Chapter I: Kachahari: a Theatre for Oppressed

I.1 Introduction

A Kachahari is a people's court traditionally held in Nepali villages. When faced with a conflict or case of injustice, a villager would call for a Kachahari and presents his or her problems. Villagers would look for possible solutions together, involving both victimizer and victimized on hearing. Kachahari theatre attempts to create this kind of forum using drama: a performing art, where artists perform the victimized person/s issue amidst the audiences who first appear as the case hearing audiences and then become performer of the solutions from each angle. Kachahari theatre –a site of performance is an interactive form of theatre, where the audience actively participates in and shapes the happening on stage. Through this dynamism, people (artists and audiences) both analyze the problems faced by them and act out or "rehearse" to get possible solutions which they can use in their lives.

The Kachahari theatre was started by Aarohan Theatre group in Nepal, nearly two decades ago, under the leadership of theatre master Sunil Pokharel. Aarohan Theatre group is one of the pioneering theatre groups who set the theatre as a political theatre movement rolling in Nepal in 1993. The other one is Sarvanam, which worked for the street theatre where artists perform for public awareness related issues.The theatre master and the head of Aarohan theatre group in Nepal, Sunil Pokharel, in his interview with *Nepal Monitor's* reporter Haris Adhikari, asserts that he does not believe in art for art sake. Moreover, his direct involvement in street theatre from 1983 with the group called Sarvanam, and his subsequent journey to National School of Drama, New Delhi, India has empowered him with a unique capacity to interpret the history of his country and learn from the mistakes that happened in Indian scenario in its post independence era. Pokharel relates this with his knowledge about

Safdar Hashmi. As he says, "[…] they called it "Nukkad Natak". Nukkad means a corner of the street and natak means drama. Safdar Hashmi in India initiated the tradition of putting the audience in a circle. He was murdered in 1989 while he was performing a street play" (*Nepal Monitor*). Pokharel shares that in the very period of Kachahari theatre's inception it took the characteristic of the street theatre which he calls a propaganda theatre:

> I worked with the Sarbanaam theatre group and played the first Nepali
> street play *Hami Basanta Khojirahe Chhaun* (we are searching for the
> spring). At that time, during 1983, Sarbanaam was very active on such
> types of performance which explored the political theme. For many
> people "Basanta" meant democracy at that time of suppression under
> the Panchayati system under monarchy. The word was a metaphor for
> democracy. The street theatre at that time was totally mission oriented
> and of political nature. Later the nature of Nepali street theatre changed
> slightly. […] Sometimes we felt guilt about the messages we gave
> through the plays because it was a kind of propaganda […] It was a
> contradiction. We could not do such plays any longer. (*Nepal Monitor*)

Pokharel further defines the problems with the established notion of propaganda theatre when he shares it as a kind of formal oppression. This complex matrix of a subtler and more generic vision of politics through performance can be easily understood in the light of Gramsci's observation:

> The dominant group is to co-ordinate concretely with the general interests
> of the sub-ordinate groups, and the life of the state is conceived of a
> continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable
> equilibria…between the interests of fundamental group and those of the

sub-ordinate groups-equilibria in which the interests of the dominant group

prevail, but only up to a certain point, i.e. stopping short of narrowly

corporate economic interests. (5)

From the above observation we can deduce that here in Nepal, specially the

evolution of Kachahari theatre appeared as the act of interrogation and subversion of

the institutional theatre that worked in the reference to ideological 'othering' to the

theatres that worked for the oppressed group. Kachahari theatre intervenes and

questions the dominance of a political ideology by involving the audiences into the

entire procedures of performance. Of course, predominance of institutional theatres

which perform the state ideology as the dominant group and cause the suppression

over the people's theatre, a site of change and justice. This makes more sense in

Nepal, because it is the place, where corporate interests do not limit to the economy,

but penetrate deep into the thousand years old socio-anthropological system. On the

other hand, even the street theatres in a way became a tool to carry the interest of the

state or donor, which ultimately create dominance on the people.Thus, the need to

have a politics that finds its root in the social structure and can cater to its needs, and

further more can be represented to generate a consent and a generic form of art that

resulted in the experiment called Kachahari theatre. Kachahari theatre can also be

inferred that it became a public spare –a site of performance where Kachahari acted

out the story of 'othering' as a victimized /traumatized form of art. It might be the

reason that Kachahari tilts towards the marginalized form of representation, departing

both from the street theatre and institutional ideology based theatre, which, for

centuries, remained suppressed. Besides many political and economic motives of

'othering', the psychological motive of 'othering' is to feel powerful or dominant and

become superior. It is clear that 'othering' is an ideology that dehumanizes the

powerless one, sub-ordinate group, whether it is in politics or in cultural reproduction of the art.According to Luis Tyson, it is a system cultivated under the rubrics of colonizing discourse as, "the practice of judging all who are different as less than fully human and it divides the would between "us" (civilized) and "them" (the others)" (424).

Moreover, Sunil Pokharel admits that, it could not be very right to say that the government doesn't want to do it actually, there is uncertainties and hesitation. The government, and the people, is always abstract thing for him:

> "Government", which government? And "the people" which people really? The two things are considered as very abstract in my mind. But somehow the system isn't working here, the political system. After 1900 we got a new system, of course, but with the same people. It is very difficult to change, within the new political system, and some people who changed were the opportunists. Some. So the system, with a very good ideology and very good thinking and philosophy that did't work here. (qtd. West, 59)

Thus, the working of a very organic politics becomes live through the Kachahari theatre-emphasizing the participation of the people in the form of performance. Here, we are talking about each individual's interaction with the happening of the play and then how they relate themselves and become an active part of it. In relation to this dynamism, Sunil Pokharel claims:

> Aarohan has pioneered the use of Kachahari theatre in Nepal. We use the methods for conflict resolution in institutions and communities and for helping oppressed/traumatized groups confront their oppression and thereby to act out it. We have worked with diverse group in

Kathmandu including street sweepers, factory workers, students, child

laborers, journalists, dalits and many more, who are always been

traumatized by various types of othering and made to suffer from

trauma silently. (*Nepthya, vol. 9, 7*)

I.2 Kachahari: A Biding Force

First of all, group of actors go to a certain village or communities, listen

people's traumatized and unexpressed stories of suffering, create oral scripts for the

performance, make performance among the communities who are the part of the game

of 'othering' or victimization, move the performance for a while till the generic

questions related to the traumatic person/s, come as a major concern of the

performance, alternative solutions are invited from the audiences, act out on these

solutions, and finally a viable solution that satisfies the oppressor and oppressed is

made. This method of performing Kachahari acts out the trauma of the concerned

group or person. In the beginning of this mechanism, a circle is drawn and the first

half of a play is presented by a group of actors. They go to the village prior to the

performance, observe and ask the locals about their lives and the kind of conflicts

they are confronted to. In this case, Kachahari theatre done by Aarohan involves the

actors from the local communities themselves and grass-roots activists who have

learned some basic acting skills. Though they already know the broad basis of the

conflicts, through informal discussions with people they learn how such conflicts are

seen and experienced locally. Based on this reality, they put together the first few

scenes of the play. The scenes incorporate all aspects of daily life in the village in

which the audiences live. The play builds up to a conflict that somehow embodies the

social conflict in which local people are caught. Then artists perform the play on the

very issues like untouchability and stop the play for seeking suggestions from the

audiences. Meanwhile, an animator, storyteller or 'Boal's Joker', who introduced the play, enters on the stage and asks the audience what the girl should do now. As the audience comes with suggestions, the actors show them on the spot. Various ideas are tried out and their consequences are shown. Most often attempts are made to resolve the conflict that leads to another conflict. The stage provides a platform that is somehow safe to try out ideas. Consciously or unconsciously the audiences know that the play is really about themselves, but the world of drama creates a space where it is legal to see one's imagination acted out. As the performance develops, the fiction and reality can no longer be separated. People speak freely about their own lives. They watch their struggles acted out before them on the stage, and at times join and act them out themselves.

Kachahri Theatre as a Nepali adaptation is an interactive theatre based on the dynamism of Forum Theatre, developed by Brazilian theatre expert Augusto Boal, "Kachahari Theatre is a Nepali adaptation of a theatre method called Forum Theatre, developed in the 1970s by a Brazilian dramatist named Augusto Boal" (qtd.*MS Nepal, Final Report*, 5). Kachahri Theatre is performed in an open air platform like street dramas. In the words of Augusto Boal, conventional theatre always brings out the mirror reality of the nature or society or of human behavior whereas Forum Theatre / Kachahari Theatre penetrates this mirror to transform the real image in order to transgress or to break the convention so as to enter the mirror of a theatrical fiction. Differentiating the nature of conventional theatre and Forum theatre, Boal opines:

> He believed that theatre could be a rehearsal for life that oppressed people could use theatre as a place to explore strategies for resistance where other socially engaged theatre presents the problems of the oppressed and offers ways to break free, Forum Theatre differs in that

the oppressed are asked to imagine their response within the play itself.

It takes authority away from the director and places it in the hands of

the audience. Underlying the performance is an idea that any person

can be a director, both in the play and in his or her own life. (qtd. *MS*

Nepal Final Report, 5-6)

For him Forum/Kachahari Theatre is not an institutionalized theatre but a third

theatre, "This particular type of theatre is not a part of the institutionalized theatre; it

is not part of the avant-garde. If it is not the first or second theatre what is it? It is the

third theatre" (Qtd in *MS Nepal Final Report*, 9). Likewise, Eugenio Barba describes

the concept of third theatre as the one that does not belong to the linage or to the

theatrical tendency. He says "the group that I call third theatre does not belong to a

linage, to a theatrical tendency. But they do all live in a situation of discrimination:

personal or cultural, professional, economical or political"(160-1).

Kachahari Thetre like Forum Theatre, thus, is a kind of interactive drama

where the audiences direct a performance about their own problems and transgress the

monologue based performance which is likely to render trauma into dialogue based

performance, attempting to redeem the trauma instigated by monologue. It empowers

the oppressed or victimized characters and audiences because through this they

acquire a resisting tool against the oppressor by revisiting the traumatic situation

through interaction and dialogue:

Kachahari Theatre confronts audiences with conflicts they are involved

in and ask them to react. There are no easy solutions. Serious social

conflicts have long histories. If resolving them were easy, the people

involved into it would have done so by themselves a long time ago.

But factors such as power, vulnerability, resources, violence, mistrust,

and fear all prevent the oppressed from acting freely. Faced with this

reality, people develop survival skills, ways of resisting oppression and

maintaining their dignity while at the same time paying what dues they

have to. Kachahari Theatre allows them to explore these strategies.

(qtd. *MS Nepal, Final Report,* 9)

Kachahari theatre, on the other hand, metaphysically sticks on this traditional

dynamism of social justice by giving agency to the social trauma, suppressed in the

psyche of the villagers that otherwise remain under the carpet, through artistic

medium or through performance of such traumatic events or social issues. Kachahari

Theatre, in this way attempts to create a kind of forum, accommodating the marginal

people of that community or victims of injustice or audience who are generally made

passive in the mainstream theatre culture or performance arts. This forum focuses on

the network of relationships in third theatre and builds its foundation in the individual

and finally results in his/her role in the collective.

I.3 Kachahari: Performing the Veiled Conflict

Unlike the dynamics of Catharsis through which audiences purge out their

emotion by arousing pity and fear towards the tragic end of the great hero of the

classic plays where audiences seemed to be marginalized, Kachahari Theatre

promotes the therapeutic values to the victimized and victimizers by means of mixing

both parties in the single forum or stage in which first the problems are enacted and

finally concerned parties are encouraged to return to the normal social behavior.

Though Nepal has a strong tradition of street drama, this theatre suffers from

the same constraints as other socially-engaged theaters do. In a country where many

people cannot read, street drama has earned a reputation of being a great way of

providing right message. This means that street drama often takes the shape of

morality tales. The drama presents simple solutions: people who accept caste discrimination will themselves suffer from it etc. Yet, the full weights of realities –the reasons why people do what they are not supposed to are usually left undeveloped.

The Kachahari Theatre, unlike street theatres, confronts audiences with conflicts they are involved in and ask them to react against such conflicts inducing situations, events or persons that have no easy solutions. Serious social conflicts have long history. If resolving them was easy, the people involved in it would have done so by themselves a long ago. But factors such as power, vulnerability, resources, violence, mistrust, and fear all prevent the oppressed from making an easy assessment to their problems or acting out their problems freely. Being caught into this reality, oppressed people ultimately develop survival skills, ways of resisting oppression and maintaining their dignity while at the same time paying due attention to Kachahari that allows and facilitates them to explore these strategies. For example, what does an untouchable girl do when a high caste man assaults her? Eventually, the plays offer "an opportunity to try out different course of action and see where they lead. That is the nexus of such plays in which comedy becomes an important tool to help people internalize the problem and not to feel being preached" (qtd. West 52).

Basically, Kachahari uses comedy to build up a situation and ends with a very serious note, leaving people pondering over heavy social problems. Kachahari believes in showing different threads of the narrative, but does not pin down to one firm end as in the case of street theater. Thus, it gives the audience a scope to act out their own version of reality, and the problems that survive in the social psyche of the every society and individual.

I.4 Kachahari: A New Trajectory of Performance

Kachahari Theatre as such is a new dimension in the line of theatrical performance and it needs to be analyzed as the theatre of the oppressed that always offers an agency to the marginal and usually victimized audiences. However, till date, we find no substantial research or study made on this area. Very few studies have been conducted on this issue. Yet, these studies have declined to reflect in depth importance of Kachahari Theatre. These studies seemed to be taking Kachahari as the site for political performance or as the site where actors and audiences make an enactment of the social issues with the purpose of translating reality through mimetic metaphysics of drama. None of the studies have touched upon these therapeutic values of Kachahari Theatre that not only helps the victimized to make an effective enactment of the social trauma or conflicts but also plays a substantial role in resolving the crisis and in releasing the social trauma, resultant of socially structured conflicts. Why do the actors go to the village and pick up the social issues or conflicting issues prevailing in the life of villagers before they improvise play on it? Why do the artists stop their performance in the middle and indulge the real sufferers to weave the plot of the play ahead? And why do both artists and audiences take part in the discussion that especially occurs on the latter half of the play? These questions evoke various responses. Producing answers to these questions is the main aim of this dissertation. Kachahari Theatre as such is the transplanted Nepali practice of Augusto Boal's concept of Forum Theatre, propounded and practiced by Boal in Brazil. Both Forum Theatre and Kachahari Theatre bear common features of performance principally stick upon the features of the *Theatre of Oppressed* (TO). Kachahari Theatre, Nepali adaptation of Forum Theatre, is propounded by Gurukul Arohan group in Nepal. Like Forum Theater, Kachahari Theatre is designed to maximize

participation of the audience in a performance by shifting the central focus of the dramatic event from the stage (actors and directors) to the audience. This shift enforces the spec-actor principle of Augusto Boal. The concept refers both to a social relation and to a protagonist function; rather than being installed into fixed roles, as in conventional theater. The spectators and actors have dual functions, mobile and reciprocal, and the theatrical action becomes one that all participants— actors and audience— exercise the same principle of 'spec-actor'. Augusto Boal, In *Games for actors and non-actors* elaborates:

> the Theatre of the oppressed is theatre in this most archaic application of the word. In   this usage, all human beings are actors –they act and spectators –they observe. They are spec-actors…Everything that actors do; we do throughout our lives, always and everywhere. Actors talk, move, dress to suit the setting, express ideas, and reveal passions-just as we do in our everyday lives. The only difference is that actors are conscious that they are using the language of theatre, and thus are better able to turn it to their advantage, whereas the woman and man in the street do not know that they are speaking. (18)

The spec-actor function is fundamental to all TO (Theatre of Oppressed) activities. In Forum Theater it creates a new mode of performance. Like Forum Theatre, in Kachahari Theatre too, actors first recognize the audience as equal performance partners from the very start of the dramatic action. As the action moves ahead, they play and dialogue with the audience through group interaction, exercises and games. Thus expansion of the aesthetic space into the audience area begins. Second, the first time an audience member interrupts the dramatic action that the focus of the performance shifts from the stage to the newly established aesthetic space

comprising both stage and audience area. What occurs in this space is, 'shared dramaturgy' (Boal). Third, by taking on the role of protagonists of the dramatic action, audience members prepare to be protagonists of their own lives in much broader social sphere. In Kachahari Theater, the spec-actors' role play is a vehicle for analyzing power and stimulating public debate. Participants explore the complexity of the individual verses group relation at a variety of levels, including social conflicts that remained survived into the oppressed psyche of the community members into the level of trauma. They are invited to map out the dynamics of power within and between groups, the experience and the fear of powerlessness within the individual and rigid patterns of perception that generate miscommunication and conflict, as well as the ways of transforming them. Kachahari Theater, thus, seems useful means of helping participants or community members to prepare for effective social action intended to transform the objective social and political realities of their community and many other trauma laden social psyche of the community as well.

I.5 Kachahari: Representing the Oppressed

Since Kachahari Theatre is closely related to the oppressed groups, communities, individuals and members of any community, it offers an agency to all the oppressed group by dismantling the mainstream mode of performance that often creates a situation of 'Othering' between the actors and audiences in which audiences become always traumatized or victimized, for not been able to speak out but to internalize the trauma of various types, resulting into various social conflicts. Kachahari Theatre connects victimizers and victimized through the spec-actor principal of Theatre of Oppressed and offers a site for oppressed or traumatic audiences to release their traumatic burden by letting them to weave their traumatic narrative in their performative roles. It negates the mirror reality of representation and

prioritizes the improvisation of the reality because artists or actors do not perform a mare product as in the case of mainstream theatrical performance that only opens up the traumatic issue of the very community through their performance. The superiority of the written script is supposed to be a trauma causing event to the mind of common folk. That's why; the previous actors stop performing their own script and bring into the center the traumatic narrative of the audiences who while narrating their own stories through performance become actors themselves in such a way that Kachahari Theatre becomes more like a trauma therapy to release every types of traumatic experiences that audiences and characters had into their mind that otherwise survives for a long into the social psyche of the community, quite often resulting in the form of social conflicts. The live discussion between spec-actors and actors facilitate both victimizers and victimized coming together and sharing their experiences for the social cohesion. Can a piece of art become a trauma therapy as such? Of course it can, if the art offers enough space for the oppressed or traumatized groups.

Kachahari Theatre, because of its spec-actor principle becomes one of the sites where art and performance become more like a trauma therapy, releasing every conflicts and traumatic situation, faced by the community members and facilitating social harmony among the oppressed and oppressor by cleansing usual 'Othering' among them through the medium of performance.

I.6 Kachahari and Its' Potentials

The insightful study of Kachahari Theatre and its social dynamics has always been marginalized partly because it is deliberately linked either with the development issues or with the democratic politics, regardless of its moral dimension that heavily builds on the therapeutic values, aiming towards the redemption of social, personal, cultural and political trauma, residing into the social and political psyche of social

beings. This side of values that embody the whole dynamics of Kachahari performance, though, bear a monumental stand, rather fails to draw the attention of the researchers into this line. Kachahari tradition in Nepali culture witnesses a dense importance both historically and socially where people in the distance past would arrange a Kachahari meeting at the center of the village, under the head of village chief who would allow both guilty and defender to disclose their traumatic existence in the form of narration to the public that in turn gets analyzed by the group who would finally impel them to confess their traumatic incidents transparently that they finally accommodate other into their values by acknowledging their wrongs to other.

The implication of this Kachahari Theatre and its medicinal role play is remarkably esteemed in Nepali culture in facilitating the traumatic members of the very society than elsewhere for Nepali social harmony that rests on this morality of the society. Since, in terms of its principle, Kachahari Theatre has a close tie up with the medicinal value of Forum Theatre, one of the dynamics of The Theatre of Oppressed. Underlining the importance of drama and its connection to the conflict resolution and conflict transformation, Thomas R. Arendshorst has attempted to bring some insights on this matter into his paper entitled *Drama and Conflict Transformation* that claims:

> Drama has the potential to open insights and avenues for learning for conflict transformation that the didactic presentation of information often can not. Through drama, one can readily approach the precise problems that can lock people in conflict –intolerance, the inability to perceive an adversary's point of vie, and the blindness to one's own contributions to antagonism. (1-2)

Paolo Freire's work and Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre on the other hand introduced and developed the modern philosophical and theoretical foundations of theatre for development. In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Friere argued the need for dialogic education as an essential element of emancipation from the oppression of hierarchical education laden with the presuppositions of prevailing power (1). Boal, in Theatre for the Oppressed, says that theatre is the first human invention and also the invention which paves the way for all inventions and discoveries, Boal pioneered dialogic, interactive theatre," Theatre enables us to observe ourselves and by so doing to discover what is not and imagine what we could become" (2).

Highlighting upon the importance of Kachahari Theatre in empowering the voiceless subaltern classes of the society by incorporating their concerns and problems like irrigation and untouchability, lying under the carpet of mainstream political performances, MS Nepal reports asserts the view that Kachahari Theatre as such is a tool to deal with social conflicts, "The scenes incorporates aspects of daily life in the village in which audience lives and encounters many conflicts like irrigation , untouchability and others" (*MS report* 5). The report further tries to link up the connection between Theatre of Oppressed , developed by Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal and the dynamics of the Kachahari Theatre in such a way that both seemed to be working into the line of a rehearsal for life ,applicable to the oppressed and victimized or socially and culturally traumatized people. The report explicitly draws the connection between the Theatre of Oppressed and Kachahari Theatre: a Nepali adaptation of Theatre of Oppressed. Exploring the causes of social conflicts and its traumatic effects on the oppressed group of any community and thereby linking it with the power relation between oppressor and the oppressed, MS Nepal reports that this imbalance power dynamics of the community results into

violence, mistrust and fear among each other and emanates traumatic sufferings. Yet, the basic strategies of Kachahari Theatre , according to MS Nepal report , offers a space where both the oppressed and the oppressor come together to witness the trauma to facilitate sharing through performance of such events collectively in it. The report claims that this the common space, shared by both parties helps each to downpour their trauma:

> Kachahari Theatre confronts audiences with conflicts they are involved in and ask them to react to them themselves. There are no easy solutions. Serious social conflicts have long histories. If resolving them were easy, the people involved would have done so themselves a long time ago. But factors such as power, vulnerability, resources, violence, mistrust, and fear all prevent the oppressed from acting freely. Faced with this reality, people develop survival skills, ways of resisting oppression and maintaining their dignity while at the same time paying what dues they have to. Kachahari Theatre allows them to explore these strategies. (*MS Report* 9)

Kachahari theatre, despite dealing with the trauma causing issues like drug addiction, alcoholism, gender discrimination, polygamy, child labor, domestic violence, untouchability, and corruption in detail, makes much efforts in resolving the conflict between oppressor and oppressed , "Kachahari Theatre is used to resolve the conflict, happened between the oppressor and oppressed" (*Nepthaya* vol.11,14). It seems that Kachahari Theatre is used by Arohan Gurukul, Nepal for last few years as the way Forum Theatre was used by Augusto Boal in Brazil to empower the oppressed people through theatre, :

The forum theatre, propounded by Augusto Boal in the 70s, has been

used to resolve the conflict in Nepal by Arohan Nepal under the name

of 'Kachahari' theatre. Though the term conflict in Nepal refers to the

very critical condition of the nation both referring to the national level

and international level, it covers a vast meaning. And Kachahari

theatre also makes a micro level analysis of this conflict. Kachahari

theatre streamlines the voice of the oppressed and marginalized. By

analyzing the local level conflicts, Kachahari Theatre, posits the

problems related to the conflicts before the oppressor and oppressed

ones and creates a conducive debate over the issues of conflicts.

(*Nepathaya* , vol. 5, 5)

Kachahari Theatre practiced by Aarohan Gurukul Nepal for last two decades,

sticks upon the methods and techniques of Forum Theatre. Kachahari Theatre is an

effort to transform theatre from the monologue of traditional performance into a

dialogue between audience and stage, relying upon the techniques of Forum Theatre,

experimented and developed by Brazilian theatre practisoner Augusto Boal. Boal's

explorations were based on the assumption that dialogue is the common , healthy

dynamic between all humans-that all human beings desire and are capable of

dialogue, and when a dialogue becomes a monologue , oppression or trauma ensues.

Kachahari Theatre then becomes an extraordinary tool for works arising from

improvisations to create scenes of specific oppression or traumatic situation.

Kachahari Theatre seeks to highlight person/group, protagonist/s who attempt/s to

deal with oppression, causing trauma and fail due to resistance from one or more

obstacles. Kachahari Theatre scenes can be virtual one-act plays or short scenes. In

either case, a full presentation is offered to the audience who are oppressed or

traumatized. The joker, facilitator then involves the audience to provide alternative choices for resolutions or outcomes and thus, works towards the redemption of trauma.Kachahari Theatre, in that sense, bears a power to resolve social trauma or at least has become an instrumental towards the redemption of trauma, "For last eight years, a new form of theatre practice has been occurring in Nepal. This new mode of theatre is called 'Kachahari Theatre'.The English name for this theatre is Forum Theatre" (Ghimire 135).

With this brief introduction about Kachahari theatre in Nepal, now the researcher would like to locate it in the mainstream theatre and art and cultural politics of modern nation state in the next chapter.

Chapter II: Relationships between Art and Society

Art, the most difficult and the simplest form of creative expression, bears an invaluable position in all walks of life, professions, culture, history, identity and economy of each and every nations partly because it is a life line of all civilizations we have studied and partly because people as a cave dwellers would not have been able to face the enlightened world or the world with light of every types. That might be the cause that in most parts of the world, the arts are the subjects to the attentions of a large number of social institutions. They are taught in schools, where their study and practice are seen as a desirable, if not essential, part of children's education. They form part of the school curriculum and are deemed suitable subjects for examination and qualifications. They are often assigned great importance by middle-class parents, who encourage their children to read serious novels, take up musical instruments or enroll in out –of-school drama and dance classes. Even at the university level, students worldwide get themselves enrolled for the study of novels, paintings and performance. Most nations in the world now have government departments that promote and support the arts whether they are the nations of the first world or of the third world country like Nepal.Many of them also have Arts Councils, which have either been given the role of distributing government funds to the arts or of advising on how it should be done.

We know that each nation has a separate ministry to deal with the interest of the arts of the respective country.On top of that there exist Arts Councils and Ministries of Culture. There are, of course, all the artists and institutions that support the arts centers, theatres, museums, galleries, concert-halls and festivals of various kinds. Whether or not art bears the responsibility of changing the collective consciousness adopting the engineering of utopia, whether the arts is the source of an

ethical vision or not and whether it is a repository of human values, cultures and ways of life in its collective forms seem to be rather metaphysical and are beyond the common discussion.

Yet, the arts, various forms of expression ranging from sculpture to writing poetry, have always been taken as purposeful. Still, the paradigm of this discussion bears a myriad of opinion from its various corners. At the very juncture the two different orientations about the purpose of arts in relation to its representation of human values, life and society seem to be colliding together. On the one hand various people pick up the humanistic values of arts and link it up to its intrinsic values that underlie the surface value of the arts which we happen to name 'aesthetic' one. In a way, the aesthetic values of art undermine its social implication or of functionality of the arts. It is very hard to pass the judgment whether the intrinsic value of arts comes first or the functional aspect comes first partly because propounders of aestheticism valorize the aesthetic value of arts regardless of its social implication and partly because propounders of socio-aestheticism underline the social implication of arts. The propositions of the letter group is that arts into its holistic forms has always been intermingled with the social context of the then situation of the respective society where it was created.

In brief, functional definitions of art are based on the notion that art serves a purpose, so that an object is a work of art only it achieves the objectives and purposes of art, which can be diverse and change over time.The functional definitions of art then, try to identify the functional property possessed by all works of art.These functions might be, for example, the property of imitating nature or expressing emotions;however we define them, though, these properties are intrinsic to the work of art. This institutional definition of art on the other hand is an important concept of

the art associated with the idea of art world which ensembles the institutions like museums, art galleries, academia and people like art critics, art administrators and established artists that make up the art establishment and that have the power to confer art as an object. Speaking about visual art, Mary Anne Staniszewski brings the centrality of the art's influence on our understanding of visual art in the following manner:

>For instance, in fifth century BC Athens, the differentiation between essentialist, functionalist and institutional definitions of art would have made little sense. […] a definition of art would have probably appeared altogether puzzling. For, there is no word, in the ancient Greek language, whose meaning corresponds to our art or arts. The closest approximation is represented by the word *techne*(and the Latin equivalent *ars*) which covered[…] array of activities, ranging from poetry , painting and sculpture to shipbuilding, carpentry, shoemaking and other activities based on craftsmanship. This is because the distinction […] did not exist in antiquity. Consequently, our differentiations between art forms would also have meant very little to the contemporaries of Plato. (37)

Of course, one can easily apprehend that by the end of the eighteenth century, artist and artisan had become opposites.The artist now meant the creator of works of fine art whereas artisan or craftsman now indicated the mere making of something useful, decorative or entertaining.Before this shift, the word artist was routinely applied not exclusively to painters and poets, but to makers in the broadest meaning of the term.Around this same period according to Shiner-another crucial transformation took place that originated a second fateful division.The pleasure that

comes from contact with art was now divided into two different categories: on the one hand a special, contemplative and refined pleasure-aesthetic-was ascribed to the fine arts; on the other , the category of ordinary pleasures was ascribed to the sphere of the either useful or entertaining. Shiner explains:

> The refined or contemplative pleasures came to be called by the new name aesthetic. The older and broader view of art as construction was compatible with enjoyment in the functional context: the new idea of art as creation called for a contemplative attitude and a separation. (6)

A question of art has an implicit relation with the aesthetic values that emanate to its consumers who are always conditioned to the social norms, values and structures when they delve into the art for the meaning. Even the meaning,attributed to any forms of art does not seem stable,rather is always unstable,flexible,ambiguous and fluid.In a way meaning is the latent current of the term aesthetic which is always likely to be versatile. In Victor Turner's words every meaning of art neither lies here nor there, but always in-between. The very in-between location of art and meaning much often shatter down the dichotomy of aesthetic and non-aesthetic values; resulting both art and meaning into liminal state. Taking all arts as the form of social drama, Victor in his *Liminality and Communitas* disorients the centuries' long concept of aesthetic and mingles it into the spirit of ritualistic process of culture by picking up Van Gennep's elaboration of '*Rites de passage*'. Turner further writes:

> […] The attributes of *liminality* or of *liminal personae*-threshold people are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there, they are betwixt and between the positions

assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial. As

such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a

rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and

cultural transitions. Thus, *liminality* is frequently linked to death, to

being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality to the

wilderness and to an eclipse of the sun or moon. (315)

This is the point where our traditional concept of art and aesthetic makes a

departure for the new meaning to aesthetic: socio-aesthetic, like the rules in the rites

de passage helps a social group to get transformed to the new identity through rites de

passage.The world of the socio-aesthetic or the world of the liminal-the space of in

between establish a harmonious tie up between art-society-culture.It seems that,

despite the dialectical relationship between art and society,influencing each other

maintaining a critical distance, art and its aesthetic essence that is to affect social

fabrics of society exists always in liminal and ambiguous state, more like the state of

death, womb, invisibility and the state of bisexuality.Art as a creative expression

becomes more expressive and vibrant at the very state of *liminality*, in relation to the

society and its cultural components.As an anthropologist, Turner discusses art and

aesthetic in the light of cultural practices and develops a socioaesthetic which he

himself calls 'a social drama'. Discussing about his concept of social drama, Turner

further in *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play* shares:

> […] what I call 'social drama'. This has a proto-aesthetic form in its
>
> unfolding. In many field situations […] a person or subgroup breaks a
>
> rule, deliberately or by inward compulsion, in a public setting.
>
> Conflicts between individuals, […] follow the original breach,
>
> revealing hidden clashes of character, interest, and ambition. These

mount toward a crisis of the group's unity and continuity unless

rapidly sealed off by redressive public action, consensually undertaken

by the group's leaders, […]. Redressive action is often ritualized and

may be undertaken in the name of law or religion. […]. If a social

drama runs its full course, the outcome may be either the restoration of

peace and normalcy among the participants or social recognition of

irremediable breach or schism. (39)

Arts, in much sense, are highly expressive entities. However, when we relate it

to the level of judgment and evaluation in relation to human life, human society and

culture, it seems that arts becomes highly mute partly because arts real articulation

gets unveiled through its agents-art critics. For essentialists, art has no other essence

than that of presenting ideal, absolute, truth and beauty. For them the question of

aesthetic value is related to the very intrinsic beauty of the art, whereas for the social

critics aesthetic value has no essence if arts fail to articulate their attachment with pan

human activities, social moorings and culture. At this juncture, art becomes an agency

in representing society and social entities and society becomes an ideal artifact that art

defines, analyzes and represents through its socio-aesthetic mode of expression. And

it is the main paradigm where socio anthropologists like Victor Turner finds a

conjugal tie up between art, social rituals and cultural practices of every society.

We know that aesthetic philosophy of art takes up art as a purely separate

entity whereas socio-aesthetic philosophy of art iterates both art and society an

inseparable entities and keep on influencing each no matter sometimes art influences

much to the society and sometimes society influences art. Despite the inseparable

interrelatedness of art and society, the questions like what is their relationship? Does

art encourage the growth of a society or does a society provoke the direction of its art?

What is the level of influences? And how much is society or art being influenced by each other? They are still under the discussions and do not have cut and dry solution. Yet, art began, one may argue, when civilization was borne. With each civilization, we form a society, a group of people with individual characteristics, philosophies and cultures within which all sorts of ideas, thoughts and opinions are always brought to challenge and evaluation. These may be recorded in literature or in different forms of expression we have known as art. It is clear that right from the moment when culture started, events have been recorded in the forms of paintings, histories, poems and theatrical performances which inform us about the experiences in the past, expressed in various forms of art including architectures, sculptures, paintings, dances and theaters as well. That might be the reason that social ideology like Marxism highly relies on social events and cultures while taking about art. So is the case with anthropologists. Both for Marxist and anthropologist art and society are the two sides of the same coin, always conflicting and interrelated into the dynamics of socio-aestheticism.

For the socio critics of art, every aestheticism is all political and all ideological, thus, both art and society becomes liminal space for other. For art, society is a liminal zone and gets influenced and changed, for art makes performance of rituals and for society art is a liminal location which gets influenced, transformed and changed when society observes various socio-political events at large. Both art and society into their interrelatedness marks *liminality* at large, for *liminality* in the words of Turner is but a space of transition marked by three phases: separation, margin and aggregation:

> […]. The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior
>
> signifying the detachment of the individual or group […], from a set of

cultural conditions (a "state"), or from both. During the intervening

"liminal" period the characteristics of the ritual subject (the

"passenger") are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that

has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the

third individual or corporate, is in a relatively stable state once more

and , by virtue of this, has rights and obligations vis-à-vis towards of a

clearly defined and "structural "type; he is expected to behave in

accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding

on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions.(314)

      In depth observation of the human history,civilization and socio-cultural

expressions tend to indicate that change is most so as to transform human life, society

and every cultural imprint.That might be the reason that human history, civilization

and culture witnessed tremendous upheavals, resulting into the transformation.These

upheavals were and are usually initiated or provoked not only through political

movements but also through the social consciousness shaped with cultural expression,

surfaced through artwork and artistic upheavals.It seems that cultural upheavals got

the lasting influence both on the human society and cultural artifacts in such a way

that changes and transformation became the mandatory obligation.The momentum of

changes and transformation, however,created a dynamism that societal and cultural

transformation became parallel to each other in such a way that sometimes structural

movement occurred in the sphere of society like polity shadowed the cultural and

artistic movements like realism through modernism and postmodernism whereas at

another moment the latter shadowed the former structure. Yet the metaphysics of

transformation occurred in both equally moving paradigms of societal structure and

intrinsic characteristics of cultural expression like art movements heralded the new

zenith. For all these transformational narratives of culture and social structure, society has become the arena. So it is obvious that society has become the vertex of change and transformation.

The continual change is the nature of art, culture and society and it is the essence of every philosophical quarries and explanations, recorded in the histories of art, sociology and human history of civilization. It might be the cause that change and transformation have led the human civilization, culture and art from the very primitive state of life to this high tech life of modern age. Yet the nature of change, transformation and development do not seem easy to define, especially about the question of agency making required change. Of course, every society contains two major ingredients: social structures like culture, religion, institutions and art and the human beings which always get influenced and transformed by each and other simultaneously. Quite often it seems that the life of human mass of any distinct society get changed because of the social structures they have been attached to and vice versa. It is clear that every change requires an agency, though it is equally difficult to mark whether social structure works as an agency to change the life of people or the people's work-art, crafts and creative genius-- as an agency to make change in the structure of any society is really the most debated issue till date.

The sociological importance of art and artist, in this connection, occupy a vital position in promoting social changes and thereby transforming it to a better state.Art in this context, is no doubt appears more like a rebellion and unlike rebellion, adopts aesthetic tool both to enhance the sense of beauty in its sublimity and to provoke rebellious spirit which ultimately in a more subtle way challenges the dominant institutions or establishment and offers a power of subversion of existing system by unsettling the society.

Colin Moore in his seminal book *Propaganda Prints: A history of art in the Service of Social and Political Change* asserts that art as the means of cultural expression can effectively be used in influencing human ideas, belief and behavior. It has a great role in heralding the social and cultural movement and thereby to institutionalize the transformation of the society. He claims:

> Throughout history people have used art to influence the beliefs and behavior of other. From the earliest times the leaders among us have known that a good picture, song, sculpture or building can get our attention and maybe change our minds. Art has been used to educate us, to mold our opinions, to confirm us in our nationhood and to persuade us of the existence of many gods. (7)

It is clear that due to this transformative power of the art, men of letters in many countries have been using this creative tool to make protest against the ideological hegemony of the ruling class by means of anti-hegemonic bloc that art creates and empowers the spirit of the cultural movement made through art. It is also been used to impose the state ideology upon the common mass by the state of the given period. The government through its state apparatus and state mechanism tries to invent a homogeneous culture through force, consent and torture and exploit art as the medium of sustaining status quo and the community people through its artistic expression in which community develops a strategy of heterogeneity or anti-hegemonic bloc through art itself:

> Art has a political power that can both support the status quo, act as a safety valve for discontent and therefore of benefit to the oppressor-state, or serve as an emancipatory force, challenging dominant

institutions, and reinforcing the subversion of existing systems. (Pratt 123)

Despite that art on the other extreme has been given less value thinking it as the frivolous form of expressions and remains detached from the political syntax, existing in the sphere of its own. However, between the two extremes is the idea that art merely reflects the social order, or political developments. A number of scholars have examined art's political power in the context of social movements and transformation, suggesting ways that art is useful. First they suggest that social movements use the medium of artistic expression for communicating with larger society and for communicating internally for religious songs in the Civil Rights Movement served as a communications bridge between the students and other, less-educated blacks, and with outsiders. That might be the reason that state through polity homogenizes its ideological dominations through state owned media houses, state funded art institutions, academia and cultural institutions, serving to maintain status quo of the state. They through songs, music, media and state honored artists invent harmonizing texts to persuade the mass in general. In the words of Italian Marxist philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, art and artists help state or ruling class to create hegemony or consent about their state ideology.

Gramsci in his *Hegemony and Power* defines hegemony as intellectual and moral leadership whose principal constituting elements are consent and persuasion.A social group or class can be said to assume a hegemonic role to the extend that it articulates and proliferates throughout society cultural and ideological belief systems whose teachings are accepted as universally valid by the general population. Ideology, culture, philosophy and their 'organizers' –the intellectuals like artists-are thus intrinsic to the notion of hegemony. Since, to Gramsci, reality is perceived, and

knowledge is acquired through ideological prisms by means of which society acquires form and meaning, hegemony necessarily implies the creation of a particular structure of knowledge and a particular system of values. For him, intellectual like artists ,therefore, are the organizers and educators of society and their medium quite often appears to be artistic expressions.They are the intermediaries through which the dominant class and the subordinate classes are organically linked. By so doing they render the existing power structure acceptable to allied and subordinate groups. In other words according Gramsci, the function of intellectuals is not only to create a particular way of life and a particular conception of the world, but also to translate the interest and values of a specific social group into general or common values and interests. Hegemony thus is understood as the vehicle whereby the dominant social groups establish a system of permanent consent that legitimates a prevailing social order by encompassing a complete network of mutually reinforcing and interwoven ideas affirmed and articulated by intellectuals. Gramsci asserts:

> The supremacy of a social group is manifested in two ways: as 'domination' and as intellectual and moral leadership. A social group is dominant over those antagonistic groups it wants to liquidate or to subdue even with armed force, and it is leading with respect to those groups that are associated and allied with it. (qtd. in Benedetto Fontana 140-141).

Michael Foucault, while discussing about the role of power or state apparatus and the knowledge or consciousness of the community, expressed through the artistic expression, underlies the relationship between power and knowledge and how the former is used to control and define the latter. Commenting on the coercive nature of the state, he explains that what authorities claim as scientific knowledge is really just

becomes the means of social control. Foucault shows how , for instance, in the eighteenth century madness was used to categorize and stigmatize not just the mentally ill but the poor, the sick , the homeless and indeed anyone whose expressions of individuality were unwelcome to the state. Taking power as the knowledge and everything, Micheal Focault asserts that nothing remains away from the influence of power as the hegemony of the state power directly or indirectly affects each and every walk of life including the art, literature and politics. He claims:

> Since everything is power, art and literature can never remain free
>
> from the hegemony of power of the state. Although art and literature
>
> can be imagined as the independent entity and can also be advocated
>
> for the same, art cannot remain free from the domination of the state
>
> power, regardless of the degree and level of domination. (Shrestha 9)

It might be the reason that, state provide fund to encourage propagandist culture and use art and literature as the most effective tool of spreading ruling class ideology and their hegemony on the people's culture and art. The state also establishes academy, art institutions like *Royal Nepal Academy and Cultural Academy of Nepal*, *Radio Nepal, Gorkhapatra*, *The Rising Nepal* and many other institutions where powerful and elite ruling class people form a ruling ideology and hegemony by means of art and literature. These institutions are made to construct the ideology of the ruling class and detach themselves from the people's art, which due to state hegemony and censorship takes of different mode of artistic expression like 'Gaijatra'(a satirical performance), performance, orchestra, comedy, satire and folk songs. Nepali society can be taken one of vibrant example for the same.

Nepali society and state have had radical experiences in terms of the polity and cultural transformation since late Prithivi Narayan Shaha put a foundation stone

of nation state of Nepal and poet Bhanubhakta Acharya made his best efforts in making cultural and linguistic unification of the country. Since then, both Nepali society and state have marked a tremendous shift till date. Nepal as a nation, intellectual society, civil society, socio-political influence of foreign communities, political activities and various artistic and cultural expressions made during the given time can be taken as the key propellers of this shift.

Speaking historically, the conflicting dynamics between the state apparatus and community seem to be having pivotal role to institutionalize the various upheavals and transformative efforts made in this paradigm. Development partners and artistic expressions became creative catalyst of all the social and cultural transformation of Nepali community at large for, "transformation draws upon various sources of social power which help to create and expand political space for peace" (Vayrynen 135) and social mobility of citizens from traditionally ascribed status to achievement-oriented choices.

Yet, creation of a more humanized society of equal opportunity entails confronting deep structural inequality, preventing the "subordination of societies and culture to the accumulation of capital" (Levitt 15) and providing citizens a fresh trajectory of hope which seems to be pervading Nepali geo-political situation till date. It seems that transformation of a state or society is a long, continuous, untiring and progressive process that passes through several stages where different actors have their own role and responsibility including art, culture, economy and many more. To enhance the spirit of change and transformation of the social structure, state and the prevailing dynamics of the socio-cultural condition bear a pivotal role in this regard. We also need adhering guidelines from the past tradition, concepts and best practices of new technology, role of the state apparatus, consciousness of the community

ignited by the wave of cultural artifacts like *Makaiko Kheti* and development models propounded by the development partners, including the ideology of both the state and community in representing the narrative of transformation.

Of course, state ideology uses art form and artist to maintain their status quo condition and block the path of radical movement through different apparatus like television, media houses, art academy which most often help the ruling class to construct state ideology or hegemony. On the other hand, there exist more vibrant form of artistic creation and expression and help in forming popular ideology in favor of common mass, despite the suppression from the state. The wave of transformation relies on such popular artistic expression through which community develops resistance against the state ideology. Society and community as such, thus, build up a new form of symbolic power of resistance against the state owned ideology constructing mechanism and survives the spirit of transformation opposing the status quo hegemony of the ruling class. Thus art can help the ruling class to maintain status quo ideology, for that society backs artists and assist community forming anti hegemony to resist the state ideology.

One of the central assumption about the performance and theatre is that it is usually been described as an ideological transaction between performers and the community audience for ideology as such is the source of the collective ability of performers and audience to make more or less common sense of the signs used in performance. That means , by which the aims and intensions of theatre performers connect with the responses and interpretations of their audiences, through which either side tries to influence each other in order to create a type of hegemony or anti-hegemony to resist the imposed ideological product. Thus, ideology provides the framework within which performers encode and audiences decode the signifiers of

performance, expressed in terms of ideological product either in favor of the state and establishment or in favor of the entire populace. So, performance can be viewed as a production of ideology and its transaction. It is obvious that quite often this process of passing and receiving of the ideology offers a site both for the performers and the audiences for the interactions in order to affect into their aim. It is the space where a democratic dialogue take place either to impose and validate state ideology or hegemony or to question it through the production of anti-hegemony in the service of larger communities who in the Aristotelian theatre were supposed to be passive because, evidently, communication in performance is not uni-directional but of course a multidirectional, from actors to audience. The totally passive audience in the performance is a practical impossibility and active participation is a practical possibility for any actor will tell us and invite the reactions of audiences' .In this connection Baz Kershaw claims:

> The spectator is engaged fundamentally in the active construction of meaning as a performance event proceeds. In this sense performance is about the transaction of meaning, a continuous negotiation between stage and auditorium to establish the significance of the signs and conventions through which they interact. (16)

Fundamentally, the function of theatre offers a public arena for the collective exploration of ideological meaning. So, it is essential to investigate it in relation to the concept of performance, community and culture and every aspect of a theatrical event may need to be scrutinized in order to determine the full range of potential ideological readings that it makes available to audiences in different contexts. In this regard the very notion of performance encompasses all elements of theatre, thus, providing an essential starting point for theorizing about theatre's ideological functions either in the

service of the establishment or in the service of community. Similarly the concept of community is indispensable in understanding how the constitutions of different audiences might affect the ideological impact of particular performances, and how that impact might transfer or not from one audience to another. Theatre and performance is a form of cultural production as well, and so the idea of culture is a crucial element to know how performance might contribute to the wider social and political history. Since ideology is connected to the existing culture of the society, it needs to have a wider understanding to know the dynamism of the theatre and performance.

Ideology has been described as a kind of cement which binds together the different components of the social order. It has also been likened as for K.T. Thompson "to plaster, covering up the cracks and contradictions in society" (qtd.in Kershaw 30). Whatever metaphor is preferred, though, the notion of shared beliefs is fundamental to most definitions of the concept. To elaborate it:

> ideology is any system of more or less coherent values which enables people to live together in groups, communities and societies. Thus, to the extent that performance deals in the values of its particular society, it is dealing with ideology. But in practice such dealing is far more complicated than this over-simple formulation suggests. The concept of ideology has generated a minefield of interpretations regarding the ways it may relate to culture and society. The critical debates have been long and complex. (Kershaw 18)

The term ideology can be used in a number of ways, but most influentially to refer to the ideas which express the interests of the dominant class of society. Durkheim elaborated the idea that for any society there may be a single social order

which encompasses class differences, and thus a unitary ideology that can represent it. Recent Marxist theorists, generally argue that there is such an order, that it is run by a ruling class, and that it is largely the function of cultural production to reinforce the structures of power by promulgating (in many diverse and complex ways) a dominant ideology which operates in the interests of such ruling classes. Subordinate social groups accept this ideology through a process of hegemony. This concept indicates the predominance of a form of consciousness (or set of beliefs) which serves the interests of an exclusive social group, the 'ruling classes'. The majority in society, however, unconsciously collude in their own subordination because hegemony reinforces the dominant form of consciousness by making it seem 'natural' or 'common sense'. Thus, hegemony works to ensure that dominant ideologies remain generally unchallenged. The ruling groups maintain their power and their control over the social system because the majority accepts their predominance as the norm.

Schechner, in *Performance Studies: An Introduction* aims to describe the structural and functional links between performance, community and culture in a variety of societies, and the admirable inclusiveness of this ambition leads to a fundamental tenet of performance theory. He claims that no item in the environment of performance and theatre can be discounted as irrelevant to its impact. Schechner thus defines performance as, "The whole constellation of events…that take place in/ among performers and audience from the time the first spectator enters the field of performance—the precinct where the theatre takes place—to the time the last spectator leaves" (39).

Obviously he wishes 'field' and 'precinct' to be indeterminate, so that performance may include events physically quite remote from the place in which performance happens. In Western theatrical terms, the production is simply the most

concentrated part of the performance event. If we extend Schechner's logic, it follows that everything else which is done in preparation for, and in the aftermath of, the production is part of the performance and may affect its socio-political significance, and its potential efficacy, for the spectators. Hence, in suggesting how community theatre performances may achieve ideological efficacy we will need to take into account all aspects of the event which bear on the ideological transaction between a theatre people and the community of the audience in any cultural context. How the audience gathers for a performance, and disperses when it is over, may be as important to its ideological reception of the show as, say, the style of performing itself.

In all forms of Western theatre the gathering phase is designed to produce a special attitude of reception, to encourage the audience to participate in the making of the performance in a particular frame of mind. In other words, the conventions of gathering for a performance are intended to effect a transition from one social role into another, namely, the role of audience member or spectator. A crucial element in the formation of the role is the 'horizon of expectation' which performative conventions create for the audience; that is to say, "The framework within which a piece of theatre will be understood as one type of performance event rather than another" (Bennett 210). So the precise nature of the audience's role will vary.

However, the anthropologist Victor Turner (who worked with Schechner) has pointed out that in some respects the role is always similar to that experienced by participants in ritual. It is a luminal role, in that it places the participant 'betwixt and between' more permanent social roles and modes of awareness. Its chief characteristic is that it allows the spectator to accept that the events of the production are both real and not real. Hence it is a ludic role (or frame of mind) in the sense that it enables the

spectator to participate in playing around with the norms, customs, regulations, laws, which govern her life in society (11). Thus, the ludic role of spectator turns performance into a kind of ideological experiment in which the outcome has no necessary consequence for the audience. Paradoxically, this is the first condition needed for performance. The nature of the audience and its responses has recently attracted the attention of critics such as Herbert Blau, Susan Bennett and Julian Hilton, who in part elaborate aspects of reception theory previously developed by Robert C.Holub, Hans Jauss, and others (Bennett 212).

These writers tend to focus on the exceptional nature of the audience's role in theatre. For example, Julian Hilton argues that it produces what he calls 'performance consciousness', by which he means a collective imaginative capacity to engage in the construction of 'potential worlds' through the interaction of performer and spectator. Bennett also notes that this interaction occurs on two levels simultaneously:

> There is the on-stage conflict of forces which constitutes the plot of the
> drama, and there is the engagement with the audience in an
> imaginative act of constructing a possible world…Performers state by
> their actions that what they are performing is both real and not real, is
> in effect simply 'possible'. The audience…tests the validity of the
> perceived meanings [of the performance] within the wider context of
> culture as a whole. (qtd.in Bennett 132–3)

Whilst it also can be argued that how the performers perform may often be less important than the conventions of gathering in creating 'performance consciousness', it seems that Hilton's account is at root an accurate one. Unfortunately, though, he spends little time discussing the ways in which the structural dualism of the performance experience might produce potential

effectiveness for its audience. In order to approach a fuller account, then, we need to theorize the relationship between the 'real' and 'not real' aspects of performance, for it is that relationship which determines the audience's reading of the significance of theatrical signs, and thus their potential effect on the future. In *Theatricality* Elizabeth Burns provides a very useful semiotic analysis of theatrical duality. Her account matches Schechner's and Hilton's in noting that performance takes place simultaneously on two levels. She describes these as "interaction between performers and spectators and interaction between characters in the play" (qtd, in Holzman 31).

However, Burns' model for analysis is the traditional mainstream one that sees theatre primarily in terms of character, dialogue, plot and so on. Nonetheless, her sociological perspective leads her to make a very useful distinction between two different types of convention which govern the audience's reading of performance. The first type she calls 'rhetorical conventions':

> Between actors and spectators there is an implicit agreement that the actors will be allowed to conjure up a fictitious world […]. This agreement underwrites the devices of exposition that enable the audience to understand the play. These conventions […] can be described as *rhetorical.* They are the means by which the audience is persuaded to accept characters and situations whose validity is ephemeral and bound to the theatre. (32)

It is clear that, performance traditions in the past and the theatrical tradition from west to east seem to be making the transaction of the hegemony and ideology of both the state and the community in order to affect each other's consciousness through the rhetoric of audiences. However, the role of the audiences in making transaction of such effect has hardly been discussed. It is the audiences who not only

receive the ideology transformed through the artistic theoretical performances, pass it to the wider cultural arena of the public community and create a type of hegemony as per the interest of the state but also create counter hegemony strategy against the state ideology by rejecting the received signs of the theatre and performance art. So the audiences have a duty of transforming their consciousness, their public and thereby the consciousness of the state and community. In relation to the role of the entire audiences in transforming the society, culture and the performance of the art itself, Augusto Boal receives the front line who by means of Theatre of the Oppressed not only dismantles the traditional role of the audience as the receptive mass of the ideological product or hegemony but also offers a new cultural and political space in which audiences became the creator of people's counter hegemony against the state apparatus and in favor of larger but marginalized oppressed community.

Unlike, traditional paradigm assigned by the western traditional cannon of theatre and performance and especially Burns' ideas, Brazilian theatre person, on the other hand takes up the theatre and performance in a rather different way. He uses the theatre as a tool that fosters an appreciation for the two level of interplay of oppression-one residing in a particular person who acts unjustly as the state and the other located in some dimension of an impersonal social structure, expressed between the actor and audiences. He describes that everyone deals often with both levels simultaneously. Even as we interact with an individual 'oppressor' we come to realize that the person is a symbol of or actor in a larger, oppressive social system. To represent this dynamism of the theatre and performance, the developed a new model of theatre-Theatre of the Oppressed which contains the real power of transformation both the person and the system. Boal acclaims:

The transformative power of the Theatre of the Oppressed emerges

from the opportunity for both actors and audience to move between the

immediate problem personified in a dramatic scene and the dynamics

of oppression that transcend the particulars of the scene. The theatre

engages participants because it casts the source of our ethical distress

in a story, dramatically rendered, rather than in a set of obstacles or list

of grievances. Once the story exists and is recognized as commonly

shared, it helps knit us-protagonist with audience-into a community.

Together we envision new ways of authorizing ourselves to act as

moral agents in this and related situations. (qtd. in Brown and Gillespie

39)

Thus, the Theatre of the Oppressed can help enhance our skills, courage, and

collective responses to resist the sources of our moral, cultural and political distress

caused by the state hegemony or ideology. By naming the circumstances of our

oppression, giving them human form, and together imagining creative alternatives,

Theater of the Oppressed enables us to gain insight into demoralizing forces and

inspires us to act against them, especially the forces that are hegemonized by the state

apparatus. In that sense, we might assume that theatre and performance can both help

to impose ideology or to debunk the state ideology through the dualism of artist as an

actor and as an audience who simultaneously interact and develop a strategy to resist

or cope the form of ideology performed and produced on the stage.

Eugenio Barba, while discussing about the basic essence of theater and

performance, in his book, *The Essence of Theatre*, also reflects that the real essence of

theatre does not grow in its aesthetic quality, nor it is about the capacity to represent

or resist life, rather it is a social cell that embodies an ethos, a set of values that guide the refusals of each of its components. Barba defines theatre and performance as:

> Theatre is intolerable if it limits itself to spectacle alone. The rigor of the craft or the elation of invention is not enough, any more than the awareness of the pleasure or knowledge that we can induce in the spectator. Our work should be nourished by subversion that projects us beyond our professional identity, which acts as a wall, both protection and at the same time imprisoning us. Performance sows a seed that grows in the memory of every spectator and every spectator grows with this seed. (17)

Thus, it is clear that the essence of theatre does not reside in its aesthetic quality or in its capacity to represent or criticize life of common public and the life of state. It consists rather in radiating through the rigor of scenic technique an individual and collective form of being-an invention of personal tradition as in the case of Augusto Boal. Theatre can be a social cell that embodies an ethos, a set of values that even guide to make refusals of each of its own aesthetic, polity and other element and that's why it is welcomed in representing the social changes and transformation in all the oppressed communities of the world. We need to understand that theatre, thus, is not limited to the performances though it is through performance the theatre exist, does not simply address itself to an audience, is not solely preoccupied with filling seats, rather an alternative imperative to transcend the performance as a physical and ephemeral manifestation and attain a metaphysical dimension-political, social, didactic, therapeutic, ethical or spiritual and bears up the role of liminal as in the words of Victor Turner, a tool of the oppressed, a way to impose hegemony and create counter hegemony and in its larger context theatre and 'performance' is the final

boarding call for cultural studies, making all local stops including women's studies, African Studies, Asian Studies and Queer theory' as Bial claimed. Tomaselli, in this context, defines black theater in South Africa and describes its expressive potential in arguing that:

> Of all the arts, theatre is the most accessible and forceful medium through which we black working class is able to articulate its ideology, expose the contradictions of apartheid and communicate a more accurate portrayal of their actual conditions of existence to members of their own and other classes. (51)

For a long time the art of performance or theatre was associated with the notion of mimesis.Ancient philosophers looked at it as a maya or illusion.Plato defined performance as an imitation or mirror relfecton of society.He regarded performance and theatre art as an act of mimicry and a way to imitate rality.Arstotle also maintained that the purpose of stage drama or theatre was to imitate the actions of real life.In a way theatrical art , thus, has always been associated with falsehood, faking or copying. However, contrary to such mimetics acts, the feelings, attitudes, and emotions aroused in the audience during and after a performance have always been acknowledged as real and it has been believed that such emotional effects always lead spectators to real , emotional consequences. Nevertheless, the term performance is applied to theatre, rituals, parades, protests and perfromance art. This very term suggests both process and product at the same time.Unlike traditional theatrical performances, modern performance art pieces are conceptual and often reflect different cultural contexts.But, theatrical-stage performance and performance art –conceptual art-both illustrate the existence of social agents and challenge the constituted social reality through language, gestures, signs, and content.Theatre or

performance art has enabled arsitsts to question the assumptions of traditional art and culture with respect to contemporary issues that are often considered subversive and controversial.

Unlike other forms of art, theatrical or performative art bears the provocative spirit of change because it is a medium to explore identity, culture, polity and humanity as well partly because theatre as a collaborative form of fine art uses live performars to present the experiene of a ral or imagined socio-political event of every culture before a live audience in a specific place. The performers through this vibrate medium of communication may communicate experience to the audience through combinations of gesture, speech song, music, dance and improvization.Theatre or performance in this regard can be used both in constructing the state hegemongy and counter hegemony in each and every sector of humanity and polity.The diversified forms of theatre on the other hand has a very crucial role not only in understanding the polity of gender, race,war, ethinicy, interculturalism and the construction of ideas but also in understanding the dynamism of conflict,prevading the spectrem of polity. It is one of the multivoal spectrum to form, reform and revolutionized the given area of humanity.

We live in a world of differences –of ideology, belief systems, ethnicity, social and cultureal values.These differences are completely natural.They are not something that we are going to be able to banish or get rid of , nor would we want to –in fact , these differences enrich our lives. But these differences can become the basis for conflicts when two or more people or parties believe that the other is an obstacle as in the case of gender, race and ethnicity to getting what they want.Such conflicts take many different forms, from private disputes to widesppread wars as they occur between adversaries as well as between friends and family members and they can be

over something physical or emotional.It is when disagreement develops into violence that conflict can destroy communities, countries and relationships.However, when a conflict is transformed can have numerous benefits only because all social change stems from conflict and without conflict , our society would not evolve, injustices would never be called into questions, and relations would reman frozen.So conflicts and disagreement in each polity like race, gender, wars, education, identity and culture can create progress, dialogue , better understanding of each other and even greater trust and intimacy, foreboding the advanced humanity based society. Theatre and performace makes collaboration with all these social situations and crate progress, change, dialogue and better understanding among all these issues. Just like the differences exist in our nature, so does the theatre so as to incorporate all these creative and diversified matters of polity and humanity. The various spectrum of theatre like development thatre, theatre of the oppressed, popular theatre, community theatre, protest theatre, feminist theatre and theatre for socail change and conflict resolution depict life from a unit of family to the global perspective of life as well.All these theatre forms are associated with a transformantion of a social reality, by using community and individual participation both as an actor and as an audience.

Thus, theatre and performane can be defined a diologic and participatory art form –an approach in which the actors interact with the public based on a real problem exposed to adapt, change or correct a situation, an attitude or a behaviour that is developed during the performance,stimulating positive changes as Boal argues, "Theatre is a form of knowledge: It should and can also be a means of transforming society.Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it" (Boal 18). Boal has used theatre to reach new audiences in the poorest communities in the country. He hoped to provoke a revolution in social and economic justice through his

art by encouraging its viewers-audiences to seek more rights and opportunities. It was Boal who dismantaled the centuries long actor centric performance theatre to the spectator centric theatre, encouraging the vibrant participation between actor and specatros or audiences to provoke the issue of change in the mattes like race, gender, education, culture, polity and identity in a dialogic and interactive way.Boal has worked to transform his troupe not to be distributors of a message to the passive spectators as in the traditional theatre,but a group that could create a space for dialogue with and among the spectators.

The immergence of participatory or dialogic theatre or performance not only offered a site to make dialogue about the existence of imparity in gender, race, culture, development, polity and wars and thereby to reinvent the ground for justice, development and change. That is the reason that for decades, the objectivity and empricism of traditional theatre departments have been challenged mostly on the basis of identity politics.Feminism's application to theatre,black people's application to theatre and colonized people's approach to thatre , in particular, has insured that universal concept of male, white race and colonizers can no loger be presumed as the subject of any performance, contermporary or historical. Multicultural and feminist multicultural and other ideological adjustment have likewise had a large impact so that racial and ethnic categories, too, can not be elided responsibly , or located purely in instances of cultural impersonation like minstrelsy and black-face that absented people of colour as subjects even while they derided them as objects of an white, male and imperialist white gaze.Margaret Walkerson says, "Theatre provides an opportunity for a community to come together and reflect on itself…It is not only the mirror through which a society can reflect upon itself-it also helps to shape the perceptions of that culture through the power of its imagining" (20).

Of course, theatre and performance have become a location to bring both the oppressor and the oppressed communities together and formulate a new paradigm of freedom and libration through the dynamism of dialogue among them, no matter whatever might be the issues.Black art movement of 1960s can be taken as an example. During the early to mid 1960s LeRoi Jones-Amiri Baraka founded a movement known as the Black Revolutionary Arts Movement, the cultural arm to The Black Power Movement.The Black Power Movement was created by a group of activists who believed that the non-violent protests of the Civil Rights Movement were ineffectual.They were separatists who believed that equality could only be achieved for African Americans by creating their own cultural institutions. Spoke persons for Black Power emphasised the need for social and economic independence within the black comminity and promoted ideas of self-defence. This approach to protesting and political activism became the foundation of Jones/Baraka's Black RevolutionaryArts Movement which emphasized black consciousness, comminity involvement, separatism and revolutionary action and new aesthetics in form and structure.

Theatre or performance , that's why ,has not only become a social-cultural forum for developing the participatory approach to mediate and remediate the issues of race, culture, gender, identity, wars and ideology but also a new revolutionary social aesthetic that offers two way strategies to the marginalized –strategy to question and a new strategy to relocate their idenity.Theatre ,thus, provides a platform to the people who are devoid of a voice.Monica Mottin, in her research article *Dramas for Social Change* says:

> Theatre for Development or the Development of Theatre? Writes:
>
> drama can have a decontexturalizing and transformative power.They

crate a different social space where anything can happen, even

magic.People who don't usually have voice can express their opinion

because a willing suspension of disbelief allows for the acceptance of

atypical events. Theatre can be the best tool for the representation of

those voices that remain unheard in society…thus, theatre helps to

create discourses and empowers those voices that are in the

margin.(323)

Of course, any thing can happen with theatre and performance. Through theatre voiceless get heard through performitivity, misrepresentated history gets corrected and reimagined,ideologies get questioned and redifined in theatre. And more than that, the usual practices of exclusion and inclusion of subject matters and characters on the stage is a highly political,reflecting the power relations. Theatre and performance questions this polity and redefines an uneven power relation in an even and radical ways. Despite this, there occurs some discripencies between the Street theatres and modern theatres in relation to the issues of representation and the ways of representation.

Of course, Boal's experimentation with the theatre not only made radical departure from modern city and aesthetic centric mode of representation to the village centric and public centric mode of representation by amalgating both actor and audience into the single body of political theatre but also paved a way for the postmodern theatricality into theatre art. It also opened a new fertile door for the emergence of local and public centric theatre in the service of large oppressed mass and took a weigh of being another avant-gardism for public and villagers. As a result, many local and public centric theatre art forms and their performances are developed and for the first time public started to question about their previous biased mode of

representation. Due to this public and local artists started to form and perform many types of street theatres which in long term flourished the concept of Forum Theatre as well.

Street theatre is a form of theatrical performance and presentation in outdoor public spaces without a specific paying audience.These marginal and negleted spaces can be anywhere, including shopping centres and open street corners.They are especially seen in outdoor spaces where there are large numbers of people.The actors who perform street theatre range from peddlers to organised theatre companies or groups that want to experiment with performance spaces, or to promote their mainstream work.The street theatre is so secular and open that even the audiences can become the actors who by taking part in the acting not only deconstruct the modernist view of aesthetics but also blur the distinction between high and low culture and between actor-all knowing and audience –all receiving creatures.Sometimes performers are commissioned –especially in the case of INGO /NGO funded theatres for street festivals, childeren's shows or parades, but more often street theatre performers are unpaid.The logistics of doing street theatre neessitate simple costumes and props, and often there is little or no amplification of sound, with actors depending on their natural vocal and physical ability.

Upon turning back towards the history of Nepali theatre it seems that, the trajectory of Nepali theatrical tradition emerged out of the street- a location where performitivity of cultural-religious tradition blended with text appeared as the foundation stone for Nepali theatricality. Whether it was the performance of 2400-year old *Harisiddhi dance* or the performance of *Gaijatra festival*, they all tend towards the street for their continuity till date. The street in Nepali culture , thus, witnesses not only the emergence of cultural-religious trajectory of Nepali

theatricality till date but also became a most influential location for the performance of political demonstration against the state which turned to be very vibrant in the sense that almost all political movements and their agendum got validated through the street demonstration, whether it was the political movement against *Ranas* and *Shah* regime or the take over of Kathmandu valley against Malla period by King Prithivinarayan Shah, the street became the most fertile location in all the political changes and development as well. The street also has the connection with the people's movement of 2006. The street in Nepali context appeared as a multi-vocal site to flourish art, culture, polity, development, ideology and festivals. Discussing about the heritage of Nepali theatre and its centrality to the street, Abhi Subedi, in his book, entitled *Nepali Theatre as I See*, argues:

> The heritage of street performance is closely associated with the history of the theatre of travel in Nepal. In fact, the heritage of street becomes an important subject when we talk about the tradition of performance in Nepal Mandala because in this sphere festivity, forms and urban architecture all became part of the theatrical tradition. Street in the Nepali theatrical heritage has a very long history because it is associated with travel or movement. In fact, we may even put it like this-Nepali dramaturgy developed out of street. (45).

The concrete theatre culture of Nepal, however, dates back to the Lichhavi dynasty. Prachanda Malla, in his Nepali *Ragamanch* (Nepali Theatre), claims, "Nepali artists are found to have had the skills to render lively form to the stone. The dance, gestures and postures depicted below the statues of Uma-Maheshwor sculpted during the same period illustrate that acting had reached its peak" (qtd. In Subedi 27).However, the emergence of street theatre took place in Nepal during the 1980s

when Nepal witnessed an extreme repression from Panchayat polity and the artists,

students and politically conscious people appeared into the street by street poetry,

which satirized the inhumanity of the *Panchayat system*, "the student movement of

1979 that erupted against the *Panchayat system* brought street theatre via street poetry

revolution (Thapa, 40)". According to Ashesh Malla, director of *Sawwanam theatre*,

"the street poetry revolution of 1979 has a close relation to street or political theatre.

This street poetry revolution was the climactic mode of the effort to bring theatre out

of the closed room (Yubaraj 2066 BS, 179).

In the words of Abhi Subedi, it was the travelling trajectory for awareness,

rebellion and political change caused the happening of street theatre in Nepal for it

was established by those angry and aspiring young individuals who were looking for

the change of suppressive *Panchayat system* into the democratic polity, symbolized

by the 'spring'-the advent of new beginning as entitled '*Hami Basanta Khojirahe*

Chhau-we are in search of Spring, the first Nepali street performance. Subedi

comments:

> The young theatre groups like the *Sarwanam* who came into existence
>
> in the year 1981, did use march or travel as the main energy of the
>
> street performance; they also emulated the forms of street theatre in
>
> India. In *Hami Basanta Khojirahe Chau* 'we are in search of Spring,
>
> the characters make movement on the street shuffling the crowd to find
>
> spring. (59)

In the context of Nepal where both theatrical performance was undergoing a

serious crisis and the people's desire for the democratic system was facing an

existential crisis because of the repressive *Panchayat System*, the emergence of street

theatre depicted an artistic, awareness-oriented and expressive weapon born against

the climactic suffocation of restriction imposed on political and civil rights by the system of the time. So, street theatre turned out to be associated with the aspiration for the radical departure both from the political system and a departure from the traditional theatricality, which was limited into the indoor, restricted by the wall. In this very backdrop, street theatre is just a continuation of Greek open theatre via *Dabali* theatre, as Yubaraj explains, "in the early years of twentieth century, theatre came out of the closed room. So it was named street theatre. But street theatre, in modern theatre, was initiated with the objective of political transformation" (88). Thus, as in other countries of the world, street theatre in Nepal emerged as an alternative to traditional theatre, as per Ashesh Malla, came to end traditional theatre: "The street theatre was born to end this tradition. This is the result of the desire to get rid of traditional theatre and presentation" (Yubaraj 179).

The street theatre movement observed another radical shift or transformation when some of the artists involved in street theatre tradition opted for the much democratic and participatory theatre-the Kachahari Theatre-the Nepali adaptation of Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre. This marked a radical departure from the tradition of doing street theater in the sense that theatricality of the Kachahari Theatre once again revolted the system of using theatre as the production site to the system of using theatre as the participatory location that rejected the norms of using script based performance and initiated non-script performance where it is the audiences who perform the role of a director, actor and director. It became avant-gardism movement in terms of public/audience participation and in terms of the *spec-actor* theory that for the first time used theatre in the service of oppressed community. Unlike, in street theatre performance where audiences are forced to receive the ready-made solutions, in the performance of Kachahari *Natak*, the viewer turn into actors to act out solutions

through discussion. In the beginning, the actors present the intended problem. As the problem is highlighted, the actors ask the audience how the latter would solve the problem. Then the viewers are supposed to either take the stage or come up with the solution, which will instantly be enacted by the actors or audiences. This approach is quite effective in exploring the grassroots of society's issues and problems. The profounder of Kachahari Theatre, Sunil Pokharel clarifies the impact of street theatre performed by Aarohan Gurukul, "our experience says-wherever there is monitoring of the message disseminated by theatre, the Kachahari Theatre is good over there" (qtd in Yubaraj 204). Yubaraj sheds light on the impact of Kachahari Theatre on the alleviation of negative social practices like the *Kamalari system*: "The Kachahari performed by ex-Kamalaris has initiated discussions on the *Kamalari* system in Kathmandu and other cities across the country. Kachahari theater has launched an initiative against the *Kmalari system*" (Yubaraj 137).

Of course, with the emergence of Kachahari theatre by Aarohan Gurukul, the street theatre stepped into a new beginning or dawn as the excluded realities of everyday life began to make inroads in the theatrical arena. As a result theatre slowly became much more inclusive because Kachahari theatre performance even explored the oppressed issues not only related to the race, class, ethnicity, ideology, civil rights and women's empowerment including the social issues like Kamalari, girl's trafficking and the traumatic experiences of the common people, witnessed by the nation during the ten years long Maoist insurgency and the country insurgency of the government resulting the death of more than thirty thousand people and the disappearance of nearly hundred thousands which still haunts the polity of the nation but also issues of community participation into the performance through the theory of spec-actor, along with the political and national agendum of restructuring the nation

and the process of constitution drafting. Abhi Subedi highlights the energy brought in by Kachahari Theater and claims:

> Forum Theatre was named Kachahari which means the gathering of a group of people mostly in rural areas who discuss over the local matters and work out solutions. It is like an agora…They are short improvised plays developed on the spot by the theater creators. Kachahari has remarkably brought about social reforms. (210)

Kachahri Theatre is an interactive theatre based on the dynamism of Forum Theatre, developed by Brazilian theatre expert Augusto Boal, "Kachahari Theatre is a Nepali adaptation of a theatre method called Forum Theatre, developed in the 1970s by a Brazilian dramatist named Augusto Boal (MS Nepal, Final Report, 5). Kachahri Theatre is performed in an open air platform like street dramas. In the words of Augusto Boal, conventional theatre always brings out the mirror reality of the nature or society or of human behavior whereas Forum Theatre / Kachahari Theatre penetrates this mirror to transform the real image in order to transgress or to break the convention so as to enter the mirror of a theatrical fiction. Differentiating the nature of conventional theatre and Forum theatre, Boal opines that:

> He believed that theatre could be a rehearsal for life that oppressed people could use theatre as a place to explore strategies for resistance where other socially engaged theatre presents the problems of the oppressed and offers ways to break free, Forum Theatre differs in that the oppressed are asked to imagine their response within the play itself. It takes authority away from the director and places it in the hands of the audience. Underlying the performance is an idea that any person

can be a director, both in the play and in his or her own life. (qtd in MS

Nepal Final Report, 5-6)

For him Forum Theatre / Kachahari Theatre is not an institutionalized theatre

but a third theatre, "This particular type of theatre is not a part of the institutionalized

theatre; it is not part of the avant-garde. If it is not the first or second theatre what is

it? It is the third theatre (Qtd in MS Nepal Final Report, 9)". Likewise, Eugenio Barba

describes third theatre as the one that does not belong to the linage or to the theatrical

tendency, "the group that I call third theatre does not belong to a linage, to a theatrical

tendency. But they do all live in a situation of discrimination: personal or cultural,

professional, economical or political" (160-1).

Kachahari Theater like Forum Theatre, thus, is a kind of interactive drama

where the audiences direct a performance about their own problems and transgress the

monologue based performance which is likely to render trauma feeling into dialogue

based performance, attempting to redeem the trauma instigated by monologue. It

empowers the oppressed or victimized characters and audiences for through this they

acquire a resisting tool against the oppressor by revisiting the traumatic situation

through interaction and dialogue:

> Kachahari Theatre confronts audiences with conflicts they are involved
>
> in and ask them to react to them themselves. There are no easy
>
> solutions. Serious social conflicts have long histories. If resolving them
>
> were easy, the people involved into it would have done so by
>
> themselves a long time ago. But factors such as power, vulnerability,
>
> resources, violence, mistrust, and fear all prevent the oppressed from
>
> acting freely. Faced with this reality, people develop survival skills,
>
> ways of resisting oppression and maintaining their dignity while at the

same time paying what dues they have to. Kachahari Theatre allows

them to explore these strategies. (MS Nepal, Final Report, 9)

Kachahari theatre, on the other hand, metaphysically sticks on this traditional dynamism of social justice by giving agency to the social trauma, suppressed in the psyche of the villagers that otherwise remain under the carpet, through artistic medium or through performance of such traumatic events or social issues. Kachahari Theatre, in this way attempts to create a kind of forum, accommodating the marginal people of that community or victims of injustice or audience who are generally made passive in the culture of mainstream theatre or performance arts. This forum focuses on the network of relationships in 'third' theatre and builds its foundation in the individual and finally results in his/her role in the collective.

Though Nepal has a strong tradition of street drama, this theatre suffers from the same constraints as other socially-engaged theaters. In a country where many can not read, street drama has earned a reputation of being a great way of providing with "right message". This means that street drama often takes the shape of morality tales. The drama presents simple solutions: people who accept caste discrimination will suffer from it themselves, etc. Yet, the full weight of 'realities' –the reasons why people do what they are not 'supposed'-are usually left undeveloped.

With this brief analysis about the relationship between modern nation state, academia and the emergence of theatre art form like the one propounded by Agusto Boal, and also after providing the history of theatre in Nepal in very brief, now the researcher wants to elaborate this very issue through analyzing some Kachahari performances produced by Aarohann and Shilpee theatre groups in the next chapter.

Chapter III: Kachaharies as a means of Resistance for Social Reformation

Before Aarohan Gurukul, artists introduced the new venue of performance by adopting the spirit and theatricality of Boal's theatre of Oppressed into Nepali context in the name of Kachahari Natak, Nepal marked a lot of performitivity ranging from Rana reign to democratic era of 1990 and Republic era of 2006 and marked a departure from traditional theatre to street theatre. However, with the invent of Kachahari theatre, based on Augusto Boal's concept of spec-actor, long been suppressed issues of oppressed not only got the attention of the Kachahari artists but also got justice not through any state apparatus but through oppressed people's of their own and through issues based interaction made on the field where oppressed were suffering without any hope of justice and relief. Kachahari theatre, a Nepali adaptation of a theatre method called Forum Theatre developed by Brazilian dramatist named Augusto Boal, explores the strategies for resistance and change. It further enhances people in Boal's words to make 'rehearsal for life'. Other socially engaged theatres in Nepal including street theater seemed to be presenting the "finished" or final solutions to the problems of the oppressed and are offering readymade ways to break free which failed to make any change into the real life situation of the oppressed.

Kachahari theatre differs with these forms of theatres in a sense that it instead of offering such readymade solution engages them in a dialogue that makes them to have a rehearsal for getting out of such problems. In the course of performance oppressed are asked to imagine their responses within its progress which unlike presenting the imitated reality offers local based reality. It takes authority away from the director and places it in the hands of audiences-a community of oppressed people,

underlying the performance is an idea that any person can be a director both in the play and in his or her own life.

Taking Kachahari performance as a social avant-garde in Nepal where oppressed people especially voiceless, *dalit*, untouchable community, women and many others have long been exposed to the state power ,vulnerability, discriminations, immense inequalities over resources, violence, mistrust and fear that barred the oppressed from acting out their problems freely. As a social avant-garde, Kachahari theatre seemed to be confronting the oppressed audiences with these conflicts they are involved in and asked them to resist. It discusses about the ways to come out and devises a tool to settle them to form a harmonious society of their own. Kachahari theatre empowers through the participation of audience as an actor on the stage, prepares them to rehears on the mode of oppression, helps to develop resisting strategies against this reality and develops survival skills: the ways of resisting oppression and maintaining dignity while at the same time paying what dues they have to. Sunil Pokharel, director and founder of Aarohan Gurukul adopted theatre of Oppressed principle into Nepali context and discusses about the differences between the mainstream theatre and the Kachahari theatre, underlying the specific ways of Kachahari theatre that:

> Aarohan does not see theatre only as a means of entertainment to be performed by by actors and observed passively by audiences but as an interactive process between actors and audiences. We want to give the tool of theatre to as many people as possible so that they can use it as a help to develop their own lives. (*Nepal Monitor*)

Commenting on the similarity between Forum Theatre and Aarohan's Kachahari Natak and its anti traditional approach in solving the issues of the

oppressed class of each society, Bal Bahadur Thapa in his article "A Study on the Nexus between Theatre for Social Change and Donor Agencies", says:

> Because of Sunil Pokharel's exposure to Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre, Aarohan Gurukul performs Kachahari Natak, where the viewers turn into actors. In the beginning, the actors present the intended problem. As the problem is highlighted, the actors ask the audience how the latter would solve the problem. Then the viewers are supposed to either take the stage or come up with the solution, which will instantly be enacted by the actors. This approach is quite effective in exploring the grassroots of society's issues and problems. (41)

This chapter explores Kachahari theatre as a social avant-garde not only to incorporate all shades of inequalities, oppression, injustice and discriminations but also to speak democratically to resolve such forms of oppressions and to garnish change, justice, harmony and transformation of society in totality on the four grounds. First and foremost use of Kachahari performance theatre as a purely Theatre of the Oppressed to empower voiceless, oppressed, victimized and marginalized people and to help them make strategies and find sustainable solutions to their problems through interaction and improvisation, second Kachahari as a therapy to work with the oppressors, third Kachahari as a conflict resolution theatre where Kachahari brings conflicting parties come to the negotiating table to devise an inclusive solution through reconciliation and finally Kachahari theatre as the tool to sustain democracy and transformation by creating a form of democracy within the groups by encouraging the participants explore collective paths through stage work to promote democratic values for sustainable transformation of society.

III.1 Kachahari Theatre as a Tool for Social Empowerment

Nepali society has long been dominated by the culture of silence. Mostly, people and members of Nepali communities neither take much initiation against the oppression, discrimination and injustice befallen on others nor raise voice against such atrocities befallen on them. The only retreat they take is to seal their lips or remain perennial silent. Silence has become a synonym of Nepali society or community. Silence as a disease has been engulfing Nepali communities in such a way that people feel easy to escape from the problems than to talk about it and to get through it. The nature of silence is much provoked by the fear, unending domination of one caste to another. Many social malpractices have been occurring in the name of caste, religion, gender, discrimination, prejudices and fear of speaking in favor of justice that usually results into the further oppression in various hidden forms buried under the carpet before coming to the forefront. Many dalits, untouchable people and especially women got born in domination, have been living under domination silently and are forced to die without speaking about their problems. Instead of speaking out they rather direct their frustration inward and disappear. Although people get a lot of space in media and cultural artifacts and mainstream mode of performances, they fail to bring change in the usual situations where silence is regarded as the greatest remedy. However, Kachahari theatre, an oppressed form of art from the perspective of mainstream theatricality, by means of interaction on these various social issues among artists and audiences not only encourages all to open up their cultural silences but also promotes discussion on the way of their nature of silence. Similarly it promotes them to hew out an empowering solution on behalf of themselves and on behalf of similar social issues rampant into these communities.

Among many ill practices, *Kamlahari* system practiced in the western part of Nepal is the most inhuman. *Kamlahari* as such is a social evil where small children below 15 from poor parents are forced to sell rich parents or family as slaves. It is quite rampant in the Terai communities of western Nepal, especially of Dang and its adjacent districts. Parents and sold. Children are numbed by this practice but do not dare to speak about it. Because of this silence such inhuman culture seems to be enjoying it's hey days till date. Realizing this issue as an inhuman, Aarohan Gurukul weaved a Kachahari theatre and moved to Dang nearly 6 years ago, established collaboration with an organization working on this issue, trained them the methodology of Kachahari theatre and performed it into those communities where *Kamlahari* was rampant. Yubaraj sheds light on the impact of Kachahari Natak on the alleviation of negative social practices like the Kamalari system, "The Kachahari performed by ex-Kamalaris have initiated discussions on the Kamalari system in Kathmandu and other cities aross the country. Kachahari theatre has launched an initiative against the Kamalari system" (137). Kachahari performance on *Kamlahari* opens up in the middle of the market place where on the occasion of Maghi festival, i.e. on Magh-1, one parent forcefully takes their 15 year old daughter, weeping in a market where costumer made landlord happens to bargain with the parent. Later, after the settlement of bargain, the landlord tries to take her as a slave to his house. Aggrieved by the tears of the girl, suddenly there comes a facilitator, a Kachahari artist from Aarohan, stops the landlord from taking her. He then, stops the performance in the middle and puts questions to the audiences so as to get suggestions both to end the given problem and to reach the play to an end. The facilitator seeks the suggestions in the following ways:

FACILITATOR.   Dear audiences, this is a real problem faced by the

communities where marginalized parents are forced to sell their

children to landlord, though the children seemed to be weeping. Is it

possible to stop this problem? Or shall we let this happen?

AUDIENCE-I.   It is unfair and inhuman and should be stopped.

 FACILITATOR.   Please come on the stage and act out the solution

to end this problem. (*Journey into Theatre)*

Now, the audience steps on the stage and points out various solutions like

taking legal action on seller and buyer, government's initiation to provide interest free

loan to the selling parents and many more. Still the problem does not get settled and

the facilitator again seeks out so many options taking many audiences one by one

until they agree to the point that if the landlord is ready to sell his children in much

more price? This question is raised by an audience who is presented as the daughter of

the landlord. She asks the question in the given way:

AUDIENCE-2.   Father! Do you sell me if someone pays me high price?

FATHER.   Why should? You are my lovely daughter!

AUDIENCE-2.   Do you mean that she is not lovely to her parents? (*A*

Journey into Theatre)

After a long interaction the landlord agrees to give loan to the poor but does

not like to take others' children as slaves. He appeals to the concerned not to take

others' children as slaves merely because they give some money and encourages

parents not to sell their children at any cost. Regarding the traumatic experiences that

*Kamlahari*s are having into their real life situation, *The Kathmandu Post of January-*

2, 2014, published a news story under the title "Kamlaris are Still Exploited:

Activists". The news story further explores:

Freed Kamlaris in the western Terai are being exploited and deprived

of minimum wage even after the government abolished the Kamlari

System in the country […] 164 of the total 308 freed Kamlaris are

found to have been working without payment. According to

FakalaTharu, legal advisor of Freed Kamlaris' Forum, most of those

exploiting the kamlaris were public figures like businessman,

government officials, doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers and

political leaders […]. (K C)

Just like the issue of *Kamlahari*, Aarohan Gurukul has been performing so

many Kachahari performances across the nation in collaboration with local theatre

activists who devised the pertinent issues into their areas. Aarohan Gurukul and many

other theatre groups in Nepal have been conducting Kachahari campaign across the

nation on the various inhuman issues which have been causing people numbed

towards the resultant effects caused by such practices. Once, Aarohan Gurukul, in

collaboration with Maithili Natya Parishad, Janakpur, performed 70 Kachahari

performances on dowry system, which has been paralyzing the life of people. By

means of Kachahari, they provoked the issue seriously, made discussion on the

problem and empowered people to find solution on it as *Nepathya* magazine reports

about the impact of such performances on empowerment of people, "Due to the

through discussion on the issue in our area, many people have started to reduce

amount of dowry. Many youths have promised not to take dowry at all"(5).

Aarohan Gurukul not only took initiations in empowering community people

against such issues like child labor in Janakpur, girls trafficking in Kathmandu in

collaboration with Shakti Samuha, torture of women from their drunkard husbands in

Hetauda in collaboration with Taranga Sanskritik Parishad, issue of untouchability in

Sindhuli in collaboration with Dalit Sewa Sangha and empowered victimized people to go against it by discussing and by engaging people in interaction against such issues which like slow poison is taking life of many oppressed and voiceless across the nation silently. Regarding the empowerment brought by the Kachahari performances, *Nepathya* magazine further reports, "While performing a Kachahari in Janakpur on child labor, one audience declared to donate Rs.5000.00 to end this problem. Later, after the performance a group of youth from Sarlahi came and requested to have performance on the same issue to their area"(5). The magazine further explores the instances of empowerment achieved by means of Kachahari performance made by Aarohan Gurukul and the resultant effect it brought into the real life situation of the people in the following ways:

> One man in Hetauda used to drink alcohol and beat his wife. He happened to see the performance on the same issue. Later, he gave up drinking […] a man in the same area was involved in girls trafficking , after the performance all the youths of the village made an organization to oppose girls' trafficking.(6)

The magazine again acclaims the Kachahari performance as the best tool for community empowerment and highlights the further achievements of the Kachahari performance:

> […] Farmer in the village had a problem of selling their vegetable to the lealer in cheap price. Once Taranga performed Kachahari on this issue, there came many solutions. Among them one was to bring vegetable directly to Kathmandu to have better price. All the farmers adopted this solution and became happy. (6)

From the given situation, one can infer that Kachahari can bear an instrumental role in empowering the oppressed and marginalized classes of the each society by redefining the existing power relationship of our social reality. Pratima Sharma believes that each and every human activity reflects the power relation existing in our socio-economic situation. She claims that the exclusion and inclusion of subject matters and characters on stage is highly political, "It has been seen that any form of representation in a play and the staging of such plays reflects a power relation" (71).

III.2 Kachahari Performance as a Therapy

State of being silent for a long time without any ways of expression and acting out certainly drives people to the sudden numbness, caused by extreme pain and unexpected physical and mental stress, resulting from various real life situations like feeding of excreta to the accused witch, inter-caste marriage, opposed by the society members and domestic violence against woman, imposed in the name of dowry system which quite often results into the expulsion of daughter in law from the house and sometimes even forces them to commit suicide. The victimized groups like the so-called witch, dalit, relatives of the girl who married to the dalit and the daughter in laws of many society not only suffer at the margin of the society but also live on mental trauma, provoked by such practices forever and ever.

Kachahari theatre, at this juncture through the interactions over the issues among the oppressed and the oppressors not only ease the trauma of the oppressed by encouraging them to speak their pain publically but also intervene into the imposed social causes responsible for these traumatogenic practices and finally brings both parties to the place where they imagine each other's situations, think about the resultant traumatic experiences faced by the oppressed and finally lessens trauma of

both the oppressed and the oppressor by means of audience intervention on the conditions made to take out both for the harmonious bond in real life situation on the social and cultural ruptures, made by the conflict and discrimination.

Nepali communities in some extend witness innumerable traumatogenic events, constructed by the issues like accusation as a witch, issues of dowry, gender discrimination and the inter-caste marriages especially between low caste boy and high caste girl and vice versa. All these issues seemed to have been waiting for centuries to be resolved through interactive intervention and discussion among the members who form a community of audiences but not through state's intervention. If state could have resolved such issues, they would have been eased long back for such practices were denied in law. Instead they still exist because state apparatus never made an attempt to bring these issues into the conscience of oppressors and oppressed. Kachahari theatre only opens up the issue and makes the parties to think about the pain, trauma and the sufferings, springing out from such practices and proves itself a healing tool as a social therapy because therapy in Kachahari explores the idea that there should be justice to the oppressed before forgiveness to the oppressor.

We can observe this dynamism, emphatically turned to be all healing both to a oppressed and oppressor by analyzing a real life situation that theatre artists of *Kachahari camp*, assembled in Jhapa Kalbalguri weaved out of one of the participant named Kabita's real story. Theatre artists of Kachahari Camp while sharing their traumatogenic events and situations they faced, witnessed and experienced into their communities. On the basis of such sharing they not only produced so many Kachahari performances but also refined their craft of using it to maintain peace, and harmony among community members through the transformation of their usual conflict which

was rupturing the social fabrics in the name of caste violence, ideology, family disputes and gender biasness.

While sharing they came into a horrible event, induced by the caste discrimination as Kabita happened to experience when he married to a boy belonging to a dalit caste of her own choice. As a result she came to experience such a horrible trauma into her life that she could not meet her parents and on the other hand her parents were also threatened to be outcasted by the community members of her society. When the Kachahari artists heard the trauma of Kabita, an artist who was attending the Kachahari Camp, they weaved a relevant Kachahari performance on the same issue and made plan to perform it in Kabita's mother's village. Although, Kabita shared that her mother wanted to let her in, was helpless due to the social perssure. Saraswati Chaudhary, an artist attending the Camp from Aarohan Gurukul, shared how her group weaved the story to make Kachahari performance on Kabita's issue, "While working and discussing and getting closer to Kabita in the camp, she shared her true traumatic story. We were moved by the pain Kabita was living with and decided to do a play on her case (*Kachahari Camp,* My translation*)*". Taking the inter-caste marriage of Kabita, Yubaraj Ghimire and his group made determination to make Kachahari performance in Kabita's village in such a way that the issue of inter-caste love marriage is a representative issue that artists picked up in Kathmandu and are in the nation-wide campaign against caste discrimination so that Kabita's villagers think it as a reality. Making some craft based performance the group reached to one of the villages in Jhapa where Kabita's parents were living under a trauma, resulting after Kabita's elopement with the low caste boy. When they reached into the village, they made performance on the same issue.

After briefing about this methodology of Kachahari, the Kachahari artists develop some improvisation on the issue. They, through their spontaneous improvisation on the issue present the first scene before a temple, with three characters: girl's father, mother and a priest. That indicates that the Kachahari is taking place in a village which is highly religious, traditional and biased towards caste, followed by a village tap scene where villagers reflect their caste discrimination against the dalit. Before an improvised village tap-a man stands as a tap sprinkling water-there come girls and boys of both castes. Suddenly, there happens the woman who is supposed to be the girl's mother, who finding her daughter, talking to a low caste girl, she scolds, showing a strong annoyance towards dalit the following ways: WOMAN (to a dalit girl). Did you touch that tap? WOMAM (to her own daughter). Why are you talking to this dalit? Go away, I need water! *(Kachahari Camp)*

This short and very sensitive scene which was developed by the Kachahari artists through improvisation of their own to prick upon the conscience of audiences who might have been doing same in their own real life. The performance further intensifies the issue through another improvised scene in which the very woman, who was showing her anger towards dalit, pressed by the survival problem of her husband, secretly agrees to take blood for her husbands operation. This scene not only exposes the hypocrisy of high caste people but justifies the caste as a human construct. The woman being in need of blood to have operation of her husband sends her relative in search of blood so that her husband could be saved. She says:

> WOMAN (to a boy). Did you manage to find blood?
>
> BOY. Yes !but…
>
> WOMAN. But what?
>
> BOY. It is Dalit's blood !

WOMAN.   Damn it, it's of no use !

BOY.   If not shall we let the patient die?

WOMAN.   What will priest say? Can't we find someone else?

BOY.   It is difficult and rare (*Kachahari Camp*)

Though the woman is from high caste, she does not mind to take blood from dalit because for her life is more important than caste. However, she hesitates to acknowledge the fact due to the society induced trauma into her mind and its' resultant fear. Yet, she indicates that she doesn't have problem to take blood from the dalit only if priest does not comment on them. This scene helps the audience to juxtapose the biasness she has towards the dalit and her negligence to it when she is in need. The scene itself deconstructs the concept of caste consciousness which finally paves a resolution in the play. Later, due to the compulsion of need to save her husband's life, she silently agrees to take blood from dalit as well. She admits that, "woman to boy: yes, we will take blood, but don't tell anyone about it. BOY.   Of course, I will not talk *(Kachahari Camp)*".

This improvised scene reflects the hollowness that we live with and points towards the transitional point which is sure to herald change and liberate community from the curse of caste issue. After this improvisational scene, the Kachahari really enters into the issue of inter-caste marriage happened between a girl from high caste-previous woman's daughter-and a dalit boy-possibly the one who donated blood secretly to the woman's husband. The opening scene begins when the girl's uncle makes a visit to the girl's parents in their house .Uncle is a campus chief in the same village. He reveals the fact that:

UNCLE.   I have heard that our Uma is having an affair with a boy

from my college.

WOMAN (mother).   It's not true. One can have friends at college.

We should not think that way,

MAN (father).   No, no, we should not think….

UNCLE.   But you know, the boy is from another caste.

MAN (to woman).   What do you say about what he said?

WOMAN.   I don't think that's true!

MAN.   But there won't be smoke without fire. (*Kachahari Camp*)

In the meantime, the girl happens to marry with the boy of her own and seemed to be coming towards the girl's house. They are seen on the stage being afraid due to the caste discrimination they had been experiencing. Upon seeing her daughter as a bride and walking with her groom, dalit boy, the mother cries hysterically, "MOTHER.   Daughter! /Father.   She ruined our prestige. Now she is dead for us".

At this critical point the facilitator stops the play and seeks suggestions from the audiences who are the community members of the oppressive society. As per the Kachahari philosophy, now the stage is offered to the audiences to act out t possible suggestions to the problem acted on the stage so that it will lead the course of the play towards the direction where audiences want to take as per the local realities and real life situation. In this play too culturally passive and muted audiences are empowered with the authority to direct the play and even to become an actor of his/her own that proves that every human being are actors of their own and directors as well. When the facilitator floors the problem, the artists faced and trapped with without any solution a head, the real artists and directors of the Kachahari-spec-actors, happen on the stage to act out the possible direction of the play. The facilitator transforms the role of an actor and director now to the audience as follow:

AUDIENCE-1.   Good I am happy with the couple.

> AUDIENCE-2.   No doubt, the couple is perfect.

Likewise, the facilitator, posing the core of the problem to the audience actors-actual healers-further intensifies the metaphysics of Kachahari. With this the audience actor mounts on the stage and tries various acting out or makes rehearsal to find the solutions to the given problem and performs the role which is real and possible enough to bring heal to the victimized: the parents and the couple. He approaches the parents with:

> AUDIENCE-1.   Look uncle and auntie, caste is no longer is an issue
>
> > these days. Time has changed it…
>
> MOTHER.   No we don't agree. No way out!
>
> FATHER.   Is she my daughter or yours'?
>
> AUDIENCE-1.   She is your daughter but we are your neighbors!

At the same time, there comes another audience actor who looks matured in age and experience to find further solution to the staged problem. Presence or intervention of such characters from real life, which was never imagined in other forms of theatricality, brings a spontaneous resolution to the problem. The old audience actor now tries to put forth the solution:

> AUDIENCE-2(old).   Look, the age really matches and they are fine
>
> couple. The couple is well matched. So caste doesn't matter.
>
> FACILITATOR.   Ok, what should couple do in this situation?
>
> AUDIENCE-2 (old).   What has happened has happened. The couple
>
> should ask forgiveness.

Of course, the real forgiveness in real life problem heals the every wound of the oppressed and oppressor. The happy ending of mainstream theatre even can't bring these types of spontaneity of spiritual forgiveness as it occurs without pain in

the performance. Facilitator, taking this as the powerful weapon of the audience to heal the wound of oppressed and oppressor promotes this healing approach ahead, "FACILITATOR.   Let's do the same as the old man has suggested".

With this there come married couple and go near to the parent and vow down their head, begging for the forgiveness. But father who sounds very tempered avoids the solution in the same way as we do in our real life situation, "FATHER. Stop!"but daughter still begs,. "What has happened has happened. We are happy together. Please, forgive us". However, father does not hear her appeal and shouts, "FATHER.   Wait, why did you step into my courtyard?" The facilitator, still finding the solution in distance and still tormenting, further seeks community pressure and communal therapy from the part of audience actors as given:

> FACILITATOR.   See, see they still did not allow them to enter!
>
> AUDIENCE-2 (old man to couple).   Go and ask for forgiveness to
> > your parents humbly.
>
> AUDIENCE-2 (old man to parent).   Forgive them and let them be
> > happy.
>
> MOTHER.   Forgiveness, forgiveness can't solve the problem.
>
> FATHER.   Forgiveness for what?
>
> MOTHER (to couple).   You ruined our prestige!

Of course, mere forgiveness from any part really does not solve the problem. As per the father, forgiveness from the part of the oppressor and the oppressed to each other to heal the problem to patch up the broken sentiments, caused by the society might solve the problems. Father and mother point to the situation that is much more oppressive for the oppression they imposed on the couple. They are just passing the oppression to the couple only to lessen their oppressed feeling towards which they

were powerless, especially to the society, as mother hints, "MOTHER.   What will your uncle say? Don't you remember what he had said to you?". And the father too adds his resentment of being oppressed by the society to the couple saying, "FATHER.   Is that what we taught you?"

It seems that parent don not mind to accept the marriage only if community lets them to do so. This means parent can forgive to their children, if the community does not harasses them in this matter with their mores. They would have already healed the pain of their and the couple if there were on priest and society members to oppress and oppose their daughter's marriage in the name of caste and tradition. Yes, priest symbolizes a way of torture in the name of religion which is more responsible to impose constructed rules. Here in the play to we find him just disrupting the ongoing reconciliation as he objects the process: "Priest and villagers together: Hey! Are you about to accept the marriage?" As a result, father seems to be denying the process saying, "No ,no, no way!"

As described above, now the priest in the name of religion and villagers with dead concepts indirectly further create barrier on the parents. It proves that, such barrier can never be removed without a strong intervention. Knowing this facilitator demands active and problem solving intervention, which mainstream theatre lacked, especially the intervention from the part of audiences. But Kachahari theatre, promotes such problem solving intervention through facilitator's initiation for the same.

Finally, not only the marriage is accepted but also one of the old women proposes to celebrate the marriage. The solution which was a distance till Kachahari artists performed on the issue and made an intervention through democratic discussion among audience actors, produced a painless healing at a moment as

commented by the facilitator of the play, Yubaraj Ghimire of Shilpee Theatre, "If everybody will act in the same way, you have done here for the play, many such families get united. This is the crux of the matter".

III.3 Kachahari as a Tool for Conflict Resolution

Conflict is the inherent instinct of human beings and seems to be rampant to all the level of human activities. First it emanates at the individual or personal sphere of his/her life. At this level or space a person debates and protests within his/her body level. Slowly and gradually it develops to a institutional level or family level-local level where a person's conflicting inner voices collides with the personal and societal norms and gets manifested into a into a inter-personal level which finally erupts to the societal level where societal values, norms and certain paramount create a type of impact on the individuals and institutions which quite often witnesses revolt as well. If managed properly such encounter results into the advancement of the society, institute and person as well, if not to a catastrophe as well. Victor Turner, departing away from the aesthetic form of drama came up with the very new terminology called "Social drama" as performance which incorporated all human activities as the performance including the interactions among people. He compares this to a unit of social process which arises out of a conflict situation. He says this process has four main phases:

> […] (1) Breach of regular norm-governed social relations; (2) crisis, during which there is a tendency for the breach to widen… (3) Redressive action ranging from personal advice and informal mediation or arbitration to formal juridical and legal machinery …to the performance of public ritual (4) the final phase consists either of the reintegration of the disturbed social group or of the social

recognition and legitimation of irreparable schism. (qtd. Simon

Shepherd and Mick Willis, 117)

Of course conflict and change go hand in hand for conflicts are not inherently

good or bad, but are expressions of a need for change. If they are perceived and

handled properly, openly and constructively, conflicts can become valuable tools for

transforming deadlocks into a new positive development. One of the ways to give

positive conflict transformation is possible through Kachahari theatre because it

allows for conflicts to be analyzed and explored on a neutral ground named on stage.

This can be beneficial for all parties in the conflict as they thereby get an opportunity

to see their situation as well as that of other people involved in the conflict from

different perspectives and locations. Furthermore, they can get an opportunity to try

out various solutions and see the results without necessarily having to agree with them

or accommodate any consequences afterwards.

Journey into Theatre, through the insightful performances of *Kachahari*

Natak, performed into various parts of the country, not only helped the conflicting

parties coming to the same space for dialogue and discussion about the nature of

conflict which finally led them to understand each others' position, resulting into

resolution of conflicts through compromise in all levels of conflicting spaces like

personal, institutional and societal levels. Among such performances, accusation on

witch craft is the one that emanates from the personal level of conflict, moves on to

the institutional level like family unit and at the chronic level manifests into societal

level where accused person feels a type of stigma both in his/her personal,

institutional and societal level due to the stressful conflict he/she is bearing into

his/her daily life. On the other hand the victimizers who accuse that someone is witch,

develops a conflicting hatred towards the accused at the level of stigmatization. The

conflict emerges of this type has no resolution than that of discussion between the parties involved into this. Since such practices are generally targeted to the poor, old, weak, dalit and mostly against women, conflict came out of this practice encourages violence against them which results, mostly in many cases, in death or suicide of the accused one and in general offending and dehumanizing treatment to them as happened in the life of Basanti Maharjan of Kirtipur, Kathamandu recently. *On December 26, 2013* Manish Gautam, *Kathmandu Post* correspondence, published a news story on a horrible issue like witchcraft entitled "Violence against Women: Woman Killed for 'Witchcraft' in Capital". The news story explains the issue:

> In yet another gruesome case, a woman has been murdered over witchcraft accusation in the capital. Basanti Maharjan, 42, was found murdered and buried in the house of her brother in law on Tuesday night, four days after she was reported missing. Police said Basanti, mother of four, was brutally murdered on December 20 by Hari Bahadur Maharjan in Pandeychap of Kirtipur -15, accusing the victim of practicing witchcraft […]According to Chief of the Metropolitan Police Crime Division, SSP Bijaya Lal Kayastha, Hari Bahadur admitted to the killing of his brother's wife on witchcraft accusation.

Making necessary improvisation on the issue while providing Kachahari training to the artists, Shilpee artists performed Kachahari on this issue nationwide during their journey into theatre. They open up Kachahari performances with a very crippling situation of a family unit where even son and daughter in law get suspicious towards her old and widowed mother. They accuse her of practicing witchcraft against her daughter in law and find her responsible for her daughter in law's infertility. This inhuman situation emerges due to the personal conflict and of family

conflict surfaces to the societal level. As a result, all the villagers get united with accused woman's son and daughter in law and gather in a village space to feed her excreta and get her ostracized from the village and family as well. The accused one begs for help and tries to prove that she is not so but the conflicting parties show no mercy on her. Almost all the villagers put ghee together on the fire by showing that she was responsible for all the bad luck in the village. Some of the villagers accuse her, as Villager-1 says, "My daughter in law could not conceive"; and villager -2 says," My buffalo died due to her witchcraft" (*Journey into Theatre*).

Being enraged, all the villagers attacked on her. As per the Kachahari metaphysics, this play also stops at the very point to seek suggestions from the audiences to resolve this violence and conflict. Yubaraj Ghimire, acting as a facilitator says:

> FACILITATOR.   This woman is being accused of witchcraft. Do you
>
> think it is right? How can we save her?
>
> AUDIENCE-1.   This is wrong!
>
> AUDIENCE-2.   This is unfair!
>
> AUDIENCE-3.   It's wrong to believe so!
>
> FACILITATOR.   Can you act out some solutions to save a woman
>
> accused of being witch in real life in the same way you
>
> did here?
>
> AUDIENCE-1, 2 and 3.   Yes we can.

However, when audience actors with the given opinions appear on the stage, they are even terrified by the other party of the conflict who believe on witch. Accusing the woman, they say, "Villager 1.   My daughter in law could not conceive children because of her; Villager-2.   My buffalo died" (*Journey into Theatre*).

Meanwhile, a woman audience who was watching the Kachahari, suddenly and

spontaneously appears on the stage in a very enraged mood. She counters:

> WOMAN AUDIENCE.   It's your superstitions. There is no witch at
>
> all. It's your jealousy and enmity that is what you are acting out. This
>
> is discrimination against women.
>
> VILLAGER-4.   (Protesting the woman audience): No, no, she is
>
> witch. It is right to feed excreta to a witch.
>
> VILLAGER-5.   Witchcraft exists!
>
> WOMAN AUDIENCE.   Do you happen to see? […]
>
> VILLAGER-5.   She can't as long as god does not want. She causes
>
> trouble. I have been beaten by her. I have been to a witch doctor and
>
> got well.

Due to this argument and counter argument about witch, the conflict reaches

to the societal level and villagers are divided into two conflicting parties, the scene

grows to the tension. However, the facilitator by means of his insightful discussion

makes the accusing party to admit that it was just hearsay as the dubious activities of

the accused woman who happens to go to the field at night due to her age and stress of

urine. Finally, all parties come to admit that it is a baseless. Villagers, at the end say,

"People just get suspicious for example when a child gets sick. People think it is

because of witch. But no one can prove existence of witchcraft".

Harassment of girl students by male teachers stands as an issue which seems

to be hidden under the carpet due to the voiceless condition of the victims who due to

the fear ridden conflicting context of the community and of their own remain passive

and restless feeling insult and pain within. Victims of such rampant harassment never

dare to confess the offending situation they have been internalizing within due to the

fear of being further ostracized by the male constructed norms of the society. These types of cultural passivity, has encouraged the oppressor to impose much more harassment on them. Shilpee theatre and its artists have raised empowering initiation to resolve these offending situations, prevailing through the nation into various forms and practices. During their journey into theatre, Shilpee artists performed this Kachahari in front of a school where girls' students are made victimized by male teachers every now and then. As in other forms of Kachahari performances, this play also begins with a local problem. As the play opens we find a very traditional teacher who due to power politics, while teaching in the classes takes advantages of the innocent village girls who lack power to resist but remain quite. The teacher in the name of teaching and supposing himself privileged quite often pinches the cheeks of the girls and moves his hands around the sensitive organs as well. Moving his hands round her neck and cheeks, he comments, "This girl looks really beautiful when she puts on eye liner/kajol. Why did not you put eye liner today?" But when the girl tries to stop his activities he further says, "I am like your father. Is it wrong to love and care you? " (*Journey into Theatre*) and even tries to persuade her, "If you want to pass exam, do come to my room alone or just meet me in person secretly". But the girl on the other hand instead of raising voice against him mover her resentment inward, while the teacher further moves and shows his voluptuous tendency toward the girl. Being tired of such harassment, on the daily basis, once, the girl tries to defend silently saying, "Why do you do it, sir? I don't like it". At this conflicting mode, the facilitator of the play stops the performance and takes retreat to the world of audiences and expects their participation and active enactment of their solution to the situation of the victim girl. He says, "How can we get rid of such rampant situation? Do you think it is good or bad? Is it good to remain silent as the victim girl?"

This situation gets the audiences provoked to act out the solution. So, audiences come up with various enactment and suggestions. Some of them advise to the girl that she should report to mother and perform the role of the victimized girl's mother. One of the audience, as a mother of the girl approaches to the teacher and complains in person to him, saying, "Do teachers behave like this in school towards a fifteen year girl? Every other student has left, why have you kept my daughter back? I will thrash you, and then only you will come to sense". Due to the mother's threat the teacher takes a back step and the audiences give the courage of the mother big hand. Still the teacher does not own up the wrong he did. Then many other audiences come up with further solutions and act out on the stage like:

MALE AUDIENCE-1.   Is this what, you bring students to school for?

TEACHER.   Do you think I am dancing here?

MALE AUDIENCE-2,   Hello sister! What did the teacher did to you?

VICTIM GIRL-l.   So shameful! How can I tell?

TEACHER.   Hello what's up you do?

MALE AUDIENCE-3.   Please don't raise your voice sir, the way behave and speak causes a stress on the girl.

TEACHER.   Who are you to teach me?

MALE AUDIENCE-4.   This teacher is abusing the students. We should ostracize him!

Despite this, the teacher does not stop his activities every other day but tries it this or that, sometimes this girl and sometimes that one. So, the facilitator again calls up an audience to act out the role as a victim student. As usual the teacher tries to molest her body and so on. Now the audience students become so furious that she

slaps him in such a way that he makes his narrow escape. Now once again the facilitator invites audience's consent for the solution. He puts his appeal:

> FACILITATOR (to girl who slaps the culprit).   Are you really dong this what you did in real life?
>
> GIRL STUDENT (as audience).   Of course I can do it out.
>
> FACILITATOR.   Can other sister do the same as she did?
>
> AUDIENCE-1.   Girls can't do!
>
> AUDIENCE-2.   Some victims do not expose due to status and prestige.
>
> AUDIENCE-3.   It will be difficult, but we should try to speak up to be the example. If we dare to come out, we can save thousand others.
>
> AUDIENCE-4.   The student should report to the head teacher.

After trying out all the solutions provided by the audiences now, facilitator lets audience-4 to enact the possibility. The audience-4 now taking all other students reports to the principal says, "Sir, the economic teacher always abuses us". But head teacher too, does not take the issue seriously but makes a very cheap comment, "there was no complain before, why now?" Now students express their compulsion to tolerate the teacher, head teacher further comments, "did you tolerate or enjoy?" The other audiences who are watching this peaceful solution, as hear this step on the stage and urge:

> AUDIENCE-5.   You should not allow such misconduct in the school. You want to hide it because you yourself do it!
>
> HEAD TEACHER.   No, I beg apology on behalf of him. I will talk to him.

AUDIENCE-5.   He should apologize in front of us.

Finally, because of the community pressure, the head teacher is forced to make his economics teacher to apologize before them with the threats that if he didn't, the head teacher would expel. With this warning, the teacher appears in person, before the mass and apologizes for the wrong he was doing and even promises not to repeat such after that. In this way, the Kachahari ends when the economics teacher in person begs excuse from the victimized. Finally, the solution of the problem comes out so easily and effectively that ends the conflict related to such issue. Seeing this reconciliation, happened through the dialogue among community members or spec-actors, comments, "it is bringing into discourse that Kachahari theatre can be used for social transformation and conflict resolution ". Similarly, the facilitator speaking about the changes and solution Kachahari can bring, Yubaraj Ghimire highlights the effectiveness of Kachahari:

> We should not preach but make the audiences think about conflicting situation they are exposed to into their real life and the ways of getting through. This is the form of play we are practicing in Nepal too. But change and solution cannot happen overnight, nor is it easy to measure the change. It is about changing our mindset which is more problematic than the situation we are exposed to.

Thus, we can assume that Kachahari theatre can be useful even in resolving the various types of conflict situations that almost all the marginalized groups of the society are living with in silence due to the absence of dialogic process into such matters. In relation to this conflict resolving dynamism, Kachahari theatre takes a leading role in restoring the relationship, for in the words of Hizkias Assefa reconciliation is "the restoration of broken relationships or the coming together of

those who have been alienated and separated from one another by conflict, to create a community again" (9). He observes that the process of reconciliation is not always possible or appropriate. For example, when one or both parties are unwilling to reconcile or when one party is unwilling to give up a major power imbalance to become equal partners in social and political repair. Reconciliation can be slow and complex. As Charles Villa-Vicencio comments:

> The communal space generated in a Kachahari theatre performance creates the context for building community relationships. Reconciliation involves restoring and renewing relationships that have been characterized by hate and mistrust. The parties involved can feel trapped in a destructive and unsustainable dynamic. The aim of reconciliation is to transcend this impasse and involve former enemies and adversaries in new ways of engaging. (2)

Kachahari theatre can contribute to reconciliation by building community relationships as people tell, listen to and witness each other's stories and see these stories performed. In good Kachahari theatre an open group culture is developed in which audience members feel interested and motivated to tell stories and feel their stories are listened to respectfully and in an accepting way by the conductor, the performers and by fellow audience members. Kachahari practitioners develop strong listening and empathic skills which are used in their performing work and modeled in their interactions with tellers and the wider audience.

Journey into Theatre, similarly, explained another issue of harassment against women and female passengers from the male passengers which quite often results into the physical violence as well. The issue is so poignant, yet has been polluting the humanity. But, neither any legal measure not any intervention made from the side of

government been able to change the situation it is because it is the matter of realization and understanding rather than taking into any legal frame. On the other hand, it has become such a chronic evil that even the people who witness such harassment just in front of them, never dare to say a word against the culprit due to the hidden terror and fear they have been experiencing now and again. In case any one comes to the forefront he/she is either insulted before his own family members travelling with him/her or is made silence through fear. Due to this opportunities horror the victimized ones, instead of protecting are further dehumanized into the level of commodity. They inwardly feel their subjectivity is demolished to a more object. *A Journey into Theatre* picks this issue and tries to end their problems to some extend by means of discussion on the matter through a performance of Kachahari. As usual, the Kachahari takes place in a bus (improvised). The bus is crowded. Many people seemed to be standing as we witness such scene in our daily life. Some young girls are also standing. But they are racked, touched, pressed and even deliberately are molested to their sensitive parts by the male passengers. No one dare to object but feels debased and shamed feeling intolerable one of the girl passengers says, "GIRL. Why are you touching me here and there?" but the BOY instead of feeling sorry, pretends, "What have I done?" At this point, the play gets stopped by the facilitator in search of solution with justice to the girl. The facilitator of the play poses the situation to the audience: "FACILITATOR. The play is struck here, what you saw here, happen in real life as well? Does it happen with us in real life? How can we solve this?" Now the audiences seeing this situation become very sensitized due to daily happenings of such activities and enact the solutions one by one on the stage (improvised bus) as follow:

GIRL. What are you doing?

BOY.   Wow you English is excellent?

GIRL.   You don't touch me, what are doing?

BOY.   What am I doing? Nothing it's the bus that shakes!

GIRL.   Do you have sister at home?

BOY.   Yes!

GIRL.   I am like your sister; do you do this with them?

BOY.   No, you are more beautiful.

The way the girl tries to settle the problem become useless. So, another solution is enacted by other audience:

GIRL: Can you please stand straight?

BOY: I am a bit sleepy. This is a public bus.

GIRL: I here paid as much as you. I have equal rights.

BOY: Please don't short at me.

GIRL: You are making me uncomfortable. Don't encroach my space.

ANOTHER GIRL: Hey, bro, you must have been tired standing? Please take my seat.

Boy: You are woman, so stay on your seat.

GIRL.   No, no, men and women are equal please.

However, the situation does not bring solution because the defaulter instead of realizing the wrong he did just pretended. Facilitator with the involvement of many audiences goes on trying many options. In another scene, the girl is being tortured as before and the audience actor (MAN) tries to settle the matter by saying the culprit that he should consider that he is with his sister, mother and other members. So, he should think them as his relative. But the culprit further ignores the request with the comment that "how can we consider all as our sister". Finding all practices, another

audience actor appears on the stage with another solution and says, "I would have hit with slippers, (she shouts with her enactment)". After that another male audience appears on the situation and tries to remind the boy, touching the girl, "MAN; what are you doing? Mind your manner! / Do you treat your sister like this?" Finding the boy not coming to the term, man makes the harassed girl sit in his own seat. Remembering the situation she used to face, a women audience comments, "WOMAN.   This kind of violence happens to woman. I have faced it. I, usually thrush culprits". Similarly another women audience points towards the seriousness of this issue and admits, "WOMAN.   Even we old woman are not spared. Once we had to make a man get off the bus, we were boarding?" trying one after another solution, the play finally reaches to the end where audiences bring out the solution to the problem peacefully. They enact the role of a public passenger and devise a solution that if the culprit does not feel sorry, he needs to be arrested". They perform the solution:

> GIRL.   This boy did nonsense to me.
>
> BOY.   What did I do to you?
>
> GIRL.   How can I tell you?
>
> WOMAN.   Don't coerce (*to boy who tries to escape*).
>
> PUBLIC.   Don't run
>
> BOY.   I haven't done any wrong.
>
> PUBLIC.   Make him up and down and solve the problem peacefully.

Once the play ends with peaceful reconciliation between the oppressed and the oppressor,   it provokes a hope that many of the conflict induced problems that have been causing a rupture in social fabrics' can be even up or healed, for Kachahari

methodology and its spec- actor principle becomes very instrumental in resolving various conflicting issues, remained under the carpet untouched.

III.4 Kachahari as a Political Performance

From all these situation we can infer that, Kachahari seems to be facilitating all the community members in building up confidence to make rehearsal to end each and every conflicts resulted into the life of oppressed by means of exploring the strength of locality and their local polity of resisting all inequalities from which they have been deprived for Theatrical performance and performance art both illustrate the existence of social agents and challenge the constituted social reality through language, gestures, signs, and content. Performance art has "enabled artists to question the assumptions of traditional art and culture with respect to contemporary issues that are often considered subversive and controversial (Thapa 18)". The way the audiences adopt the very inclusive method of understanding the local problems and situations and thereby use a new local method of resisting it reminds the very postmodern methods of doing politics as well because all the radical issues of oppressed community are resolved through a democratic methods of discussion, based on spec-actor principle of Boal. This indicates that Kachahari, apart from promoting empowerment, redefining the broken relationship to patch up the social fabrics and conflict resolution, helps the local community members to make politics in favor of the oppressed, with the aim of forming new cultural identity mutilated by the war, violence and oppression. Kachahari performance does what Charles R.Garoian defines. In *Performing Pedagogy: towards an Art of Politics*, he defines performance art as:

> A method of exploration and expression grounded in postmodern
>
> thought, performance art has enabled artists to critique traditional

aesthetics, to challenge and blur the boundaries that exist between the

arts and other disciplines and those that separate art and life…With

regard to cultural identity, it has provided artists with a position from

which to engage historical ideologies, to question the politics of art ,

and to challenge the complexities and contradictions of cultural

domination in the modern and postmodern worlds.(qtd. Thapa, 19)

Furthermore, Kachahari theatre or performance provides a platform to the

people who are devoid of a voice as Monica Mottin , in her research article *Dramas*

for Social Change: Theatre for Development or the development of Theatre?, writes

that dramas can have a decontextualizing and transformative power. They create a

different social space where anything can happen, even magic. People who don't

usually have voice can express their opinion because a willing suspension of disbelief

allows for the acceptance of atypical events (323). Theatre can be the best tool for the

representation of those voices that remain unheard in society. In Nepali theatre, too,

"marginalized voices are being represented in different periods of time. Thus theatre

helps to create discourses and empowers those voices that are in the margin" (Sharma,

72).

Finally, Kachahari theatre does what Victor Turner's "Social Drama" does,

for Victor Turner, departing away from the aesthetic form of drama came up with the

very new terminology called "Social Drama" as performance which incorporated all

human activities as the performance including the interactions among people.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

Kachahari Theatre is the Nepali adaptation of Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre and bears all the basic principles of Forum Theatre at large. Kachahari, in Nepali context refers to the village court where people in ancient time even up to *Panchayat era* would go to have a hearing on the problems they are exposed to due to various social reasons like family dispute, violence and injustice befallen upon them from other party. However, the guiding principle for the procedure of hearing was always influenced by the then power relation of the society members, dominant ideology of the society and the interest of elites. This Kachahari historically turned to be a court where hearing used to be ready-made. However, the Kachahari Theatre departs radically from this concept of court and offers this space to the unheard people and issues so that through discussion and through dialogues all the deprived and marginalized community member together make a rehearsal on their polity and the ways of getting out of crippling situation befallen on them through theatrical performance. In the history of Nepal, theatre remained as a space of making courtly romance for the elites and was barred for the commoners until writers and artistes like Balkrishna Sama, Prachanda Malla, Gopal Prasad Rimal not only wrote and produced original plays, but also took theater to the doorsteps of commoners. The 1950s was the period of foundation of modern Nepali theater and literature. Writers, and artist embraced realism and naturalism. Writers not only wrote plays but also performed them. During the height of monarchial rule (1960-1990), Nepali theater workers used theater as a medium for political expression. They voiced concern for freedom and democracy. Streets became the center stage for Nepali theater artists. Street theater emerged in Nepal in the 1980s, during the height of Panchayat regime. Ashesh Malla,

Artistic Director of Sarvanam, a theater group in Nepal, is credited for the street

theater in Nepal.

After the end of monarchial rule in 1991, freedom of speech was guaranteed

by the new government. Political change of 1991 paved a way for everything,

including Nepali theater. Nepali theater flourished during the late 90s and early years

of the new millennium. The people's movement of 2006 heightened it further. Nepali

theater is now outgrowing, theater workers are beginning to see stage as a career.

There are hundreds of theater groups active on stage, they perform and produce

regular shows. Nepali theater groups like Aarohan-Gurukul Mandala, Shilpe have

organized national and international theater festivals, to place Nepal on the

international theater map. At present, Nepali theater use folk tradition such as rituals,

oral tales, festivals, theologies, and blend with modern dramatic form. Nepali theater

is experimenting with form and content.

Forum theatre uses the power of theatre to depict sensitive social issues within

a community, where the audience uses the opportunity to resolve the issue they face,

by suggesting an alternate outcome to the end of the play. The Forum Theatre,

adopting the dramaturgy of Augusto Boal, introduces not only theatre techniques that

help local communities to express themselves and resolve the day to day social issues

like stigmatization of caste, untouchability, gender discrimination, conflict induced

through insurgency and counter insurgency and many more through the very practical

way of Forum Theatre named Kachahari. On top of that, it has been helping the nation

to imagine its symbols, nationality and developmental narratives which are must. The

Kachahari theatre, initiated by Aarohan Gurukul and later performed by various

theatre groups of Nepal like Shilpee Theatre, Mandala Theatre and the Theatre village

has been offering a useful weapon for both entertainment and social change to the

marginal people of the nation. Thus, it seemed to be emerging as the surest weapon of the oppressed groups of the nation to build peace and justice.

All these performances have been offering a paradigm shift and transformation of our community at deeper level. All these Kachahari Performances help people, especially to adults and victimized to realize why people from different cultures and ethnic groups think and act the way they do. They provide an opportunity for the young performers who work together in an inter-cultural environment, to get awareness about other cultures that enable them to be a skilled community leader. Similarly, they offer a platform for the oppressed and women in the communities to voice their concerns and find solutions. Finally, they empower people in overcoming inequalities and prejudices perpetrated the so called privileged.

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