

I. Folklore and Folktale

Folklore embraces all branches of popular knowledge that are in a great measure distinct from technical science. It might be defined as the direct expression of the psychology of mankind from its primitive origins to the present day, transmitted across the ages without the help of technical science. Those traditional elements or factors of civilization that are important parts of the spirit of peoples, that are transmitted from generation to generation, spontaneously, instinctively so to speak, without the aid of government – in fact, government itself is often tradition – are all important in cultural studies. In these elements of human behaviour that constitute tradition, the character, the feelings, the manners and customs, the religious beliefs, the artistic powers, and, in short, the ideas of people are documented.

Folklore includes all the customs, beliefs, and tradition that people have handed down from generation to generation. Charlotte S. Burne comments on folklore as; “the generic term under which the traditional belief, customs, stories, songs and saying current among the backward peoples or retained by uncultured classes of more advanced people, are comprehended and included” (i). The word is defined in terms of opposition to the upper class and an urban center. Commenting on folk, Alan Dundes writes, “the folk were contrasted on the one hand with civilization – they were the uncivilized element in a civilized society – but on the other hand they were also contrasted with so-called savage or primitive society, which was considered even lower on the evolutionary ladder” (3). Folk occupies a kind of middle ground between the civilized elite and the uncivilized savage and can be perceived in the emphasis placed upon a single cultural trait.

Many students of literature consider folklore to be the literature of an unsophisticated or illiterate people. MacEward Leach defines folklore as “the

accumulated knowledge of homogenous, unsophisticated people” (Boswell 11). In general, folk means a group of people of one place caste, religion and nation. Approach from this perspective, folklore appears to have a life of its own super organic process and laws. This view of folklore is "an abstraction, founded on memories or recordings of songs as sung, tales as told, spell as chanted” (Alan Dundes 3).

The study of folklore has drawn the attention of professionals as well as amateurs of diverse background and interests. As a result it has given rise to many schools of thoughts and interpretations of folklore in the attempt to understand the origin, composition, transmission and diffusion of folktales, some of which have been greatly modified and revised by the modern folklorists since the turn of century. Cultural anthropologists describe folklore as the study of the embodiment of popular tradition, the symbolic representation of social organization and as a key to understanding the mentality of people from whom specific folk materials are obtained. Psychoanalysts take folklore as inevitable, intuitive product of the activities of the human psyche in communities. Comparative linguists conceive of folklore as a source of raw materials for the study of exotic languages through oral texts and narratives recorded in the original language.

Many anthropologists believe that folklore travelled from more culturally advanced to less civilized countries. With the expansion of Europe in the fifteenth century, European folklore was transported to the continents of North and South America and Africa. However, the stories of indigenous African and American peoples did not travel back to be incorporated into the folklore of European peasants. In the same way, ancient Indian civilization exerted an influence on Greek culture which later extended to other advanced European countries. India is considered to be a powerful centre in the diffusion of myth and folklore. Vedic deities of the Hindu Pantheon have

counterparts in Greek and Roman mythology: Indra, the King of the Gods and the Gods of creation, has a congener in the Greek God, Zeus, also known as Jupiter by the Romans. Thus, India and Western Europe have been intensively strolled as powerful centres of the diffusion of myth and folklore. Folklore is made up of complex of genres ballads, folk songs, dance, tradition, customs, beliefs, proverbs, riddles and tales. Every form is unique and spontaneous, and has been preserved over many centuries. Folklore is so popular that it has become a part of everyday social life.

Folklore in Nepal is still closely associated with lifestyle of the people. Folk theatrical performances which were staged in market square or at important cross-roads at midnight were until the late 1950s in Nepal. On the other hand, folk songs and ballads continue to be immensely popular. They preserve most authentically the native tunes of different ethnic groups. The main component of the songs in this masculine society is melodramatic romance and flirtation as witnessed by the innumerable songs from the mountains, valleys and the Terai. In the Terai, which stretches along the south of Nepal, the songs are generally performed in combination with folk dances during festivals. In hilly regions, they are sung, purely for vocal entertainment regardless of the occasion. Every song sung at a *chautara* (resting place) or along winding trails echoes through the valleys, wafts with a romantic aura. The evergreen hills, cascading rivers and snow-capped mountains touch the inner beings of villagers, and the songs help to counterbalance their harsh mountain life-style.

Folktale is the most important form of folklore. The term 'folktale' implies that the tales were composed by the folk, for the folk, about the folk or belonged to the folk. Folktale is a traditional story that has been passed on orally from parents to child over many generations. No one knows who that author is and there are usually different versions of the same story. On a broader sense, folktales are traditional tales of no

firmly established form in which supernatural elements are subsidiary. They are not primarily concerned with 'serious' subjects nor are they the reflection of deep problems and preoccupation. G.S Kirk defines folktales as:

difficult to [assign] to [. . .] specialized genres [in which] witches, giants, ogres and magical objects are all quite frequent; they represent the supernatural, but hero or heroine is a human being, often humble origin who has to achieve his or her human purpose in spite of, or with the help of such fantastic forces. (37)

Folktales have many characterizations that make them easier to understand than other types of literary genre. They are typically considered children's story in the modern western world. "Despite their outwardly simple appearance, folktales address theme and issue that profound significant for all ages" (Eric 15). They touch on many social problems and concerns; mistreatment by a stepsibling, the death of parents, finding a wife, leaving home and finding a way in the world, isolation, poverty and failure. They include many psychologically significant themes: betrayal, revenge, jealousy, arrogance, greed, generosity and forgiveness. They are filled with hopes and dream, and sorrows and pains that all of us share.

Folktales from different cultures display many uniqueness while some elements are common to many or all culture. The main point of the tale is precisely the ingenious way in which a difficulty or danger is overcome, and also underline struggles to find what is right or the same. Taylor writes "the attitudes characters reflect – pride and humanity, and greed and generosity – are common to all humanity" (16). The struggle, joys, and hopes common to humanity addressed in folktales provide a bridge between culture and its theme. The social, moral and relational themes that lie behind the stories tend to rise above local cultures. Taylor writes, "Finding a spouse, coming of age,

dealing with death and loss, and unexpected bad fortune are common issues in any culture” (16).

Folktales have been used to teach values in many societies and we often find characters in folktales that clearly demonstrate particular moral qualities. We find lazy and hardworking son, the wretch stepmother, the misery man, the wise woman, etc. There is no subtle character development and subtle working with moods and feeling. Taylor comments: "Although in real life, life does not always seem fair, in folktales it usually is the hardworking girl who is badly mistreated will marry the prince in end, and the wicked, lazy step sister will miss out [. . .]" (ii).

In folktales, the theme is very plain and concrete. It is often guided by the cultural and religious belief and value of particular group or race. Similarly, the trickster, the noodle head, the diligent son and wise old woman appear in the tales of many cultures. They embody abstract qualities like greed, patience, humanity, arrogance and foolishness. Such abstract qualities are not in themselves simple to explain but when they represented in a character of folktales, they become much easier to explain.

Folktales in Nepal are collectively grouped as *Dante Katha* (literally oral tales). Now, however, in modern Nepali literature, they have been given the name *Lok Katha* (folktales). In Nepal, folktales resemble fairy tales or *marchen* and fables of western world, and do not include historical and religious accounts.

Nepal has a large number of stories based upon primitive beliefs in animism: the humanization of animals, natural forces and objects in the universe. Many stories concerning human values, which are common the world over and follow archetypal patterns, are also found in Nepal. These tales are strongly affected by the religions of neighbouring countries. In the foothills of the Himalayan region, the stories are

dominated by Tibetan Lamaism, whereas in the South along the Terai, they are centred on primitive forms of Hinduism. Genuine Nepalese folktales which are in fact a *pot pourri* of Hinduism and Buddhism, and whose presentations are unique, original structures, come from the Kathmandu Valley and the villages of the central zone of Nepal.

The cultural history of the Terai is fairly new compared to that of the mountains and valleys. The impenetrable malaria-infested forests of the tropical Terai have lately been occupied by Indian-oriented inhabitants, although certain indigenous tribes such as the Tharu and Satar who have been greatly influenced by Hinduism, also live there. As their life depends entirely on agriculture and natural resources, the folktales tell a great deal about gods and goddesses of fertility, and of the forest and animals. Generally, these tales are set against a background of superstition, the existence of Heaven and Hell, the Golden Age and the Iron Age respectively representing the past era of happiness and the present age of crisis. In the Terai, people do not believe in the germ theory of disease, believing rather that if a person is sick, it is because an evil spirit has entered the body. Such primitive characteristics still prevail among indigenous tribes, and are strongly exhibited in the folktales of the Terai.

The culture of the Newar community dominates in the Kathmandu Valley. While other important ethnic groups such as the Tamang, Limbu and Rai have enormous influence in the hills of central Nepal, the Kathmandu Valley is a melting pot of many cultures and religions where unique and original characteristics of Nepalese life can be detected. The folktales of the Newar community deal with Tantrism (the Buddhist cult of ecstasy) and superstition, and they are fantasies. The fictional *Parbate* (hill tribe) folktales are designed to mock as well as to entertain.

Folktales in Nepal do not have a rigid structure or form, and this flexibility allows for reiteration, monologue, and the use of narrator's imagination. However, folktales do have clear beginnings and conclusions, and tales are well-balanced with a logical conclusion, even though the dialectic may not be visible. A happy ending, returning the listener to reality, is visible. There are many Nepalese folktales which dwell upon emotions. Love between man and woman is a very strong motif, and since polygamy was legal, it was common for a man to have more than one wife. A man is usually swayed and used by a second wife, who is usually presented as a villain, indicating that the system was socially undesirable. Although Nepal has a strongly male-dominated society, in certain tales, women are shown as flirtatious and capable of dominating men. Wealthy ladies, even queens and princesses, may be portrayed as nymphomaniacs.

The general tendency of Nepalese folktales is to deal with extremes: we see poor people oppressed to very rich people, simpletons contrasted with shrewd characters, gentle personalities versus cruel and aggressive ones. In these extremes of characters portrayal, poor people always receive a favourable and sympathetic treatment, and are often rewarded for their honesty and innocence. However, unless they are tricksters; they are not usually presented as dominant victors. The villainous or stupid personalities of rich people, and especially merchants, are widely caricatured. These characters are usually shown as ruthless misers and the audience likes to see them duped.

While the character presentations of male and female personalities are very vivid and flexible, a certain uniformity in individual behavioural patterns can be detected: male chauvinism is undoubtedly distinct; women are unable to keep secrets; a step-mother is a jealous villain; the youngest son, daughter or wife becomes the hero or

heroine; the relation between a brother and a sister is based on honesty whereas two sisters may be enemies and a step-daughter is a victor. Most of these motifs correspond with universal values.

The overall characteristics of oral literature in a country like Nepal whose cultural diversity is well-reflected in folklore. There is ample scope for studying the folktale of Nepal as well as collecting tales from all over the country, fitting them into scientific and morphological patterns. So, different sorts of intensive and extensive studies have been carried out for the collection, preservation, interpretation and promotion of Nepalese folktales in which different scholars, researchers, critics and writers have given different views.

They have focused only on the historical, structural, psychological study, and so on. So, the present research attempts to focus on how the Nepalese folktales portray the characters that perform their roles on the basis of traditional gender roles in the socio-cultural structure of Nepalese society. This thesis rests on the fundamental assumption that gender representation in Nepalese folktales is entirely replete with the ideology of the prevailing socio-cultural structure that is guided by the patriarchy. However, despite being the victims of the traditional bias gender stereotypes, the characters are able to resist the stereotypical roles at times. Gender roles are social constructs, not naturally determined traits, so they can be disrupted at times especially in unusual situation by veering towards trickster role as a strategy for survival which is proved by the female characters in Nepalese folktales.

II. Feminist Perspective on Folk Tales

Feminism is a social theory and a political movement primarily informed and fuelled by the experience of women. It can be understood as a doctrine which advocates equal rights and dignity for women with regard to men. Feminism acquired a more or less concrete set of beliefs in the nineteenth century articulating the thesis that women are inherently equal to men in every way conceivable. As a concerted social and political movement that went global, feminism got momentum in the twentieth century. The aim of this movement can be designed as spiritual as it seeks to establish a human society based on the mutual understanding and respect between the two sexes.

Feminism questions why women have been consigned to a subservient status in relation to men, and points the social system controlled and constructed by men, as the cause behind women's subordination. It also studies how women's lives have changed throughout history. Also, one of its central concern is, to explore how women's experience is different from that of men's, either as a result, as Michel Ryan writes, of "an essential ontological or psychological difference or as a result of historical imprinting and social construction" (101). The guiding norms of patriarchy to the extent that they make unfounded claims about the inferiority of women are called into question by this awakened social-political movement called feminism.

Basically, viewed from the feminist perspective, folktales as well as fairy tales are complicit with the masculinist project of keeping women subjected to the men by inculcating in female readers the conviction that only by remaining under male protection, only through marriage; they can attain social status and wealth and garner moral plaudits. As Karen E. Rowe, a feminist scholar, explains, this genre promotes universal models of female dependency. Referring to such widely read and enjoyed

tales as Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty which praise female subjugation to male power, Rowe writes that they “encourage women to internalize only aspirations deemed appropriate to our ‘real’ sexual functions within a patriarchy” (211). To further explain the matter, “by showcasing ‘women’ and making them disappear at the same time, the fairy tale [. . .] transforms us/them into man-made constructs of women” (Bacchilega 9).

Folktales and fairytales have been perpetrating sexist and misogynist stereotypes of women despite the claims of some that the tales are dominated by female protagonists and narrators. The facts remain that the powerful women are usually wicked witches or stepmothers whose assertiveness and independence prove self-destructive at the end. Thus, after setting the premise that folktales and fairy tales are complicit with the masculinist mission of subjugating the female kind, it is relevant here to cite a critic in this context. As Donald Haase writes in “Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship,” fairy tales have accrued a variety of response and so it would not be very easy to make generalizations about their effects:

Questions about canonization and the male-dominated fairy-tale tradition would lead to the discovery and recovery of alternative fairy-tale narratives and to the identification of the women’s voice in fairy-tale production from the earliest documented references to the present. The initial and rather simplistic debate over the effects of fairy tales on “the masses of children in our culture” and “the meaning of fairy tales to women” would require more detailed study of the relation between the process of socialization and the development of the classical fairy tale, as well as more convincingly documented studies of the fairy tale’s reception by children and adults. (2)

In this light, the folktale and fairytale becomes an elastic frame within which contradictory gender images can be exposed and reformulated in multiple ways. Revisionist feminist stories such as Angela Caret's or Margaret Wood's focus on recycling old paradigms or on experimenting with themes, structures and styles in the ways that de-emphasize male centrality or domination. Thereby, they show that the existing social arrangements are not natural but artificial.

Patriarchy and Gender Stereotypes

A society can be called patriarchal to the extent it valorizes male values at the cost of female ones and helps perpetuate the domination of women at the hands of men. This sociological and anthropological meaning retains its relevance in the political and philosophical movement of feminism too. Feminists would like to contend that patriarchy would refer not simply to a society where men hold power, but rather to a society ruled by a certain kind of men wielding a certain kind of power. And such a society reflects the deep-rooted values of traditional male ideal. In this sense, patriarchy denotes a culture whose central and driving ethos is an embodiment of male or rather masculinist ideals and practices confirming to those ideals. Patriarchy has determined to considerable and virtually indelible extent the nature and quality of human societies across the world irrespective of time and space the values and priorities, and the place and image of women within the societies, and the relation between the sexes. Feminism, therefore, as socio-political movement which aspires to enhancing healthy and just relations between the two sexes, has to expose how masculinist ideals have been dehumanizing and subordinating women on the basis of grossly unfounded myths and norms.

The males know well how easy it is to control women by the mere strategy of mind control. To inculcate certain beliefs, to indoctrinate the women into believing

their inherent fragile, sentimental and altruistic nature, to continuously remained them of their secondary and subservient status ever since the creation of human beings by God these all are the tools of mind control. To give constancy and currency to such brain-washing and mind-controlling percepts, stereotypes are formulated and given currency. Stereotypes images based on limited experience of one time but accepted as true ever after serve the great purpose of the men in subjugating the women. The stereotypical images of women stamped and circulated as truths have been destructive to the self image and esteem of women. These myths and stereotypes function as social norms, and direct the attitudes and conducts of both the males and the females in the society. Anne Cranny-Francis, Wendy Warning, Pam Stavropoulos and Joan Kirk by jointly write about stereotype as:

A stereotype is a political practice that divides the world into like and unlike, self and other. It is a radically reductive way of representing whole communities of people by identifying them with a few key characteristics. Different stereotypes applied to particular social group or community may attribute to them conflicting characteristics. These apparent contradictions reveal the fact that stereotypes are (a) generated by those outside the group and (b) are part of a political strategy for managing that group or community. While marginalized groups receive negative stereotypes: powerful groups are endowed with positive stereotypes. Against the way women are stereotyped as emotional, nurturing, sensitive and deferring, men are sensibilities as all-powerful, emotionless and authoritarian. (141- 42)

What is problematic with the female stereotype is that it forces, rather indoctrinates in many instances, the women not only to appear and accept that they are substandard,

but to become substandard so that they can gain approval of the society as the embodiment of ideal women. And the social factors help sustain and enhance such an ideal. Limited education, experience, and critical faculties deemed ideal for women because they are not expected to be wise in the ways of the world, or to compete with the men along with the demand that women be of delicate and attractive body to be desirable for male consumption, and countless other influences collude in the masculinist mega scheme of persuading the women to believe the myth and act accordingly. Explaining how much pressure such myths, stereotypes and curbs exert upon females in twisting and narrowing their intellectual and moral qualities, Mary Wollstonecraft writes in her landmark critical text *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792):

Females, in fact, denied all political privileges, and not allowed, as married women, excepting in criminal cases, a civil existence, have their attention naturally drawn from the interest of the whole community to that of the minute parts through the private duty of any other members of society must be very imperfectly performed when not connected with the general good. The mighty business of female life is to please, and restrained from entering into more important concerns by political and civil oppression, sentiments become events, reflections deepens what it should, and would have effaced, if the understanding had been allowed to take a wider range. (398)

Women are deprived of the right to natural expression of their psychological and physiological needs and drives. They are expected to live up to the images men have conjured about them. This all eventually creates a diseased and unnatural personality in women. The influence of stereotypes and the need to live accordingly destroys the

humanity in females. This is what Simone de Beauvoir also notes in “Myth and Reality” section of *The Second Sex*:

[. . .] as against the dispersed, contingent, and multiple existences of actual women, mythical thought opposes the Eternal Feminine, unique and changeless. If the definition provided for this concept is contradicted by the behaviour of flesh-and-blood women, it is the latter that are wrong: we are not that Femininity is a false entity, but that the women concerned are not feminine. (996)

So, powerful is the myth of femininity that the females are forced into complying with the myths. Otherwise they would be termed aberrations, but the myths would never be questioned as to their authenticity. One of the features of the myths produced by men against women is the praxis of the ‘us’ and ‘them,’ the ‘self’ and the ‘other.’ The men are the natural component of humanity; whatever they see, say or do is right and universal. Their mode of acting and thinking is the human mode, the right mode of thinking; but the female mode of perception is merely of the female. But in reality, both men and women are of the same category in their nobility and weakness as human beings. The effort of the men to establish and claim superiority over women is spurious. Commenting upon the false notion of feminine mystery and the usefulness of the same mystery for the men, Beauvoir writes:

We can see now that myth is in large part explained by its usefulness to man. The myth of women is a luxury. It can appear only when man escapes from the urgent demands of his needs; the more relations are correctly lived, the less they are idealized [. . .] surely most of the myths had roots in the spontaneous attitude of man towards his own experience and towards the world around him. (999)

So, the real issue is not what is true but how much the patriarchal mode of perception damages the personality of women.

Sheila Ruth makes a similar observation to how women are rendered weak in character and self-assertion:

Many factors in the environment conspire to impede women's competence and accomplishments in many areas – hostile or deprecating attitudes of incumbent men, lack of support and assistance from all quarters, dual and/or incompatible professional and nonprofessional functions, pervasiveness of the male (alien, inhospitable) ambience, and socialization that erodes confidence and self-assertion. Rather than being inferior, women are hampered in developing competence in the most profound ways. (160)

Given these odds against their success in life, it is hardly surprising that so few women came to be counted as successful personages in life which accounts for the relatively backward position women occupy in every public domain in comparison to men. How can one expect women to be somebody with their distinct mark in a field when what the society and family confines the definition of good women to those who are beautiful and attractive, fragile, domestic and self-effacing – that is, ready to renounce themselves for the integrity of their family and the honour of their husbands?

Deliberating upon the impact of tales and literature on the psychic make-up of the female readers Karen E. Rowe also makes similar observation:

Romantic tales exert an awesome imaginative power over the female psyche – a power intensified by formal structures which we perhaps take too much for granted. The pattern of enchantment and

disenchantment, the formulaic closing with nuptial rites and the plot's comic structure seem so conventional that we do not question the implications. Yet, traditional patterns, no less than fantasy characterizations and actions, contribute to the fairy tale's potency as a purveyor of romantic archetypes and, thereby, of cultural precepts for young women. (11)

The masculinist images of women and the roles that these images support are constructed so as to create a situation many ways very convenient for men. Women are expected to help and serve men physically, taking care of their homes, property, clothing, or persons; economically, doing numerous household chores for which women are paid so little or not paid at all; sexually, as wives, mistresses, or prostitutes who satiate men's sexual needs; and reproductively, assuring men of their line, the continuity of dynasty.

The image of women as man's complement offers and extremely effective support mechanism for the masculinist self-image; the softer, weaker, and more dependent the woman is, the stronger and more powerful the man appears; the more servant the woman, the more master the man. Hence, there is the complicity of the patriarchal social pattern in sustaining and propagating such stereotypical images.

Discourse and Folktale

Discourse is a system of constraint or exclusion which set boundaries for what can and cannot be said or done in all everyday life. It is to exclude the females by showing the reference of subordinate images described from the pre-historic time. It is the discourse of male which includes female's characteristics in derogatory manner. The feminists resist female's subordinate image represented in male discourse equating truth which is made by male to dominate female. Discourse is a way of

talking, thinking, acting and feeling about an idea, issue or areas of concern. It may be generated and experienced verbally, visually, aurally or is a way of the sign systems operating within a society. The society under the system possesses some knowledge and by using such knowledge, the society creates discourses. This discourse consists of representation, power and truth. Representation has different form: written, audiovisual, oral, etc. Power is circulated through different forms of representation. This very represented power creates the truth, which ultimately becomes truth to everyone who is under the system. Arun Gupto says about the discourse and the power exercised over females creates the truth about them: "Truth is determined by the power institution like patriarchy exercises over the female. [. . .] Discourse is productive. Patriarchal discourse produces woman as a cultural construct" (177). Gupto makes clear on the intertwinement of discourse, power and truth. Patriarchy exercises the power upon female and what it generates through discourses become truth in the society.

Discourse can help us to interpret many slices of social and political systems that we have never ever considered before. It also helps to illuminate past of the ordinary world that is controlled by the experts of society. Thus, discourse is a major point in the society that affects how we can speak, activities and interpret things. The experts define the situation and then divide the line between reason and unreason for the society. And it determines for us what is proper and improper through eyes of the experts. The system of discourse regarded to everything constantly changes within years, decades and according to the one who has the power.

Our social lives are dominated by the written discourse. It is constructed to achieve particular social goals rather than representing acts. Likewise, male discourse is created from the earlier age to subordinate a woman which is not the true

representation of the women. Since, the males were in power in the earliest age, they controlled and guided everything as their wish. They created such discourses that would uplift them as superior and relegated female as inferior. Even the religion is not left untouched from the male ideology in the sense of female representation.

Most of the fairy tales and folktales are also male discourse in which male ideology is imposed in the representation of female. The implementation of patriarchal ideology creates the binarity of superiority and inferiority between male and female respectively. Feminists have long been aware that the role of women, which patriarchy imposes upon the imagination of young girls, is destructive as it equates femininity with submission, encouraging women to tolerate familial abuse, wait patiently to be rescued by a man, and views marriage as the only desirable reward for right conduct. In most of the fairy tales, a beautiful, sweet young girl is rescued from a dire situation by a dashing young man who carries her off to marry him and "live happily ever after". It seems that females must be beautiful, sweet, young and incapable of rescuing herself if they are to be worthy of romantic admiration. The fairy tales, the male discourse, represent the female character as 'submissive and polite figure' and male as 'rescuer and masculine figure.'

Folktales is a discourse which is a dynamic part of the historical civilizing process. It is a tool of political ideology since it is an agent of socialization and politicization. Folktales are historical perceptions operating ideologically to indoctrinate the dominant social standards. Commenting on folktales and fairy tales as modes of socialization and politicization, Jack David Zipes writes:

Folktales and fairy tales have always been dependent on customs, rituals, and values in the particular socialization process of a social system. They have always symbolically depicted the nature of power

relationships within a given society. They are strong indicators of the level of civilization, that is, the essential quality of a culture and social order. The effectiveness of emancipatory and revitalized tales has not only depended on the tales themselves but also on the manner in which they have been received, their use and distribution in society. (67)

Thus, the folktale and fairytale discourse is inseparable from power structure because it is the governing and ordering medium of socialization and politicization.

Ambivalent Representation

The images of women in all patriarchates are fraught with sharp contradictions. Sometimes women are extolled for their feminine virtues of modesty, submission, and tenderness. At other times, they are criticized for being weak, dependent and sensual. Woman is the sublime, the perfect, the beautiful; she is the awful, the stupid, and the contemptible. She is, according to the Christian tradition, the Mother of God as well as the Traitor of the Garden. She is the lovely, tender creature man marries and takes pride in as well as the treacherous, manipulative sneak who tricked him into a union he never sought. A woman is supposed to be the keeper of virtues; she is yet a base and petty creature. Women are thus represented as having dual natures, of being all that is desirable, fascinating, and wonderful, yet destructive and dangerous. Ambivalence toward a whole range of real and imagined female powers expresses itself in subliminal patriarchal beliefs that women are unknowable, docile but dangerous, caring by preying at times. Sheila Ruth calls this bifurcation of images, the negatives versus the positives ones the "Mary/Eve dichotomy" (87).

Women are thus at once presented as the divine manifestation as well as an incarnation of evil. It was a woman who caused the primal fall of man: who know well the Biblical story of Adam's fall from the Garden of Eden. It was because of

Eve, his beloved wife, that Adam, though he knew the consequences, took the fatally adventurous misadventures step of eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. In doing so he disobeyed God and incurred the curse of expulsion from the Garden of Eden, of toilsome life and of death. In short, women are mystified by the men either because they cannot understand them as they do not try to, or because the cooked-up mystique of femininity serves the male interest well. It goes without saying that, in a patriarchy, like everything else, the images of and injections about women have been exclusively male created. The dichotomy in the representation of women is a strong indication of the ambivalence on the part of men, because all the representations are done by men. Beauvoir's observation in her noted text *The Second Sex* is relevant in this regard:

But if a woman depicted as the praying Mantis, the Mandrake, the Demon, then it is most confusing to find in woman also the muse, the Goddess Mother, Beatrice. As group of symbols and social types are generally by means of antonyms in pairs, ambivalence will seem to be an intrinsic quality of the Eternal Feminine. The saintly mother has for correlative the cruel stepmother, the angelic young girl has the perverse virgin: thus it will be said sometimes that Mother equals Life, sometimes she equals Death, that very virgin is pure spirit or flesh dedicated to the devil. (996)

This dual representation of woman has kept them at a disadvantaged position. They can be the good mother or friend only at the cost of their individual identity; and if they try to be on their own, they are depicted as the very evil incarnate. In patriarchy, the images of women, like other conceptualizations, have been male created.

Therefore, it takes no extra perception to see that the contradictory and conflicting

stereotypes of women are male projections, and as such they ought to be understood as the outward expressions of male attitudes. As Sheila Ruth writes, "the dichotomy in the representation of women, therefore, is a strong indication extreme ambivalence on a part of men" (87).

The women have both images of fascinating and destructive in patriarchal society. They are stereotyped as either good women or bad women. If the woman accepts her traditional gender role of being gentle, submissive, passive, emotional, virginal, angelic, etc. and obeys the patriarchal rules, she is a good woman; if she does not do so, she is a 'bad woman' who is violent and aggressive. These two roles also identified woman as 'Madonna' and 'whore' or 'angel' and 'bitch'. These two images are defined according to the place and the time in which they live. They are projections of patriarchal male desire. We can see the image of 'good girl' and 'bad girls' in Lois Tyson's word as such:

According to a patriarchal ideology, [. . .] 'bad girls' violate patriarchal norms in some way; they are sexually forward in appearance or behaviours, or they have multiple sexual partners. [. . .] The 'good girl' is rewarded for her 'good' behaviour by being placed on a pedestal by patriarchal culture. To her are attributed all the virtues associated with patriarchal femininity and domesticity: she's oddest, unassuming, self-sacrificing, and nurturing. She has no needs of her own, for she is completely satisfied by serving her family. At times, she may be sad about the problems of others, and she frequently worries about those in her care but she is never angry. (89)

The 'good girls' obey the patriarchal norms whereas 'bad girls' violate it. The good girl has to remain uninterested in sexual activity except for the purpose of legitimate

procreation, because it is believed in patriarchy unnatural for women to have sexual desire. The 'good woman' is expected to find sex frightening or disgusting. She does not want her own self autonomy in the society. She only knows about the traditional rules. But the 'bad-women' who are power-seeking always want newness in the society. They do not limit themselves within the boundary which is drawn by the patriarchy. They have strong feminist idea and they are hard and bold enough that they can do what male. So, they want their self-autonomy.

Feminist literary critics study ideas about sex and gender expressed by people in literary and critical media. Their subject matters are mainly – ideas about sex/gender, people who use these ideas, the effects of these ideas on people, the media of language, literature, and critiques where these ideas are expressed, our self-reflective feminist study of subjects, subject matters, methods and epistemologies, just to mention a few. Feminist study has been defined as the study of the dynamics of gender definition, inequality, oppression, and change in human societies. It aims at re-examining society's assumption on the issue of gender.

Trickster figure in Folklore

Trickster in folklore is the most paradoxical of all characters for he combines the attributes of many other types. His undertakings are audacious, rebellious, egotistical and always performed with the idea of giving freedom to personal action in the face of group restrictions. In the form of small creatures such as Spider or Rabbit, in the guise of the jesters and fools Stupid Jack and Punchinello, or as Moron and Hophead, he has performed his antics in the traditional entertainments of most groups throughout the world: aboriginal, peasant, and urban. He is the central character in many different types of folk narratives. He may appear in different figures as a mythic hero like Raven or Coyote among Indian tribes in North America, as a fictional

prankster like Br'er, Rabbit or Aunt Nancy (the Spider) in communities of Negroes. At various times he is clown, fool, jester, fraud, prankster, confidence man medicine man magician, witch, jokester, initiate, culture hero, even ogre. This contradiction is brought out by anthropologist Paul Radin in his book on trickster as:

Trickster is at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes others and who is always duped himself [. . .] He knows neither good nor evil yet he is responsible for both. He possesses no values, moral or social [. . .] yet through his actions all values come into being. (10)

The devil and the trickster are not the same thing though they have regularly been confused. The devil is an agent of evil, but trickster is amoral, not immoral.

Trickster's outstanding characteristic is his lack of morals. Paul Radin says that at all times he is constrained to behave as he does from impulses over which he has no control. He possesses no values, moral or social, and is at the mercy of his passions and appetites. The stories about him exist in communities with ethical values; though he represents amorality, he does so in a moral context. His actions must be condemned at the same time that they are laughed at and admired. As the enemy of constraint, he seems to function as a representative of lawless, indeed anarchistic, aspect of ourselves which exists in even the most social creatures.

Trickster is the emblem of displacement and indeterminacy. He is the spirit of disorder and the enemy of boundaries. He represents the principle of pure unbridled energy directed into human shape and impelled by primal human needs. He not only actively dupes others but sometimes tricks himself. And when he does so, his exploits are nothing less than clownish and his mask is that of the noodle, the simpleton. In this context, Joseph Campbell says:

Trickster classically functions far more dynamically as the principle of disorder, a catalyst for subversion and loss. He is the border breaker, the outlaw, the anomaly; deceiver and trick player, shape-shifter and situation-inverter; sacred messenger and lewd bricoleur — one who doesn't respect the values that you've set up for yourself, and smashes them. (qtd. in Hynes and Doty 33)

So, the pervasiveness of this image in human narrative suggests its centrality as an emblem for redemptive chaos and transformative disorder.

The duality of trickster's acts is as most dramatically seen in the stories about him which were told as a cycle of tales among such American Indian groups as the Chippewa and the Winnebago. In the celebrated cycle collected by Paul Radin from Sam Blowsnake, a full-blooded Winnebago, trickster begins as an unnamed chieftain who unwittingly commits all kinds of taboo acts leading him to retreat from his group and his role as a leader. He then goes through a series of close to fifty incidents equally divided between those in which the tricks others and those in which the dupe is duped, generally by himself.

The trickster functions as a challenge to authority. The trickster tales are almost universally seen as expressions of rebellion against the rigid taboos and ritual requirement of primitive societies. In this context Barre Toelken comments on the trickster as:

A challenger of ritual order, like the clowns who try to distract the participants in the Navago Night Chant. Far from being irrelevant comic relief, the clowns play a crucial role. By resisting the clowns' attempts to distract them from participating in the ceremony by listening with strict

attention and concentration, the audience demonstrates the fortitude necessary for preserving social and ritual order. (64)

Trickster's actions are not considered to be models for behaviour. He cannot be seen as a norm of sanity; he does not clear our vision, but rather clouds it with hints of potential chaos. In social terms, his actions are extremely aggressive, destructive, and forbidden. Therefore, his acts must be countenanced because of some aspect of our dream world; his actions must represent a way of getting around, taboos and other restricted restrictions without actually upsetting the order of society. In other words, trickster functions primarily as a release valve for all of the anti-social desires repressed by the men who tell and listen to his stories. He behaves as the members of the society would behave if they were not constrained by fear from acting. Vicariously, sympathetically, through the acts of this egocentric sensualist, man expunges the pressures that might otherwise destroy both his ordered world and himself.

To evoke this sympathetic response, the stories of trickster must be removed from the everyday world and put in a ridiculous context so that we may laugh the laugh of superiority. In American Indian tales, this removal is effected in a number of ways. First, trickster is represented as existing in the mythical world. Second, he is given powers such as the ability to change shapes or sexes and so is somewhat removed from the sphere of man. Third, and perhaps most important, he is always represented as a creature with many human characteristics, but one who lacks exactly those features which would qualify him as a member of the tribe.

Trickster virtually defies understanding. In many tales relevant to this type of story, his conscious mind becomes dissociated from his body and its excrescences and consequently he commits acts that soil or maim him severely. In different episodes, he finds himself awash in his own faeces, or burning his anus as punishment, or eating his

own intestines. Such stories betray the fascination of trickster with body and its product an attraction which must paradoxically be interpreted as both humorous and self-destructive.

He possesses many human characteristics such as liar, thief, smooth operator, the injector of disorder and bankruptor of souls. In this connection Melita Schaum comments: "By breaking the rigid and sterile orders of misplaced human pride, righteousness, egoism, or appetitive greed, he becomes the disruptive force that paradoxically makes possible social and spiritual renewal" (3). He is often shown to be a lawbreaker; that fact is, however, that he is too minatory, too childlike, and too insane to conscious of the law. In this regard, it is interesting to look at the beginning of Sam Blowsnake's cycle of mythical events. Here trickster appears first as a chief who calls for a war dance only to frustrate the expectations of the assembled group by cohabiting with his wife, in direct violation of ritual war procedure. As the incident proceeds, it becomes clear that the chief has in a very real sense lost his mind, his sense of order, and has taken on the characteristics of an insane man. He has regressed from his adult role to one of essential innocence or childishness, and it is in this guise that he is able to get away with his acts.

Instability is the remarkable feature of a trickster. He is given such power as the ability to change shapes or sexes. His instability is manifested in his ambiguous sexuality. Four of Barbara Babcock-Abrahams's lists of sixteen trickster characteristics address this issue: tricksters "have an enormous libido without procreative outcome" tend to "be uncertain sexual status", and to "have exaggerated sexual characteristics especially in oversized or prominent penis" (159). In a famous episode of Norse mythology, Loki transforms himself into a mare mates with a giant's horse, and gives birth to Sleipnir it-an eight-legged steed that becomes Odin's royal mount. In Paul

Radin's collection of North American Indian trickster tales, the trickster disguises himself as a woman by fashioning himself a vulva from an elk's liver but then bears children to a chief's son (22 - 23). These gender-blurring abilities of trickster seem to be a function of their ability to cross all boundaries, rather than of any controlled reconciliation or fusion of opposites. Indeed, tricksters have been called personifications of the *limen*, the margin outside of human order that Victor Turner has described as "the unbounded the infinite the limitless [. . .] the essentially unstructured which is at once de-structured and pre-structured " (98). The unbounded or destructed cannot serve as a symbol of an achieved fusion or resolution of opposing qualities.

If trickster is a figure of displacement and indeterminacy, then boundaries and thresholds are sites where he is to be found. Tricksters are "edge men" according to an anthropologist Victor Turner (580). For Hynes "the trickster appears on the edge or just beyond existing borders classification and categories visitor [. . .] everywhere especially to those places that are off limits, the trickster seems to dwell in no single place but to be in continual transit through all realms marginal and liminal" (34 - 35). Trickster, thus, resides at the junctures between the worlds the known and the unknown, the orderly and the chaotic, temporal and divine. He is a figure of aporia and transition, he creates illusion but unveils it; his is the magic that both enchants and disenchants the world around him.

A trickster is linguistically located in the shadowland between truth and falsity. This fosters the referentiality of language which offers "not one meaning but the possibility of meaningfulness" (Doueithi 199). In this liminal space, the ambiguity is clarified. It is again a site of disorientation. Commenting on trickster Henry Louis Gates, Jr. writes "trickster is he who dwells at the margins of discourse, even punning, ever troping, ever embodying the ambiguities of language [. . .] repeating and reversing

simultaneously as he does in one deft discursive act" (235). Thus, this use of bent language, word and riddle is one of the identifying traits of trickster.

In folklore, trickster is incarnated as a clever, mischievous man or creature who tries to survive the dangers and challenges of the world using trickery and deceit as a defense. He in folktales is found to be combating against the authority thereby deconstructing the binary line between truth and falsity. His act is redemptive since disrupting and disorienting of the order can incarnate new ways of thoughts and new affirmations so, he is a dislocator as well as a transformer. Tricksterism is thus "a justifiable response to oppression, a mode of survival" (Guerin 334). For that indeterminacy and duality are his major strategies. Tricksters therefore personify a hyper consciousness. They are masters of tricky speech and verbal power, but are cut off both for the non-verbal knowledge that underlies speech and from participation in long dialogues by means of which social truth is constructed. Hence, he is the most paradoxical character in folklore.

III. Gender Representation in Nepalese Folktale: A Feminist Critique

The mode of gender representation in Nepalese folktale is entirely complicit with the masculinist project of keeping women subjected to the men. Male chauvinism is undoubtedly distinct. Women are represented in the role of passive and negative objects. Female agencies are passive since the male's concerns are prioritized more than the female. Men always enjoy the position of centre, but women are sidelined and marginalized in the peripheral section of the society. Though there is not such natural rule and characteristics to prove hierarchy between men and women, culturally fabricated normativity of the society from ancient to the present viewed as the "other" of man's "self." Men with their culturally designed mindset presuppose that they possess rights fundamentally to subjugate women and to make women subordinate or appendage to men. Male supremacist ideals teach and direct women to internalize gender-biased assumption that they are of less value and are genuinely inferior and unequal to men. The definition of woman by men does not value woman as human being rather they define them as objects and commodities to fulfill masculine desires. Nepal has a strongly male-dominated society. The gender stereotype of such society is well-reflected in Nepalese folktales. The sexist and misogynist stereotypes of women have been portrayed. The powerful women are usually wicked stepmothers whose assertiveness and independence prove to be self-destructive at the end. In the tale like "The Tale of the Seven Sisters," the wicked step-mother has overpowering influence on her husband to abandon his innocent children in the forest:

She was jealous and treated the seven sisters very badly. She also influenced her husband against his daughters. Naturally, a strong enmity grew up between the seven sisters and their stepmother.

Eventually the step-mother also succeeded in creating a gulf between the father and his daughters, and persuaded him to develop a plan to banish the seven girls from the house forever. (Sakya and Griffith 182)

The step-mother is represented with negative role. She has a villainous role. She lures her husband to plot against her daughters. “He hatched a plan to lure them into the forest and to abandon them there where they would be devoured by wild animals” (182). He according to his plan takes his daughters to the jungle and let them spend the night there. “When he arrived home and told his wife that he had abandoned all his daughters in the thick forest, she was happy and thought that she had got rid of them forever” (184).

The step-mother is independent but this self-independence proves to be self-destructive at the end. She is the victim of male discourse which considers women as troublesome. She is a greedy woman who wants to acquire more than the precious offerings brought by her husband so that she visits her step-daughters. They give her a present of a *marikashi* (an earthen pot covered by thin rice paper in which there is always a surprise) containing a poisonous snake: “The step-mother was impatient to know what was inside and ran home at once. Without saying a word to her husband, she rushes to her room, locked it from inside and opened the *marikashi*. To her horror, poisonous snake darted out, and bit her to death” (187).

Male-chauvinism is the distinctive feature of male-dominated society. In such society, males are given higher importance in comparison to females. The high degree of male chauvinism can be perceived in the tale entitled, “The Jackal’s Advice.” The king following the advice of the jackal suppresses his beloved wife. The queen is excited by the king’s power to understand the language of animals. But the king does not want to teach her this art. The jackal further says: “Look at me. I control all my

vixen in the palm of my hand. You are the king, and yet you can not control even one wife, shame on you!” (191). This inspires the king to have domination over his wife. He takes his wife as a stupid woman who cares nothing about her husband’s life. She is like an object to him. He wants to keep her under his control. After listening to jackal’s advice his male ego gets encouraged. The jackal further advises him: “Tell your wife that in return for learning this art, you had to receive one hundred sharp lashes. If she wants to learn it also, she must also receive hundred lashes” (191).

This further encourages his male ego and he is pleased with the jackal’s timely advice and tells his wife: “Well, if you want to learn it, you must suffer one hundred lashes as I did, otherwise I can’t teach you” (191). The queen at first agrees with this condition of the king. The king is the male figure who exercises his male power upon his wife. He is the agent of male-dominated society so that the male ideology is manifested in his activities. His wife has become an object to be acted upon. The king hits her sharply just a couple of times. Her delicate skin lacerates and she screams with pain. Again the king asks her, “I have given you only five lashes, you must still receive another ninety five” (191). His mind is entirely drenched with the dominating mentality fuelled with the masculinity project of keeping women subjected to male discourse. His every word is packed up with masculinist ideology.

Women are dangerously inquisitive is the popular theme in Nepalese folktale which is well-reflected in this tale. The queen, the female figure, in the tale is very inquisitive to know the secret of the king’s power to comprehend the languages of animals. She wants to learn the art herself. The king tries to convince her saying that it is impossible for him to teach her because if he does so, he will die within the seven days. This is a sort of discourse that the king has tried to use in order to subjugate his wife. But the queen is quite stubborn so she insists him to teach her at any rate.

Because of her insistence, the king finally agrees to teach her as per the advice of the jackal. According to the advice, she gets a lot of beating from the king. Her inquisitive manner is supposed to be a typical feminine characteristic in Nepalese society. It is a gender stereotype constructed within the patriarchal society in which the wife is the victim of this gender stereotypification. She suffers a lot in the hand of the king. That's to say, she is the victim of male power.

Patriarchy assumes that women are the objects of showcasing for which they have to focus on elaborate make-up. Women are objects of external beauty having no inner beauty. They are the objects to be decorated. They ought to beautify themselves in order to satisfy the male desire. Patriarchal discourse encourages women to internalize such false assumption as their strength through which they can draw the love and protection of males. The young girl in the tale, "The Story of Sinhapata Maiju," is fond of elaborate make-up. Everyday she decorates herself in Newari make-up: ". . . every day she washed with *kwolon* (a mixture of wheat and barley made into a paste with water and mustard oil) to remove every trace of dirt from her face and neck. She put a distinct *tika* of red vermilion powder on her wide forehead, and dressed on a beautiful sari, as well as adorning herself with jewels" (200).

Patriarchy upholds that the external beauty is the strength of woman. They can draw the attention of the males towards them through it. It is only a weapon for garnering love and protection. It is a patriarchal social norm which highly motivates the young girl to have an elaborate make-up in the story. So after the elaborate make-up she displays herself sitting at the window with the hope of getting a princely husband: "She always sat in her window, displaying her beauty to passers-by" (200).

In patriarchal society, marriage is supposed to be a reward for women who are supposed to have got married to a handsome man who can rescue and protect them.

Men are the protectors and rescuers. This assumption is well-functioning in the society and it is more pervasive in patriarchal society. As a result, it deepens the female dependency in the social structure thereby creating the gulf between the gender roles. Bearing in mind the dependent-mentality, the girl in the tale mentioned above wants to get married to a dashing man: “She always dreamed of marrying a handsome husband who would support her like a princess” (200).

Girls in a gendered society with the patriarchal domination are generally considered to be tender-hearted and easily-tempted beings. They are supposed to be fond of flattery of their outer beauty. The young mouse in the above-mentioned tale stands in front of the girl who is sitting at the window and asks her amorously: “Oh most beautiful Sinhapata Maiju! Oh, most beautiful Sinhapata Maiju, how are you and where are you planning to go?” (202). She has internalized the gender-stereotype of female in patriarchy that women get tempted easily and she gaily replies: “I’m ready for marriage if some one proposes, I’m ready for a feast if someone invites me” (202). Her every word bears her submissiveness towards patriarchal order. She is eager to get someone’s proposal and get married soon. Moreover, she wants to get someone’s proposal but does not intend to propose someone on her own which precisely demonstrates her dependent mentality particularly towards males.

Polygamy is common in Nepalese folktale. It is common for a man to have more than one wife. The woman is often presented as a villain. The king in the tale “Chandra Mukhi in the Land of Impossible Tasks,” has two wives. The woman is shown involved in treachery which is the common feature of Nepalese folktale as well as Nepalese society. The first wife hatches a cruel plan of abandoning the second wife’s child:

A cruel plan developed in the first wife's mind. She told the midwife to abandon the second wife's son in a box by the river. She sent a message to the king that the second wife had given birth to a *mussal* (chopping block). The king was sorely grieved, but relieved that he had at least one son. He was extremely disappointed with his second wife and ordered her to live a life of seclusion in the forest. (100)

Women are at once presented as the divine manifestation as well as an incarnation of evil. She is the sublime, the perfect, the beautiful. On the other hand, she is the awful, the stupid, and the compatible. This ambivalent representation of woman is seen in the Nepalese folktales like in "The Story of Dhon Cholecha." The little girl named Maincha receives a lot of torture from his stepmother. She is the victim of her cruel step-mother's discriminatory treatment towards her:

Her father remarried and his second wife gave birth to a daughter. Maincha's step-mother was a wicked, jealous woman. She never gave the elder girl, good food but she prepared the best possible food for her own daughter. The elder daughter had to attend to all the household duties and also had to graze the family's nanny-goat, Dhon Cholecha, to whom, she was very attached. (115 - 16)

The gender bias of patriarchy has been internalized by the step-mother in the story. She always suspects the activities of the step-daughter: "In spite of all the heavy work and poor food, Maincha was always healthy and happy. Her step-mother became curious as to why Maincha was healthier than her own daughter, whom she fed and pampered so well" (166). The step-daughter has been made involve in domestic chores. She is limited in domesticity. She has to graze the family's goats, the whole

day. “When Maincha finished her daily routine of household jobs, she would take Dhon Cholecha to the jungle for grazing” (166).

The existence of *Kichikinny*, who is to be a man-hunting ghost lady, is the gender stereotype of patriarchy in Nepalese society. She is supposed to be very beautiful, but can’t speak and can only yelp like a monkey. Her peculiarities are said to be enormous breasts, and her feet have the heel and toes reversed. The *kichikinny* seduces men taking them to a solitary place where he kills them by tickling.

Kichikinnies are supposed to be the abused reincarnations of whores or nymphomaniacs whose souls roam the night. The emergence of a *kichikny* is said to be an incomplete cremation of a supposed nymphomaniac. The young men of the village spend most of their time roaming the night in graveyards and cremation grounds wanting to encounter ghosts, witches and other supernatural beings. “One night they heard a rumour that there was a *kichikny* in another locality [. . .] finally, on moonlight night, they saw a most beautiful woman standing at the cross-roads next to a *lukmodya* (152 - 53).

The delineation of woman character as *kichikinny* in this story reflects the patriarchal ideal prevailing in Nepalese society. The male characters in the tale describe her with bias gender stereotypes: “She was wearing a shawl thrown around her shoulders. He saw her pendulous breasts and was scared to death, but did not lose his courage to encircle her with his arms” (153).

Women in a male-dominated society are supposed to be flirtatious. They are not faithful to their husband. They are supposed to be dishonest and not to be trusted. Such values of the patriarchal ideal are well-reflected in Nepalese folktale in which the illicit relationship between women and animals are portrayed. They are depicted as not faithful to their husband; sometimes they are portrayed as nymphomaniacs. In the tale,

“The Wilful Woman,” the man has no faith in any women. He believes that women are all faithless and they should not be trusted. They are rather treacherous for him. “Over time, wife had a love with the snake. The husband would be away working all day while the woman and the snake engaged in their amorous affairs. When the husband returned in the evening, they detested his very presence" (122).

On the other hand, women are shown involved in plotting against the men. They are supposed to be the destroyers of sweet home. In reality, they are the real home makers. They are shown more loyal to their animal lovers. They try to get rid of their husbands. In the above-mentioned tale, the wife wants to get rid of her husband:

One day, the wife and the snake decided to get rid of her husband forever. The woman told her snake-lover to bite the husband to death. The husband’s normal routine was to spend hours in his *puzaa kotha* worshipping God. The next morning, the snake was waiting curled ground a beam for the right moment to bite him. All of a sudden, the husband glanced up and saw the snake about to jump on him. (122)

Daughters in a gendered society are regarded as a few days’ visitors who will leave the house soon. The cultural emphasis on the marriage of the daughter and her nearly permanent departure is well entrenched. Patriarchy encourages women to tolerate familial abuse and views marriage as a reward for right conduct. It expects women to remain within the family boundary getting marriage. In the tale, “The Right Husband,” the daughter is taken as a few days’ visitor. She is supposed to get married to a handsome husband and expected to have a bright future. Marriage is supposed to be a great reward in her life:

She was the youngest daughter of the family and dearly loved by all.

One day, the merchant’s wife asked her husband and sons to search for a

suitable match for her ravishing daughter since she was growing as fast as a rising moon. The father and sons agreed and went off in three different directions in search of a suitable man. Rumours of the girl's beauty had spread all over the country and so there was no lack of offers for her hand. (133)

The women's participation in decision-making activities is almost absent in patriarchal society. The female agencies are passive. The men are active in making decisions. In the case of marriage, male members of the family and society take prior initiative and make decisions which are pro-patriarchy. In the tale said above, the responsibility of making decision about the marriage of the daughter is solely taken by the male members of the family. The fathers and the sons agree and go off in three different directions in search of a suitable man. All of them find three handsome men who are all equally determined to marry the girl. Without discussing it amongst themselves, each decides on man of their own selection: "They were all unaware that each had chosen a husband for the girl. By chance, each brother and the father decided on exactly the same auspicious day for the marriage" (133).

The females in patriarchy are supposed to be submissive. They are supposed to be loyal and obedient to their parents. Because of this assumption, female agencies remain passive whereas male agencies become active which leads to the victimization of women. Moreover, this discourse of the society fosters the male hegemony. In the above-mentioned tale, both female characters – mother and daughter – are passive. "First, the father returned home and told his wife that he had selected a handsome son-in-law [. . .] the two sons came back home and found everything ready for the ceremony" (133). The females are happy with whatever the male members of the family have decided. The mother is not discontent: "The women were glad to hear the

news, and set about the necessary arrangement for the marriage ceremony” (133). But the daughter becomes the victim of male hegemony. She performs the traditional gender role which supposes girls to be loyal to the decisions made by the male members of the family. She thinks that to deny the decisions is to go against them and hurt them: “The girl was most perplexed. She didn’t know which husband to choose as every selection would hurt her father or brothers who loved her so dearly and who had taken so much trouble in finding her a most handsome husband” (35).

Moreover, she is innocent and obedient which is the stereotypical patriarchal ideal set in Nepalese society. She is the representative of typical Nepalese daughter who is devoted and submissive. She further says: “I have no prejudice against any of the three men. Each one is equally fine and handsome” (135). Instead of choosing one among the three, she requests them to decide among themselves who will marry her and who will voluntarily give her up. She does not break the traditional gender roles of an ideal daughter. Her sticking to the patriarchal ideal ultimately leads her into a state of quitting her life forever: “Finally the girl could find no way out of this complicated affair, she jump into a ritual fire which had been prepared of ceremony” (135).

Females are expected generally to be rescued by a male from a dire situation. They are stereotyped as incapable to rescue themselves and males are rescuers of female. Males assume that only their twisted arms and legs and flat chest need to rescue others and to be rescued. On the other hand, women are shown as being helpless in a dire situation. In the tale “The King’s Judgment,” the wife of the farmer from Tharu community becomes helpless after she is taken away by the demon that has turned himself into the farmer:

A demon that lived in the jungle happened to pass the spot where they were sleeping. Attracted by the beauty of the sleeping lady, he turned

himself into the farmer through the power of his magic. He slowly lifted up the girl and carried her away. When she awoke after a short distance, she felt very shy at being carried in the arms of the demon whom she naturally took to be her husband. (131)

On the one hand, she is submissive to her family and husband and on the other hand she is helpless. She is the victim of the dispute between the men. That's to say, she is victim of male discourse, she is unable to do anything on her own:

A quarrel naturally broke out between the two men each claiming the woman as his wife. The woman was helpless; whom should she support? She started to cry bitterly and all the villagers, drawn by the noise of the argument and the anguished cries of the woman, gathered around. They were shocked at the unusual sight where no one could decide who was who. (131 - 32)

She expresses her helplessness to the king of the cowherds. Moreover, she is rescued by the cowherds and the villagers. The cowherd asks his friend to grasp the demon by the neck and challenges him to reveal his true identity: "The demon realized his foolishness, and as soon as the people's grip loosened, he disappeared. The boy gave the beautiful woman to her true husband, who thanked the cowherd profusely for his clever challenge" (132).

Faithfulness to the husband and family is considered to be the virtue of females in a patriarchal society. It is supposed to be the ornament of females. She is supposed to remain faithful to her husband despite any obstacles on her life. She should confine herself within the domestic chores. She has to remain submissive to the ideals set by the family which is entirely patriarchal by nature that regards woman as the helpers of males but not as the next side of the same coin. In the tale," The story of the Bamboo-

cutter,” the wife is innocent and submissive and remains faithful to her husband. She always carries out the domestic activities. She prepares meal for him. She massages her husband’s tired legs after a hard work. One day, the demon assumes the form of the bamboo-cutter, the husband of the lady and goes to the house but she becomes ready to serve him and makes him happy since to make the husband happy is supposed to be the duty of an ideal wife in patriarchal society: “The innocent wife, on seeing her husband, went to prepare her meal. As it was already dark, she could not distinguish the actual features of her supposed husband” (Vaidya 74).

She performs the traditional gender roles. She is a good woman for the patriarchal ideals. She never complains of the household work. All the times, she is ready to serve her husband: “While preparing the supper, she provided him with his favourite *hookah*” (74). She is innocent since she serves everything to the demon in the same ways as she has been doing to her husband: “The woman having finished her supper and other household chores came to the room with a small pot of oil, to anoint his legs. The demon was quite unaware that the wife used to message her husband’s tired legs after a hard day’s work” (74).

Violence upon women in various forms is seen far and wide in a gendered society which is male-centred. Its pervasiveness and prevalence disturbs the social harmony thereby damaging women’s health, psyche and perception of self. Most of the women are victims of domestic violence. They are often tortured by their husbands and other family members. But despite such injustice and discrimination, they are helpless since women are blamed and made responsible for all the consequences. In this context, folktale has become an effective discourse to indoctrinate the dominant social standards. It helps socializing the people in the prevailing culture. In the tale, “The Four Brothers,” the only female character, the sister of the four brothers, is the victim of male

arrogance. The four brothers after consulting the astrologer decides to go to fetch their sister in order to sacrifice to the gods so that, according to the astrologer, the canal will be filled with water. All the first three brothers are unable to fetch her but the youngest is able to do so. After her arrival, she is taken to the site of the canal and asked to get some flowers from across. She is loyal to her brothers but her brothers, who represent the male-chauvinist ideal, do not treat her justly. They rather treat her inhumanly. She is encouraged to go deeper into the water time and again: “Keep on going, keep on going” (Lall 66). The brothers are so much stuck to their male arrogance.

Moreover, they are guided with the customary practice of sacrificing blood to the gods. Because of this, they decide to shoot their sister by shooting her with the gun: “Let Eldest brother's gun graze my head-cloth . . . Let second brother's gun graze my hair . . . Let third brother's gun graze my clack” (67). Each brother takes turns to shot at their sister. They keep on torturing. The third brother takes aim and sends his sister's cloak flying away: “He then handled the gun to the youngest brother who did not have the heart to hurt her in the least. So, he closed his eyes as he took the gun and pulled trigger, but as ill luck would have it, he hit his sister right in her heart and she was instantly killed” (67). All the brothers except the youngest brother are overjoyed at the sight of water in the canal which is filled up immediately after the sister's death. Moreover, the brothers display more brutality to their sister: “The brothers decided to cut their sister's body and cook the meat and eat it. Eldest brother, therefore, asked the youngest brother to get some fire-wood while he himself went to make a fire” (68). In this way, the sister is killed after a lot of torturing. She has been represented in the tale but her characterization is packed up with the masculinist values and norms.

Trickster Role as Subversion of Female Stereotypes and Patriarchal Ideology

The characters in Nepalese folktales perform their traditional gender roles but they are able to resist at times when they veer towards the trickster role and devise different strategies for survival in unusual situation. The images of women in patriarchy are replete with the negative stereotypes of timidity, passivity, weakness, submissiveness, fragility and tenderness. The women with these images are considered as good women but the women going against these images are considered as bad women. This is a sort of discourse that has been propelled in the patriarchal society since many years and has been playing a vital role in tagging the female with this series of negative images, since it equates femininity with submission. Even the female agencies have generated male discourse in the society and female concerns have been relegated to the lesser important position in male discourse. The dynamics of tricksterism helps the characters of Nepalese folktales blur the traditional gender-based roles. They are equipped with different strategies in order to survive in the unusual situations appearing in their social intercourse both indoors and outdoors. Challenging the male-dominated society, they get beyond the negative stereotypes and become bold, courageous, capable, resistant assertive, clever ,rational and hard women .They become bold and courageous characters capable of resisting the patriarchal ideals and norms with their revolutionary thought.

The trickster functions as a challenge to authority. Patriarchy represents the authority in Nepalese society in which women are supposed to be feeble, submissive, irrational and emotional. But sometimes the women in Nepalese folktales assuming the trickster role challenge this order and subvert the traditional gender-based roles. They become rebellious against the rigidity of the society. They are law-breakers. The woman in the tale “The Saga of Tanan-Lata” is a very clever mother who saves her

stupid son. She dupes everyone whenever she gets the better opportunity: “The clever mother quickly slipped the money inside her blouse . . .” (280). She is a cunning mother who is not submissive to the traditional role but rather she is rebellious since she crosses the limitation of the traditional gender roles.

She embraces the traits of trickster since she is tricky and crafty. She often dupes her son, Tanan-Lata: “The credulous Taran-Lata looked hopefully up to the sky and was soon excitedly picking up sweets, unaware that his mother was throwing them from the rooftop” (280). She is not an ordinary woman who is passive and docile but rather she is active, creative and bold. The butcher follows the boy, son of the woman, to his home and demands the money from his mother. But she dupes him. “The woman feigned surprise and expressed her complete ignorance of the subject” (280). Moreover, she looks knowingly at the butcher and says: “You see what stories my son invents. Now you can see that he also made up the story about the money” (280). The poor butcher is totally disappointed that he has left his shop to follow such a stupid boy. The female agency is active here unlike in traditional role.

The mother like the trickster functions as the principle of order, a catalyst for subversion. She is not a stable figure who sticks to the traditional gender norms. In patriarchal society, women are supposed to be irrational and emotional. But the mother subverts these long-rooted norms of the society through her crafty activities that make the female agency active. The rumours about her son’s stupidity and simpleton behaviour have spread throughout the land and nobody wants to offer their daughter to him marriage. Though that turns unfortunate ultimately, the mother advises her son about courtship in order to find a girl on his own. Using her sense of trickery: “she suggested that he got up before sunrise and went near the public well for a girl to come by to draw water. She told him to throw a small stone at the girl: if she smiled back, if

meant she approved of him” (280). The son does everything according to the advice of the mother. He is submissive to the mother’s advice. He is the passive recipient of female authority. As a trickster, the mother possesses no values either social or moral unlike the traditional ideal mother who is supposed to be feeble, submissive, faithful, loyal and passive.

Tricksterism is a strategy for survival, especially in unusual situation. The clever mother devises different strategies which are often practised by the trickster in folklore, in order to save her son who is known for his simpleton behaviour and stupidity. The situation has turned unusual since Tanan-Lata, the son, has hit the girl on the head with a big stone and has fell down dead with her mouth left wide open in a grimace of pain. When she finds the dead body, she gets really angry and yells at her son: “You killed her. Now I must throw her into the well. Run home quickly or villagers will catch you” (281). The crafty mother takes the dead woman and buries her in the nearby jungle, first removing all her jealousy, and then she throws a goat down the well. The famous man, father of the dead girl, drags Tanan-Lata off to look for his daughter-in-law at the bottom of the well after he tells him everything about the happening of the day before. But to his surprise, Tanan-Lata finds the dead body of a goat: “When Tanon-Lata brought up the body, they saw a dead goat. The father-in-law chastised him for wasting so much time with the stupid man. Thus, again the clever mother saved her stupid son” (282). The mother acts as a catalyst. She saves her son from the unusual situation veering towards trickster role which is the principle of necessary disruption which is a strategy for survival.

Trickster is the emblem of displacement and determinacy. He subverts the long-standing stability in terms of traditional gender roles in folklore particularly in folktale. In traditional patriarchal society, women are supposed to be loyal, submissive,

passive and emotional. The daughter-in-laws in Nepalese society are supposed to be limited within the domestic chores. But the female in Nepalese folktale mostly in unusual situation veering towards trickster role subverts this patriarchal ideal. The daughter-in-law in the tale "The Smart Daughter-in-Law," has an extraordinary quick-wittedness. The father asks his three sons to cut down the mountain. They all relate the story and the wives of two elder brothers express surprise at how they can cut down the huge mountain but the youngest son's wife gives the very witty answer and says: "Your father's expression meant that you should tell stories while you climb so that you wouldn't be aware of ascending such a high mountain" (173). She proves to be a clever and witty woman who subverts the long-rooted assumption set by the patriarchal ideal.

She is the liberator of the family. When the cruel king sends his men to cut off the hands of those who have built the beautiful pagoda even in that land, the smart daughter-in-law quickly realizes the whole situation and tells them that: "She is not prepared to deliver such precious hands to the ordinary people and she promises to give to them only to the king's son" (174). After the arrival of the prince, she takes him to a room deep in the house and then dashes out, quickly locking him inside. She then sends message to the king saying: "If you cut off the hand of any of those men, I will cut off the hands of your son" (174). The king is stunned by the women's cleverness. In order to save his son, he has no choice but to send the old man and his son back to their home laden down with rightful reward. The daughter-in-law upholds her part of the bargain and returns prince unharmed.

The daughter-in-law plays the role like of a trickster who is the emblem of displacement and indeterminacy. She is a border breaker since in such society, the daughter-in-law is supposed to be loyal to her husband and family but in this tale, she is the rescuer of the family. Because of her smartness, the king sends the old man and

his sons back and saves her son. In this sense the daughter in law is the figure of displacement. Moreover, she is the deceiver, trick player and role-shifter. She smashes the social rigidity set in terms of gender construction. So, she is not an ordinary woman who is bound to be feeble but rather she is courageous, crafty and witty.

The female characters in Nepalese folktale sometimes become revolutionary and break the patriarchal norms that female after the marriage should be the passive recipient of male chauvinism. In such situation they swerve towards tricksterism and thus become bold and revolutionary. The daughter-in-law in "How the Clever Wife Outwits the Cheaters," resists the male arrogance. Her husband believes that a wife is like a slave. She boldly shouts back at her husband: "What a clumsy man you, and when you haven't learnt how to earn single penny, and when you can't feed your wife with your own labour, you have no right to behave like this to me. So, fast go and earn some money to feed me, and then you can beat with your shoes like a slave" (178). Her every word is replete with boldness, hardness, assertiveness and resistance. Tricksterism is a justifiable response to oppression. It is a mode of survival. Moreover, it asserts the right of the individual to contest the irrational authority. The husband in the above mentioned story represents the patriarchal authority. He is pre occupied with male chauvinist project of subjugating women merely to male desire. He labels women as a slave. It is a sort of male oppression upon female in patriarchy. So, the daughter-in-law resorts to tricksterism which is a mode of survival for her. She in doing so subverts the traditional gender role which supposes female to be submissive and loyal to the husband after the marriage.

Trickster is in control of his situation. He manipulates people at his will. He is the one who dwells at the margins of discourse. The daughter-in-law in the tale is the trickster dwelling at the margin since her husband and the society where she lives in is at the

center. So, her husband is the oppressive figure representing the male power. She is victim of male discourse. But she uses the bent language like the trickster and manipulates her husband. In doing so, she drags the entire situation under her control. Hence, she subverts the binary of center and margin.

Trickster is ultimately a redemptive figure since he offers his uncorrupted critique of social mores and prejudices. The husband is the agent of masculinist project of relegating women to the lower position: "...the stupid son believed that a wife was like a slave. He thought that after marriage he would be able to beat his wife often with the soles of his shoes" (176). The daughter-in-law resists the social conventions internalized by her husband. She is the critic of such bias social mores and practices. She is not a submissive and feeble woman who bears all the oppression of the male authority. She wants to uplift herself from the narrow wall of domesticity. Therefore, she dares to break and cross the barriers set forth by the prevailing society. She in this sense is the representative of a redemptive figure.

The patriarchal deal assumes that women are the passive recipients of the male discourse. It is a customary practice that has been institutionalized in a patriarchal society. The female characters in Nepalese folktale veer towards tricksterism in order to break the hegemony of male discourse. Trickster in true sense not only spoofs and exposes the institutionalized power but also addresses the limitation of human endeavors, especially the attempt to impose an order on human nature. In the tale mentioned above, the land lady of the house where the husband lives in veers towards trickster's role:

While he was having a meal, the old lady showed him a hen under a basket and claimed that it cooked like a rooster. The old lady proposed a bet: if it would crow the next morning at four o'clock. If it did, the man

would have to agree to become her slave; on the other hand, if it didn't crow, he would be entitled to all her property. (179)

But the rooster crows powerfully in the early hours of the next morning and the man loses his bet.

The lady is able to spoof the long-rooted belief that females are the objects to be acted upon and are the passive recipients. She blurs the binary of centre and margin with male at the center and female at the margin. She is able to make male the passive recipient of female imposition and treatment. She treats the man in the same way as he assumes that the female ought to be treated like a slave after the marriage: "Since he had lost the bet, the old lady hung shells from his nose and ears to show that he was now a slave and put him to work for" (179). She has a revolutionary thought. She is radical as she strikes the society's norms and mores thereby blurring the traditional gender roles.

Trickster defies understanding. His remarkable aspect is lack of morals. The dynamics of tricksterism help the female in patriarchal society to defy the long-rooted presumption about female. The patriarchal firmly believes that men are the rescuers of the family and the females. But the females in Nepalese folktale at times defy this long-rooted social construct. In the tale "The Story of The Bamboo-cutter" the woman is bold courageous and revolutionary: "She was not an ordinary woman. Brave and clever, she maintained control over herself and planned a way to get of the demon" (Vaidya 75). She distorts the general long-rooted assumption that females are weak and feeble who are always in need of favour of the males for survival.

The tricksterism is strategy for survival in unusual situation since trickster defies the social rigidity, limitation and expectation which in fact help him to ease the challenges in hands promptly. So, his distortion of the established norms is not for destruction but rather for redefining and redrawing the boundary. As a result he is not only a destroyer

but also a creator at the same time. He baffles the firmly established belief and reconfigures the border and order. The female characters in Nepalese folktale veering towards the role of trickster destroy the traditional assumption about the female that they are feeble and not able to rescue themselves on their own. But the women in the tale mentioned above defy this presumption especially of patriarchy and dupes the demon: "She laid a big pillow in her place close to the demon, sprinkled dried peas from the third floor to the ground floor and removed floor, a big fire pot was placed burning charcoal" (75). She is a crafty and cunning woman. She baffles the demon. Thus, she distorts the traditional belief and rigidity.

The demon is puzzled with the woman's arrangement. He wants to devour the woman but he falls into her trap:

He pounced on the big pillow by his side thinking it to be the woman. But instead of the woman's flesh, his teeth closed in on an old tattered pillow. He had difficulty taking out his teeth entangled in the rags. He fumbled in the pitch dark and found not one on the bed. The demon realizing that he was outwitted by woman, flew into rage, and swore that he would devour her by any means. (75)

The demon tries to escape but he is unable to do so. He becomes the victim of the strategy devised by the crafty woman: "As he got up and walked, he slipped over the dried peas on the first floor, too, and crashed again. He got up and went to the ground floor. This time he fell into the big fire pot and died instantly" (75 - 76).

Trickster is a dislocator as well as transformer. He dislocates the general truth and unveils the duplicity and falsehood of the society. The notion of truth and false is a social construct. Moreover, trickster transforms the social construction of gender role. The patriarchal society assumes that females are always in need of favour and rescue from the

male. But tricksterism transforms this assumption and demonstrates that female also can take care of the house and the husband. The woman in the tale above is the rescuer of her husband since he has been deceived by the demon by imitating a human voice by virtue of his supernatural power. The falls into a trance and cannot remember anything after the demon casts a spell. The woman is brave and courageous since she goes to forest and fetches him home safely:

She found him, much of her delight, deeply sitting in a trance and dazed with fright. The women guessed that her husband must have seen bewitched by the spell of the demon, and to destroy the influence, she beat him with tied end of her black sari .Her husband came back to the house and narrated the whole story of her adventure with the demon. The husband thanked and praised his wife for her courage and resourcefulness. (78)

She disrupts the social construct of the male discourse and refashions the truth.

She as a trickster figure reveals the duplicity and falsehood of the male discourse. She is not dependent but rather self-reliance since she is able to protect herself on her own on the one hand. And on the other hand, she is a role model for the females since she rescues her husband from the critical situation. In this sense she is the redemptive figure since her acts baffles the demon through the trickery and incarnates new life to her husband. In doing so, she disrupts the expectations stabilized by the male chauvinism.

Trickster is a guiding force for the feminism since it interrogates the politics of gender resorting to tricksterism. Trickster stands at the edge or border between order and chaotic, truth and falsehood. So, the female characters in Nepalese folktale veering towards trickster roles appear on the edge. It means they are not in single place but in continued transit. They become a figure of aporia and transition. They become the

shadowland between truth and falsity. Therefore, trickster role becomes a site of disorientation where he subverts the demarcation line between truth and falsity established by the male discourse.

In patriarchal society females are supposed that they are not able to maintain secrecy. Moreover, they are considered to be more inquisitive than male counterparts. The former presupposition has been inculcated in the perception of gender role. Folktale has been a strong agent of transmitting such conception in Nepalese society. But trickster role veered by female characters subverts this supposition. The woman in the tale is the glaring example of such woman: "As she was thinking a plan come to her mind. She placed her *kosa-sandu*(a big roofed treasure chest) on the ground floor and managed to squeeze the huge body of the demon. She then closed the chest and locked it with a big lock. She kept the incident secret and she was careful not to let any of the neighbours know about" (76). Thus, trickster has blurred the gender role.

The characters in Nepalese folktale are bound to their traditional gender role designed in accordance with the social structure. The images of the characters are replete with binary opposition man with boldness, hardness, resistance, rationality and courage, and women with timidity, passivity, weakness, emotionality, submissiveness, fragility and tenderness. They at times veer towards trickster role especially in unusual situation for survival. In doing so, they devise different strategies which ultimately deconstructs the traditional gender roles and stereotypical images.

IV. Conclusion

This research makes a scathing critique of the false notion of female inferiority and male valour in terms of gender representation in Nepalese folktales which are replete with characters adhered to the traditional gender roles based on socio-cultural structure of Nepalese society that is shaped by the ideology of patriarchy. Being the central point of Nepalese culture and civilization, the mode of gender representation in Nepalese folktales is entirely complicit with the patriarchal culture. However, despite being the victims of the socio-cultural ideology, the characters at times are able to subvert the social construction of gender roles when they devise different strategies for survival in unusual situation veering towards the trickster role.

The representation of women in Nepalese folktales is in strict adherence to the dictates of patriarchy in which the images of the characters are replete with the gender-biased stereotypes so as to justify and sustain the male supremacy. Folktale has been a strong agent in socialization and politicization so as to inculcate the values and norms of the patriarchate. Since the male experts create the discourse in the Nepalese society, all the sides of male are weighty and significant whereas the female has a series of negative values which is well-portrayed in Nepalese folktales. So, the female agencies are passive since the male concerns are prioritized more than the female. Men always enjoy the position of centre, but women are sidelined and marginalized in the peripheral section of the society.

Nepal has a strongly male-centred society which is well-reflected in folktale in which women are represented in the roles of passive and negative objects. The powerful women are usually wicked stepmothers whose assertiveness and independence prove to be self-destructive at the end. They often have negative and villainous role like plotting against her family and husband. However, they become the victims of male discourse.

Women are depicted as being dangerously inquisitive. They are shown as the object of showcasing which they believe is a weapon for garnering love and protection from males. They have to bear the violence, domestic problems and negative stereotypes. They are sometimes depicted as nymphomaniacs. Domestic violence that is widely spread in various forms in Nepalese society is reflected in folktales. Women even become victims of various customary practices.

The hierarchy made between men and women by patriarchal society has marginalized women from the social position in Nepalese folktale. Their participation in decision-making activities is almost absent since their agencies are passive. They cannot make their own decision as what to do and how to live. They are rather manipulated by the males. The images of feminine vulnerability and male protectiveness can be detected. Women are stereotyped as incapable to rescue themselves and males are rescuers of females. They are helpless and are always rescued by the males. They are faithful and submissive to their family and husbands. They become the victims of familial abuse and take marriage as a reward. They seem content with what they have. Moreover, they are the victims of ambivalent representation as the divine manifestation as well as an incarnation of an evil.

Women are the victims of male supremacy in Nepalese folktale. Their life and existence is limited to the managing of the domestic chores, cooking and looking after children and husband. They face alienation and numerous domestic problems. They are associated to their husband and family by marriage and cannot dissociate themselves and become self-reliance because they are neither dependant nor can gain any assistance from the society. Moreover, they have internalized dependent mentality. So, they are condemned to a life of a slave rather than a free and complete individual. They are inferiorized, dominated, enslaved and marginalized from the social position.

Trickster role is an act of subversion. It is a justifiable response to oppression. The women in Nepalese folktales veering towards trickster role are capable of rebelling against the rigid restraints of the patriarchy which in fact dramatizes the possibility of refashioning the truth about the construction of gender in Nepalese society thereby deconstructing the shadowland between truth and falsehood. They defy the view that women should serve males, should be passive, docile, and submissive and timid, should spend their life like sewing, cooking and looking after the husband and children. They dupe the demon, sometimes even the male counterparts. They rescue their husband from a critical situation. They are rescuers and liberators of the family. So, they are not merely objects of passive recipients since their agencies are active.

Tricksterism reveals the duplicity and falsehood of the male discourse. Interrogating the politics of gender, it transforms the social construction of gender role and reconfigures the order and border. The female characters in Nepalese folktales act as the trickster figures since they offering uncorrupted critique of the social mores and prejudices that relegate women to the lower position, defy the social rigidity, limitation and expectation in order to survive in unusual situation.

All in all, the characters in Nepalese folktale which is one of the key sites for gender construction are in strict adherence to the ideology of patriarchy. So, the representation of women correlates with the idea of females as incomplete human beings. Tricksterism conferring upon them agency, volition, courage, protectiveness and power for violence, subverts the representation of women in the bulks of literature written in the folktale genre which undermine female worth and existence by portraying women as inactive, weak characters. It, thus, is a mode of survival as well as a justifiable response to oppression.

Works Cited

- Adams, Hazard, ed. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Forth Worth: ABJC Publisher, 1992.
- Bacchilega, Cristina. *Postmodern Fairytales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.
- Beauvoir, Semon de. "The Second Sex." Adams. 993-1000.
- Boswell, G.W. *Fundamentals of Folk Literature*. Oosterhout: Netherlands Anthropological Publications, 1962.
- Burne, Charlotte Sophia. *A Handbook of Folklore*. London: Folklore Society, 1994.
- Cranny-Francis, Anne, et al. "Ways of Seeing." *Gender Studies: Terms and Debates*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 14-42.
- Douiehi, Anne. "Inhabiling the Space Between Discourse and Story in Trickster Narratives." *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and Criticism*, eds. William J. Hynes and William G. Doty. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1993. 193-201.
- Dundes, Alan. *Interpreting Folklore*. Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1980.
- Gates, Henry Lous, Jr. *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the "Racial" Self*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Guerin, Wilfred L. et al. "Cultural Studies." *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. 275-349.
- Gupto, Arun. *Healing Thoughts on Tender Theory*. Kirtipur: New Hira Books Enterprises, 2004.
- Haase, Donald. "Feminist Fairytale Scholarship: A Critical Survey." *Marvells and Tales: Journal of Fairytale Studies*. 14 (2000): 2-63.

- Hynes, William J. "Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Trickster: A heuristic Guide." *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts and Criticism*, eds. Williams J. Hynes and Williams G. Doty. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1993.34-45.
- Hynes, William J. and William G. Doty. *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts and Criticism*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama, 1993.
- Kirk, G.S. *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Lall, Kesar. *The Seven Sisters and Other Nepalese Tales*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2007.
- Radin, Paul. *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Methodology*. New York: Schocken, 1972.
- Rayan, Michael. *Literary Theory: A practical Introduction*. US: Blackwell Publisher, 1999.
- Rowe, Karen E. "Feminism and Fairytales." *Don't Bet on The Prince*. ed. Jack Zipes, New York: Methuen 1996. 209-206.
- Ruth, Sheila. *Issues in Feminism: A first Course in Women's Studies*. Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University, 1980.
- Sakya, Karna and Linda Griffith. *Tales of Kathmandu: Folktales from the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Mandala Publications, 2005.
- Schaum, Melita. "Erasing Angel: The Lucifer Trickster Figure in Flannery O'connor's Short Fiction." *Southern Literary Journal*. 33.1(Fall 2000):1-26.
<<http://web.ebscohost.com>>
- Taylor, K Eric. *Using Folktales*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

- Toelken, Barre. "The 'Pretty Languages' of Yellowman: Genre, Mode and Texture in Navaho Coyote Narratives." *Folklore and Genre*. ed. Dan Ben-Amos. Austin: U of Texas, 1976. 145-70.
- Turner Victor "Myth and Symbol." *The International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*. New York: Macmillan, 1968.
- Turner, Victor. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1967.
- Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1999.
- Vaidya, Karunakar. *Folk Tales of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2007.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. "Vindication of the Rights of Women." Adams. 394-99.
- Zipes, Jack. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*. New York: Methuen, 1988.