

Representation of Violence in Manjushree Thapa's *The Lives We Have Lost*

Abstract

*Manjushree Thapa's recent text *Lives We Have Lost* is a questionable depiction of the politics of violence in Nepal. The author of this text is an ardent supporter of democracy. She believes in the constant and subsequent development of democratic norm and principle in Nepal. It is this deep faith in the universal principle of democracy that makes her to write this work. She argues that every conscious citizen of a country has the responsibility towards the political history of violence. It is natural for citizens to be optimistic about the future. But the author contends that a politically conscious citizen wills justice to the political future when and only when he fulfils his duty towards the political and cultural past. By reminiscing and recalling the disasters and catastrophe of the past the probable mishaps can be averted. Thapa argues that human rights were mostly violated during Maoist insurgency from both side-one from the side of the underground insurgents and the second is the state-sponsored counter insurgency. By being familiar with these gruesome details of the ugly political past, the politically incorrect representation of violence can be amended.*

The representation of violence generated by underground Maoist insurgency and state-sponsored counter-insurgency appears to be problematical. Manjushree Thapa's *The Lives We Have Lost* is the tilted representation of the political history of Nepal since the rise of the underground Maoist insurgency. There can be different motives of Maoists to launch underground insurgency. But innocent civilians lost their lives in the underground guerilla campaign led by the Maoist. Citizens have rights to live happily and freely. Hundreds of innocent people lost their lives without any faults of their own. Similarly, state also launched counter- insurgency to quell down the Maoist.

When the direct and indirect military encounter between the underground Maoist insurgency and state-sponsored counter-insurgency escalated, thousands of citizens, peasants and professionals were either displaced or executed. Gross violation of human rights took place. Geneva Convention was flatly challenged by both Maoist and State representatives. The present generation must learn lessons from the gruesome political past of Nepal. In the past, some died for democracy, some for its restoration, some for the election of constituent assembly, some for republican state, some for social justice and finally some for federal state. The struggles of people for rights, freedom, identity and access to resources are admirable. It is good to raise finger against tyranny, oppression, deprivation and dispossession.

Citizens have to speak agent's exploitation, domination and state racism. Similarly, state also must be willing to address the genuine demands of people. When armed and unarmed encounter and confrontation happen, innocent civilians and people can fall victims. When government imprisons rebels and protesters, their basic rights must not be violated. When the rebels and guerillas surrender, they must not be shot dead. In prison custody females are sexually molested and abused. In the history of Nepal's struggle for full-fledged democracy and republican state, thousands of innocent and faultless people lost their lives. Both state and underground guerillas violated human rights, Geneva Convention and civic rights.

During the state of emergency, the cases of female prisoners raped by armies in custody are countless. Faultless and politically unaffiliated peasants were killed summarily by both armies and Maoist cadres equally. Though the historical record of Nepal's past is embarrassing in terms of human rights, legal rights and right of freedom of expression, the present generation must learn bitter lesson from the political past and make the political present and future far better and promising. From the tragic and traumatic events, let's take

fruitful lesson and strive to remake new Nepal where human rights and freedom of expression can be guaranteed.

During the decade long underground Maoist insurgency and state-sponsored counter-insurgency, bloodshed, massacre, displacement, dispossession, rape, molestation, and denial of access to legal investigation were rampant. No one had the right and power to raise voices. People were torn asunder psychology. Villagers and peasants were forced and bullied by Maoists to give them shelter and food. Maoist cadres used to ask food and shelter. People were not in a position to say no because the entire rustic part of nation were under their control. On the other hand, armies come in the morning and threaten innocent people for giving Maoist cadres shelter. In this way innocent civilians lost their right to live freely. Everywhere there was the reign of terror. Simple and hardworking people were also taken to custody and interrogated without finding out any concrete evidences of their involvement.

The scale of the violation of human right is increasingly phenomenal. Both the Maoist and government claimed and counter-claimed that they are firmly committed to the principle of Amnesty International. They have each affirmed their loyalty to the standard of civil rights, human rights, legal rights to inquiry and Geneva Convention. But the political facts always counter and contradict the so-called claims and counter-claim. Thapa quotes Doromba event which is one of the most disastrous event in the history of Maoist insurgency. In the essay "The Violation of Treaty" Thapa quotes the line "We knew, before the Amnesty report came out, what would happen with the security forces."

It can be known from the past experiences that there would be reprisal. In the past where politic was the politics of war and revenge, assault and retaliation, claim and counterclaim, the basic expectations of people remained unfulfilled. In the name of fighting against tyranny for democracy, several undemocratic ways and methods were used. Rebels

have rights to resistance. Government has the right to address genuine demands and voices. Moreover, the government and state have rights to control undemocratic and violent resistances and movements. While controlling the undemocratic revolt and opposition, the state apparatus must not violate the basic rights of people.

To initiate the democratic process, the most undemocratic process is used. During ceasefire, the armed forces of government killed Maoist cadres. The Maoist cadres killed two colonels during the inception of ceasefire. Declaring ceasefire is the most democratic way of dealing with undemocratic challenges. But both the government and underground insurgents violated the standard of civil rights. In the essay "Life We Have Lost" , loss of life, disappearance of hope, looming threat of annihilation , tragedy and trauma of civil war, gross violation of convention and dysfunctional condition of state mechanism are dramatized so that the posterity can take lesson and foresight from it.

In the essay " Out of Love, Silence", Manjushree Thapa has mentioned the dwindling prospect of democracy. The representative democracy became weak gradually due to inter-party conflict, groupism and party split. Even the active resurgence of Monarchy has reduced the scope and spirit of democracy. Democracy had suffered from dual threat. It came under Maoist threat and the threat of active monarchy. The loss of democracy turns out to be extremely painful to citizens. It is history which teaches people that the loss of political achievement is the most tragic and traumatic loss of people. From the loss of democracy and the rise of Panchayat even common people must know that lost hope, lost right can hardly be restored.

Thapa affirms that "Our third and most recent movement took place in 2006, when democratic political parties and Maoist rebels united against King Gyanendra Shah, ending a 10-year civil war"(11). Millions of Nepalese participated in nonviolent demonstrations in a

show of support. Nineteen days after that, the king relinquished power; two years later, a newly elected Constituent Assembly abolished the 240-year-old monarchy with a near-unanimous vote. With the democratic political parties and the Maoists vowing to work together peacefully, a “New Nepal” felt attainable. Our democratic parties are inexperienced, deferring to “big brother” India on all matters political. But India has backed an inflexible policy of containing the Maoists. And the Maoists have also been unwilling to compromise, holding on to their 19,000-troop army and their paramilitary group, the Young Communist League, and refusing to turn into just another political party.

Manjushree Thapa is the leading writer. She occupies metropolitan attitude. She is an ardent supporter of democracy. She can't tolerate the blatant violation of human rights. She has produced a large volume of writings in English. Regarding to her literary works, Sally Acharya has made the following comment:

Thapa made a daring choice in focusing her novel around politics. Not only is there the risk of obsolescence, but the insular politics of an obscure nation isn't exactly up there with sex -- or, for that matter, masala spices, servant boys, and familial estates -- as a grabber for Western audiences. Yet to depict Nepal in all its messy politicization is also to tell an important truth. (60)

The present day history, both political and cultural, can be sustained in a progressive way if historical rewriting and reinterpretation are promoted. Rewriting of history gives inducement and excitement to the historical and transitional uncertainty.

Michael Hot has appreciated the novels of Manjushree Thapa. Thapa's contribution to Nepalese literature in English is indescribable. Michael Hot has made the following insight into literary oeuvre of Manjushree Thapa:

The posture and position of Manjushree Thapa in the history of Nepalese literature is immense. Nepali Literature refers to the literature written in the Nepali language and should not be confused with Nepalese literature. A work that is classified as Nepali literature does not necessarily have to be written by a Nepali/written in Nepal. (7)

Those who made contribution to Nepalese literature live outside Nepal. There is the danger of twisting and turning the original subject, belief and norms. All the writers who write living outside Nepal have not committed the sin of misrepresentation. But the greater number of writers has been blinded by the seductive charm of metropolitan glamour. Instead of raising the local subject matter to the global arena, they have acquiesced to the taste and interest of western readers and reviewers. But Manjushree Thapa is an exception to the rule. She is truly committed to the nativeness of subject. Hence, her literary portrayal is highly admirable and flawless.

In a *Newsweek Magazine*, the following analysis is published. This analysis focuses upon Thapa's power to introduce western culture of resistance with eastern sense of amazement. The following part of review illustrated this aspect of author's constructive vision:

The resulting fusions and confusions of East and West excite and awaken and inspire. Contemporary art and music and literature are thriving in Kathmandu, alongside strident questioning, heated political debate, and civil-rights movements of all varieties. As for the original hippies: many are still here, gathered at the temples and monasteries, aglow with teachings on enlightenment. (14)

In most of her fictions Kathmandu is portrayed as crossroad of western and eastern cultural experience. But she does not generalize that the cultural antiquity of Nepal is replaced by the imported modernity of the west. Pressed by the demands of the mundane realm, modern Nepalese rush past the sacred, whereas Western dharma seekers linger, taking in each marvel. Thapa's merit and worth as the serious and realistic writer obsessed with social issue are proverbial. The capacity to give literary gloss and glitter has earned the currency of originality.

Nepalese history, political history of revolution and peace, socio-cultural problems and the diasporic experience of Nepalese immigrants in western Anglo-American cities are some of the striking themes of her novels. Her recent work *The Lives We Have Lost* has drawn the attention of a large number of critics. Regarding to the substance of this nonfiction writing Zyanu Sharma has expressed the following views:

Thapa focuses upon the deteriorating condition of political democracy in Nepal. She always stands in favor of the constant progressive shift in the structure of political democracy in Nepal. She is of the opinion that transitional situation of Nepalese politics will pave the way for the consolidation of the structure of Nepalese political restructure. (4)

Thapa probes the dramatic transformations witnessed in Nepal during the period 1990 to 2009—spanning the dark years of the atrocity-ridden Maoist insurgency and counter-insurgency, the quagmire caused by the disarray of the democratic political parties, King Gyanendra Shah's military coup and subsequent overthrow, and the launch of a thorny peace process fraught with uncertainty led by India and the United Nations.

The essays in this collection—by turns reportorial, impassioned, humorous and deeply

personal—offer a portrait of a nation still in search of democracy. Paula Bronstein has made the following revelation:

The violent conflict in Nepal has taken a huge toll of civilian lives. Some 13,000 have died, many more have been displaced and scores of villages have been razed. The mountain kingdom has lost more than a decade's potential for development and economic growth. The sensational assassinations of the royal family in 2001, and what followed, have transformed the way the country is governed. Recent armed conflict in Nepal has taken an exceptionally large human toll. (5)

By Paula Bronstein Maoists have tasted power, but their abuses are no less than those of the armed forces. If government forces have imposed collective punishment on villages for harboring or collaborating with Maoists, the Maoists have conducted reprisal killings, targeting civilians suspected of being informants. The depressing story is similar to tales from other conflict-prone regions. What's remarkable and perplexing about the Nepali conflict is its virulence and timing.

In *The Lives We Have Lost*, she combines her reportage and passion to portray a disturbing picture of Nepal. She draws on her skills as a reporter to meet victims of human rights abuses. In most instances, she lets the victims—or their loved ones—talk of what they have experienced. Commenting upon Thapa's regarding foreign policy; Lois Kopila makes the following revelation:

She examines the policies of not only the Nepali political factions and India but also something that is unfortunately rare in reportage of human rights organizations. Thapa tells the story of the ordeal of one girl, allegedly raped by an Army officer because her father owed him money. As well as criticizing

the idea that such cases should be swept under the carpet in order not to jeopardize the peace process. (11)

Thapa also looks into what the responsibility of human rights organizations towards victims of state violence and arguments about how they should handle such cases. Nepal's conflict is tragic and heart-rending, but Thapa doesn't reassemble her very rich material.

Manjushree Thapa's *Lives We Have Lost* is a critical contemplation on the politics of violence and its representation. The history of democracy, human right, social justice and progressive socio-economic transformation is the history of loss. The present history of Nepal's exercise towards full-fledged democracy is overburdened with the burden of loss, devastation, nightmare and nostalgia. In 2007, democracy was introduced at the cost of Rana regime. For a brief period of time, democracy survived and thrived. Then, democracy had to suffer from catastrophic setback. The rise of active and powerful of monarchy led by king Mahendra puts an end to democracy. Country plunged into the totalitarian rule of Panchayat system. The throat of baby democracy was stifled by the oppressive one party system of Panchayat.

With the help of Stuart Hall's idea on representation, the further analytical task will be conducted. Hall is a noted theorist of representation. He is of the view that representation does not successfully convey truth. One who represents has one intention while encoding message in the textual representation. But the viewers or readers approach it from another angle. The one who wants to decode the message has different objective. That is why the problem can occur. The following lines give Hall's view regarding to theory of representation:

A message must be perceived as meaningful discourse and be meaningfully de-coded. There are four codes of the communication. The first way of

encoding is the dominant code. This is the code the encoder expects the decoder to recognize and decode. The second way of encoding is the professional code. It serves to reproduce the dominant definitions precisely by bracketing the hegemonic quality, and operating with professional coding. The third way of encoding is the negotiated code. It acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations. The fourth way of encoding is the oppositional code also known the globally contrary code.

(37)

Hall elaborates how message is encoded and then how the perceiver happens to seek different message other than the message he intends to achieve. The different objectives in the minds of encoder and decoder create problems. The problems exist that at the level of textual production and interpretation. Hall challenged all four components of the mass communications model. It argued that meaning is not simply fixed or determined by the sender. The message is never transparent. The audience is not a passive recipient of meaning.

In 2047, people struggled against one party rule by Panchayat. Dozens of innocent civilians died in a heroic movement towards the restoration of democracy. Before the sovereign power of people, king had to buckle down. As a consequence, multiparty democracy was brought into establishment. King became willing to live beneath the power of constitution. Then country moved into new historical phase of representative democracy. With the restoration of democracy, a great deal of progress was made in the field of human rights, civic affairs, individual freedom, right to information, media and information technology.

Democracy had faced no threat from monarchy because king was constitutional.

Democracy faced severe setback due to factionalism and unhealthy party politics.

Governments were frequently changed. Corruptions were rampant. Parliamentarians were bought and sold. Within a decade more than one and a half dozens of governments were formed. Political parties split. Public trust in the power of leaders and parties declined and eroded.

It is a mode of human association that recognizes the disappearance of a single substantive idea of the common good and makes room for individual liberty. It is a form of association that can be enjoyed among relative strangers belonging to many purposive associations and whose allegiances to specific communities are not seen as conflicting with their membership in the civic association. This would not be possible if such an association were conceived as university as, as purposive association, because it would not allow for the existence of other genuine purposive associations in which individuals would be free to participate. Chantal Mouffe, in this regard, makes the following remarks:

To belong to the political community, what is required is to accept a specific language of civil intercourse. Those rules prescribe norms of conduct to be subscribed to in seeking self-chosen satisfactions and in performing self-chosen actions. The identification with those rules of civil intercourse creates a common political identity among persons otherwise engaged in many different enterprises. This modern form of political community is held together not by a substantive idea of a common good but by a common bond, a public concern.

(66)

A definite identity is in continuous reenactment. Such a conception is clearly different from the pre-modern idea of the political community, but it is also different from the liberal idea of political association. For liberalism also sees political association as a form of purposive association, of enterprise, except that in its case the aim is an instrumental one: the promotion

of self-interest.

Democracy found itself in a catch twenty-two situation. All of a sudden, a group of radical Marxists went to Jungle and waged the people's war. Those rebels launched underground Maoist insurgency. The political mission of those underground rebels is to wipe out democracy and establish people's democracy which is a euphemism of the dictatorship of the proletarians.

The underground Maoists and democratic government came into open encounter. Police, armies, guerillas, innocent civilians and government employees had lost their lives. The violation of human rights was rampant. Destruction, havoc, loss of hundreds of lives, traumatic nightmare and collapse of socio-political institutions were the recurrent phenomena. Thapa reflects upon the loss of human rights, loss of individual freedom, legal rights of people and disintegration of civic affairs.

Geneva Convention was flatly disobeyed. The civic rights and individual rights were completely damaged by both underground insurgency of Maoists and the draconian laws imposed by government. Country moved into the condition of war, civil war. The fierce confrontation between underground insurgency led by Maoists and state-sponsored counter-insurgency took a heavy toll of human beings. The following extract illustrates the problematical situation of human rights in the difficult period of the underground Maoist insurgency:

In December 2002, Amnesty International released a report holding Nepal's state security forces accountable for the wide use of summary execution, torture and disappearance in the previous year. The report questioned the legality of half of the 4050 deaths of alleged Maoists in state counter-insurgency operations, many of these had been civilian deaths, it claimed. (14)

Amnesty International has published several reports about the violation of human rights by

security forces. Of course, the underground guerillas have also violated fundamental rights of civilians and innocent peoples. Thapa says that underground insurgents violated the common and fundamental rights. She condemns the violations of human rights and individual freedom by both sides. But security forces have greater degree of responsibility in protecting the fundamental rights of people. But contrary to expectation, security forces violated the rights of people. If government itself violates the seminal rights of people, what could be expected from guerillas? During the troubled period of the people's war, the distortion of rights and freedom was the rampant phenomenon. In the present context of political transition, lesson and insight must be taken from the political past and the history of struggle for democracy.

Michel Foucault contends that the new notion of truth is formed out of discursive practice. He categorically rejects the effects of ideology in the productions of knowledge. Discursive framework is largely responsible for the inception of a new mode in which discourse about culture and history circulates. The production of discourse about culture and history is affected by power groups. At the same time, the circulating truths and knowledge generate a sort of power. The process is mutual and interactive. The following lines exemplify the point:

With the emergence of post-structuralism, a shift from ideology to discourse in social theory took an upper hand. Let us begin with the two main tendencies in post-structuralism: textuality and discursivity. Textuality refers to a movement within literary, cultural theory and in philosophy emphasizing the revaluation and revalorization of text as text. Textual researches focus on language as a producer of meaning rather than a pale reflection of some prior reality.

Discursivity on the other hand, has an area of research much broader than textual analyses. (70)

Foucault's discourse contains all traditions, norms, rules, texts, symbols, words and

expressions. These contents demonstrate hierarchical power relations. Discursivity unlike textuality, not only deals with the text but also with the context. Discursive researches focus on the question of how rather than why. They do not look for causal explanations. Foucault analyzes different institutions and other discursive unities to detect power relations.

According to Foucault, whenever one can describe, between a numbers of statements, such a system of dispersion, one can define regularity an order, correlations, positions and functioning, transformations. That regularity, order and symmetry are highly hegemonic and oppressive.

Maoists committed extreme brutalities and violence. They went to the extreme point of annihilating those who are alleged with spying against Maoists with the government security. Without conducting investigation fairly, Maoists annihilated innocent people. The people's court established by Maoists performed several deeds of annihilations. Inwardly, Maoists perpetrated plenty of deeds of brutality, annihilations and mutilations. But outwardly, they affirmed that they are committed to the universal rights, freedom of expression, and self-esteem. The ground-reality regarding Maoists and their rhetoric of claim are exposed to public reality. Each group took part in the game of claim and counterclaim. The political hope and vision is caught in the chaos and confusion of claim and counterclaim.

If politics is divided between claim and counterclaim, if it is lost in perspectives and power hunger, the political possibility of reform remains delayed. If the political history is the history of tragedy and trauma, loss and lamentation, how can the present day political program produces fruitful consequences. The following extract dramatizes accurate cases of the violations of people's rights and rights to live freely:

But a visit to the Bheri Zonal Hospital revealed how close the war was. On any given day there were twenty to twenty-five patients in a special ward for insurgency victims. The five patients eyed visitors warily. A skinny woman

was a heap of bones in one bed. Two men had had both legs broken by Maoist. Others had suffered broken arms, or burns, or burns to the eyes and forehead.

(15)

The greatest crime against humanity is that Maoists annihilated innocent and faultless civilians. Annihilation was the widespread events which were quiet pervasive. The guerillas committed crimes against humanity. Crime against humanity had become the distinguishing hallmark of Nepal's political past. The history of decade long underground insurgency and state-sponsored counterinsurgency is the history of crime against humanity and the crime against human rights. Struggles for democracy hardly take momentum if it is countered by several crimes against the basic aspirations and ambitions of people.

Michel Foucault's attempt to trace the proximity between the thematic of repression and the microphysics of power is relevant to examine the issue of representation. The way power operates in a subtle and silent way is dubbed by Foucault as the microphysics of power. Any cynical notion of power hardly fits into the procrustean bed of the microphysics of power. Foucault projects the disembodied and diffused notion of power. Foucault's analysis of power in the first volume of *The Order of Things* is admired everywhere with a detached critical awareness. Foucault's treatment of power is transparent in the following citation:

First and most generally, power is not simply punitive—it does not just deny, silence, restrain. Power can also be, in fact need also be productive; a purely cynical form of power, says Foucault, would never last. Although we have come to accept confession as a liberating revolt against the silence of the Great Repression, confession is itself a form of the subtle workings of power, one that in fact promotes discussion and analysis of sexuality. (1)

What is required is not a theory but rather an analytics of power, which must free itself from

the juridico-discursive representation of power that governs both the thematic of repression and the theory of the law as constitutive of desire. Foucault's explanation for the popularity of the juridical notion of power which neglects everything that makes for its productive effectiveness, its strategic resourcefulness. Power is only accepted as a pure limit set on freedom, a capping of freedom, its fulfillment rather than its abuse.

During the difficult days of insurgency and emergency, innocent people suffered from random shooting, mutilation, bullying and sporadic explosion in ambush. It seems all the legal and constitutional laws and provisions were in a state of suspension. No rule was superior than the military rule. Without any fault of their own, people had to face police brutality and terror of security forces. The standard of an individual's fundamental rights and requirement is respected from no side. Some rebels have taken weapons against monarchy in order to strengthen democracy. By walking on anti-democratic path, how can democracy be strengthened? Democracy is related with civil rights and human rights.

Human rights and civil rights can be guaranteed only if democracy is maintained, upgraded, enriched and diversified. But how can democracy be upgraded and reformed so as to maximize human rights if struggle for democracy is misdirected and undemocratic? So long as the movement for full-fledged democracy does not take coherent form, it can hardly take constructive dimension. The following extract shows how security forces shot dead innocent passersby randomly in drunken bouts:

Villagers told me that the security forces wore army uniforms. Some of the men were visibly drunk, they said. When one of the Maoists tried to flee, he was shot dead. Mansaraa's daughter -the one leading, bullocks in the courtyard- rushed out to see what was happening, only to be kicked and slapped around. Are you a Maoist had in the past held cultural programmes in the area to attract young cadres? (17)

Individuals did not get freedom to live individual lives. Individuals did not have freedom to live free lives. Citizens did not have the feeling of being citizens. Only the sense of being a subject existed in people's minds. It is the struggle of people to achieve the level of citizenship from the bondage of subjecthood. A kind of condition arose during emergency which can be described as the state of exception. In this state of exception, efforts were made to consolidate democracy in an undemocratic way.

Another name for the underground Maoist insurgency is cruelty, vicissitude, dehumanization and annihilation. The term people's war is a euphemism for brutality, violence, genocide and political vengeance. Radical efforts to change country must not degenerate into political aggressive, ideological rigidity, political concept of tit for tat and inhuman sense of brutality. Progressive political agenda advocated by the underground insurgents is a gloss and glitter on their radical path of destruction and violence. Extremity is the path chosen by Maoist in order to implant its political agenda. Armed violence has become alternative less option for the radical rebels. For the democrats, parliamentary democracy has become a system which does not have faults and defects. For Maoists, democracy is filled with several faults. But for democrats, democracy does not have defects. According to Manjushree Thapa, ideological rigidity is the chief obstacle in reconfiguring the curve and locus of democracy. By demolishing representative democracy, how can full-fledged and inclusive democracy be introduced? Democracy flourishes only where democratic culture evolves.

According to Foucault, any mode of representation is not totally free from the formative influence of power and the dominant cultural codes of society. The idea of taking out pure truth from a discourse is doomed to fail, according to Foucault. The following lines give a glimpse of Foucault's stand on the absolute representative power of representation:

The great turn in modern philosophy occurs when, with Kant, it becomes

possible to raise the question of whether ideas do in fact represent their objects and, if so, how they do so. In other words, ideas are no longer taken as the unproblematic vehicles of knowledge; it is now possible to think that knowledge might be something other than representation. This did not mean that representation had nothing at all to do with knowledge. Perhaps some knowledge still essentially involved ideas' representing objects. (171)

As claimed by Foucault, every mode of representation is problematical. But this problematical nature of representation is actually the true characteristic of representation. Judged from the classical point of view, the postmodern narration or representation is problematical. But viewed from the workable perspective, it is the exact characteristic of representation. This thought, according to Foucault, led to some important and distinctively modern possibilities. Not, however, produced by the mind as a natural or historical reality, but as belonging to a special epistemic realm: transcendental subjectivity.

Democratic culture does not evolve suddenly. People should cultivate democracy friendly culture. Conducive atmosphere is necessary in order to construct full-fledged democracy. The history of Nepal's struggle for democracy has never followed the linear track. The path towards the political destination has always been cyclical. Sometimes, democracy asserts ascendancy and at other times, dictatorship asserts its preponderance. Democracy which is imposed from outside hardly survives and flourishes. It has to grow in the culture which is conducive to democracy. In parallel to change in socio-cultural circumstance, democracy must be upgraded. As far as possible, it must be made participatory. The following part of the text discloses the historical glimpse of the politics of extremism and violence:

The brutality of the Maoists prevented even those who felt that social and economic transformation was overdue from supporting them. Govinda Bandi,

heading the Nepalgunj office of the human rights organization Advocacy Forum, was emphatic about the culpability of the Maoist: Their methods are especially cruel, he said to me as we visited village after village. There is no question that the state should control their violence, he said. But those means had to be legal. (23)

Violation of rules, laws, convention and regulations from the side of the government is deplorable. The history of government's efforts to restore democratic norms while checking undemocratic moves and manipulations is the history of hopelessness and horror. Never the country had made endeavor to reform its policy of control and policy of handling the undemocratic attempts.

If the political history of Nepal is revised and reviewed, new fact comes to the surface that horror and helplessness pervaded like wildfire. The far-western region, which has been known as the cradle of Maoists, is completely swept with the painful sense of horror and helplessness. At any time, anyone can be detained, arrested and taken into custody for further inquiry and investigation. The detainee can be killed without any firm and solid ground. Citizens lost their basic rights. Even courts' decision to free the so-called ally of insurgents is flatly denied.

A radical democratic interpretation will emphasize the numerous social relations where relations of domination exist and must be challenged if the principles of liberty and equality are to apply. It should lead to a common recognition among different groups struggling for an extension and radicalization of democracy that they have a common concern and that in choosing their actions they should subscribe to "certain rules of conduct; in other words, it should construct a common political identity as radical democratic citizens" (Mouffe 88). The creation of political identities as radical democratic citizens depends on a collective form of identification among the democratic demands found in a variety of

movements. This is a conception of citizenship.

Through a common identification with a radical democratic interpretation of the principles of liberty and equality, people aims at constructing a "we a chain of equivalence among their demands so as to articulate them through the principle of democratic equivalence" (78). For it is a matter not of establishing mere alliance between given interests but of actually modifying the very identity of these forces. This is something many pluralist liberals do not understand because they are blind to relations of power. They agree on the need to extend the sphere of rights in order to include groups hitherto excluded, but they see that process as a smooth one of progressive inclusion into citizenship

The problem with such an approach is that it ignores the limits imposed on the extension of pluralism by the fact that some existing rights have been constituted on the very exclusion or subordination of the rights of other categories. Those identities must first be deconstructed if several new rights are to be recognized. Mouffe makes the following remarks about the fluid notion of identity:

To make possible hegemony of the democratic forces, new identities are therefore required and I am arguing here in favor of a common political identity as radical democratic citizens. By that I understand a collective identification with a radical democratic interpretation of the principles of the liberal-democratic regime: liberty and equality. Such an interpretation presupposes that those principles are understood in a way that takes account of the different social relations and subject positions in which they are relevant: gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on. (55)

This approach can only be adequately formulated within a problematic that conceives of the social agent not as a unitary subject but as the articulation of an ensemble of subject positions. It is constructed within specific discourses and always precariously and temporarily

sutured at the intersection of those subject positions. Only with a non-essentialist conception of the subject which incorporates the psychoanalytic insight that all identities are forms of identification can we pose the question of political identity in a fruitful way.

In the essay "The War in the Western Terai" taken from *The Lives We Have Lost*, the terror, horror and nightmare are described as apocalyptic event. The following stanza taken out from the poem illuminates the history of terror which verges on the apocalyptic vision:

Life seems anomalous, hard to describe
 Like black smoke flying without aim
 Like white dandelions drifting in the wind
 Like a reckless bet placed at festival time
 Like a flower that has withered without budding
 Like a huge error committed on purpose
 Like a tiny flower parched by a drought. (29)

The political history of struggle for social change and democracy is the history of loss, nightmare, and trauma. Life is increasingly anomalous. The disruption of normal life is politically provoked. The beauty of normal life has withered. Life has lost direction. The political movement has taken the worst directions. In this condition how can the fundamental rights and requirements be maintained. The history of past is the history of futility and ideological vacuity. No one can predict what could be the course of action which our political struggles can take.

In the essay "Custody Management" from this book *The Lives We Have Lost* Thapa has raised the issue of custody management. Female detainee did have the better chance of being sexually molested and abused by police officers sexually. Even the prisoners have the right to keep their dignity and self-esteem intact. But prisoners in Nepal's custody are deprived of basic rights. Faultlessly they have been dragged into the pointless police inquiry.

Threatened by misdemeanor of polices in custody, those detainees did not have the audacity to make a lawsuit to the court. The history of detainees in the past can teach a bitter lesson for us as to how miserable was the conditions of war prisoners in custody. The following extract highlights and dramatizes the deplorable conditions of detainees and terrorists suspects:

Only about 35 percent of detainees had said they had given statements of their own will. Nearly 43 per cent had said they had not been informed of the reason for their arrest. Over 70 per cent had said that they had no contact with lawyers. Over 32 per cent had said they had been denied access to their visiting family members. Over 49 per cent had said that they had suffered severe physical torture in detention. And an additional 41 percent had complained that they had suffered mild physical, verbal or sexual abuse in detention. (33)

The available statistical data and historical records show that detainees suffered a lot from the psychological harassment. Female detainees were sexually assaulted and abused. No clean sanitation was allowed for the detainees. Every detainee has the right to meet his or her doctor to file a lawsuit in the court. But the security forces did not allow detainees to consult their respective lawyers. Security forces themselves are ahead in the campaign of denying legal and civil rights of the suspects and detainees.

Every detainee has the right to seek his legal right prior to the court decides his or her case properly. But during the underground insurgency, police administration itself became the center of abuse, violation and torture. The history of civil rights and human rights in Nepal is the history which needs to be reinterpreted. The official record and documents prove that none of such violation occurred. But the resurvey and review of history of the past betrays the fact that government was the most undemocratic entity while dealing with undemocratic things.

Several cases of the violations of civil rights are submitted to Nepal police, Armed Police Force and Royal Nepal Army. Amnesty International took the leading role in drawing the attention of police administration and Security forces. But Amnesty International received only one response that is indifference. The posture of indifference is the only one gesture made the police and security forces. Amnesty International is shocked at the demonstration of indifference by the responsible bodies of government. The historical discourse and chronicle of Nepal's past are full of prejudices. These prejudices have taken the form of indifference, claim and counter-claim. The history of claim and counterclaim needs reinterpretation. In the past only the dictatorship, monarchy and regime had existed. Though efforts were made to set up the superstructure of democracy, such efforts never yield fruitful consequence. Hence, a totally new historical perspective is necessary so that the present historical reality, challenges and missions can better be known.

Even the BBC report was dismissed by the government. Instead of being responsible to what state security forces have committed, the bodies of government tend to be unresponsive and irresponsibility. Administrative irresponsibility has been the motivating factor behind the growing rate in mutilation, rape, solitary confinement and deprivation of fundamental and inalienable rights of civilians. The line" the BBC aired a report on Nepal's human rights violations, in which correspondent Daniel Lak interviewed a burka -clad, anonymous T. She once again confirmed that she had been raped during army detention"(40) dramatizes the blatant violation of human rights.

Human rights community is largely accountable for safeguarding the rights of people. The role of human rights community is to critique and comment on the bad performance of government. A government which is not sensitive to the fundamental rights and aspirations of people can try to bring faction and split in human rights community. Politics which is not guided by ethics and rationality can create havoc and split in a nongovernmental bodies. By

creating a split and faction inside human rights community, the government wants to play in the vacuum. Apart from government's irresponsibility and insensitivity, there is another factor which is largely responsible for the decline and degradation of human rights status.

Factionalism is the root cause of the dysfunctionality of agencies and bodies which exist to pave the way for the consolidation of human rights and civil supremacy. The following extract illuminates how factionalism made human right community crumble from the standard of human rights:

She also expended not a little energy negotiating the factionalism of the human rights community. This community was notoriously divided among institutions, personalities, and democratic or left blocs: there were UML-affiliated human rights organizations and organizations affiliated with the Nepali Congress, which each tended to be soft on governments led by their parties. (48)

Political encroachment has become the burgeoning problems of the country. Every sector has been invaded by the political figureheads. Both governmental and nongovernmental bodies are vulnerable to the power of politics to encroach in every sphere of life. Human rights commissions and communities are made dysfunctional by the specter of political encroachment and interference. Human rights degrade due to the random performance of government and irregular functionality of those bodies and agencies which belong to human rights community.

The outcry of a daughter for the arrest of her father by security forces on the alleged charge of being in alliance with the Maoist dramatizes the history of lamentation and loss. If the political history is examined and excavated, innumerable facts can be identified. These facts need to be reexamined critically so that such a heinous crime against humanity and human rights will never get repeated. The line " She discovered that had had been at Moktan's

house only when her daughter came running to the fields: Ama, Ama, our Ba's is taken away!"(54) Shows pathetic outcry of those who have fallen victims to sporadic spree of security forces.

If the political history of Nepal is reviewed, conscious citizens will have no option other than being traumatic and nostalgic. Struggles for democracy should herald a chunk of progress in human rights and other kinds of rights which every citizen hope to achieve. The size, volume and proportion of the violation of human rights and democratic norms are astounding to those who are highly sensitive to it. The following extract shows the case in point:

Returning to Kathmandu was not a little depressing. In the previous year, Amnesty International had alleged that more than half of the 4050 people killed so far by the security forces had not been Maoists as the government had claimed, but civilians. Everyone in Kathmandu was quick to condemn the Maoists. Yet only a handful of the capitals left liberal human rights activists, journalists and editors had spoken against the widespread and systematic abuses of the state. (57)

The surface reality is drastically different from the ground reality pertaining to the torture, brutalization, harassment and sexual assault. The underlying facts always contradict the profaned. Political truths are always contradicted by the circulating statements and ideological discourses. The government makes claim that it has achieved tremendous progress in the sphere of human rights and democratic values.

The shifting notion of representation is basic to understanding some of the important tenet of postmodernism. Knowledge has become informational commodity in the wake of postmodern scenario. Manufacturing commodities are replaced by the digitalized or computerized form of knowledge. Hans Bertens has exemplified this kind of postmodernist

conception. Bertens elaborates thus:

The scenario in which information replaces the manufacture of material goods as a central concern in the most advanced economies. This computerization of society will affect the nature of our knowledge. It is not very clear how exactly our knowledge will change, but it offers the prediction that the direction of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being translatable into computer language. Knowledge has become an informational commodity. Science has been forced to abandon its original integrity and has become an instrument in the hands of power. (119)

Bertens subscribes to the conviction that meta-narratives have been replaced by a great number of language games. These language games range from models of discourse, various forms of utterance-denotative, performative, and prescriptive. Narrative language games can accommodate elements such as deontic statements prescribing what should be done with respect to kinship, the difference between the sexes, children, neighbors, and foreigner. Narrative language games have only limited social and historical validity.

The text *Lives We Have Lost* mentions a few examples of aggressions committed by government in an attempt to check People's Movement II. People's Movement II was launched in order to play down the resurgence of active monarchy and bring the underground Maoist Insurgents to the right track of peace. This movement is to be interpreted as the cornerstone in people's struggle towards the establishment of full-fledged democracy and the constitutionally approved rights of people. Since the successful end of this movement none of the intended level of progress in human rights is maintained.

The surveillance of Maoists guerillas in cantonment is a significant step in the direction of maintaining the integrity of peace. It was incapable of representing different voices of people. The representative democracy failed to foster the culture of political

participation. That is why people spoke for participatory democracy. In the inclusive full-fledged democracy, fundamental rights of people can be accommodated. Peace process and demilitarization have been considered as the stepping stone in the direction of safeguarding democratic norms, human rights and other inalienable rights of people. The following extract dramatizes and discloses the promising aspects of the full-flowering of human rights and civil supremacy:

But the man felt only indignation at the massacre. He launched into a heartfelt story--impossible to know if it was true, but he clearly believed it- of a Royal Nepal Army soldier who deserted in protest against the massacre at Kotbada, only to be murdered by soldiers from his own barracks. He became a legend, the man said emotively. (153)

The political past is a pure fantasy. It contains no truth. It offers ideas which are justified by facts that are twisted and turned by the dominant perspective. When perspective overrules historical truth and reality, only the effects of truth are multiplied. That is why it is necessary to reinterpret history and review the old historical explanation. Many contradictions and aporias are hidden in the thick chapters of political history. Unless and until these chapters are rewritten and reorganized, the posterity will remain in a state of uncertainty. Pure historical facts and truths will remain in a far condition if history is not analyzed from the progressive perspectives.

Alisa Acosta is a noted theorist of representation. She says with reflective approach to representation, language is said to function like a mirror. It reflects the true meaning of an object, person, idea or event as it already exists in the world. The Greek word 'mimesis' is used for this purpose to describe how language imitates nature. In this regard, she remarks:

Essentially, the reflective theory proposes that language works by simply reflecting or imitating a fixed "truth" that is already present in the real world.

The intentional approach argues the opposite, suggesting that the speaker or author of a particular work imposes meaning onto the world through the use of language. Words mean only what their author intends them to mean. This is not to say that authors can go making up their own private languages; communication – the essence of language – depends on shared linguistic conventions and shared codes within a culture. (34)

The intended meanings have to follow these rules and conventions in order to be shared and understood. The social character of language acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning. Meaning is not inherent within an object itself, rather we construct meaning using systems of representation.

Each and every moment of history is an effect of foreign intervention. The intervention of India in shaping the political destiny of Nepal is incredible. The choice of political system in Nepal is the internal affairs of Nepalese people. The struggles, sacrifice and contribution made by the people of Nepal are hindered by the aggressive interest of India. Without knowing the bulk of Indian influence and interference, it would be totally difficult to perceive grand truth regarding to political history of Nepal. India has been playing a crucial role in each and every political movement of Nepal. Even the true political reform can't come without its sympathy and help despite the heroic sacrifice of people of Nepal. Now the builders of history must take into consideration how the influence and interference of India makes resurgence in the fragile political conditions of Nepal. The following extract justifies the necessity to revamp and reform the politics of encroachment in the transitional state of Nepal's politics:

India has always been influential in Nepal, but its involvement increased dramatically when it took a lead role in persuading the Maoists to enter peace talks. This came after King Gyanendra's military coup in 2005. Until then,

India had unfailingly backed the unpopular monarch. India had therefore been deeply embarrassed when the King effected his military coup in February 2005. This breach of trust had provoked New Delhi to sever ties with King Gyanendra, and to suspend military aid at last. (187)

In this way it is fair to say that *Lives We Have Lost* is the brilliant rendering of the history of Nepal since the dawn of democracy to the rise of Maoist insurgency. The history of Nepal is the history of loss and achievement, ups and down. It is filled with plenty of ifs and buts. Political events like the abduction of democracy repeatedly have dominated the major portion of the history of Nepalese politics. Without any exaggeration and prejudice, it can be said that the cases of the violation of human right and civil right has occupied the greater degree of textual space.

Thus it is contended that *Lives We Have Lost* is the exemplary case of the rendering of politics of violence. The researcher argues that by revising and reshuffling the blunder of violence, human beings can take profound lessons. To avert the possibility of the occurrence of the fatal consequences, the representation of violence must provide insight and understanding.

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