of a father to his emotional child. With this statement and departure of Sanjeev from his house the writer's ideology is foregrounded. However, the story shows that the exposure of murder before a child leads him towards the violent life. If his sister was not killed before his eyes Sanjeev would not be so revengeful and violent.

Another important but shameful child abuse is sexual exploitation. In the war stories, especially the girl children are depicted with such sexual exploitation. The sexually abused character Biplavi in Illay Bhattarai's story represents such inhuman activities in the war-terminated society. When Biplavi was taken to the war, she was just turned thirteen. Bhattarai ironically argues that, "she had to lie, in their beds to quench their physical thirst" (133). An under-aged girl sexually exploited in a camp is

certainly terrible. This leads her either towards the violent life or life long psychological problem. Both chances are equally possible in a raped child's life. Though Biplavi's future life is not indicated in the story, she is mentally affected along with physicality. Bhattarai's situatedness is explicit, when she sketches the character like Biplavi being rapped in the rebel's camp. Here, the subject matter of sexual exploitation is used to draw the sentiment of the forcefully recruited girl fighters, who have to surrender before their commanders. Behind this, the writer is knowingly demonizing the Maoists' recruitment policy at the time of people's war.

The sexually exploited girls may use the violence for their individual purpose. The girl child's sexual exploitation may result into violent outlet as Pradeep Gyawali's character Ganga, in the story "Jamkabhet" says that, "The only aim to my life is to take revenge with so-called husband Jagannath and rapper Suresh" (88). Ganga was fourteen years old when she was married. Her child-marriage itself is inhuman but her failure in that marriage and sexual exploitation in mother-in-law's village leads her to the violent result. That's why, she joins rebellious army and wants to take the revenge with her own husband and rapper Suresh. Here also Pradip Gyawali indirectly exposes his own situatedness, when Ganga goes to the war for her individual revengeful aim but not for social change. He indirectly creates a discourse of Maoist war as it was a war of individual revenge. In that sense his anti-Maoist grounding is reflected in the presentation of Ganga, a rebel hero. Gyawali's politics behind the creation of such discourse is to demonize the Maoists as their struggle is of personal revenge. However, Gyawali accepts that the lack of proper address for such victims like Ganga, increases the violence. However, the girl's sexual exploitation always leads towards the destruction, whether it is physical violence or mental disturbance.

Finally, the child representation in every war story is directly or indirectly ideology laden, whether that is individual or institutional. The politics behind such representation is to impose the writer's own ideology and to use such sentimental issue to demonize the adjacent party. The issues of children are made mostly sentimental to achieve the effect of writings. It is easier to win the readers' sympathy by such sentimental issues and motivate them in the desired way. By exposing the pathetic child-related issues, the story writers try to win the favour of the readers. Behind this, they have certain purposes. When any writing has certain purposes behind it then there is ideology. It is also true that it is not possible to depict any issue without purpose. So, every writing is ideology laden.

Madheshi Issues under the Narrative Domination

Madhesh related issues in Nepalese war stories are suppressed under the narrative domination. The narrative trend of Nepal has remained always biased towards the Madhesh/Terai. The dominant hill perspective in the Nepalese war stories does not try to excavate the essence of the Madheshi practices, whether these are socio-cultural or behavioral. Despite having the significant role for the nation, the Madhesh has been overshadowed in the Nepalese literary scenario because of the biased attitude of the dominant class. The socio-political and cultural description may add some strength while talking about the misrepresentation of Madheshi issues in Nepalese war stories.

A long stripe of plain land from east to west lies in the southern part of Nepal and it is called Terai. Terai is geographically undistinguished from the land over the frontier in India. Up to the eighteenth century most of the plain land was covered with dense forest except in certain settled areas like Janakpur, Biratnagar, Batauli etc. Now a day, this plain land is called by its classical name Madhesh though there is still a

deep debate in this name among the people who live in this region. The people, who are living in Madhesh/Terai are called Madhesi. The Madhesi has been an umbrella term for the Terai dwellers and has been getting wider recognition now a day.

Madhesh is the place of diverse cultural practices and tribal people. There was mass migration in Terai when the dense jungle was cleared and malaria was eradicated in 1950s and 1960s. After the migration, the natives of this area started to get marginalized and the same trend is still continuous. After the settlement “the inhabitants of this area were divided into many different castes and ethnic groups but in contact to the hill region, the Nepalese state made little effort to regulated the Terai cast system and the relative ritual status of many of these groups has remained in dispute” (Burkert 239). There are also cast divisions and cast hierarchies in Madhesh but those were less acknowledged by the state and the vibrant cultural practices like Maithili and Tharu cultures were overshadowed.

The term ‘Madhesi’ was pejoratively used to indicate the people of Terai in the past but the people of Madhesh feel proud of having the same name and Madhesi identity at present. Because of having debate in the use of the term ‘Madhesi’, the Tharus, real native of the southern plain, reject to call themselves ‘Madhesi’ but *Bhumi Putar*. Tharus have been loosing the grasp over the land because of hilly and Indian migrants though the hilly people’s domination is more in comparison to Indian migrants. Casting the light on the same issue Mc Donough states that, “The rise in Pahari⁵ control over land was accompanied by an increasing rate of immigration of hill people” (28). Because of those immigrants, the real *Bhumi putars* were marginalized. Despite having such debate in the use of the term ‘Madhesi’, the very

⁵ Pahadi, ie-the Nepali speaking parbatiyas or Bahun- Chhetris as they are known in the hills.

term is collectively used to indicate Tharu, Maithili, and other heterogeneous socio-cultural groups and communities in Terai/Madhesh in this analysis.

Because of the state level imposition of Nepali as the state language, Tharu, Mathili, Jhagad and many other languages were marginalized. When a language is imposed upon a certain group or community, the native language loses its ownness. As a result, the cultural practices are also affected. Because every cultural performance is attached with the language though the “language, like other sign systems, is a collective construction” (Greenblatt 5). The consequences of that state level marginalization is still seen in the literary writings too though a sense of resistance is seen among the people of Madhesh. Madhesh always remained under the state level domination. When there is domination the power circulates in both ways and the sense of resistance increases though it is doomed to perpetual defeat. Casting the light on the same issue, Louis Montrose quotes Michael Foucault and says:

The strictly relational character of power relationships...depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations... resistance... can only exist in the strategic field of power relations. But this does not mean that they are only a reaction or rebound, forming with respect to the basic domination an underside that is in the end always passive, doomed to perpetual defeat... The points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities.... Are there no great radical ruptures, massive binary divisions, then? Occasionally, yes. But more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing

across individuals themselves [. . .]. It is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible, somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships. (403/4)

As Foucault says, the power circulates from above to below and vice-versa. That might be the cause Madhesh uprising had taken place in 2007.

Very few texts are written in Madheshi languages in comparison to Nepali, the official language of the country. The war stories are almost non-existent in those languages and the writers from main stream also do not like to depict the Madheshi issues in their stories. That sort of less depiction of Madheshi issues in the war stories might have two reasons; on the one hand, Madhesh had not to face the dire consequences of decade long Maoists war in comparison to hills and human killings and destructions were relatively less in this region. On the other hand, the Nepalese main stream writing trend has a kind of biased attitude against Madhesh and people living there. That's why the marginalization of Madhesh is explicitly seen in the Nepalese war stories too.

The main stream story writers do not like to represent the issues of Madhesh. Even if they depicted the Madhesh related issues, those are also knowingly and unknowingly biased as we know "the impossibility of objective analysis" (Tyson 283). The famous war story collection *Chhapamar ko Chhoro (Son of Guerilla)* includes only one story about the Madhesh among the dozens. In his story "Gaun Ma Githaru Gunjidainan," Mahesh Bikram Shah tries to expose the effect of war in Tharu community. The first person narrator, the mouth piece of writer, is a hill migrant but born and grown up in Tharu locality. He lives in Kathmandu and goes to the village

after six years because of the war. Presenting the writer's ideology the narrator speaks about his war-torn village in Terai and says:

My village was more suspicious and terror stricken than I had guessed [. . .]. My childish friends Budharam, Resham, and Chunnu, who had left their study in the middle because of the poverty and had been working in the parental field, had thrown their spades and ploughs there and run away to Muglan⁶. Ups...how sorrowful fate! I was panic stricken by seeing the terrible condition of my village. (My Translation 10)

The first person narrator of Shah's story is a hill migrant. When he goes to his village, he sees different picture of it. The familiar people also do not like to look at him. The important issue here is that the narrator, mouthpiece of the writer, lives in Kathmandu because of the warfare but his childish friends do not get such opportunity to study and live in the city. So, they are compelled to go to India. His dominant tendency is further seen when he says, "I was panic stricken with the thing that Surajram had gone to jungle being a rebellion" (10). Through this statement the writer's ideology is clearly seen. On the one hand, he inferiorizes Surajram, a Tharu youth, who had gone to be a revolutionary and on the other hand he is seen anti-Maoist since he is shocked to know about Surajram's departure to the jungle but the narrator lives in the city for the security and study. The vast gap has been created between the narrator, a *Pahade* and Surajram, a *Tharu*. The difference between them exposes the writer's innate psyche toward the Madhesi and Maoists at a time. By using Madhesi issue the writer is trying to impose his own ideology.

⁶ A term for India, the hilly people use this term to refer India, synonymously used for Lahur

Every writer is more or less ideological. The ideology “seems to pop up precisely, when we attempt to avoid it, while it fails to appear where one would clearly expect it to dwell”(Zizek 4). Sometimes the individual writer deliberately exposes his/her biased attitude and sometimes his/her intention is unconsciously embedded in the perspective. So, the writer’s ideology is knowingly and unknowingly reflected in a text. Neither the writer is free from his biasness nor can he/she hide his/her ideology, which is inevitably reflected in the literary text. The same kind of *Pahade* mentality is indirectly reflected in Ram Mani Pokhrel’s story “Sarawati Pashwan Ra UnkoGaun,” when he writes:

In the Terai, where Pahadi and Madheshi castes cooperatively live, lets say in mixed status, civilization, culture and costume, helpfulness and relations are different. But the places, where there are only Madheshi, the level of consciousness is very low there. [. . .] We Madheshi have to learn many things from the Pahade. (35)

Through this statement Pokhrel unknowingly makes the Pahade more cultured and civilized than the Madheshi and later have to learn many things from the Pahade. In this statement, Sarawati Pashwan, a Madheshi character wants cooperation between Pahade and Madheshi people but the sorrowful matter is that kind of dichotomy is created between both and Madheshi are inferiorized. If we see the above statement from the perspective of Sarawati Pashwan, we can see the inferiority complex in her because she accepts that Madheshi have to learn from the Pahade. On the other hand, her projection itself is the outcome of the writer’s biased mentality. So, from the writer’s perspective Sarawati as the character is a creation of the *Pahade* ideology. The writer forgets that the Madheshi cultural performances are no less rich in collaborative practices.

The role of Madhesh is undeniable to provide the spiritual and intellectual leadership in the history. Describing the Mithila culture, Claire Burkert quotes Shivendra Lal Karna and writes:

Nurtured in the soft and sweet lap of the Himalayas, Janakpur's contribution to the enhancement of the glory of free Nepal is undeniable. Although it is difficult to present accurately and correctly the historical and geographical relations of ancient Janakpur in the absence of archeological basis, yet according to the scriptures, it is evident that Janakpur, the capital of Mithila, which bestowed upon Sri Janaki 'motherliness' had provided spiritual and intellectual leadership to the whole world in the *Upanishad Age*. Owing to passage of time, this world famous part, which remained in oblivion for a long time has again reemerged and revived. (242)

This statement sparkles the core aspect of Mithila culture, which was truly a guideline for the spiritual and intellectual leadership. The 'motherliness' of princess Janaki is remarkable in the history of Nepal. That might be the cause she was made national figure of the country. Then the contradiction is seen between Ram Mani Pokhrel and Shivendra Lal Karna. The question is raised here, who have to learn from whom? Do we believe that Madheshi should learn from Pahade or vice versa, since Madheshi people have such cultural inspirations and practices? While putting Pokhrel's projection of Sarawati Pashwan within Karna's definition, every thing turns upside down.

The issues of Madhesh are being gradually included in the literature though the proportional and truthful representation is still nominal. The Tharu, Maithili, and many other vibrant cultural practices are not still recognized in the national and

international level. They have not been included in the main stream culture. The Brahmin-Chhetri dominant state policy might be the cause of this marginalization. Though Madhesh was also affected from the decade long Maoists 'people's war' and the Madheshi also have their experiences of sufferings, loss and destructions in the war, those issues are still in the latent form. Those issues are almost not depicted in the war stories because of various causes as described above. Even if some of the depicted issues are also misinterpreted and misrepresented because of the writers' ideologies. So, the truthful representation of Madheshi needs to come into the main stream of Nepalese literary writings too.

Other Minority Groups as Insignificant Type

As we know, Nepal has heterogeneous castes, indigenous ethnic tribes, religious minorities and other communities. The so-called higher castes have dominating position in Nepal. The same tendency is seen in the literary writing also. The story writing about the experiences of a decade long war also has the same trend of marginalization of minorities. The issue of ethnic tribes, women, children, Madhesh and Dalits are also gradually getting places in such writings despite they are very few in numbers. The situation of religious minorities like Muslims, Shikhs, Christians and other communities like Bangali, Madwari, and foreign immigrants do not have almost any places in the war stories. Neither the writers from related minority groups have tried to present their issues nor have the dominant writers presented the religious minorities and other communities in their writings. The non literary Nepalese writers accept the existence of the religious minorities and other communities except the dominant castes and ethnic tribes.

The religious minorities and other communities are almost not acknowledged in the Nepalese politics. As a result, they are marginalized from the main stream

culture. More than that, their representation in war stories is nearly invisible. So, their war experiences also should have to come at the front. Muslims are made religiously 'others' though the country is declared as secular at present. Describing the Muslims in Nepal Mollica Dastider writes, "A small minority as per the census figures, 971056 Muslims in Nepal comprise 4.2 percent (2001 census report) of the total population, nevertheless, they form the second largest religious minority group only next to the Buddhist (10.7 percent 2001 census), who constitute the main religious minority group in the country" (87). There are three kinds of Muslim community in Nepal; Kashmiri, Churoutes and Terai Muslims. All of them have very less access to the development and other advantages. They have not fixed location neither their cultural practices are acknowledged. That might be the cause; their access to the literary writing is also nominal. The writers from main stream do not like to include Muslim issues in their writings. If they are depicted, their presentation is nominal. Sanat Regmi, one of the writers in *Stories of Conflict and War* presents a lonely Muslim character Allarakha in his story "The Curfew" with his Hindu neighbor. The purpose of this projection is to develop the humanitarian values as Allarakha speaks:

Last Friday, I had paid a visit to the mosque; Maulana Hassan Mahammad was bearing a grudge against Hindus-"we Muslims are in minority here. We have fallen prey to injustice. We must be united, we must struggle for our rights, and then we can live freely as Muslims. Otherwise we will have to live, being crushed under the slavery of the Hindus". Brother Ramdin, I can not understand what Maulana Hassan wants. (76)

Regmi's story is based on Hindu-Muslim riot rather than about the direct experiences of Maoist war. In the war terminated country such riots are spread by the conflicting

parties to win the sentiments of the people and to demonize the opponents. Here also, Maulana⁷ wants to win the favor of Muslim community by spreading the anti-Hindu feelings among them by taking the advantages of critical situation. The noteworthy issue here is that Allarakha is presented as innocent and meek figure in the story that he can not understand what the Maulana wants, what are their rights and what is injustice. His weak and meek projection is the outcome of writer's mind. In the same story, Allarakha's neighbour is Hindu, named as Ramdin, who is made more conscious and careful about such riots and purposes behind them, as he speaks:

Allarakha, these political leaders are dividing us in the name of religion and sects, either preaching sermons in temples or mosques. They divide the man in us by erecting the invisible walls. As we get divided, our political leaders collect our divided votes. Our intolerance leads to violence, killings and riots. This devours us as well Allarakha. This riot preys on the destitute and meek like us. In such riots, it is the poor who suffer the loss. (76)

The petty selfish desire of politicians is exposed through this statement. The politicians play dirty game of 'divide and rule' strategy upon the people by spreading such sentiment-winning messages in the critical period of the country. The needy matter here is that how conscious Ramdin is about politics. Is it possible for him like person to understand such deep political motifs? Allarakha and Ramdin are from similar socio-political situation. They live in the same locality and work there but Ramdin is made more aware than Allarakha. That is nothing more than the main stream ideology operated through the writer's mind. Though the purpose of this story is to spread the sense of humanity, brotherhood and cooperation between Muslim and

⁷ A person who preaches Muslim religious rites based on the Koran

Hindu the ideology of the writer is unknowingly reflected in his projection of the characters.

Finally, like Muslims other religious minorities are marginalized from the main stream trend. The role of other communities was also no less important for the upliftment of the country but they are also not acknowledged properly. The social marginalization has its effect upon the literature too. That's why those tribes and communities are not truly depicted in the war stories. In order to find out more information about such marginalized communities in war stories, all the related texts should be collected and synthesized thematically. The government and concerned authorities should be actively participated in such acts to promote researches about them, otherwise the individual attempt will vanish like a drop of water in the ocean.

IV. Marginalized Socio-Political Issues in Nepalese War Stories

The unmitigated decade from 1996 to 2005 remained crucial and indelible in the history of Nepal because of Maoist insurgency. Thousands of people sacrificed their lives and millions were affected directly and indirectly. The news of deaths, murderers, rapes, abductions and migrations came frequently in the national and international media. Everywhere there was disorder and chaos. The laws were dysfunctional and everyone became everyone's enemy and spy. Even the individual enmity also took the political color and the robbers and dacoits also took the advantages of that critical period. It is needless to say that the catastrophe was unbearable for the Nepalese people during the time. The restlessness and devastations are carved in the mind of those people, who had faced it directly. In order to depict such horrific scenes, some of the writers have used story writing as one of the means to express them. The short story writers have used those undeniable events of the history as the subject matter of their stories. Despite their attempt to present the picture of war terminated Nepalese society, the short story writers have failed to justify their aim because of their own ideological influence and socio-cultural situatedness. The story writing trend seemed quite biased towards the adjacent conflicting parties of the time even in the depiction of the socially marginalized communities too.

The political influence of two conflicting parties: the then Royal Nepal Army and 'People's Liberation Army' seemed explicit in the short story writing too. As this analysis has proved, there is clear cut division of two groups. A group of writers projects the Maoist war as a real harbinger of golden future and another group takes it as a means to destroy everything. The first group of writers is quite optimistic for the consequences of war. So, they praise it despite its momentary destructive nature.

Another group totally demonizes it and takes war as an expression of barbaric nature of human kind. This group does not see any positive consequences of the war.

However, those story writers should be appreciated for their attempt to present the issue of war in their writing, whatever the bent they take. This bending on either side has made the writers biased towards the opposite. Because of that biasness, the raised issues of ethnicity, Madheshi, Dalits, women, children and other religious minorities have remained overshadowed. Because of the politics behind those representations, the depicted issues have got political color and consequently misrepresentations.

The representation of ethnicity in war stories is politicized and has been given a political color. The socio-cultural situatedness of the story writers and dominant Brahmin-Chhetri ideologies do not give justice to the ethnic issues. The ethnicity is a boon for the country if it is properly acknowledged otherwise it turns out to be the curse. The ethnic issues have been curses like for the writers as they have represented them in their war stories. The ethnic issues are either overshadowed or made insignificant deliberately. The representation of women seems influenced with patriarchal ideology; female as weaker and male as stronger. Amid such situations, all of the short story writers including women have been indoctrinated with the same traditional assumptions. All of the writers, who have presented the women's issues, are using traditional gender role. The sole purpose behind this is to demonize the adjacent party but not to raise the voice of the women. Their socio-politico-cultural situatedness does not allow the short story writers for the free play of the subject.

The child related issues are more horrific and agonizing. Most of the writers have played with the child sensibilities in order to politicize the child-related issues. The children are made indoctrinated with adult ideology in the war stories. Either the children are made violent and revengeful or they are presented as meek suffers

forever. Madheshis, Dalits and other religious minority groups are rarely presented in the war stories of Nepal. Despite rarity, those issues are also no less politicized than the others. Those issues are minimized knowingly and unknowingly. The state level marginalization seems to have influenced for the war story writers too in terms of Madheshi, Dalits and other religious minority groups. However, the Nepalese war story writers are ideologically guided and the writers' socio-politico-cultural sitautendess is clearly seen in their stories along with their politics.

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