

I. Globalization, Intertextuality and Contemporary Art

Contemporary Nepali paintings reconcile subject matters, contents, and forms from western art of the twentieth century while at the same time from the early Nepali art. Contemporary Nepali paintings thus share and reconcile western art and earlier Nepali artistic traditions. Such reconciliations create contemporary native varieties. A tentative borderline of contemporaneity can be considered from post-1950s. These paintings create a complex and dynamic sets of visual texts. The Nepali arts achieve such visual textuality through hybridization, negotiation, and appropriation.

Furthermore, the mergers create interart and intertext of paintings that include not only the traditions of west and early Nepali art but also include various artistic genres and disciplines. Such incorporations can be seen from photography, media, poetry, theatre, music, sculpture to objects and images of virtual texts. One can experience and comprehend an intense artistic intertextuality of time and space, genres and disciplines in Nepali paintings.

Keeping such propositions into consideration, the thesis aims at studying Nepali paintings of the recent times as a mixture of subject matters, contents and forms from various cultures, pasts, and presences and thus produce native creations. Since many such cross-currents interact to produce the texts of Nepali paintings, one can delve into the nature of tradition of painting as hybridity, negotiation and appropriation. Such plural nature, however, cannot be traced with definitional concreteness because of two reasons. Firstly, fleeting, continuous, ever-changing art influences in the time of globalization unsettle representational modes, and secondly Nepali art in general, and painting in particular, is going through a phase that still needs critical theorizing about the nature and features of its

creative representations. Such conditions do not limit a discourse on Nepali painting but provide scopes to interpret Nepali art freely and fluidly to theorize its nature with interpretative terms of reference. Consequently there may be conceptual play, provisionalism, and indeterminacies involved in developing a theory of artistic representation. The focus of the study takes such indeterminacies into consideration and looks at the impact of globalization and its influences in the works of the painters. The study also aims at mapping Nepali painters and their works in the light of interpretation and analysis keeping in the tradition of art criticism. The thesis thus discourses on three areas in particular: it studies intertextuality by looking at hybridization, negotiation, and appropriation, it critically maps Nepali paintings of the pre and post-50s kinds, and engages in the art criticism of the contemporary works.

To elaborate on the issues mentioned above, the thesis proposition can be presented with a functional claim that contemporary Nepali painting is both intertextual and intergeneric by blurring the boundaries between times and space and the genres like literature, theatre, music, sculpture and photography. Techniques are borrowed from the west, myths and traditions are incorporated from earlier traditions in terms with cross-cultural interflow, and in the visual textual levels, verbal texts are juxtaposed with visual images, photographs are pasted and objects of reality are stuck on the canvas giving the painting three dimensional qualities. Furthermore, sometimes artists execute and exhibit paintings accompanied by poetry recitation, music and performance.

The art works depict heterogeneous elements being intertwined and criss-crossed. The artists neither fully assimilate the alien forms nor wholly reject but mediate them from ambivalent and inbetween spaces. Through negotiation and hybridization of heterogeneous

images and forms, contemporary Nepali painting not only expresses the feelings and emotions of the Nepali artists but also explores the socio-cultural and political issues of contemporary Nepal. Because of the co-presence of heterogeneous images, symbols and forms, the art speaks of the cultural self and the cultural other. These heterogeneous and hybrid art forms are plural and open-ended, and their significance or meanings become contingent and multiple. The identities of these plural and hybrid art forms tell a story of artistic becoming in the present time. In this context one should also mention the fact that a theory of Nepali painting is academic requirement so as to develop terms of reference to identify Nepali art in its exclusiveness. The work aims to look at the potentialities to introduce and discuss such terms by the end of the thesis in way of the implication of the research work.

To exemplify the thesis of the work hitherto being discussed, it would be appropriate to read a couple of contemporary paintings. Shankar Raj Singh Suwal's *Peace* (Fig. 1) and Sabin Prakash Sainju's *Sayaun Thunga Phulaka Hami Eutai Mala Nepali* (Fig. 2) are the works to explain the issue of hybridization, negotiation, and appropriation. Suwal's overtly nationalistic painting *Peace* reveals hybrid intertextuality which appropriates surrealist forms and techniques and also forms and contents of early Nepali arts, Hindu myth, and then reintegrates them into native socio-cultural and nature images. The major image is a person in meditation. In surrealist paintings, the contents of dream and unconscious appear on the canvas with free association of images. The images are condensed and displaced, and sometimes they melt with others as in a dream-like visuality. Such surrealist features can be traced in Suwal's work. The Buddhist imagery at the top and the human structure below melt into a meditating sage. The sage appears to be sitting in *padmasana* (lotus posture) with

vitarkamudra (the gesture of debate) as signified by the position and gesture of his right hand. The body further melts into village cottages, woods and pond. The meditating figure also melts into mountain. There is the constant blurring of images like mountain, meditating sage and stupa. No sooner one image appears than it merges with the other.

The free association of images is another surrealist aspect in *Peace*. Contrary images are juxtaposed in unexpected and unusual manner. When the figure in the foreground appears to be a meditating sage, the top of the stupa sprouts out of his head. The tree which is bigger and taller than the human figure, stupa and mountain, covers all objects below. These images can also be seen as the interplay of coherence and incoherence. When the figure appears to be a meditating sage, the tree at the back appears to be proportionate in the sense that the sage is meditating under the tree. The same image of the tree appears to be disproportionate when the figure appears to be mountain. Likewise the images of woods, cottages and human beings are in proportion when figure in the foreground appears to be mountain, but these images look disbalanced in space when the figure appears to be a meditating sage, for they appear on the body of the sage. Similarly the hand in *vitarkamudra* is realistic when the figure appears to be a sage, but the same image is disproportionate when the figure appears to be a mountain. With the play of absence and presence of the figures like mountain and sage, the images of woods, cottages, hand and the tree become constantly coherent and incoherent, proportionate and disproportionate. Such juxtaposition of images is significantly illustrated by the techniques adopted by surrealism.

This intertextual and hybrid painting has revised, reformulated and reintegrated the recurrent images of the early Nepali arts using surrealist devices. The sage sitting under the tree in *padmasana* with *vitarkamudra* and Buddhist stupa are the familiar local images, and

they are also found in many Nepali manuscript illuminations and *paubhas*. These images are referential in early Nepali paintings whereas they are plural and surrealist in such a contemporary composition. The images of meditating figures and stupas are also the parts of early Nepali sculpture and architecture. The work is intertextual, for it is not only interconnected to the western art form but also to the early Nepali painting, sculpture and architecture.

The work incorporates native socio-cultural images and the images of nature associated with native locations. Typical Nepali cottages and human figures in typical Nepali dresses, and bamboo baskets on their backs, and many such native socio-cultural images, are negotiated and hybridized with western techniques of painting. The artist has appropriated, contextualized and hybridized the western form to give his expression through the images of locality.

The pain and suffering of the meditating sage are suggested by sharp spikes coming out of his abdomen and broken chest, and the color red in this context suggests blood. Furthermore, the image of a flying white bird spreading golden rays is juxtaposed with redness, broken chest and spikes. He experiences the presence of pervasive objects with which his self is placed in association with the objects around.

More importantly the surrealist form is not exploited to depict fragmentation, alienation, disillusionment, as western surrealist arts do, but the negotiated western technique and local theme bring about the theme of meditation and peace. The borrowed images and contents treated with different motive is an example of recontextualization. Thus recontextualization happens due to different purpose. Modern Nepali art is full of such amalgamation where the work represents both the cultural self and the cultural other.

In *Sayaun Thunga Phulaka Hami Eutai Mala Nepali* (*We Nepali, Hundreds of Flowers in a Garland*), Sabin Prakash Sainju (Soham) depicts the themes of unity and national integrity by reconciling various heterogeneous forms and techniques with native Nepali images and western forms. There are figural as well as referential images along with abstractions, verbal and visual texts, painting, photograph, and sculpture. The artist draws a geographical map of Nepal in the middle of the canvas, and the Nepali flag is pasted at the centre. The flag is surrounded by pasted photographs and newspaper cutouts which represent the portraits of various ethnic people of Nepal and their socio-cultural activities. Further, these photographs and newspaper cutouts are connected by the image of a thread created with color giving the impression of a garland of various flowers which encircle the flag. The round shape of the connected images around the flag suggests patriotism, as the flowers are connected in the garland suggesting moralistic tone of coexistence and harmony undercut by violence which is suggested by the color red. Since the color is spread and splashed in all direction, the blood symbolism can easily be noticed.

The artist takes the theme of unity among Nepalis from the national anthem of Nepal. The title of the painting itself is the first line of the national anthem. The artist also imparts the images of threat of disintegration through colors and abstract images. The strong black and red patches of color and abstract images around the map of Nepal are like pressing external forces, suggestive of dominant yellow externality. The map of Nepal in soft colors of light blue and gray is contrasted against strong colors outside the map. The vertical lines which divide the map, the images of blood running over the photographs and newspaper cut outs, and broken threads give a sense of brokenness. The painting tries to illustrate conflicts and social disintegrations of the country just before the restoration of democracy in 2006. To

depict the theme of unity and national integrity, various heterogeneous images and forms are negotiated and hybridized in the composition. First, figural and abstract images are juxtaposed in the same canvas. Furthermore, the visual text is interconnected with verbal text. The first line of national anthem, *Sayaun Thunga Phulaka Hami Eutai Mala Nepali*, is cited as the title of the composition, and the content and theme of the national anthem are represented in visual form creating a complex intertext. The verbal text reinforces the theme of visual text and vice versa. The artist exploits the techniques of sculpture. He creates abstract images using the lumps of colors that rise over the surface of the canvas and project out giving the images three dimensional quality as in the low relief sculpture. In the painting, three dimensionality is the illusion created with the exploitation of light, shade and the smooth gradation of colors but in this composition, three dimensionality is created as in sculpture appealing to the tactile sensation. The work crosses the boundary between sculpture and painting.

The artist thus plays with various techniques of painting like realism, abstractionism, abstract expressionism, and the forms of collage art. The map of Nepal is almost realistic image whereas the spaces filled with various colors around the map create abstract images. The colors are dribbled, dripped, spattered and splashed on the canvas within and around the figural images exploiting abstract expressionist form. Abstract expressionists give emphasis to the process of creation rather than final product. The images and figures are not created with forethought but evolve as process. Chance effects determine the painting rather than pre-planned structure. The colors are handled with spontaneity. The colorful dabs, patches and splashes, and the images of flowing liquid in Soham's composition are not finished but are in the process of composition.

There are more juxtapositions. Since the artist pastes a real flag on the canvas, the work blurs the boundary between real object and the images of art. The artist creates a visual intertext of reality and imagination. The work has interart relationship. A pastiche is created putting together a number of heterogeneous art works of various genres like verbal text of the national anthem, photographs of ethnic communities, three dimensional images as in sculpture and two dimensional images of painting. Western art forms and local contents are intertwined creating intertextual negotiation.

Such reconciliations are significant features of contemporary Nepali paintings which on the one hand, depend on western devices of art, and on the other hand, use native subject matters and forms. Thus three discursive domains come to the fore which have to be explored in detail before explaining and analyzing the paintings in the chapter V. mainly given to interpretation of the works. These domains are early Nepali painting, twentieth century western painting and their techniques, Indian painting in relation to western influences, and its further modalities in contemporary Nepali painting. The remaining part of this chapter discusses these domains in introductory detail. Since contemporary Nepali paintings negotiate with early Nepali paintings and contemporary western paintings, some features of early Nepali paintings and contemporary western paintings will be discussed in some detail. Western influences in contemporary Nepali paintings have come to Nepal directly as well via India. Hence, the impact of western influences in contemporary Indian art will also be introduced briefly along with Indian influence in contemporary Nepali paintings. Furthermore, the concepts of globalization, cultural encounter, negotiation, appropriation, hybridization, postmodernism, intertextuality, inter-arts and cultural identity will also be

critically discussed which are the key terms of reference to elaborate upon the thesis of the work.

Moreover, the question also is how such external influences have come in the formation of contemporary Nepali painting. One of the most important factors that brought such transformation in Nepali art is globalization which ultimately resulted in hybridization of various locations in culture from art to fashion, knowledge to food habits. In the context of painting too globalization has brought inevitable cultural encounters between western and native art forms. The advanced means of transportation and communication facilitated the cross-flow of artists and art products of different socio-cultural space. As a result Nepali artists were exposed to the western art forms and techniques that played significant role in such hybrid intertextual transformations. Exploiting western forms and techniques as tools, Nepali artists read anew and reinterpret the early art forms and revitalize them in contemporary paintings. One important question thus is: before such cultural encounters and the transformation of Nepali painting, what were the characteristics and features of early Nepali art forms?

Nepali paintings until the mid twentieth century are predominantly referential in religio-realistic terms and also everyday worldly ideas and events. They represent the objects, characters and events of the Hindu and Buddhist mythologies and religious texts. These referential paintings can be classified in two types: religious paintings and the paintings of worldly objects and events. Religious paintings represent the characters and events of the mythologies and religious texts. They are narrative, mythical, mystical and didactic. They were created mainly for religious purpose like worshipping, praying and meditating. The artists were dictated by the religious iconography of their times. Other types of early

paintings realistically try to represent the object and events of the world. Some of them are found in the form of portrait, landscape and still life. Despite the difference in subject matter and presentation, both types of painting are ultimately referential.

After the mid twentieth century, one can see transformations in Nepali art in terms of forms and contents. Nepali artists now were exposed to various contemporary western art forms and techniques because of Nepal's cultural openings to India and the west. The influence can be found intense after the end of Rana regimes in 1950s. On the one hand, Nepali artists directly encountered western art forms and techniques through traveling possibilities and later media inter-communicability. In particular, Nepali artists were/are exposed to various western art forms and techniques of modernism like impressionism's fragmented colors, lines, and rough texture, expressionism's distorted colors and figures, cubism's geometric shapes and multiple perspectives, surrealism's dreamlike images, abstractionism's forms, abstract expressionism's emphasis on the process of painting, pop art's images of everyday life, and installation and performance art's intermingling of painting with other genres of art like sculpture, literature, theatre, music and photography. These plural western art forms helped the artists to break away from referential representations providing the opportunity to the artists to express their imagination and personal feelings in the process of creation. At the same time traditional cultural encounters kept on taking place. Then referential native art forms and plural and subjective western art forms interacted, cooperated, and hybridized.

The cultural encounters brought up by globalization, in the initial stage, created local complexity. On the one hand, Nepali artists were attracted toward these plural western art forms and techniques, for they could provide the opportunities to express their inner feelings

and emotions more vividly, they, on the other hand, were keen on using native contents and subject matters. At this critical situation, Nepali artists adopted to rich complexity of forms and contents.

Remaining in the ambivalent inbetween space, contemporary Nepali painting hybridizes western forms and native contents and forms through dialogue, interaction and negotiation. Because of the negotiating attitude of the contemporary Nepali artists toward both western and native art tradition, cultural interplay, cross-overs, compromise and mediations take place. In the process of negotiation and hybridization, a number of strategies are employed: exploitation of western forms and techniques, usage of Hindu and Buddhist mythologies and religious imagery. This is how the traditional native forms and western techniques are appropriated and decontextualized. In the process of appropriation, borrowed forms and techniques are exploited for different purpose in different context. Contents and forms of traditional and folk arts are revised, reinterpreted, rehistoricized, reformulated and reorganized to address the contemporary socio-cultural and political issues. Established cultural icons are subverted and menaced through such usages to question and challenge the hitherto persistent authority and homogeneity.

Furthermore, one can propose that various heterogeneous art forms are put together creating a pastiche in the sense that there is no clear purpose to do such imitation and adaptations. For instance, the techniques of impressionism are still used in Nepal but not with any European avant garde purpose. The imitation is the imitation per se. One visual text intersects the other transgressing the conventional boundaries. The artists reconcile figural and referential images with abstract and non-referential images and forms. Likewise, the art works negotiate referential and realistic images and forms of early Nepali art with

impressionist, expressionist, cubist, surrealist and multiple abstractions. In this sense, contemporary Nepali painting depicts intercultural hybridization, intra-cultural hybridization and appropriation. The works also present the juxtaposition of visual images and verbal texts in the same canvas. The artists create three dimensional images on the canvas. Three dimensionality, especially, is the feature of sculpture. Pasted photographs on the canvas, and other visual images painted over and around them blur the boundary between high art and low art. The artists execute and exhibit paintings accompanied with music, recitation of poems, theatrical performance and installation. Remaining in the dynamism of ambivalent and inbetween space, the artists negotiate, appropriate and hybridize heterogeneous images and art forms giving voice to the cultural self and the cultural other as discussed earlier. Such reconciliation of diverse cultural elements thus has broadened the creative possibilities in the domain of contemporary painting. Such features are discussed to present what the contemporary situation is in the domain of art.

Contemporary Nepali paintings also explore socio-cultural and political issues of present day Nepal. These hybrid art forms subvert homogeneity and authority. Patriarchal values of the Nepali society are questioned, opposed and resisted attempting to redefine and relocate the social position of Nepali women. Some works revolt against socio-political domination, suppression and tyranny appealing for equality, freedom and justice. As Homi K. Bhabha says, hybridity challenges the authority and homogenizing forces from the "in-between" or "Third space" attempting to "elude the politics of polarity" ("Cultural Diversity" 209).

Cultural identities of contemporary Nepali painting are provisional, dynamic, ever shifting and always on the process of becoming. The identities of these hybrid art forms are

constructed and reconstructed in ambivalent and inbetween spaces of local and global influences. They are constantly transformed in relation to context, history and existing power structures of the society. Inbetweenness, ambivalence and hybridity are the dynamisms of contemporary Nepali painting where global and local art forms come together creating a visual intertext with multiple meanings and identities. Keeping such ideas in view contemporary Nepali paintings can be studied in terms of critical negotiation and artistic hybridization.

I introduce in this section some characteristics of early Nepali painting to familiarize the traditions of the past that are brought in and used in the forms and contents in the present times. A study of early Nepali paintings will communicate a sense of past relocated in the present.

The earliest Nepali painting ever found is *Prajnaparamita* illuminated manuscript which is dated 1015. The paintings from this date to 1950 can be generalized in the category of early Nepali paintings. Almost nine hundred years of artistic tradition reveals the creative and perspectival mind of aesthetics and politics of art works instead of generalizing such a long tradition with the artists and the arts.

The early works of art are referential: they represent the contents of the myths and religious texts, and objects and events of the world. These works can be classified in two types: religious paintings and the paintings of the worldly objects and events. Religious paintings are found in the form of manuscript illumination, *paubha*, *pata* and mural. These paintings represent the Buddhist and Hindu deities and their various activities as narrated in the mythologies and religious texts. The artists of these paintings were influenced by the religious tradition and iconography of the time. Such early religious paintings are symbolic,

mystical and didactic, and the paintings of worldly objects and events are realistic.

Prajnaparamita illuminated manuscript is an example of religious painting whereas the portraits of the Rana rulers and the paintings of hunting wild animals in the jungle are the art works of worldly objects and events. Some of them are found in the form of portrait, landscape and still-life. Despite the difference in subject matters and presentations, both types of early paintings are referential.

Religious paintings are symbolic, mystical, anthropomorphic, narrative and didactic, and they attempt to resolve the dualities of individual self and cosmic being, and sacred and profane. About these religious paintings Amita Ray writes:

Without considering religion and philosophy as a foundation, no genuine evaluation can be made of the basic character of Nepali Art. The symbols of art here voice the same truth as philosophy and myth. Like that of India, Nepal has always aimed at achieving a synthesis of the dualities of life. Thus worldliness and spirituality are complementary not antagonistic in Nepali thought. In the same way, perhaps life and art, the religious and secular, even Buddhism and Brahmanism are not separate entities. ("Plastic Art" 10-11)

These paintings are worshipped as images and icons of gods and goddesses. They are mystical, magical and moralistic. Percy Brown writes:

Nepalese artist either elevates the observer by the transcendental nature of his celestial conceptions, or terrorizes him into docility by his suggestions of purgatory. It is an art, therefore, as far as the people themselves are concerned, which inspires awe and veneration more than pleasure and is worshipped rather than admired. (130)

Such religious paintings were the integral part of religio-cultural rituals. The patrons or the devotees worshipped the paintings and prayed in front of the icons of deities. These paintings not only assisted to strengthen the religious feeling of the then viewers but also discouraged to commit sins.

Early Nepali paintings are naturalistically anthropomorphic in the sense that gods and goddesses are “created in the image of man” having both “benign and malevolent” nature “just as each human being is capable of both kindness and anger” (Pal, *Nepal* 12). The “youthful figures” of gods and goddesses always present the “vibrant sap of life” (Ray, “Plastic Art” 14). Serpentine and flexible roundity of figures and luminosity of texture make the human figure lively and youthful.

The miniature illuminations in the manuscripts are the earliest examples of Nepali painting. Both Hindu and Buddhist manuscripts are illuminated. *Prajnaparamita*, *Dharanisamgraha*, *Paramartha Namasangiti*, *Karandavyuha*, *Gandavyuha* and *Pancaraksa* are the illuminated Buddhist manuscripts. *Prajnaparamita* manuscript dated 1054 (Fig. 3) depicts various scenes from Buddha's life, goddess Prajnaparamita, panchabuddhas and various bodhisattvas. Scenes from Buddha's life include Buddha's nativity, meditation under the *bodhi* tree, Mara's temptation and attack, the miracle of Muchalinda (the snake), offering honey to Buddha by monkey, visiting mother after his enlightenment, taming mad elephant and *mahaparinirvana*. These images narrate the story of the Buddha's life.

In the scene of Buddha's nativity, symbolic, mystical and magical elements can be found. In this composition, Buddha emerges from Maya Devi's left hip, immediately takes his first seven steps and stands on the pyramid of lotuses. Even at his birth, Buddha appears to be tall. The depiction of his tall figure and first seven steps even at his birth are mystical

images. Buddha's first seven steps and his standing on the pyramid of lotuses are signs of his spiritual journey from this mundane world to the stage of *nirvana*.

The scene of offering honey to Buddha by a monkey is didactic. In this composition, the monkey offers honey to Buddha and jumps into a well. Because of his altruism and the act of piety, the monkey is released from the chain of death and rebirth, and is flown to the heaven by a cloud. This allegorical narrative scene teaches one of the most important lessons of Buddha's teaching that of kindness, altruism and the act of piety toward others.

The presence of Brahma with a basket of grain and Indra with a fish, in the scene of Buddha's nativity, suggest the religions harmony between Buddhism and Hinduism. After taking his first seven steps, when Buddha stands on the pyramid of lotuses, Brahma and Indra, the Hindu gods welcome him with auspicious omens like grain and fish. Other Buddhist manuscript illuminations also have more or less similar themes and style.

Hindu manuscript illuminations represent the characters, events and objects of Hindu myths like *Bhagavata Mahapurana*, *Shiva Purana*, *Devimahatmya* and Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*. Like Buddhist manuscript illuminations, these illuminations are also mystical, narrative, didactic, anthropomorphic, while merging imagery of Buddhism and Hinduism. On the cover of *Visnudharma* manuscript of eleventh century (Fig. 4), ten incarnations of lord Vishnu have been portrayed. The paintings of these ten incarnations are didactic. Whenever the demons terrorize the earth and heaven, lord Vishnu in the form of various incarnations subdues and destroys them rescuing religious men, women and deities. The incarnations like *Matsya* (fish), *Kurma* (tortoise), *Varaha* (boar), *Narasimha* (half man, half lion) are treated in anthropomorphic manner. Buddha is incorporated in Hindu god's incarnations which suggests the religious harmony.

The *paubha* is painted on clothe, and worshipped as religious icon since it has sacred and ceremonial subject matter. Because of the *paubha's* flexible medium, it can be hung on the wall and stored or carried by rolling them. The *paubha* paintings attempt to resolve the dualities between individual self and cosmic being, and sacred and profane. In the *paubha*, principle deity or deities reside at the centre, and subsidiary deities and other images are around the central figure. These images are depicted with symmetry, balance and visual order.

Many *paubhas* have the structure of *mandala*. *Mandala* is a well-ordered geometric structure which is used as a *yantra* (instrument) for a visual support to assimilate oneself with the divine beings. The visual images in the periphery of the *mandala* lead the viewer toward the centre where the principle deity resides. Stella Kramrisch has such view about *mandala*: "Mandalas are visual support of concentration and meditation, ritual aids on the way toward the center of the cosmos and self. Cosmos and self coincide in the image of central and main divinity of the mandala" (*The Art* 44). Since the self assimilates oneself with cosmic being, there is no duality between the self and the other. In the *paubha* of *Vishnumandala* dated 1420 (Fig. 5) four-armed Vishnu with Laxmi is seated on the lotus at the centre of the *mandala*, and central figures are surrounded by twelve couples representing Vishnu and his Shakti in circular form. These twelve couples are surrounded by another circle with a square. Such geometric visual structure of *Vishnumanda* leads the viewer toward the central divinities, Vishnu and Laxmi, where the individual self merges oneself with the cosmic being. Other *mandalas* like *Amoghapasha Mandala*, *Kalacakra Mandala*, *Navadurga Mandala*, *Chandra Mandala* and *Surya Mandala* have more or less similar structures and themes.

The *paubha* painting of *Nritesvara*, dated 1659 (Fig. 6), dissolves the quality of sacred and profane. Lord Shiva is in sexual union with his Shakti, and they are in rhythmic movement of dance. Other many images reinforce the central motif of the union. The head of Shiva is in the shape of *Shivalinga*, and the top of the shrine is represented by the erect phallus. The lotus and the *vajra* in the hands of deities also symbolize the union, for *vajra* symbolizes male principle and lotus female.

Another type of religious painting is the *pata*, which depicts the stories from religious texts like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, *Devimahatmya*, *Bhagavata Mahapurna* and also the scenes from the Buddha's life. The medium of painting the *pata* is like that of *paubha*, but *pata* is not structured geometrically giving emphasis to the central deity as in *paubha*. It represents narrative pictures on a large horizontal band and sometimes pictures are separated in several segments. The narrative subject matter of painting determines the length of the *pata*. The *pata* is equally sacred and ceremonial like that of manuscript illuminations and *paubhas*.

The murals are painted on the walls of temples and palaces. Subject matter, themes and presentation of the religious murals are like that of manuscript illuminations, *paubhas* and *patas*. The painting, on the walls of the Hanumandhoka palace in Kathmandu, depicts the narrative scenes from *Devimahatmya*. The battle between goddess Durga and Mahisasura (buffalo demon) is represented on the wall. The images like ocean, mountain ridges, clouds, snowy peaks and animals in the paintings create a landscape in the background. The scenes from the *Ramayana* are depicted in the horizontal bands on the walls of Nautaledarbar within Hanumandhoka palace.

Religious paintings like manuscript illuminations, *paubhas*, *patas* and mural represent the images and contents of the mythologies, religious texts and Hindu epics. Some of these paintings incorporate the landscapes in the background and portraits of the donors along the bottom of the paintings but these worldly images are subsidiary to the religious ones.

Breaking away from symbolic, mystical, magical and didactic religious paintings, later eighteenth century onward with the rise of Shah Kings, the artists executed the subject matters of worldly objects and events independently. Portraits gave emphasis to the fine representations of real people. The portraits of the kings, their family members and other higher officials appeared independently without much religious imagery. In these works, every part is well finished in detail through the use of subtle lines and smooth gradation of colors. These features, for example, are present in the portrait of king Girvanyuddhavikram Shah dated 1815 (Fig. 7).

Western media and realistic style heavily influenced the art of portrait painting during the Rana rule from the mid-nineteenth century. Rana Prime ministers, Jung Bahadur and Chandra Sumshere visited Europe, got their portrait executed in western style and brought some western paintings home (Narayan Bahadur Singh, *Samasamaik* 35-36). Both of them took a Nepali artist in their journey to Europe. Since the artists like Bhajuman Chitrakar and Dirghaman Chitrakar, and the rulers were exposed to western art forms and fascinated by them, these rulers made these artists execute the portraits of themselves and their family members in western style. To encourage the Nepali artists in the western style of painting, Chandra Sumshere sent Tej Bahadur Chitrakar and Chandraman Maskey for training in Calcutta where the British India had already established an art school. The art school trained the artists in western styles of art. These artists used imported canvas and western media like

oil color, water color and pestle for their paintings and their style was realistic. The Rana rulers invited even western artists to Nepal to execute their portraits. (N. Singh, *Samasamaik* 40). Other Nepali artists also learnt western techniques of painting from these trained artists and their new works. Pratapaditya Pal evaluates the paintings of the Rana rule: "After the mid-nineteenth century Nepali portraits were rendered entirely in the European tradition" (*The Arts* 132). Breaking away from religious and mystical painting, realistic style of painting and western media entered in the domain of Nepali painting during the Rana rule.

The exposure of Nepali artists and rulers to the western art, importing of western arts, sending artists to India for training and inviting foreign artists to Nepal were the ways how western influences appeared in the Nepali portraits. These portraits exploited western media and realistic style. Simultaneously with portraits, some landscapes, still-life paintings, and scenes of hunting of wild animals were also painted using western media and realistic style especially to decorate the walls and ceilings of theatre and the palaces of the Rana rulers. These paintings also break away from mystical, magical and mythological motifs of religious paintings.

Later eighteenth century onward portraits appeared independently with fine reproduction of the person. After mid-nineteenth century, western media and realistic style influenced the execution of portraits, landscapes, still-life paintings and other types of paintings. More western influences came to Nepal after the end of Rana autocracy in 1950. Many contemporary Nepali artists went to western and Indian cities for art training. Lain Singh Bangdel, Laxman Shrestha and Urmila Upadhyay took art education from Paris. Pramila Giri and Dipak Simkhada went to America for art education. When they returned, they brought western techniques of painting like impressionism, expressionism, fauvism,

abstractionism, cubism, surrealism and abstract expressionism. Some contemporary artists who went to Indian cities for art education are Uttam Nepali, Ramananda Joshi, Shashi Shah, Batsa Gopal Vaidya, Krishna Manandhar, Govinda Dagol, Sudha Manandhar, Madan Chitrakar, Kiran Manandhar, Bijay Thapa, Shankar Raj Singh Suwal and Dipak Simkhada. There are many other artists who went to India for art training and the trend continues. Since India remained British colony until 1947, western art education was already in practice in India. These artists also brought home western influences and some of them became art teachers. In contemporary Nepali painting, western influence not only came directly from the west but also through India.

Contemporary trends in western art have appeared since 1870s. The first artists, who broke away from objective representation of the objects and events of the world, were impressionists like Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edger Degas, Camille Pissarro and Berthe Morisot. Impressionists represented the "impression of thing" on the canvas hastily which they perceived from the object at particular transitory moment (John Canady 182). Since the impression of the thing of that particular moment can change with no time by the change in weather and the intensity of light, the artists attempted to capture the impression hurriedly neglecting fine outline, smooth gradation of colors and well-finished form. They employed the play of light and shade with contrastive colors suggesting "incompleteness" in the figure (182). The artists shattered the "surface of their canvas into thousands of fragmented tints" and painting became "a rough texture of dots and dabs of paint"(183-185). Impressionist paintings appear to be a "bare hint of the forms" because of the "colored patches" created through the use of "rapid strokes" (E. H. Gombrich, *The Story* 409-10). The artist explored the "vibration of light" and practiced "broken color" discarding the soft colors

like gray and brown (Jean Leymare 13). Although impressionist paintings are representations of the objects and events of the world, the representations are not realistically fine, detailed and well-finished like that of earlier western paintings. During the first decade of the twentieth century, cubist paintings created more distance from the paintings of the impressionists. Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque created cubist paintings exploiting the geometric shapes. They broke the linear form of the objects in nature and reduced them to geometrical forms like triangle, square, cylinder, cone, and jagged, crashing and swinging lines. Then the artists loosely joined and reconstructed these shapes suggesting an image. The broken image suggests the depth or the fourth dimension. In the painting, "the fourth dimension is movement in depth or time, or space-time by the simultaneous presentation of multiple aspects of an object" (Canady 456). Rita Gilbert has similar view on cubism:

Cubism is an art of facets, like the facets in a diamond. Forms are flattened into planes, broken apart, and reassembled to make a striking visual (but abstract) reality. We see the same form from different angles simultaneously: top, bottom, side and frontal views may be combined into one image. (469)

Cubist artists also used stencil letters and numbers, and sand particles on their canvas, and sometimes made collage of wood board, fabric, photograph and newspaper cutouts. Since these paintings combined visual images, texts and real objects of the world, they defy the boundary between paintings and photography, visual and textual art, and art and reality.

Simultaneously with cubist movement, expressionist art movement was also taking place during the first decade of the twentieth century. Expressionists like Max Beckmann, Emil Nolde, Kathe Kollwitz and Oskar Kokoschka depicted inner sensations and emotions of troubled, tortured and disillusioned mind with free distortion of images and colors. These

distorted forms suggest the poverty, slum, misery, misfortune, violence and brutality of the contemporary world. Distorted images and the colors are the "inner responses to external reality" (Canady 430). Abnormal and anxiety ridden state of mind gets expression in moody, restless, harsh or abrupt lines, bold and stormy colors, and horrifying images.

Unconventionality of subject matter, frightening quality of formal and coloristic distortions, and intense mysticism and sense of impending doom represent against the brutality of earthly existence, and these paintings may be seen as an effort both to escape and to protest it.

Distancing from objective and purely representational paintings, expressionist paintings move toward subjectivism and abstract images and colors.

In contrast to expressionist's depiction of negative and pessimistic outlook toward scientific, mechanical and industrial society, futurist paintings glorified science and technology and celebrated the power and speed of the machine from 1909. Futurists exploited the geometric forms to depict mechanical shapes. They depicted the images of robot, automobile and industry with the view that technology can bring dramatic change and progress in the society. Giacomo Balla, Joseph Stella and Umberto Boccioni's futurist paintings celebrate the speed and dynamism of the automobiles and the majesty of the modern machine.

With the outbreak of World War I, the enthusiastic and optimistic outlook of futurists toward machine was shattered. Then in 1916, dadaist paintings attacked and mocked the western civilization including politics, literature and art which was responsible to bring misery, bloodshed, death and tragedy. They questioned and undermined the value of western arts. They reproduced, mocked and made fun of most cherished western art forms by distorting them adding their own images and colors in the reproduction. Although dadaists

did not develop their particular painting techniques, they discarded all the early conventions of painting.

The abstract painting, during late 1910s, finally disconnects itself from the objects, and then forms and colors do not become the means but ends in themselves. Abstracted form is "significant not because it informs about our world but because the form is its own significance" (F. David Martin et al. 75). Since the abstract forms do not represent the objects and events of the world conventionally, one need not think about past and future to associate the images, and they become "timeless within time" (82). Rhythmic lines and colors, in abstract painting, create the "lyricism of music" (Matthews et al. 533). In 1924, the images of the objects and events reappeared in paintings with surrealist movement.

Surrealist paintings exploited strange and seemingly unrelated images with free association as in dream, hallucination and fantasy. They violated standard morality, logical reason and artistic conventions and revolted against any restraint on free creativity. Surrealists were inspired by Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis that human personality is determined by unconscious mind, and conscious mind plays a minor role in it. They gave emphasis to the artistic automatism that the contents of the dreams and unconscious should be directly transposed on the canvas without any obstacle. According to Herbert Read, the world of the unconscious mind as depicted on the canvas is a "world more real than the normal world" (120). Some surrealist artists are Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Joan Miro, Frida Kahlo and Rene Magritte. Around 1950s, combining some techniques of surrealism, abstractionism and expressionism, some artists created abstract expressionist paintings.

Abstract expressionists borrowed the concept of artistic automatism from surrealism, concept of abstract form from abstract painting and concept of expressing inner sensation and emotion from expressionism. They handled colors vehemently and freely. Sometimes, they put the huge canvas on the floor and applied paint through spotting, spattering, dribbling, puddling and pouring. Chance effects determine the painting rather than pre-planned structure. They painted through "randomness" and "spontaneity" (Matthew et al. 593). Abstract expressionists gave emphasis on the process of painting rather than the finished final product. These paintings have dynamic, violent, interweaving and criss-cross lines, colors and images on the canvas. Some abstract expressionists are Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Willem de Kooning.

In 1960s, pop art movement not only attacked abstract expressionist paintings but also earlier nonrealistic arts like cubist, expressionist, abstract and surrealist, and their philosophic, spiritual and metaphysical project. Pop art drew its subject matter from daily life of common people, mass-produced culture, media, advertising and consumer society. Pop art celebrated "post-war consumerism" and worshipped the "god of materialism" (Beckett 380). It incorporated photographs, text and real objects in painting. Coke bottles, soup cans, cream pies, hamburgers, supermarket, hoarding board and photographs of celebrities are familiar images in pop art. It erodes the gulf between high art and low art, for photography, a form of low art and painting, a form of high art are combined. Since some of these paintings are three dimensional, pop art crosses the boundary of painting and sculpture. Some pop arts are intertextual, for they reproduced the earlier paintings and made the collage of them. Pop art also erodes the boundary between life and art, for it uses the real objects of

the world. Some pop artists are Robert Rauschenberg, Noel Mahffey, Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein.

During 1970s, inter-art relationship was more vehemently explored in installation and performance arts. In these arts, the techniques of paintings, sculpture, photography, theatre, film, literature and music are combined. Simultaneously texts are recited and performance is presented by the artist. Other media are exploited to reinforce the performance of the artist. Sometimes several people including audience participate in the performance. They are heterogeneous and interactive art forms. They include interpersonal and intercommunity relationship, and blur the boundary between art and reality. Keith Haring, Jennifer Bartlett and Laurie Anderson are renowned installation and performance artists.

Contemporary western paintings are not objective and referential but subjective and expressive. Various types of contemporary western paintings have different techniques of expression. Impressionist paintings record the impressions of the things as perceived by the artist. Expressionists depict tortured and troubled feelings using distorted images and colors. Cubists explore fourth dimension using geometric shapes. Futurists glorified the machine and technology exploiting cubist forms. Dadaists attempt to dismantle the western civilization including art using unconventional forms. Abstract paintings disconnect the paintings from images of objects and events. Surrealists use the contents of dream and unconscious through psychic automatism. Abstract expressionists give emphasis to the process of painting rather than finished product and create the open-ended art form. Pop arts use the images of mass culture and materials of daily life. Performance and installation arts combine the painting, sculpture, photography, theatre, literature and music, and even the elements of reality. Contemporary western paintings are heterogeneous, open-ended and

plural. These western art forms not only directly influence the contemporary Nepali painting but also through India. Since India remained British colony until 1947, these western art techniques were taught in Indian art schools. Many contemporary Nepali artists went to Indian art schools and are still going for art education. Thus, now, contemporary Indian painting will be studied briefly in terms of western influence and the response of India art.

Contemporary Indian painting treats Indian subject matters and themes with the dominant use of western techniques of painting. It takes its subject matters from Indian mythologies, folk and pop culture, and contemporary socio-political life of India. After the establishment of British colonial rule in India, Indian painting had to cross a number of stages to come to the contemporary forms like forceful implementation of western education, imitation of the western art, degeneration of Indian art, resistance of the western style and finally incorporating the western techniques in contemporary Indian painting.

British colonizers implemented western education in India to create western taste among Indians and subdue the revolting spirit of people. British colonizer's such project echoes with the words of Sir Charles Trevelyan:

The only means at our disposal for preventing revolution is to set the natives on a process of European improvement. They will then cease to desire and aim at independence on the old Indian footing. The national activity will be fully and harmlessly employed in acquiring and naturalizing European constitutions (qtd. in Archer 18).

As a part of this project the colonizers established art schools in India during the later half of the nineteenth century. These art schools taught western styles of art and encouraged the Indian artists to reproduce western forms. Then Indian art followed "a path of decline and

finally degenerated into soulless skill of artisans only" (B. C. Sanyal "Panorama" 29). The art products of these newly trained artists appeared to be "mediocre and kitsch" (Rupika Chawla 33). This process of degeneration continued throughout the nineteenth century.

In the first decade of the twentieth century some Indian artists questioned, resisted and opposed the western influence and struggled for the revival of the traditions of Indian art. The artists of the Bengal School of Art including Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose, regularly published their ideas in *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, which worked as the oppositional discourse against the western domination. The artists of this school were inspired by Indian mythologies and traditional arts. They also painted the narrative scenes from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. Although the movement ran successfully for two decades, some artists were tired of stereotyped, repeated and fixed patterns of their arts. The "monotony and the lack of vitality" of their arts drove the young artists "almost to despair" (Ajit Mookerjee 14). Bengal school made the Indian artists conscious about their glorious past but did not make any breakthrough.

Finally, in 1920s contemporary Indian artists denied any limitation on the process of creation and freely exploited the western techniques of painting to create their paintings. They thought that creative impulses should not be smothered in the name of tradition. Poet-painter Rabindranath Tagore criticized the trends of Bengal school:

When in the name of Indian art, we cultivate, with deliberate aggressiveness a certain bigotry born out of the habit of a past generation, we smother our souls under idiosyncrasies unearthed from buried centuries. These are like masks with exaggerated grimaces, that fail to respond to the ever-changing play of life (qtd. in Anand 6).

Tagore discarded any boundary and limitation in the process of creation. Subjectivity and the working of unconscious are apparent in his paintings. He was influenced by the expressionist, cubist, surrealist and abstract paintings. Angular forms, beaky noses and harsh lines in his paintings are the responses to the horror and cruelty of life and world. His shapes, lines and colors echo to the western artists like Edvard Munch, Pablo Picasso and Paul Klee.

Other contemporary artists also exploited western forms for native contents in their paintings. Jamini Roy used western techniques for his subject matters of myths, primitive and folk culture of India. Amrita Sher-Gil, who studied art in France, exploited western techniques to express the Indian rural life. S. K. Bhattacharya says that her paintings are "rooted in the matrix of India, in its ethos and imagery" but "modern in its execution with a contemporary awareness" (101). Bhupen Khakar exploited surrealist techniques and depicted the life of insignificant men and women with "personal fantasies and dream images" (Geeti Sen, "Subverting" 139). Arpita Singh used collage on fabric and explored the melancholic life of Indian women. Influenced by pop art, Saroj Pal incorporated the images of television, magazine, comic books, hording boards, toothpaste and washing machine. Vivan Sundaram used metal, engine oil and perspex in his three dimensional paintings. Performance artist, Rummana Hussain created heterogeneous art form incorporating painted images, photographs, textual narration and physical performance, and expressed the fear, pain and suffering of minority race in India. Contemporary Indian artists exploit western styles of painting to their native subject matters and themes, and treat mythological and socio-cultural images with different significance.

Contemporary Nepali artists, who came to India for art education, were influenced by these western and Indian styles of painting. Because of globalization, western forms of painting influenced not only these trained artists but also other contemporary Nepali artists.

Science and technology brought dramatic change in the field of transportation and communication. Advanced means of transportation and communication intensified globalization, and globalization brought cultural encounters in the contact zone. Advanced means of communication like telephone, facsimile and electronic mail interconnected innumerable individuals and institutions around the world, made the information flow efficient and fast, and brought the cultural encounters among the people of various cultural background. Distant socio-cultural images invaded the rooms of many individuals through satellite television and computer network.

Advanced means of transportation and communication boosted the transnational corporations, international organizations, educational and cultural exchange programs, tourism industries and migration. This created the environment for the cross-flow of individuals around the world and brought the cultural encounters. Using communication network, migrant workers and diasporas create virtual neighborhood among themselves and with the people of their native country, and ultimately influence the socio-cultural activities in the native land. Globalization has brought the situation of "time-space compression" (David Harvey 137). Nation-states are unable to control the cross-flow of information and cultural products. Anthony McGrew defines globalization:

Globalization refers to the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcends the nation-states (and by implication the societies) which make up the modern world system. It defines a process through which events,

decisions, and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe. Nowadays, goods, capital, people, knowledge, images, communications, crime, pollutants, drugs, fashions, and beliefs all readily flow across territorial boundaries. Transnational networks, social movements, and the relations are extensive in virtually all areas of human activities from academic to sexual. (470)

Globalization generates cultural encounters, contradictions and contestations, and creates tension between homogeneity and heterogeneity. Globalization "unities and separates creates similarity and difference" in many aspects of reality and creates the problem of identity (Frank J. Lechner and John Boli 320). Out of these cultural encounters and contradictions, each individual is compelled to redefine and reconstruct one's particular place.

Cultural encounters, contradictions and differentiations give way to dialogue debate, interaction and negotiation between local and global cultural images on the process of reconstructing identity in the locality. Reconstructing identity is a process of "making local sense of the collision" (Lechner and Boli 320). Being located at the ambivalent and in-between space, the artists revise, reread, rehistoricize and reinterpret both global and local images. On the process of negotiation, boundary between alien and native images blurs, and cultural interplay, "criss-cross and cross-over" takes place with fluctuating movement (Nederveen Pieterse 55). The native artists appropriate and decontextualize alien forms. On the process of appropriation, borrowed forms and techniques are exploited for different purpose in different context. Native artist "subverts and menaces" the authority of alien forms through irony, "mimicry and parody" (Gareth Griffiths, "Authenticity" 240). Alien forms or

contents are sometimes reproduced and cited, and criticized, mocked and challenged. Such activity creates distance between the significance of the source art form from which they borrow and the significance of newly created art form. The artists also recycle, reformulate, reorganize and hybridize native and alien images through dialogue, negotiation and compromise. Such art works incorporate the images of myths and traditional arts with different significance in different context.

Hybrid art forms are heterogeneous, ambivalent and open-ended. Such art works merge and intertwine local and global or native and alien images creating a *mélange*. Furthermore, they re-negotiate and re-integrate the forthcoming cultural images. Hybridity subverts homogeneity and authority as Pieterse writes:

Hybridity unsettles the introverted concept of culture which underlies romantic nationalism, racism, ethnicism, religious revivalism, civilizational chauvinism, and culturalist essentialism. Hybridization, then, is a perspective that is meaningful as a counterweight to the introverted notion of culture the emergence of new practices of social co-operation and competition, and cultural hybridization, or new translocal cultural expressions, are interdependent: new forms of co-operation require and evoke new cultural imaginaries. Hybridization is a contribution to a sociology of the in-between, a sociology from the interstices. This involves merging endogenous/exogenous understanding of culture (64).

Unifying and homogenizing forces of nationalism, ethnicism and racism are untenable.

Hybridity challenges these forces from the "in-between" or "Third space" from where "we

may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the other of our selves" (Bhabha 209). In hybrid arts, locating others, artist locates oneself.

Arts and cultures are not pure and monolithic but hybrid, heterogeneous and interconnected. Cultures are not found in fixed and original form but constructed in ambivalent space through appropriation and negotiation of available various cultures. Bhabha writes:

[C]ultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable. . . . meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew (208).

As no culture is pure and original, art works also share the images of distant cultures.

Western artist Henri Matisse, for instance, was heavily influenced by Arabian, Moroccan and African costumes and cultures (Jacques Lassaigne 95). In his paintings, he was "fond of having pretty and young women pose in Moorish costumes and turban like headdress" (95).

Likewise, Japanese print influenced many impressionist and postimpressionist artists. About the influence of Japanese print on western painting Nederveen Pieterse writes:

An episode that can serve to probe this more deeply is the influence of Japanese art on European painting. The impact of Japanese is well known: it inspired impressionism which in turn set the stage for modernism. The color woodcuts that made such a profound impression on Seurat, Monet, Van Gogh, Toulouse Lautrec, Whistler belonged to the Ukiyou-e school- a bourgeoisie

genre that flourished in Japan between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. (60)

Local technique of Japanese print was globalized through impressionist and postimpressionist paintings.

The renown cubist artist Pablo Picasso also shared the images of African sculptures (Graham Reynolds 7). According to R. A. Jairazbhoy, Greek geometric art and the art of floor mosaic were "transmitted to Greece from the orient" (16). Some western paintings have incorporated Arabic inscriptions on the costumes and robes of the human figures (78). About heterogeneous and hybrid nature of culture Edward Said says:

The history of cultures is the history of cultural borrowings. Cultures are not impermeable; just as western science borrowed from Arabs, they had borrowed from India and Greece. Culture is never just a matter of ownership, of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of appropriations, common experiences and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures. (*Culture* 261-62)

Through negotiation and hybridization local art can be globalized. Impressionist paintings incorporated Japanese printing techniques. Then Japanese printing technique was globalized simultaneously with impressionism. Reggae, hip-hop, rap and Jazz music, once popular among lower class and black communities were negotiated and hybridized with western music and became globalized.

Hybrid and heterogeneous art forms are intertextual for they are interconnected with other works. Earlier art forms are revised, read anew, rehistoricized, reinterpreted and reintegrated. Marcel Duchamp's painting *L.H.O.O.Q.* (Fig. 8) is connected with Leo

Nardoda's *Mona Lisa*, for Duchamp reproduced *Mona Lisa*, drew mustache and made fun of one of the most cherished western arts. Paintings are not only inter-connected with paintings but also the verbal texts. According to Roland Barthes, a text is a "multi-dimensional space" where several texts are "married and contested" (1132). A text consists of "a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture" (1132). A text is interconnected to other many texts. Earlier poems influence the poems of contemporary time. According to Harold Bloom, "a poem is a response to a poem". To create one's identity, new poet must "misinterpret the father [from whom the new poet is influenced], by the crucial act of misprision, which is the rewriting of the father" (247). New poet rereads, reinterprets and rewrites the earlier poem. In Umberto Eco's words: "works are created by works, texts are created by texts" (447). Thus art works are always intertextual generically and beyond genres, from disciplines to disciplines.

Hybrid art works create interart relationship blurring the boundaries between various art genres like painting, sculpture, literature, theatre, music and photography. Poems and other texts create visual picture through verbal medium. A text is the "verbal reproduction of pictorial rhetoric" (Stephen Melville et al. 8). Close affinity between writing and painting can be seen in Montaigne's lines from his "Essay 28", where he uses word "paint" for "write": "I do not paint being. I paint its transition: not a transition from one age to another . . . but from day to day, from minute to minute" (qtd. in Louis Marian 213). Likewise, some other renown writers attempt to associate their verbal works with visual picture. Cleanth Brook, for instance, entitles his critical work as *The Well-wrought Urn*. Similarly, James Joyce names his novel as *A Portrait of Artist as a Young Man*. Moreover, concrete poems create graphic pictures using verbal medium. Such poem is not only verbal art but also visual. In art works,

there is the "heterogeneous co-presence" of vision and textuality (Melville et al. 20). Thus, some art works transgress the boundary between various art forms.

Paintings create musical effect with their rhythmic colors, lines and brush strokes. Piet Mondrian, for instance, creates auditory effect not only through his painting but also from the title of his painting *Broadway Boogie-woogie* (Fig. 9). About the importance of rhythm in every form of art, poet painter Rabindranath Tagore says:

My pictures are my versification in lines The only training which I had in my young days was the training in rhythm, the rhythm in thought, the rhythm in sound, one thing which is common to all arts is the principle of rhythm which transforms inert materials into living creations (qtd. in Archer 50-51).

Tagore agrees that there is rhythm in his paintings as in his poems. Similarly, F. David Martin et al. compare the rhythm of abstract painting with "frozen music" (81). Thus, paintings share the elements of poetry and music.

Visual images not only create auditory impressions but also tactile. E. H. Gombrich shows interrelationships among visual, auditory and tactile sensations perceived from the colors and images:

We speak of loud colours or of bright sounds, and everyone knows what we mean. Nor are the ear and the eye the only senses that are thus converging to a common center. There is touch in such terms as *velvety voice and a cold light*, taste with sweet harmonies of colours or sounds, and so on through countless permutations. ("From Representation to Expression" 1085)

Artists can exploit the colors to create the musical, tactile and olfactory sensations. The images and colors can be descriptive, narrative, meditative and dramatic. Depicting the

relationship among language, music and painting, Paul De Man says that we should "recognize the necessity of a non-perceptual, linguistic moment in painting and in music, and learn to read pictures rather than to imagine meaning" (362). Paintings can also be read as verbal art.

Three dimensional features of some contemporary paintings break the boundary between painting and sculpture. Pop artists, for instance, paste collage, and stick things of daily life like glass, wood, electric light bulbs, neon lights, wire and so on in the canvas. As a result the painting becomes three dimensional which is the characteristic of sculpture. Marisol's art *Women and Dog* (Fig. 10), for example, is a combination of plaster, wood, synthetic and polymer paint. The artist makes the "collage of mixed media" (Florence Margaret Daniels 108). Contemporary art forms are hybrid, and do not "fit into a preconceived early-century concept of either a painting or sculpture" (46). The art works transgress the boundaries among various art genres.

Performance art ignores artistic boundaries by mixing painting, music, text, film and theatrical performance. Music, painting, photograph and text reinforce the expression of the performing artist. All these art forms are simultaneously presented creating a hybrid form. In such postmodern art, there is the "coexistence" of "high and so-called mass culture" (Jameson 382). *Empty Places* and *The Wizard of Oz* by Laurie Anderson are the examples of performance art.

Hybrid art works are intertextual and intergeneric, for they are interconnected with earlier paintings, share techniques of other art genres like sculpture, literature, music, photography, theatre and film, and negotiate and compromise with alien art forms. Since

these art works are heterogeneous, openended and plural, their meanings are not certain and transcendental but contingent, relative and provisional.

Hybridity, intertextuality, openendedness, plurality and contingency are also the characteristics and features of postmodern art forms. Postmodern arts become hybrid and intertextual by recycling the myths and reintegrating the earlier art forms. John Carlos Rowe says, "Postmoderns became adept at recycling familiar myths, often in order to recall us to the mythopoetic sources of all human experience" (186). They "revitalize traditional texts with an *intertextuality*" (186). Furthermore, postmodern works present the "creative appropriation of tradition" (Gerard Delanty 154). The "two antithetical traditions of the 'classical' and the 'popular' once again begin to merge" (Fredric Jameson 385). The "complacent play of historical allusion and stylistic pastiche" are the features of postmodernism (375).

Postmodern work does not strictly follow the rules of a particular genre of art. It shares the media and techniques of other art genres. The work "blurs genres, transgresses them, or unfixes boundaries that conceal domination or authority" (Ralph Cohen 293). Such works are "multigeneric" having inter-art relationship (Rowe 186). They are not governed by the preestablished rules and cannot be judged on the basis of them. Rather they attempt to formulate their own rules in the work. Jean-Francois Lyotard writes:

A postmodernist artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. (81)

Since postmodern artists invent new techniques and idiom for their expression by discarding the old ones, their works are experimental.

Postmodern art incorporates socio-cultural and political images and issues of contemporary society. Gerard Delanty says that such art work "is no longer confined to the aesthetic but includes the wider category of the social, or everyday life" (133). Socio-cultural images and political themes are intertwined. According to Fredric Jameson, all cultural products have political significance. Jameson writes:

Freud's delight at discovering an obscure tribal culture, which alone among the multitudinous traditions of dream-analysis on the earth had managed to hit on the notion that all dreams had hidden sexual meanings-except for sexual dreams, which meant something else! So also it would seem in the postmodernist debate, and the depoliticized bureaucratic society to which it corresponds, where all seemingly cultural positions turn out to be symbolic forms of political moralizing, except for the single overtly political note, which suggests a slippage from politics back into culture again. (383)

There is nothing purely cultural, but politics comes along with cultural images.

The significance of postmodern art form is contingent, provisional and open-ended. Such art form "defers any final answer, implying that all answers are relative and provisional" (Leah Wain 4). It "suspends answers and defers completion, though it does not ignore the possibility" (2). What the work of art functions with provisionally is more important than what it means. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write:

We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in

connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed . . . (4).

Such features of postmodernism are also found in hybrid art forms. Since the hybrid art forms are heterogeneous, openended and plural, the question of cultural identity arises regarding these works.

In hybrid art forms, cultural identity is not found in transparent and fixed form but constructed out of heterogeneous cultural images through negotiation and appropriation. The constructed identity is not certain, transcendental and universal but contingent, plural, provisional and ever shifting. Globalization has created cultural encounter among heterogeneous cultural images. On the process of constructing identity, dialogue, debate, interaction and compromise take place among these heterogeneous cultural images. Translation, "negotiation" and "dialectical reorganization" of heterogeneous elements bring the cultural change with a "hybrid identity" (Bhabha 208-9). This activity creates the "networks of interaction-spatial and transterritorial or global" (Barrie Axford 153). Both alien and native cultural images are recycled, revised, re-read, re-interpreted and rehistoricised. Remaining at the ambivalent and in-between space these heterogeneous cultural images are negotiated and hybridized. Revised and re-integrated cultural images are treated with irony, mimicry and parody. Globalization, cultural encounters and negotiation give rise to the "cultural hybridization and multiple identities" (Pieterse 56). Out of the confluence of "heterogeneous" and "carnavalesque" cultural image, "plural identity" is constructed (Julia Kristeva, "Identity" 1166-67).

Identity is not pure and concrete but hybrid, plural and relative to the time and place. Art and culture are created in particular place and time, and identity is always positioned in

context. According to Kwame Anthony Appiah, "identities are complex and multiple and grow out of history of changing responses to economic, political and cultural forces" (227). With the departure of existing cultural images and the arrival of different cultural images in the particular context, identity is reconstructed provisionally and always remains on process. About the historicity and contingency of cultural identity, Stuart Hall says:

Cultural identity . . . is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past, It is not something which already exist, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentials past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power far from being grounded in mere 'recovery' of the past, which waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves (112).

Identity is not a fixed essence which can be brought back from a fixed cultural origin. But it can be constructed out of the dialogue and negotiation with existing economic, political and heterogeneous cultural matrix. Identity is always on the process of becoming, for this provisional identity is renegotiated and rehybridized with forthcoming cultural images. Thus, identities of hybrid art forms are not fixed and universal but contingent, plural and provisional.

As I have already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, contemporary Nepali painting hybridizes western techniques, and native contents and forms through dialogue,

negotiation and appropriation. It reinterprets and reformulates the images, symbols and forms of early painting using western techniques as tools. As the thesis statement is analyzed, one finds the four constituents- contemporary Nepali painting, early Nepali painting, western form, and hybridity. Chapter I., first, elaborates the thesis and supports it by interpreting and analyzing the two works of art. Second, it introduces those four constituents of the thesis briefly. Despite the fact that the term 'Indian painting' painting does not appear in the thesis statement, the chapter introduces the characteristics and features of contemporary Indian painting, for the western influence, mainly, enters Nepal via India. The way how Indian painting responded and adopted alien forms impacts Nepali artist. Third, the chapter explores in detail the terms of reference related to hybridity like globalization, cultural encounter, intertextuality, interart, postmodernism and cultural identity.

Since the thesis states that contemporary Nepali painting shares the contents and forms of early Nepali painting, the question arises, what are the contents and forms of early art? Chapter II. answers this question in detail exploring the various types of early Nepali painting, their subject matters, techniques and recurrent themes. Nepali artists exploit the western techniques as tools to express the native contents. One may ask, which western techniques do they use? And what are the features of these techniques? The first part of the chapter III. answers these questions by exploring the characteristics and features of some western art techniques that the Nepali artists share. The second part deals about the evolution of contemporary Indian painting in response to western forms and their general features, for, as I have mentioned earlier, contemporary Nepali art shares the way how the Indian paintings incorporated the western forms.

Now the work remained is the study of the contemporary art works. Before analyzing and interpreting the works, it would be more informed discourse, if the available critiques of the contemporary Nepali paintings were explored. Thus, chapter IV. studies the artists and their art works from the perspective of the critics. Chapter V. supports the thesis by tracing the forms and contents of the early arts, and western techniques in the contemporary painting. Furthermore, the chapter interprets and analyzes individual art works of representative artists in terms of intertextuality, interart, gender and identity, religio-cultural images and socio-political concerns. Finally, chapter VI. concludes the whole works.

Methodology

The research uses both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include most of the Nepali paintings both early and contemporary. A number of art galleries and museums were visited to study the art works and take photographs for documentation. I could not have the first hand experience of viewing western and Indian paintings, for I was unable to visit the places where these art works are located. For this reason, the photographs of these art works were taken from books. Defining the terms of reference like intertextuality, interart, postmodernism and cultural identity, the study depends on the books and articles on art and literary theories. The study of western and Indian paintings also depends on secondary sources like books of art history. The critics' views on contemporary Nepali paintings are taken mostly from exhibition catalogues and newspaper articles as the books and scholarly journals on contemporary Nepali art are not available. Since the page numbers do not appear in most of the catalogues, the name of the critic and the title of the exhibition catalogue or the title of the article that appears in the catalogue are mentioned in the thesis text, and the details of the catalogue appear in the works cited. As this research is qualitative

(not quantitative), it does not claim to solve any concrete problem, and does not put forward any recommendations but analyzes and interprets the individual art works to create the discourse of contemporary Nepali painting. For documentation, the study follows the MLA format as far as practicable.

II. Tracing Early Nepali Paintings

Chapter I. has stated the thesis, elaborated it and traced the native forms and contents, and western techniques to support the thesis by analyzing and interpreting the two contemporary Nepali works. Besides, the chapter has briefly introduced early Nepali painting, and contemporary Indian and western art, and defined the terms like globalization, cultural encounter, hybridity, postmodernism, intertextuality, interart and cultural identity. As the thesis states, contemporary Nepali painting revises and reformulates the images, symbols and forms of early Nepali painting, this chapter hence elaborately discusses the types, and characteristics and features of the early art, which facilitates to trace the early elements in contemporary works while interpreting them in chapter V.

Contemporary Nepali paintings read anew, reinterpret and reintegrate early Nepali paintings. The artists appropriate, rehistoricise and reorganize the forms and contents of these early works to address the issues of contemporary times. They revitalize conventional subject matters, symbols and images exploiting new forms whereas they depict contemporary themes and issues using slightly distorted and altered traditional forms. Traditional symbols and images not only appear with new strength but also the artists recycle them using parody and irony. Sometimes, these contemporary works question, challenge and subvert the authority and the unity of early art forms. Contemporary Nepali painting thus does not totally break away from its traditional root but extends and widens its horizon to give expression to the social and geo-political issues of contemporary Nepal. Since early Nepali painting is the thematic part of the contemporary works, the forms, contents and significance of these early works needs considerable discussion.

The earliest Nepali painting ever found is from the eleventh century, though viewing the fine sculptures of the fifth century, it can be said that Nepali painting developed even earlier simultaneously with the beginning of the observation of cultural rituals. Early Nepali paintings exist as a part of cultural rituals, and in the form of manuscript illumination, *paubha*, *pata*, mural, portraits, landscape and still-life. These works are representations of the mythologies, and objects and events of the world. They refer to the characters, events, symbols and images of Hindu and Buddhist mythologies and religious texts, and objects, images, events and the people of the external world. Religious paintings are didactic, mystical, magical and symbolic whereas the paintings of the worldly objects and events are less moralistic. Some religious paintings incorporate the portraits of the donors at the bottom of the paintings, and landscapes in the background. However, these portraits and the landscapes play only subsidiary role in the overall organization of the painting.

Because of the socio-cultural and geographical proximity, early Nepali paintings have been mainly influenced by the Indian paintings like that of Ajanta, Pala, Mughal, Rajput and Pahari paintings. After the seventeenth century, Tibetan paintings also influenced Nepali paintings particularly the *paubhas*. Buddhist monks and nuns shifted to Nepal and then to Tibet, for they lost the patronage of the courts during the Muslim rule in India. By the seventeenth century, Tibet appeared as the centre of Buddhist religion and art. The trade between Kathmandu valley and Tibet also brought the criss-crossing of people. With the cross-flow of businessmen, pilgrims and artists, Tibetan influence appeared in Nepali *paubha*. From the later nineteenth century onwards, paintings of the worldly objects and events were influenced by the western media and realistic style due to the British colonialism in Indian subcontinent. Although there are Indian, Tibetan and western influences, Nepali

artists tested, filtered and incorporated these influences to suit their purpose, finally developing Nepali idiom in their works.

I will discuss religious paintings categorizing them in types: the paintings created on the process of observing the cultural rituals (unpreserved), and the preserved ones like manuscript illumination, *pata*, *paubha* and mural. Devotees, patrons or priests created the paintings of the first type while observing the rituals and wiped out or cleared them with the end of the ceremony. Furthermore, they create the paintings on floor where they observe the rituals with no intention to preserve them. The process of creation and destruction continues as the rituals and ceremonies come and go. The religious paintings executed on the process of observing the rituals are anthropomorphic, symbolic and mystical, and have inter-art relationship. Such paintings are found in relation to Hindu cultural rituals like naming ceremony, *Bratabandha* (a ceremony when young Brahmin boys put on sacred thread and learn *mantra* from their *guru*), wedding, worshiping of gods and goddesses, and in annual festivals like *Vijaya Dashami*, *Dipawali*, *Laxmi Puja*, *Gobardhana Puja*, *Tulasi Bibaha* (wedding of sacred plant) and other many festivals.

Although these cultural ceremonies and festivals have their own specific purposes, people initiate them with similar rituals. The ground on which the ceremony is observed is swept cleanly and wiped with the mixture of cow dung and water. They create square-shaped *mandala* by installing auspicious plants like *sal*, *painyu* and banana in the four corners, and link them with the help of colorful threads and garlands. The patrons paint the stems of these plants with various colors and in different patterns. The priest paints other four small *mandalas* within the *mandala* with *rekhi* (powder made of crushed rice) creating the images

of geometric shapes like circle, square and triangle with defined centers. While painting these *mandalas*, the priest recites from the scriptures.

In these four painted *mandalas*, the priest installs the images of the four major gods- *Agni* (fire), Ganesha (son of lord Shiva), *Kalasa* (the metal vase full of water) and *Deepa* (lamp) one after the other. *Agni* is installed at the centre of the square-shaped large *mandala* while the other gods are installed around *Agni*. The priest recites from the scriptures during the action. The worshipping is accompanied by the music of conch shell and bell. The priest and the patrons offer butter, sugar and rice into the fire, which produces incense bearing smoke. According to mythology, such smoke brings the rain.

The installed gods have symbolic value. *Agni* is the symbol of purity which purifies the sins. Ganesha is believed to avoid obstacles. *Kalasa* is the symbol of life. And *Deepa* is the symbol of light, knowledge and wisdom which destroys darkness and ignorance.

In the ritual, physical things like fire, vase of water and lamp are personified as gods, and the gods are given anthropomorphic attributes. The gods are given place creating specific painted *mandalas* and offered clothes, flowers, fruit and *tika* to make them happy and finally to achieve their blessing and help patrons achieve their goals.

The elements of various art forms are unconsciously intermingled in the ritual: installation of plants, painting of their stems, linking them with colorful threads and garlands, painting *mandalas*, installation of gods, recitation of scriptures, offering of flowers, fruit and *tika* to the gods, offering butter, sugar and rice into the fire and creating music using conch shell and bell, and so on. Thus such cultural rituals have interart relationship.

In the annual ritual of *Tulasi Bibaha* (wedding ceremony of *Tulasi*), the wedding of *Tulasi* is conducted along with the rituals mentioned above. Religious minded Nepalis grow

Tulasi plant on *matha* (square or round shaped elevated structure made of mud and stones). According to *Shree Swasthani Bratakatha*, *Tulasi* is a favorite thing of Lord Vishnu. On the day of *Tulasi Bibaha*, *matha* and the ground around it is cleaned. The red surface of *matha* is painted with vertical white lines and round patches in between the lines with certain patterns. The priest recites from the scriptures, and patron offers clothes, garland, flower, water, *tika* and fruit to the *Tulasi* plants. The performance is accompanied with the music of conch shell and bell. Devotees offer the shade to the *Tulasi* by installing a bamboo or *sal* plant there on the *matha*. The stem of this plant is painted with red and white colors. The *Tulasi* plant is personified as the god and married to lord Vishnu. This ritual is also anthropomorphic and mystical and has inter-art relationship: music, recitation of scripture, painting, architecture, installation and performance exist simultaneously.

The writing of *Chinaa* (astrological documentation of a person) is still a living culture in Nepal in which paintings are found. In *Chinaa*, astrologers create *mandalas* using geometrical shapes, and install planets and stars in their particular places. The figures of various gods and goddesses, symbols like fish, vase full of water and *swastika*, and decorated borders in floral design appear within the document. The sun, the moon, stars and planets are treated as gods. Verbal and visual arts coexist on the same paper creating inter-art relationship.

Mithila art is also based on cultural rituals. Mithila art is religious, ceremonial, anthropomorphic, narrative, symbolic and mystical. Mithila art is religious and ceremonial as Maithili women paint the images of gods and goddesses and other various types of images in the shape of *mandalas* on the floors and the mud walls of their houses on the auspicious occasions as *Gauripujana* (worshipping cow), *Satyanarayan Puja* (worshipping Lord

Vishnu), *Kojagratabrata* (the ceremony observed on the full moon day after the Dashain Festival), *Madhushravani*, *Mahalaxmi Puja*, *Prabodhini Ekadashi*, *Saraswati Puja* (worshipping the goddess of learning), *Chhata* (the festival of worshipping sun), *Bratabandha*, *Karanvedha* (making hole in the ear) and wedding ceremony and so on, to observe specific cultural ritual. Since the images on the floor and walls are erased when they are washed and cleaned, the early examples of Mithila art disappeared.

Mithila paintings are narrative, for they represent the stories of the Hindu epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, and also scenes from *Bhagavata Purana* and *Geeta Govinda*. The land of Mithila is a significant location in the *Ramayana*. Sita, the daughter of king Janaka is from Mithila. The poetic lines of the epic inspire the women to paint the narrative scenes. The narrative pictures are about Ram, Laxman (younger brother of Ram) and Sita's exile, abduction of Sita by the demon King Ravana of Lanka, Ram's friendship with monkeys including Hanumana, Hanuman's continuous devotion and assistance to Ram, and war between Ram and the army of Ravana. The scenes of flirting of Krishna and *gopinis* (milkmaids) in the bank of Yamuna River from the *Mahabharata* are also painted on the walls. Naked *gopinis* swimming in the river, Krishna sitting on the tree trunk playing his flute in ecstatic mood while hiding the garments of the *gopinis* along with caring and protecting the cows in the forest are the principal scenes narrated in the visual forms.

Mithila paintings are anthropomorphic, for Hanuman, the monkey friend and devotee of Ram, in the scenes of the *Ramayana*, and cow in the scene of the *Mahabharata* are given human attributes. Hanumana, who is depicted in his clothes, worships Ram and assists him in war. Cow appears in the form of both woman and animal and also is decorated with various colorful tapestries and garlands. Her hair on the head is combed and two locks of hair like

that of a woman appear hanging. There are ornaments in the nose and the ears. Her face appears almost as that of a woman.

On the auspicious occasions as *Gauripujana*, *Satyanarayanpuja*, *Kojagratabrata*, *Prabodhini Ekadashi*, *Chhata* and *Dipawali*, women folks draw and paint *aripana*, a kind of Mithila painting having the structure of the *mandala*. The paintings are done on the floor. *Aripana* is the symbolic and magical structure which represents the cosmos. It is also a *yantra* (instrument) of individual self for meditation and concentration to unify oneself with the divinity who resides at the centre of the *mandala*. About *aripana* Lydia Aran writes:

Aripana, a magic circle representing a magically fortified space for rituals and domestic religious ceremonies, [is] the equivalent of the Tibetan *Mandala*. Like the latter it also represents the cosmos and the symbols used in these drawings express the cosmological concept of the tantra Ideally, the design of an Aripana should be revealed to the lady-artist as a result of meditation and general yogic experience (184-185).

The ritual determines the image of the principal deity who resides at the centre of the *aripana* in symbolic or figurative form. For example, the sun is the principal divinity in the *aripana* painted in the festival of *Chhata*, the goddess Laxmi in *Deepawali*, the full moon in *Kojagratabrata* and cow in *Gauripujana*. The images like lotus, conch shell, wheel, plants, leaves, animals and birds around the structure are symbolic as well as decorative. Creation of square, rectangle, triangle and circle within *aripana*, makes it a geometric structure which leads the meditating individual self toward the centre. Not only the viewing of the finished product but also the performance of the painting is the meditative and spiritual experience.

About the importance of devotion, meditation and concentration of the artist while creating *aripana*, K. S. Srivastava says:

The artists ought not to work unless she is in a meditative state. The peace emanating from the paintings have often seemed the best proof of how seriously the artists take the period of meditation, which precedes their work. A woman's painting begins with her realizing the spiritual image of a god in deep prayer and her finished product will therefore correspond to her inner attitude. (143)

The creation is associated to the individual artist's realization of the deity. Since *Aripanas* are painted on specific occasions, cultural and religious performances go hand in hand with creative and aesthetic experience.

The structures of *aripanas* differ according to the ceremonies, festivals and auspicious occasions to be celebrated, and they are named accordingly. For example, *Sandhya aripana*, *Kojagrata aripana*, *Swastika aripana*, *Kalyandevi aripana*, *Sarvatobhadra aripana* and *Deepawali aripana* are some of them. *Sarvatobhadra aripana*, a "Square yantra", "drawn around the sacred plant of Tulasi", is an auspicious symbol of the "creative forces of the universe" (Rakesh, *Folk culture* 69).

The artists create *yantras* in *aripana* structure on the articles of daily use. They are sometimes "engraved on gold, silver or copper plates and worshipped or worn as amulets" (69). Sometimes they are drawn on paper and "inserted into talismans to be worn around the neck or arm" to protect oneself from evil spirits, enemies, diseases and other various calamities (69). The people believe that such *yantras* have mystical and magical power. Maithili artists also create *yantras* resembling *aripana*, or mark the images of gods,

goddesses, lotus flower or rose on the limbs by “pricking with seven needles” for the magical protection of the individual (Rakesh, *Cultural Heritage* 131). In Mithila, tattooing also has been a popular folk art form immemorial time.

In some Mithila paintings, the sacred and profane images are intertwined. Maithili women paint *kohbar*, a kind of Mithila painting, on the walls of the honeymoon chamber in the wedding ceremony specifically to motivate the newly married couple for union and fertility. *Kohbar* is also painted on the paper used for wrapping gifts, and the gifts are sent to the boy during courtship. The principal images in the *kohbar* are bamboo stalk and the open lotus flower. The lotus flower is shown as being penetrated by the bamboo stalk. *Kohbar* is represented in symbolic form. The open lotus flower symbolizes *yoni*, and bamboo stalk is the symbol of *lingam*. These principal images are surrounded by other symbols and images which support the central motif. Lydia Aran defines *kohbar*:

Kohbar, i.e. a composition centered around the Lingam (phallus) penetrating the yoni (vagina), often depicted in the form of a lotus flower, surrounded by mythological scenes and various sexual and fertility symbols. The Kohbar, painted on paper by a girl is sent by her to the boy of her choice as a marriage proposal; it is painted on the walls of the bedroom to ensure fertility; on the paper used for wrapping gifts during courtship as a proof of a girl's accomplishment in the traditional art; and on the walls of the house for magic protection. (184)

Six other lotuses, around the central lotus which is bigger, are the symbols of infinite possibilities of procreation in female fertility power.

Other subsidiary images found in *kohbar* have both decorative and symbolic value. The images like pregnant elephant, fish, parrot, turtle, Swastika, the sun, the moon, goose, peacock, betel leaf, and mango leaf are associated with *kohbar* and placed in the background and the periphery. The pregnant elephant is the symbol of fertility which inspires the bride to be the mother. The goose and the peacock, the vehicles of Saraswati and Kumara respectively are the symbols of peace and harmony. The Betel leaf is thought to bring good luck. "Mango leaves are used to signify the importance of mango trees as a source of fertility" (Rakesh, "Mithila Art" I). *Swastika* is a symbol of spiritual power, holiness and truth. Fish and turtle are the incarnations of Lord Vishnu and expected to bring prosperity, good luck and happiness. The sun and the moon are considered as gods and symbols of long life.

The *krida* (flirting) of Shiva and Parvati, the subject matter taken from *Shiva Purana*, and flirting of Krishna with *gopinis*, the subject matter taken from the *Mahabharata* are also painted on the walls of the *Kohbarghara* to arouse the romantic mood in the couples. *Kohbars* are wiped and rubbed out on the fourth day supposing that the couple has had the successful intercourse till then. Particular paintings are significant in particular cultural rituals and ceremonies.

Mithila artists use home made basic colors which are rubbable and washable. They draw the figures on the floor with the help of *pithar* (rice powder), *sindur* (vermilion), colorful clay and other natural colors extracted from leaves and flowers. They generally use basic colors like yellow, red, blue, black, white and green. Black is extracted from lamp soot or coal, and yellow from yellow colored flower petals. White is made from rice powder and green from green leaves. All these natural colors are diluted in water. The women artists

mostly use their finger to paint and sometimes a bamboo stick with cotton tip as a brush. Mithila art is ceremonial, and the ceremonies are repeated every year.

In Mithila art, figures are in profile with bold outlines, and the paintings are nearly two dimensional. Outline and other drawing are made in bold black and red colors and enclosed space is filled by flat colors with minimum contrast between light and shadow, which makes the painting nearly two dimensional. The bold outlines and the use of basic colors like red, white, black, green, yellow and blue, add to the clarity of painting. Pointed nose, big eyes, face in profile and feet turned sideways are a few characteristics of the figures. Lydia Aran writes:

The faces are usually shown in profile, though the eye is always drawn as seen from the front. The feet are always turned sideways like on ancient Egyptian reliefs. The difference in the size of figures has nothing to do with perspective and reflects only the relative importance of the figure in the overall composition. The faces, with their long, pointed noses and large eyes, show not a trace of Mongolian influence and add support to the hypothesis that the Maithila people may be pure descendants of the Aryan immigrants. (186)

The principle image is at the centre and bigger than other figures in the surrounding, which plays a significant role in deriving meaning. In the periphery, decorative and symbolic images are presented.

To sum up, Mithila art is narrative, symbolic, magical, mystical and anthropomorphic, creates balance between religious and secular motifs, and individual self and divine being. It has been a ceremonial art form and a living cultural heritage for thousands of years.

The earliest Nepali painting ever found is in *Prajnaparamita* manuscript dated 1015. Manuscripts are religious texts which were copied and illuminated with miniature paintings. Miniature paintings are also found on the wooden covers of the manuscripts. Early manuscripts were written on palm leaves which were brought from India. The strips of palm leaves were loosely held together by means of strings and protected mostly by wooden boards. Gradually paper replaced the palm leaves after the thirteenth century but the shape and structure of the manuscripts remained similar. The artists used home made colors to paint the figure. Generally, illuminations are at the centre of the leaf and the texts on the both sides of the painting. The borders on the left and right of the painting are decorated with geometric and floral designs. However, sometimes the illuminations were created at the sides with the text at the centre. In a few manuscripts, there are pictures on one side of the page and texts on the other. There, however, are many manuscripts when only some are illuminated, and sometimes paintings are executed only on the manuscript covers not in the text. The artists of these paintings are unknown.

Prajnaparamita, Dharanisamgraha, Paramartha Namasangiti, Gandavyuha and Pancaraksa are some of the Buddhist manuscripts. *Prajnaparamita* manuscripts are decorated with the various scenes from the Buddha's life, goddess *Prajnaparamita*, *panchabuddhas* (five transcendental Buddhas) and various *bodhisattavas*. The painting depicting Buddha's nativity on the cover of *Prajnaparamita* manuscript dated 1054 (Fig. 3) shows the religious harmony between Hinduism and Buddhism. The Buddha emerges from Maya Devi's left hip, immediately takes his first seven steps and stands on the pyramid of lotuses. Then, the Hindu gods Brahma with a basket of grain and Indra with a fish welcome the Buddha. Fish and grain are traditionally auspicious objects.

On the cover of the twelfth century *Prajnaparamita* manuscript, the goddess Prajnaparamita and her six female companions are intensely symbolic. Prajnaparamita is seated on the open lotus, and has four hands. Two hands form *dharmachakra mudra* (gesture of turning the wheel of law). The upper left hand holds a manuscript and upper right hand holds the *mala* (rosary). The manuscript in her hand symbolizes the achievement of wisdom. Vase, conches, flowers and lamps around are also associated with wisdom. A vase full of *jala* (primeval water) or *amrita* (the nectar or the elixir of immortality) is "an auspicious sign and symbolizes plenty" (Aran 230). The goddess Prajnaparamita is considered to have been full of wisdom and knowledge. Lamps as the symbols of enlightenment and wisdom, further reinforce the same theme. Conch is the symbol of the "Buddha's speech", according to Buddhism, through which wisdom and enlightenment can be achieved (Min Bahadur Shakya 29). Three of her six female companions are seated on the left hand side and three on the right. One goddess holds a sword in her hand which is symbolic in the sense that it "cuts through the darkness of the ignorance of all sentient beings" (25). Other goddess sits in *varada mudra* (gesture of conferring boon). A goddess sits in *dhyana mudra* (gesture of meditation) and the other one sits in *namaskara mudra* (gesture of adoration).

On the other wooden cover of the same twelfth century *Prajnaparamita* manuscript, a seated Buddha is flanked by three *bodhisattavas*. The illustration of these figures is based on the Buddhist mythology of *Mahayana* (the great vehicle). The concept of *bodhisattava* is the coinage of the Mahayana Buddhism which is in sharp contrast to *Hinayana* (the small vehicle).

According to the *Hinayana*, the Buddha is a "great teacher and leader but not a god" and "his tremendous success was due to the fact that his experience of enlightenment was

potentially reproducible by anyone” (Aran 47). The followers of *Hinayana* did not make idols of the Buddha because it was thought “impossible to represent him once he had passed into *Nirvana*, a state of being inconceivable in human” (47). In contrast to *Hinayana*, according to *Mahayana*, enlightenment is possible for human beings “not only by their own endeavor but also through the vicarious suffering of a new deity, the *bodhisattava*, an intermediary between the passive Buddha and the suffering humans” (49). About *bodhisattavas*, Ernst and Rose Leonore Waldschmidt write:

Enthroned beside the Dhyani Buddhas in their worlds are so called Bodhisattvas, ‘Being of Enlightenment’, who are potential Buddhas or Buddhas designate. These blessed beings have come within reach of their goal, the rank of a Buddha, having travelled the way that leads through the ten stages (bhumi) of supreme virtue and perfection; they have, however, abstained from taking the final step to deliverance and extinction in order to stand by those who have remained behind on earth, their former companions in suffering, to help them in their troubles and guide to them along the right path. These Bodhisattavas thus have the function of helpers to those who belong to this branch of the Buddhist religion-like the saints in the western churches. (29)

Bodhisattavas, the enlightened ones function as the bridge between the Buddha and the common human beings who seek the *nirvana*.

On the wooden cover of the twelfth century *Prajnaparamita* manuscript, the Buddha is seated in *dharmachakra mudra* (teaching the law) surrounded by a white aureole. The *bodhisattavas*, Samantabhadra, Vajrapani, Ratnapani, Avalokitesvara, Visvapani and

Manjusri each is seated in *dharmachakra mudra* and holds a lotus with his left hand. The composition is based on the myth of *Mahayana* Buddhism.

The illuminations of the *Pancaraksa* manuscript of thirteenth century (Fig. 11) are also anthropomorphic, mystical, magical and narrative. This manuscript written on paper has been illuminated with five goddesses who are the personifications of five protective charms that were supposed to save people from snakebite, smallpox and other miseries and diseases. One of the compositions in the manuscript represents seated goddess Mahapratisara. Devotees are consulting about their ailments and problems to the deity. When the verses of *Pancaraksa* are opened, the personified figure of disease flees away. The personified figure of the disease acts as living beings. The scene is narrative, mystical and anthropomorphic. The plants and trees in the background create a sort of landscape and enliven the composition. The brilliant red, green and yellow colors against the deep indigo of the paper make the painting vivacious. The borders have been decorated with floral and geometric forms.

The narrative scenes of twelfth century *Gandavyuha* manuscript depict the spiritual journey of Sudhana, his interaction with Manjusri, the *bodhisattava* of wisdom, and his enlightenment at the end. Manjusri is seated on the cushion and has the halo at the back of his head whereas Sudhana is on the ground and does not have the halo. The artist also depicts the landscape through the use of rocks, trees, plants and animals in the background.

The paintings in the twelfth century *Vessantara Jataka* manuscript (Fig. 12) are narrative and didactic, and depict the religious harmony between Buddhism and Hinduism. Vessantara is a generous prince who gives away the white elephant to the neighboring kingdom that is suffering from draught. It is believed that white elephant can bring rain.

Later Vessantara's own country suffers from draught. The king banishes the prince from the country because of the pressure of the revolting public. Vessantara goes to a forest with his wife Madri, his son Jali and his daughter Krsnajina. One day when Vessantara is meditating, god Indra in the form of a Brahmin comes and asks for his son and daughter. The prince gives his children to him. The Brahmin takes away the crying children beating them with a stick. Indra tests the enduring capacity of Vessantara. He becomes successful in his test. At the end, the family is reunited and returns to their palace. This narrative in the painting is didactic, for the story implies that helping others is very important, and the kind person is always rewarded. The manuscript is Buddhist but incorporates the Hindu god Indra suggesting the intermingling of religions on artistic grounds.

In these Buddhist manuscripts, continuous flowing curves, serpentine, sinuous and flexible roundity of figures and luminosity of texture make the human figures lively and youthful. About the stylistic quality of these paintings Rajatananda Das Gupta writes:

The lines move in continuous flowing curves and successfully model the masses and volumes within the given contour. Human figures are full, sinuous and rounded while draughtsmanship attains the height in the decorative motifs. Some landscape is also attempted by arranging stylized plantain trees at uniform distances. (10)

In Amita Ray's words, the lines in the compositions of manuscripts are "rounded and sweeping and colour has almost a modeling effect" (*Art of Nepal* 49).

The fifth century Ajanta murals and the manuscript illuminations of Pala period in India to some extent influence these Buddhist manuscript illuminations. The murals in Ajanta caves are about the nativity of the Buddha and the other scenes from his life. Buddhist

art and learning “flourished under the Pala dynasty in Bengal and Bihar from eighth to twelfth century (Aran 127). The pilgrims, monks and merchants brought these influences into Nepali art. However, Nepali artists tested and filtered the influences and created their “distinct style” of their own (Pal, *The Arts* 154).

Hindu manuscripts like *Bhagavata Mahapurana*, *Visnudharma*, *Shivadharmā*, *Niswastantra*, *Lalitavistara*, *Devimahatmya* and the *Ramayana* are also beautifully illuminated. In these manuscripts, Hindu deities like Vishnu, Shiva, Durga and narrative scenes representing their activities can be seen. On the covers of eleventh century *Vishnudharma* manuscript (Fig. 4), there are the images of the ten incarnations of Vishnu. The paintings of these ten incarnations are didactic in suggestion in the context that incarnations are redeeming feats of the gods to save the world from sins. The fish in the painting represents the *Matsya avatara* (incarnation of Vishnu as fish) who saves the human beings from drowning in a flood. Fish thus is a very auspicious symbol in Hindu ritualism.

Tortoise represents the *Kurma avatara* who saves the Mandarachal mountain from drowning while churning the ocean for *amrita* (nectar) which made the gods immortal. The boar represents the *Varaha avatara* who rescues the earth that has been drowned in the ocean because of the domination of the demons and the presence of excessive sin on the earth. The boar has the powerful, heroic and militant posture. The earth appears in the form of female goddess on the *Varaha's* right elbow. The artist personifies and gives human attributes to the fish, tortoise, boar and the earth. Their activities are miraculous, magical and mystical. Another incarnation called *Narsimha* (half man, half lion) kills demon king Hiranyaksipu to protect his devotee Prahlada. Since Hiranyaksipu has the boon that he would be killed neither by man nor by animal, Vishnu takes the incarnation in a form of man-lion, and destroys the

demon king. *Vamana avatara* (dwarf) destroys the pride and ambition of the demon king Bali. Vishnu assumes the form of Brahmin and asks Bali for land as much as he can cover in three strides to sit there and meditate. As Bali accepts to grant the land, shown in the painting, Vishnu tricks him stretching his left leg upward to cover the heaven. In two strides he covers the whole of the earth and heaven, and in the third stride Vishnu puts his foot on the head of Bali thrusting him to the hell.

Parasurama avatara with his axe kills all the sinful Kshetriyas of the earth. *Rama avatara*, the hero of the *Ramayana*, together with his brother Laxman and monkey friends destroys the demon king Ravana of Lanka. *Krishna avatara* kills the demon King Kansa and helps Pandavas, the righteous people to destroy the sinful people like Kauravas. This is the subject matter of the renowned Hindu epic the *Mahabharata*. The composition of the *Buddha avatara* depicts the Buddha as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu, which suggests the religious harmony between Hinduism and Buddhism. This also suggests that Hinduism absorbs and incorporates all the important new ideas developed in its time and space. *Kalki avatara* in the human form holding a sword on a horseback is supposed to descend on the earth in future to destroy the evils, and rescue the earth and his devotees. The paintings in this manuscript are the fine representations of the ideas of the mythology. The compositions are narrative, didactic, symbolic, mystical and anthropomorphic, and suggest the religious harmony between Hinduism and Buddhism.

In some *Visnudharma* manuscripts, Vishnu is portrayed with his four hands holding *sankha* (conch), *charka* (wheel), *gada* (mace), and *padma* (lotus) in his hands, ascending toward heaven on his vehicle *garuda*. The presentation of anthropomorphic god with four

hands and having the bird, *garuda* as the vehicle is archetypal imagery. Vishnu with Laxmi, his *Shakti* (female power) is also frequently portrayed in the manuscripts.

The composition on the cover of *Shivadharma* manuscript of thirteenth century is symbolic and anthropomorphic. Lord Shiva is seated at the centre holding his consort Parvati. Parvati is on the lap of Shiva. Shiva is also holding *trisula* (trident) in another hand. *Trisula*, the favorite weapon of Shiva “symbolizes the triple functions of god in the theistic sense, namely creation, preservation and destruction” (M. Shakya 31). Parvati’s mount, lion and Shiva’s mount, bull are on their sides. Ganga River pours water over the divine couple. Ganesha and Kumara, the sons of Shiva and Parvati appear with their vehicles mouse and peacock respectively. The Kailasha mountain, the abode of Shiva and Parvati has been shown in the backdrop.

In the fifteenth century *Sivadharma* manuscript (Fig. 13), *Shivalinga* is painted which assimilates both erotic and spiritual concepts. About the connotative meaning of the *Shivalinga*, Lydia Aran writes:

Shiva cult in Nepal comes in the form of *Lingam* (Phallus), which was the early form of *Shiva* Icon. [T]he *Lingam* is roughly cylindrical in Shape, standing upright on its narrow end and rounded at the top. It usually stands on a flat rimmed disc called yoni being possibly the female symbol. There is an indentation on one side of the yoni, the purpose of which is to drain off the water poured over the *Lingam* as offering. (78)

As in *Shivalinga*, male and female principles are depicted in union in the form of Uma and Mahesvara, Vishnu and Laxmi and Samvara and Vajravarahi in other Hindu religious

paintings. The erotic and sacred themes have been assimilated in the Hindu religious arts both in terms with physical union and creation.

The paintings in the eighteenth century *Devimahatmya* manuscript (Fig. 14) are again narrative, mystical and magical. The goddess Durga and her various forms, and the deaths of Mahisasura (the buffalo demon), Sumbha, Nisumbha and Raktabija are represented.

Mahisasura and his army terrorize the gods and men everywhere. Listening to the prayers of the gods to destroy the demons, Durga appears in the form of beautiful girl in the mountainous forest to challenge the demons. One of the demons sees her and talks about her to his King. Then, Mahisasura sends a messenger with his marriage proposal to Durga. She talks to him and asks him to send his master instead for the fight. Then Mahisasura comes with his army to wage war with her. Durga on her mount, lion with many weapons in her many hands attacks Mahisasura and other demons and destroys them. Durga in the form of Kalyani kills the demon, Sumbha in one of the compositions. In another composition, she destroys Nisumbha. She is assisted by Chamunda. In the episode of *Dhumralochana vadha*, she attacks the demon with her arrow from the cloud. The demon, hit at the chest by the arrow, somersaults in agony. The arrow produces the flickering flames. Flowers, colorful rocks and green mountains are “serving the background of the painting”, and create typical “Nepalese landscape” (Gupta 23). The compositions are narrative and depict the mythical and magical scenes.

In another fifteenth century Hindu manuscript, the scenes from the *Ramayana* have been painted. Rama, the hero of the epic, is seated in the middle with nimbus and aureole which signifies his divine status. His brother Laxman, wife Sita and devotees and monkey friends like Hanumana and Sugriva are looking toward Rama. There are “delineated trees”,

birds and stylized “decorative motif of a purely imaginary form” in the painting (Pal, *The Arts* 61).

Although most of the manuscript illuminations are religious, *Hitopadesa* manuscript illuminations dated 1594 (Fig. 15) deal about secular themes. This manuscript represents two animal fables in visual form. These paintings are narrative, didactic and anthropomorphic. One fable is about an old vulture, birds and a cat. The old and blind vulture works as a baby-sitter for the other birds. For its labor, it is offered food by the birds. One day a cat comes there and befriends the blind vulture by flattering it. Then the cat climbs the tree, eats all the chicks and goes away leaving their bones. When the parent birds return, they become angry thinking that the vulture devoured their chicks, and thus kill the old vulture. The fable gives the moral that one should not believe in flattery. The other fable is about a jackal and a deer. The jackal becomes a friend of a deer, and takes the deer to a green field to graze, where the farmers have set a trap. The deer is caught in the trap. The jackal hopes to eat the trapped animal. But the Jackal fails, for the farmers release the deer from the trap. The visual and the verbal texts coexist on the same page of the manuscript. The paintings are narrative, didactic and anthropomorphic.

Miniature paintings like that of manuscript illumination are also found independently. The images of Hindu and Buddhist gods and goddesses are depicted in these paintings. In some miniature paintings, *mantras* and the figures of deities are presented in the same composition, which has inter-art relationship. In the nineteenth century miniature painting, *Mantrachhar ‘OM’ with God* (Fig. 16), for example, images of deity appear within the text.

Early Nepali manuscript illuminations depict the influences of Ajanta cave paintings, eastern Indian manuscript illuminations and the paintings of Pala period though they differ in

certain aspects. Geographically and culturally, India and Nepal have been closely linked. Because of the cross-flow of artists, pilgrims and merchants, Indian influences came to Nepal. Even the palm leaves on which manuscripts were written were imported from India.

Despite the Indian influences, there are differences between Indian and Nepali manuscript illuminations. In eastern Indian manuscript illuminations the tonality of colors is brighter whereas in Nepali manuscript illuminations it is softer. Pratapaditya Pal compares the two schools of painting in these lines:

A primary difference between two Schools of painting is perceptible in the tonality of colours. Because the pigments are prepared with different ingredients in the two areas, the colours differ considerably both in the intensity of their brightness as well as in their texture. The reds in the Eastern Indian manuscripts tend to be brighter and more like vermilion, while in the Nepali Manuscripts the reds are deeper and possess crimson tinge. Similarly, the yellow has a stronger tonality in the Eastern Indian manuscripts as compared to the softer hue preferred by the Nepali artists. On the whole, the palette of the Nepali artists betrays a richer variety than that of their Indian counterparts. (*The Arts* 42)

In the view of Lain Singh Bangdel, the lines in Nepali manuscript illuminations are rhythmic and colors are delicate and friendly whereas in the eastern Indian manuscript illuminations, the lines are thicker and harsh, and colors are overused (*Prachin Nepali* 23). Furthermore, Bangdel shows contrast in these two schools of painting:

The Eastern Indian illuminated manuscripts are brighter in colour than their Nepalese counterparts. The figures are sharply tilted and the outlines and

contours are hard against the background. The outlines of visage, eyes, nose are sharp and they are reminiscent of early Gujrati miniatures. In contrast, the very treatment of colours in Nepalese manuscripts is sober but executed with great delicacy. Linear tones of figures are also harmonious. The Nepalese features in contrast to eastern Indian, are soft, pliant and delicate. (“Nepalese Painting” 29)

Although Nepali manuscript illuminations were more or less influenced by the Ajanta cave murals and eastern Indian manuscript illuminations, Nepali artists exploited home made colors in different style, created mountainous landscape in the background and modelled human figures giving the touch of locality, which is “typical Nepalese” style (Pashupati Kumar Dwivedi 31).

Seventeenth century onward, Mughal-Rajput styles influence Nepali manuscript illuminations. The arrival of refugee artists in Nepal from India after Muslim invasions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries also facilitated the entry of Indian influence. Mughal artists employed the art of Islamic “calligraphy” in line drawing, and the lines “acquired thereby more uniformity and regularity” (E. B. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting* 212-13). Sometimes, the drawing is “delicately shaded and embellished with discreet touches of gold” and achieved the finished detail. More “sumptuous palette and subtler gradations of colours” create “delicate finish” and “gem-like combination” (217-18). Paintings were “often embellished with admirably designed floral patterns” (216). The subject matters of painting were “[P]ortraiture and brilliant court ceremonials” like shooting, hawking parties, battles or sieges, and religious subjects were “studiously avoided, except for a formal visit to a sacred

shrine, or an interview with a Muslim saint” (217). And the figures were portrayed nearly always in profile.

Rajput paintings, flourished in Rajasthan and Punjab mountains from the sixteenth to nineteenth century, are two-dimensional, simple and musical, and generally deal about love. The painting developed in mountainous region is also called Pahari painting. According to Ananda Coomaraswamy, “Rajput painting is essentially an aristocratic folk art, appealing to all classes alike, static, lyrical, and inconceivable apart from the life it reflects” (qtd. in Heinrich Zimmer 386). The subject matters of paintings are mainly the love of Krishna and Radha, Rama and Sita and Shiva and Parvati. However, the paintings also depict “a simple, passionate love of nature” in “two-dimensional” and “archaic” style, yet they are “vivid with life” and “poignant charm” (Zimmer 386). They also give emphasis to the idea that “each system of sound must have its inevitable visual aspect”, and developed “poetical paintings personifying the moods or sentiments of the thirty-six *ragas* or traditional musical scales” (387). Exploiting this technique, the artists produced a collection of paintings known as *Ragamalas* (garlands of the musical modes).

Such features of Mughal-Rajut paintings appear in later manuscript illuminations in the portraits of the donor of manuscripts as depicted toward the bottom of some compositions. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century compositions, the portraits of the donor take larger space, and gradually portraits were executed independently in Mughal-Rajput manner. However, facial feature and body of the figures, and setting always remained Nepali.

Another type of religious painting known as *paubha* is painted on the cloth and worshipped as the image of gods and goddesses. The religious people hang them on the walls

of temples, monasteries and sacred place at their homes and carry them while traveling for worship. Most of the artists of the *paubhas* are anonymous. They have been constructed and painted in such a format that they can be hung on the wall while worshipping, and stored or carried by rolling them. *Paubhas* have rectangular shape. About the process of creating *paubha* Pratapaditya Pal writes:

All *paubhas* are painted on coarse cotton which is primed with conchshell to provide a smooth surface. The outline is carefully drawn either in red or black and filled in with colours. The pigments are derived both from minerals and vegetable extracts and the principal binding material is gum, resin readily soluble in water paintings are executed in opaque watercolours, the opacity deriving from the binding medium, more often than not a *paubha* is rectangular in shape, the height being greater than width, and its size obviously depended upon the affluence of the patron (*The Arts* 65-66).

The media of the *paubha* like surface of cotton clothes, colors and binding material are home made. The colors are opaque.

The principal deity, temple or stupa is created at the centre of the *paubha*, and subsidiary deities, the images related to central figure or decorative elements are around the central figure. In the nineteenth century *paubha*, *Shakyamuni Buddha*, the Buddha resides at the centre, and other images of the Buddha in various postures and gestures, and monks and devotees are around the central figure. The images in the background and periphery lead the viewer toward the centre.

The nineteenth century *paubha*, *Usnisavijaya* (Fig. 17) represents religious images and cultural rite simultaneously. Stupa, the religious image has been created at the centre,

and on the surface of the stupa, images of the goddess Usnisavijaya have been painted.

Around the stupa, there are the images of various Buddhist gods and goddesses. Below the stupa, there is the painting of *Bhimaratha* rite which is observed by a person on reaching the age of seventy years, seven months and seven days. The old person is seated on the chariot drawn by the horse, and other many human figures standing on the both sides of the chariot are observing the ceremony. This part of the painting related to cultural rite, co-exists with religious images like Stupa, and the images of gods and goddesses. Below the scene of *Bhimaratha* rite along the bottom, donors or devotees are worshipping and praying the deity. The human figures of the *Bhimarath* scene, donors and the devotees are painted in Mughal-Rajput style. The figures are shown in profile.

The figures and colors in *paubha* are in tightly structured order, and the artists have not used shade in the painting. They are painted according to the traditional iconographic rules. About the stylistic features of *paubha*, Pratapaditya Pal writes:

[P]aubhas are essentially religious icons, the artist was bound by certain immutable iconographic rules and aesthetic canons which had been established by theological precepts and long-standing tradition. Colours in such paintings were invariably determined by religious needs and the picture surface is always suffused with uniformly luminous hues. It was unnecessary for the artist to experiment with light and shade since the divine world is regarded as perpetually effulgent. The composition is determined by inexorable laws of symmetry and visual order, for a divine image cannot exist in chaos and disharmony. (*The Arts* 65)

Since the divine image is considered to be full of light, the artist does not create shades in the *paubha*. Likewise, the visual order and coherence in the composition imply the harmony and order in divine world.

Different kinds of *mandalas* are present in most of the *paubha* paintings. Such *paubhas* are mystical and symbolic, and used as the *yantra* (instrument) to meditate for uniting oneself to the almighty. *Mandala*, the well-ordered geometric structure, is also a visual support for meditation and concentration. The principal deity resides at the centre within circles and the circles are surrounded by squares with four gates in four directions. Then the squares are again surrounded by other circles. Subsidiary deities are within and outside the circles and squares around the principal deity. The structure and the images lead the individual self toward the centre where one is supposed to be coincided with the central divinity. The creation of *mandala* “demands correctness and precision from the painter” and the artist is seldom free to use his “creative experience” (Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of Nepal* 44). About the structure and features of *mandala*, Kramrisch further says:

Mandalas are visual supports of concentration and mediation, ritual aids on the way toward the center of the cosmos and self. Cosmos and self coincide in the image of the central and main divinity of the mandala. This divinity resides in principle, in an eight-petaled lotus filling a circle, within a square, enclosed by further concentric circles. The square is divided by diagonals into four triangles whose colours white, yellow, red, and blue-represent the four directions. Entry and exit into the magically fortified square are marked in the middle of each side by a symbolic gate structure stations on the way are marked by small images of subsidiary divinities in their appointed places, in

the eight directions of space within the square. As a rule, the aim of the surrounding circle teems with scenes. (44)

A *mandala* is a well ordered geometrical structure that is used as an *yantra* for meditation and concentration. The structure leads the viewer or *shadhak* (a person practicing meditation and concentration) toward the center where s/he is supposed to be united with the divinity.

At the centre of the nineteenth century *Amoghapasha Mandala* (Fig. 18), Amoghapasha, a form of the Buddha stands with his six hands on the lotus within a circle. There are twenty deities around the circle, and the outlines of their shape resemble with twenty small lotus petals. They are also surrounded by another circle on which there are sixteen deities within the shape of sixteen lotus petals. They are also enclosed by another circle within square, which creates four triangles on which there are four deities in four different colors representing four directions. They are again enclosed by another square which has four gates where there are the images of four *dwarapalas* (gate keepers). The square is again enclosed by other two circles. Around the outer circle there are other deities. Along the bottom there are the portraits of worshipping and praying donors. The structure is symbolic, mystical and magical. The artist gives emphasis on “symmetry, order, balance and harmony” (Abhi Subedi, “Nepali Utopia” 118). The structure and the images lead the viewer toward the centre where principal deity resides. This symbolic visual structure of the *mandala* is supposed to aid in meditation and concentration and to unite oneself with the cosmic being.

In some *mandalas* non-human objects are given human attributes. In the *Visnu Mandala* by Tejarama dated 1420 (Fig. 5), four-armed Vishnu with Laxmi is seated at the centre, and the central deities are surrounded by other figures of Vishnu and Laxmi. On the

left hand side of the central deities, the kneeling *garuda* (Vishnu's vehicle) is in *Namaskara Mudra* (gesture of adoration) and Laxmi is on the right. Although *garuda* has beak, wings and claws in his feet, its head, hands and body share human features. It is decorated with clothes and ornaments. At the top of the *mandala*, there are *Chandra* (the moon) and *Surya* (the sun) in two corners. The background of *Surya* is red while the background of *Chandra* is white. They also have been personified and two subsidiary human figures from both sides are spreading light in the world using bow and arrow.

Similarly *Chandramandala* dated 1425 and *Suryamandala* dated ca. 1400 are also anthropomorphic. The central deity in *Chandramandala* (Fig. 19) is moon-god who is riding chariot drawn by seven ganders. This suggests that *Chandra* moves in the sky using chariot, female figures are shooting arrows from both corners of the chariot which symbolizes the light spread by moon. The eight *grahas* (planets) seated on the lotus petals surround these central figures. They are personified as male deities. These eight *grahas* and central moon-god altogether makes *navagraha* (nine planets). The twenty four *nakshatras* (stars) seated on the lotus petals surround the eight planets. The *nakshatras* are personified as female deities. The painting is anthropomorphic, magical and mystical. Some other *mandalas* are *Kalacakra Mandala*, *Cakrasamvara Mandala*, *Nairatmya Mandala*, *Hevajra Mandala* and *Navadurga Mandala*. These *mandalas* also have more or less similar geometric structures and stylistic features.

Some *paubhas* attempt to resolve the duality between sacred and profane. *Nritesvara Paubha*, dated 1659 (Fig. 6), depicts the sexual union of Shiva and his Shakti, and their rhythmic cosmic dance. Shiva, in white complexion is embarrassing his Shakti in red complexion with his two arms. The rhythmic movement is suggested by their lifted legs.

Generally sexual connotations related to Shiva are depicted through the use of abstract symbol like *Shivalinga*, but in this painting, Shiva and Shakti are represented in direct sexual union. The images in the painting are the “tantric manifestations of Shiva and Parvati” (Subedi, “Nepali Utopia” 120). This painting represents the principal dimension of *tantric* philosophy.

According to *tantric* philosophy, individual self can unify oneself with cosmic consciousness and achieve enlightenment through the sexual union between male and female. *Tantric* philosophy is the modification of earlier Hindu philosophy like *Vedanta* without rejecting the “fundamental beliefs” (Aran 53). According to *Vedanta*, there is no duality between the individual self and the other, individual soul and the cosmic soul, and you and me. They are the manifestations of the same entity the cosmic being (*Brahman*). Everything is filled with divine spirit creating the unity and oneness in them. About the unity of individual self and the universal self, Geeta Khadka writes:

From the Hindu point of view, it is the self that is supreme, self has a double aspect to it: the individual and the universal self, and they can be expressed diversely: the individual self can be regarded as one’s smaller self, the universal self as one’s larger self, though essentially, there are no smaller or larger selves. They are one self. Recognition of the unity and universality of the self is one of the major metaphysical ends of Hinduism.

There is no duality of subject/object in Vedanta. (31)

Khadka further says, “Vedanta is the realization of the individual soul’s identity with the supreme soul (*Brahman*) which is transcendent and immanent” (35). When individual self or *yogi* assimilates and identifies oneself with the *Brahman* or cosmic being, he experiences

“one life, one world, one existence” (Swami Vivekananda 295). Then the individual self visualizes himself in every image of the world. He finds *Brahman* within himself, and himself within *Brahman*. There is no difference in the self and the world, and the self and the other. *Tantric* philosophy accepts this philosophy of *Vedanta* but differs in the method and practice to achieve this enlightened status.

According to *Vedanta*, to achieve enlightenment, the individual should read scriptures and/or meditate continuously discarding the pleasure perceived by *gyanendriyas* (sense organs) considering it deceptive as the creation of *maya* (illusion). For the initiator, sense organs are obstacles on the way toward the enlightenment, and the world is *maya* though they are the parts of cosmic being (*Brahman*) for the enlightened one. Geeta Khadka writes:

According to this Hindu philosophy, when a person manages to stay permanently in the state of attention, with the mind still and absorbed in the ultimate, he or she achieves release. A person may cease to be human so that he or she is converted into as all-embracing consciousness which is at once Being and Bliss special kind of heroism is required to detach oneself utterly from experience in the world (55).

This shows that achieving enlightenment is not in the reach of many common human beings. According to Patanjali, such individuals are “rare geniuses born with *yogic* gift - - the natural *yogis* - - who rise to cosmic consciousness or *Brahma chit*” (qtd. in G. Khadka 33).

Although *tantrism* accepts the *Vedantic* belief that *paramananda* (absolute bliss) is achieved only through the union of the self with the cosmic consciousness, it rejects the *Vedantic* methods and practice. *Tantrikas* criticize *Vedantic* methods on the ground that enlightenment is achieved only by a few gifted *yogis* who can study abstract scriptures and

meditate continuously discarding the worldly pleasures of all sorts. Thus, enlightenment is impossible for common folks since the method is absurd, painful and inaccessible. *Tantra* believes that exploiting the worldly pleasure perceived by sense organs and channeling them properly, enlightenment can also be achieved. Geeta Khadka further writes:

In complete contrast to this kind of Hindu tradition which rejects the world as an illusion, Tantra emphatically accepts it as reality. Tantra asserts that instead of suppressing the senses, they should be cultivated and used sensation and emotion are the most powerful human motive forces, and should not be crushed out, but rather, harnessed to reach the ultimate goal. Properly channeled, they can provide an unparalleled source of energy, bringing benefits to society as well as continually increasing ecstasy for the individual (55-56).

Among the various pleasures of this world, “sex as a powerful motivating factor, which, like other passions and desires can be used rather than suppressed” (Aran 53-54). In sexual intercourse, for transitory moment, male and female experience absolute bliss by assimilating themselves in one entity, and forgetting themselves and the world around them. This transitory experience helps the initiator to create the vision of the enlightenment.

In the *tantra*, women are considered as goddess and the worship of the deity is associated with the fertility cult. The goddess is the “creative principle” or the “cosmic Shakti” who is regarded as the central figure of the *tantric* cult, and the union of the male with the female is associated with the union of the individual self with the cosmic being (56).

Lydia Aran further says:

The tantrikas seem to accept the assumption that sexual energy is identical with the creative energy source of the universe They believe that by arousing the libido they thus mobilize otherwise dormant energies, which they can then use, through sexual act, combine with ritual and yoga, to increase their intuitive powers, culminating in their sexual partner, thus associating themselves to her power (60).

In the *tantric* worship and meditation, “the act of sexual union is the symbol of the mobilization of the creative energy” from where the individual initiates his practice of assimilating oneself with the cosmic consciousness (56). The sexual union also symbolizes “the act which created the world, the eternal cycle of reproduction without which nothing would exist” (qtd. in Bangdel, “Nepalese Painting” 30). Bangdel further says that the “whole world, from Brahma to the worm is held together by the union of male and female” (Bangdel, “Nepalese painting” 30). While meditating and worshipping, the *tantrikas* visualize the “mystic syllable (*bija* = a ‘germ’ or seed)”, for the seed continues the life in the world and it is the root of all creations (Waldschmidt et al. 33).

Buddhism incorporated the *tantric* cult and it became the *Vajrayana* (the Thunderbolt vehicle) Buddhism, *vajra* is the “emblem held by Buddhist divinities such as Vajradhara, Vajrasattava and Vajrapani” (M. Shakyas 25). *Vajra* is structurally “centered on a vase-like midsection, endowed with eight-petalled lotuses” which symbolize the union of male and female principles, and the absolute bliss (25). About the symbolic value of *vajra*, Ernst and Rose Leonore Waldschmidt write:

The word Vajra is also used for the emptiness or nothingness (*Sunyata*) which in Vajrayana is regarded as the Absolute. In connection with the sacred

enjoyment of love, the symbolism goes still further; various names take on at one and the same time a religious and an erotic meaning. For instance, the phallus is called Vajra, 'Thunderbolt' or Mani, 'Jewel', and the female organ in Padma, i.e. lotus. In this sense, Vajrayana can become a way to salvation by means of the sacred enjoyment of love Nirvana became equated with the orgasm (mahasukha) (35).

Vajra, an important symbol in *Vajrayana*, symbolizes the union of male and female principles. The constituents of *vajra*, thunderbolt and lotus are associated with phallus and *yoni* respectively.

Both *tantric* Buddhism and *tantric* Hinduism believe that absolute bliss or enlightenment can be achieved through the union of female and male principles. However, they differ in some aspects, for *tantric* Hindus believe that Prakriti, Shakti or female principle is active "feminine energy underlying the creation of the cosmos and hence underlying condition of all being" and *purusa* or male principle is passive whereas *tantric* Buddhists believe that *prajna* or female principle is passive and *upaya* or male principle is active (Arun Gupto, "Goddesses" 44). And the union of the two leads to the enlightenment or *Nirvana*. About the difference between *tantric* Buddhism and *tantric* Hinduism, Pratapaditya Pal writes:

[T]he term Shakti, as applied to the Goddess, is employed only in the Hindu context, whereas in Buddhist tantra she is designated as Prajna, meaning wisdom, further, while the Hindus believe that Parusa (Man) is passive and Prakriti (Nature-Women) is the active agent, the Buddhists hold a diametrically opposite view. For them the male representing the method

(Upaya-karuna or compassion) is the active principle, while Prajna is passive, only the combinations of the two, of right method with right knowledge, leads to ultimate bliss known by such terms as mahasukha or bodhicitta. (*The Arts* 14)

Tantric cult always gives emphasis on *yoga* (the combination of two) like the union of Shiva and Shakti, Prakriti and Purusa, Prajna and Upaya, Samvara and Vajravahni, *vajra* and lotus, and finally individual self and cosmic consciousness. The *yogi* (sage) exploiting the method of *yoga* in blissful manner clears the obstacles existing on the way toward the enlightenment.

The viewing of the *paubha* paintings depicting the union of gods and goddesses inspires the viewer envisioning the absolute bliss of sexual union, and finally his/her union with *Brahman*. Geeta Khadka compares the union of Shiva and Shakti, and the sexual union of male and female:

[T]he devotee identifies the semen with Shiva and the menstrual flow with Shakti-- the dual sources of creation. By sexually uniting these two, the *yogi* symbolically achieves the union of Shiva/Shakti within himself or herself. The mingling of these two in sexual union, or even mere envisioning it, suffices to give vivid experience of the cosmic union of Shiva/Shakti. (67)

The union of Shiva and Shakti or the male and female principle is associated with the union of individual self with cosmic being.

Nritesvara paubha also depicts the working of *tantric* philosophy. Shiva is in union with Shakti, and they are dancing in cosmic rhythm. There are numerous cohesive images to reinforce the central motif of the union. The head of Shiva itself is in the shape of *Shivalinga*. The top of the shrine represents the erect phallus. The lotus and the *vajra* in the hands of the

deities also symbolize the union of Shiva and Shakti. The appearance of *vajra*, the symbol used in Buddhism, in the hand of Shiva suggests the religious harmony and the cross flow of images and symbols in Hinduism and Buddhism. Along the top, various forms of Shiva are seated with their Shaktis on their lap in various *mudras* (gestures). Many dancing figures surround the central deities. The overall organization contributes to the union of Shiva and Shakti and their cosmic dance in rhythm.

Other various symbols also express the themes of union and enlightenment. The sword in the hand of Shiva symbolizes the “wisdom that cuts through the darkness of ignorance” (M. Shakya 29). Bow symbolizes balance, and arrow is the symbol of “one-pointed devotion” through which one can attain the “goal of enlightenment” (27). These symbols suggest that cutting through the ignorance, and one-pointed devotion lead to the union of the self to the cosmic being. Shiva’s many heads facing toward different directions symbolize that he can see the whole world. Many hands symbolize that all the works and activities can be executed and completed simultaneously and quickly using the instruments in the hands. This means that after the union of the self and the universal soul, nothing exist except the one universal being. Everything is within itself and nothing remains to be done. The self is in continuous bliss. Thus, the *paubha* of *Nritesvara* is symbolic, mystical and magical, and attempts to resolve the dualities of sacred and profane and individual self and cosmic being.

The Buddhist *paubha*, *Samvara and Vajravarahi in Union* dated 1450 (Fig. 20), also attempts to resolve the dualities of sacred and profane, and individual self and cosmic being. Buddhist god Samvara in blue complex is in union with his *prajna*, Varahi in red at the centre of the composition. Except for the ornaments, both of them are naked. Vajravarahi’s

legs encircle Samvara's waist in a passionate embrace while his two hands encircle her waist. His two hands hold *vajra* and *ghanta* (bell). *Vajra* is the symbol of "Upaya" or "male principle" and *ghanta*, "Prajna" or "female principle" (Aran 221). Both of these symbols suggest the union of Samvara and Vajravarai. Both the god and the goddess hold *Krtika* (chopper) in their hands "symbolizing severance of all material and this-worldly bonds" (222). In the four corners of the central figures, there are four flowering *urnakalasa*s (vases full of water) symbolizing "plenty" or absolute bliss (230). *Urnakalasa*, the image firstly popular in Hinduism is present in this Buddhist painting, which suggests the cross-flow of images and symbols, and religious harmony between Hinduism and Buddhism. Along the top and bottom various forms of Samvara and Vajravarahi are in union, which reinforce the central motif. On both sides of the aureole, huddled figures like stupa, trees, bones, corpses, flower, temples, banners, flags, parasols etc, and the bustling activities of children, saints, monks, gods, goddesses, musicians, dancers, devotees, animals etc. symbolically encompass the whole world suggesting the ecstasy in the union, and the experience that the whole world is within the copulating couple. This painting is symbolic and mystical, and depicts the harmony between sacred and profane images, and individual self and the cosmic being. Some other *paubhas* depicting the union of gods and goddesses are *Mahasamvara*, *Amoghapasa Lokesvara* and *Adi-Buddha Samantabhadra*.

Paubha paintings not only depict gods and goddesses but also the temples, stupas and shrines. *Laksacaitya Paubha* dated 1416, symbolically represents *laksa* (one hundred thousand) *caityas* or stupas. This *paubha* is related to the performance of *Laksacaitya* rite in which one hundred thousand stupas are donated. Numerous small stupas create an exciting visual pattern with architectural motif. Another *paubha*, *Svayambhunath* depicts stupa with

its surroundings. Rock formations, other shrines around it, animals, trees and roads appear around the central shrine. In addition to the central motif Svayambhunath, the artist captures the landscape.

Paubha is geometrically structured and well organized form with central motif represented by principal divinity or shrine, and the same motif is reinforced by subsidiary divinities, images and symbols. Although portraits of the donors and devotees, and landscape appear along the bottom and in the background respectively, the central image always remains dominant. Pratapaditya pal writes:

The principal divinity in a paubha could not really be removed from the centre without sacrificing his or her primacy. All subsidiary figures and narratives served to glorify the central image and their disposition also had to reflect accepted principles of geometric orderliness. Even when mountains and trees are added they are integrated into the pictorial field in a symmetrical and harmonious fashion and are really never allowed to overwhelm the importance of the figures, whether human or divine. (*The Arts* 88)

Paubha represents philosophical, “ritualistic” or “magical” themes through “rounded and sweeping” lines, and “colour has almost a modeling effect” (Ray, *Art of Nepal* 47-49). The use of rhythmic lines and colors creates the visual coherence, symmetry and harmony in painting.

The style of *paubha* paintings “resembles” to the style of earlier “manuscript paintings” to some extent (M. Shakya 12). However, *paubhas* are more structured and organized than manuscript illuminations. The figures in “outlined elongated face, large petal-shaped eyes and general costumes” in *paubha* paintings “show the impact of Rajasthani-

Mughal-Pahadi paintings” from seventeenth century (Ray, *Arts of Nepal* 51). These Indian styles of paintings have more influence on the portrait of the donors and their families than on the divine figures. General costumes consist of “long Jamahs , tight curidar pyjamahs, komabandhas, dopattas, and turbans of several types of male human figures”, and they resemble to these styles of Indian paintings (51).

After the seventeenth century, Tibetan *thankas* influenced Nepali *paubha* paintings, though there was constant influence of Nepali painting in Tibet before the seventeenth century because of the well-established trade link between these two countries. After the arrival of Mughal rulers in India, the monasteries in India did not remain the centre of learning. Thus Nepal became the centre for Tibetan pilgrims. Tibetan king Srong-Tsen Gampo is said to have married the Nepali princess, Bhrikuti, and Araniko, the renown Nepali artist with a group of artists went to China. They also assisted to spread the Nepali styles of art in Tibet. G. Tucci says that “the influx of Nepalese artists in Tibet lasted for centuries, indeed in certain epochs it became more intense, for instance during the Sa Kya Pa period, when a team of Nepalese craftsmen were invited by the abbots of these monasteries" (277). However, Tibetan *thankas* influenced Nepali *paubha* paintings after the seventeenth century (M. Shakya 13). Until then Tibet had already become a Buddhist state under the Dalai Lama who was a Buddhist monk and the king as well. The Tibetan monasteries, monks and artists played a dominant role to develop the Buddhist religion and art in other countries as well. This became possible because of the state support to the monks, artists and monasteries. The close trade link, and cross-flow of merchants and pilgrims brought the Tibetan influence in Nepali *paubha* painting after the seventeenth century.

Tibetan *thankas* are more or less similar to Nepali *paubhas* in terms of themes, techniques and medium although there are some basic differences in terms of treatment and overall style. Nepali *paubhas* have simple design, “smooth gradation of colour tones”, rhythmic flow of lines, aspects of “life and nature” and “poetic charm” (L. Bangdel, “Comparative” 117-18). But Tibetan *thankas* have wrathful deities, “mysticism”, “complexity”, “contrasty” colors and “loud overtones” (118). Tibetan *thankas* have “no modeling of colour” and appear “strictly two-dimensional” (Ray, *Arts of Nepal* 51). Clouds and mountains are more frequently presented in *thankas* than in *paubhas*. Slowly and gradually these Tibetan elements were introduced in Nepali *paubhas* seventeenth century onward. Frequent depiction of dragons, heavier garments and use of loud colors are the Tibetan influences in Nepali *paubhas*. However, Nepali artists synthesized these influences with native tradition and Mughal-Rajput styles. About various influences and their synthesis in Nepali painting, Pratapaditya Pal writes:

The most fundamental influence may be perceived in the sudden introduction of mountains with snowy peaks in late seventeenth century Nepali paintings. Although the Nepali artists did not imitate the exact forms of the hills and rock formations seen in contemporary *thankas*, the basic idea of a mountainous landscape was borrowed from Tibetan paintings which had developed a distinct style of its own by the seventeenth century. Among other features adopted were dragons and forms of clouds, flying scarves, heavier garments, floral patterns, such as the peony-like lotus on thrones, a penchant for bright and gaudy colours, of which the Tibetans were particularly fond. However, as always, apart from the idea of using elements of landscape, the

Nepali artists generally borrowed particular motifs which they combined with features taken from cotemporary Rajput pictures to create a stylistic synthesis of their own. (*The Arts* 154)

Nepali artists filtered the influences and contextualized the figures and settings to suit their purpose though they borrowed from Mughal-Rajput and Tibetan paintings.

Another type of early Nepali painting is *pata* (banner painting) which narrates the stories from religious texts like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, *Devimahatmya*, *Bhagavata purana*, scenes from Buddha's life and also some didactic stories. Thus, it is also called the narrative scroll painting. The medium of painting *pata* is like that of *paubha* but it is not structured geometrically giving emphasis to the central deity. It represents narrative pictures on a large horizontal band and sometimes pictures are separated in several segments. In such paintings artist finds more scope for the urge of creative experience than in *paubha* and it tends to be less rigid. The narrative subject matter of painting determines the length of *pata*. It is equally sacred and ceremonial like that of manuscript illuminations and *paubha*. About the religious importance of *pata* Stella Kramrisch writes:

In addition to that of evocation of and identification with the divinity, the art of *pata* served a magical purpose. By merely looking at a *pata* the faithful might achieve whatever he desired, be it illumination or health, wealth and son, a remission of his shortcomings, or an amelioration of his karma. Certain rites might be observed in preparing the cloth- or they could be omitted. All that was needed was faith and concentration on the evocative mantra, the magic formula uttered in front of the competently painted image. (46)

The process of creating and viewing *pata* are like worshipping and performing religious rituals. Many common people also can get access to the subject matter of the *pata* because of its simple design.

The eighteenth century *pata*, *Krishna Lila* (Fig. 21) depicts various narrative scenes from the *Mahabharata*. The painting shows Krishna subduing the serpent King Kalinaga who does not recognize the divine power of Krishna, Krishna working as the chariot driver of the Pandavas in the war against Kauravas, and destroying other demons.

Manavinayaka Pata dated ca.1590 narrates the story how Manavinayaka, a manifestation of Ganesha, rescues Vadava from the curse of Parvati. Shiva and Parvati are playing dice on mount Kailasa. Vadava is watching the game. Since he is a devotee of Shiva, he casts a spell, and Shiva wins the game easily. Knowing this she curses him. He falls into the ocean where many sea creatures attack him. Although many gods try to rescue him, they cannot. Finally, he worships and performs a rite to Manavinayaka, then the god rescues him from the ocean. The painting is mystical and anthropomorphic. Shiva and Parvati play dice as human beings, and Parvati becomes angry as common people.

Sringabheri Avadana Pata dated ca.1775-1800 (Fig. 22), a didactic painting, depicts the story of Sinhaketu, a hunter king and his wife Sulakshna. Since she is kind, religious and devoted wife, she requests the king not to hunt the animals. He does not listen to her. After his death, he is born in the form of buffalo because of his sin. But she is born in a religious family. Knowing that the buffalo is her husband, she always remains around him. She prays to god to rescue her husband. One day wild animals kill him. She collects and throws the bones in the river and brings water in the horns. She cleans the spot where the buffalo was dead, constructs a stupa, and worships there. After some days, the buried horn changes into

gold, her husband in the form of handsome young man comes out and takes his wife by the hand. This didactic parable in visual form deals about sin, rebirth and the importance of stupa.

In most of the *patas*, figures are in profile and their eyes are big as in Rajput painting. The artists capture the landscape in the background using mountain range, snowy peaks, clouds, flowers, green trees and flying birds. About the various features of *pata* Pratapaditya Pal writes:

[T]he background of these paintings is densely packed with florid ornamental devices which draw their designs or patterns largely from vegetative forms. The motifs are employed with astounding variation and compromise of both naturalistic and stylized floral elements, curving and convoluting with slender and intertwined tendrils, swirling rhizomes verging on arabesques and exuberant cloud or flame patterns. . . . The faces are almost always shown in three-quarter profile and are distinguished by long noses, prominently loped chin and bow-shaped eyes with their ends projecting slightly (*The Arts* 89-99).

Despite the fact that landscape in the background is captured splendidly, the narrative aspect is dominant in the compositions.

In early Nepali *patas* figures appear in round and modelled mass because of the subtle lines and gradation in color but in the *patas* of the mid-eighteenth century onward figures seem to be two-dimensional because of the solid outlines and sharp lines. Amita Ray Compares early *patas* and the *patas* of later dates:

In early Nepalese banner-painting one can still see the round modelled line controlling the round mass modelled in colour. But soon broad expanse and

tight and solid outline begin to show less substance. They tend to be brittle and modeling desiccated; increasingly the figures are shown in flat profile or frontality, and sharp lines and acute angles tend to characterize them. At a still somewhat later date, that is, by about the later half of the eighteenth century certain elements of contemporary Pahadi painting from the western Himalayas, seem to have made themselves felt in Nepalese painting. (*Art of Nepal* 51)

In comparison to early *patas*, the stylistic quality of later works has declined. Figures looked flat and without substance due to the lack of modeling effect.

In manuscript illuminations and *paubhas* divine as well human figures are represented naked from the waist upwards except the donors, his family and devotees who are attired. But in *patas* all the figures like gods, goddesses, men and women are dressed in Mughal-Prajput style. The human figures look more like common people in narrative scrolls than in manuscript illuminations and *paubhas*. The depiction of the portraits of the donors and the frequent use of landscapes as a background suggest that narrative scrolls are incorporating more worldly elements than earlier paintings.

Next type of religious painting is wall painting. It shares the subject matters and stylistic features of manuscript illuminations, *paubhas* and *patas*, and it is also narrative, didactic, symbolic, mystical and anthropomorphic, and suggests the religious harmony between Buddhism and Hinduism, assimilation of sacred and profane images, and attempts to resolve the duality between individual self and cosmic being. The earliest surviving wall painting is that of the eighteenth century in the palace of Bhupatindra Malla at Bhaktapur although Chinese ambassador Wang Hsuan-tse admired the paintings on the walls of the

houses in Kathmandu Valley in the seventh century. Various deities including the scenes related to Sati Devi have been represented in these paintings. Sati Devi is married to Shiva against the will of her father Dakshaprajapati. In a religious ceremony, her father invites all the gods but Shiva because he lives in crematory wearing snakes, eating *dhaturo* (a plant with narcotic drug in its fruit) and smoking marijuana. He hates Shiva. Parvati can not endure the pain and dies jumping into the fire. Later Shiva comes and takes Sati Devi on his shoulder, and wanders to various places. Shiva, in spite of his divine status, shows his tragic experience as the mortal human beings. Different parts of her body rot and fall in different places and these places become the *Shakti Pithas* (religious places). This narrative painting is anthropomorphic, for the activities of gods and goddesses resemble with the human beings.

The paintings on the walls of Taleju temple at Bhaktapur depict the battle between Bhairavi and demons Sumbha and Nisumbha. On the walls of Kumarighara, there is a beautiful portrait of King Jayaprakash Malla who seems to be praying to the goddess Kumari. This painting also suggests the growing popularity of portrait painting in Nepal. As in *patas* human figures appear in profile and paintings seem two-dimensional. The paintings capture the landscape with mountains, trees, temples and stupas in the background. The coexistence of temples and stupas in the same painting suggests the religious harmony between Hinduism and Buddhism. About the style of wall paintings Ram Niwas Pandey writes:

Though imbued with frontalism and two dimensionlism, the paintings gleam with a vigor which is essentially aesthetic in flavour. The representation of the landscape and the vegetal surroundings in the portraiture is not less enchanting and resplendent. The segmented chaityas and the tiered pagodas,

gleaming with their pinnacles at the apexes, provide us unshakable divine assurances of the pleasure and the emancipations from the bondage of the earth. (43)

In the wall paintings, the figures are two dimensional. Landscape is captured in the background. Some paintings incorporate Buddhist stupas and Hindu temples in the same composition suggesting religious harmony.

The use of colors and the structure of the wall paintings are like that of manuscript illuminations, miniature paintings, *paubhas* and *patas*. Amita Ray writes:

The colours used are the same as in the miniatures, namely orpiment, vermillion, indigo, chalk or conch-shell white and black. Mural paintings of Nepal belong to the distinct west Himalayan tradition of late medieval times . . . the paintings are in fact miniatures and scroll paintings transferred on the walls in somewhat large dimensions (*Art of Nepal* 53).

As manuscript illumination, *paubha* and *pata* share Mughal-Rajput styles, wall paintings also depict the influence of these Indian paintings.

In the wall painting, there are “slight attempts at modeling with the help of subdued tones of color, but generally speaking, the treatment is flat, and colours that strike the eyes are red and gold” (Ray, *Arts of Nepal* 53). Painting walls is a living tradition in Nepal. They are still executed “at the time the building of a house is completed or when a marriage is celebrated in the house” (Macdonald et al. 143).

I have already discussed various types of religious paintings separately in terms of subject matters and stylistic features. Now, I would like to present some views on religious painting as a whole. Manuscript illuminations, miniature paintings, *paubhas*, *patas* and

murals are religious paintings. They represent the characters of Hindu and Buddhist mythologies, and narrate didactic and magical events. Sometime the themes are expressed through symbols. Despite the representation of divine character and mythical world, they appear to be anthropomorphic. They attempt to resolve the dualities between Buddhism and Hinduism, sacred and profane, and individual self and cosmic being. These paintings are worshipped and prayed as images and icons of gods and goddesses. They are rarely taken as purely aesthetic objects. They are mainly based on philosophy and myth. Amita Ray writes:

Without considering religion and philosophy as a foundation, no genuine evaluation can be made of the basic character of Nepali Art. The symbols of art here voice the same truth as philosophy and myth. Like that of India, Nepal has always aimed at achieving a synthesis of the dualities of life. The worldliness and spirituality are complementary not antagonistic in Nepali thought. In the same way, perhaps life and art, the religious and secular, even Buddhism and Brahmanism are not separate entities. ("Plastic Art" 10-11)

These paintings not only depict the concept of transcendental nature of the deities, and the hope of the artists, donors, devotees and viewers to achieve heaven after death but also make them aware of the fact that their sin can lead them to hell and purgatory. In this sense they are didactic. Percy Brown writes:

Nepalese artist either elevates the observer by the transcendental nature of his celestial conceptions or terrorizes him into docility by his suggestions of purgatory. It is an art, therefore, as far as the people themselves are concerned, which inspires awe and veneration more than pleasure and worshipped rather than admired. (130)

Early Nepali paintings are the integral parts of the religio-cultural life of the then society. They were created to worship and pray rather than for aesthetic pleasure. Didacticism was the focus and feature of life and art.

According to Manabajra Vajracharya, early Nepali paintings deal about the four important elements like birth, death, life and the wishes of men (“Paramparagat” 8). Philosophically birth is the symbol of construction and creation, death is the symbol of religion and thinking about God, life is the symbol of sexual union, and the wish of man/woman is the symbol of *mahasukha*, absolute bliss or orgasm (8). These inspiring forces are intertwined in early Nepali painting.

Early Nepali painting is anthropomorphic in the sense that man becomes the “pivot” in the foreground, and mountains, trees, flowers and animals always remain in the background (Ray, “Plastic Art” 13). Gods and goddesses are “created in the image of man” having both “benign and malevolent” nature “just as each human being is capable of both kindness and anger” (Pal, *Nepal* 12). The “youthful figures” of gods, goddesses and human beings always present the “vibrant sap of life” suggesting the prosperity, health and seductive beauty of human body (Ray, “Plastic Art” 14). Ray further says:

Thus in order to present liveness and glossy smoothness men are always handsome heroes the women are eternally sixteen, the symbols of seductive beauty. Indeed in the art of Nepal there is no portrayal of old age, not even in those highly individualized portrait-statues which are being considered as thoroughly realistic representing the actual likeness possibly from the life. The plastic art of Nepal is not realistic rather it elevates everything to a sphere of happiness and youth . . . since youth is predominantly the characteristic

visual face of fertility and since women are the main instruments of procreation, the women in their youthful countenance are represented both in visual as well as in literary art as the figures of abundance This abstract quality gets expression in the smooth and flexible rotundity of forms and the rhythm of their lines and in their transparent luminosity of texture (14).

The goddesses are “represented as wearing many ornaments (nanalamkaravati), charmingly youthful and endowed with fresh blossoming breasts” (Pal, *Nepal* 10). When the goddess Durga is depicted destroying Mahishasura in the manuscript illumination of *Devimahatmya* and narrative scrolls, her face does not show any anger and even her victim does not express the agony even if he has got mortal wound. The Buddha appears as youthful figure even in his death bed. The concepts of anger and old age are “perpetually banished from the idealized world” (10). Early Nepali paintings depict the dignity of human beauty and youth as metaphors of human qualities rather than physical features.

In the portrayal of divine image both “physical desire and spiritual grace” are combined successfully (11). The union of Samvara and Vajravarahi, and Shiva and Parvati depict the passionate embrace even though they symbolize spiritual values. Thus, the spiritual images and symbols “do not reflect a negation of the world of senses” in early Nepali paintings (11). Such themes get expressed through the use of form which has “flowing, unceasing and plastic linear movement” (Ray, “Plastic Art” 11). Harmonious colors, “undulating” curves and the “balanced line of contours” radiate “a living force which seems aware of its search for understanding” (12-15).

Until sixteenth century the murals of Ajanta caves, the eastern Indian manuscript illuminations and miniature paintings influence early Nepali paintings. Seventeenth century

onward, they were influenced by Mughal-Rajput painting. However, Nepali artists modulated the styles of these alien forms with their “long artistic tradition” shaped by Nepali history and context “according to their needs and requirements” (Prem Uprety 173). Thus, in Nepali paintings, “[s]omething original born out of their innovation” (Dilli Raman Regmi 628).

Early Nepali painting did not only share foreign influences but also influenced the arts of other countries. Tibetan arts were influenced by Nepali arts until the seventeenth century. In Stella Kramrisch’s word: “The art of Nepal not only became famous in itself but also played an initiatory and decisive part in the art of Tibet and China” (16). However, seventeenth century onward, “Tibetan influence continued to flow through the Himalayan region” and brought stylistic changes in Nepali paintings (Ratan Kumar Rai 35). But the Nepali artists contextualized these influences through the use of distinct colors, Nepali setting and facial features of the people. Thus, Nepal was “no longer a mere stopping place for traffic between India and Tibet, but it had become the starting point and the goal of cultural and scientific exchanges with Tibet and East Asia” (Waldschmidt et al. 5).

Later eighteenth century onward, breaking away from symbolic, mystical and didactic religious paintings, portrait painting developed independently with fine representation of real people. The portraits of the donors, their family and devotees were frequently executed along the bottom of many *paubhas*, *patas* and murals. The portraits of a few Malla Kings are also found in these paintings. But these portraits occupy comparatively small space along the bottom giving emphasis to the divinities, and they play subsidiary role in the overall organization of the painting. Moreover, they have religious significance, for the donors and the kings appear in the postures and gestures of praying and worshipping to the deities whose

figures are above them. From later eighteenth century, the portraits of the kings, his family and other higher officials also exist independently without their association to any religious image. However, religious paintings like manuscript illuminations, *paubhas*, *patas* and murals were executed simultaneously. In these portraits, realism replaces the mystical, magical and mythological elements of earlier paintings. The artists attempted to reproduce the fine representation of the real person. Every part is well finished in detail through the use of subtle lines and harmonious colors. King Girvanyuddha Vikram Shah's portrait dated 1815 (Fig. 7), for instance, depicts these features. The mild mannered young King is portrayed in profile. "Such realistic portraits of royalty became fashionable in Nepal" because of the "Mughal and Rajput influence" (Pal, *Art of Nepal* 231). The figure of the King is within oval frame which is derived from the "European tradition" (231). The decorated oval frame with golden sunburst and blue flowers resemble to the "Persian book illustrations" (231). Such portraits suggest the entry and growth of realistic paintings in the nineteenth century Nepal.

During the Rana regime later nineteenth century onward, western media and realistic techniques heavily influenced the Nepali portrait painting, and it flourished and reached to the climax. Jung Bahadur Rana, the first Prime Minister of the Rana regime, visited Europe in 1850. He got exposed to the western paintings and fascinated by them. In Europe, he got his portraits made in the western realistic style and brought them to Nepal (N. Singh, *Samasasamaik* 35). The paintings of Victoria and Albert were sent to Nepal from England in Jung Bahadur's request and now they are in National Museum, Chhauni. Nepali court artist, Bhajuman Chitrakar, accompanied Jung Bahadur in his journey to Europe. Bhajuman also got exposure to new forms of art in Europe and he enriched his perception and style. After returning to Nepal, Jung Bahadur made Bhajuman execute portraits of himself and his family

members in the western style. About Bhajuman's visit to Europe and its impact in Nepali painting Abhi Subedi writes:

Bhajuman's visit to Europe can be considered a significant event in Nepali portrait making. Though direct evidence of his emulation of the western paintings can not be found but from the artist's execution of Queen's portrait and her words of praise for the portrait can be taken as evidence of the fact that he had keen eyes for arts-for the portraits he brought western techniques of paintings home. As a very talented artist he must have learnt many things from his European visit. A careful study of the portrait he executed after his return to Nepal from the European visit can show many things in terms of the western influence in Nepali art ("Nepali Utopia" 121).

Other Nepali artists also learnt this style from Bhajuman and his paintings, and western influence spread rapidly.

Next Rana Prime Minister, Chandra Sumshere, took another Nepali artist Dirghaman Chitrakar in his journey to Europe in 1908. More western influences came to Nepal with Dirghaman's visit to Europe. The Ranas employed artists to do the portraits of the royalties since no other forms of art were encouraged. They executed a large number of portraits after 1850 and this tradition continued throughout the "entire period of the Rana rule in Nepal which lasted up to 1950" (122). The portrait of Mathabar Shingh Thapa dated 1986 BS by Dirghaman Chitrakar shows the influence of western medium like the use of oil color and western realistic style. However the portrait in slightly profile and costumes depict that the artist also exploited the Mughal-Rajput style. But in the portrait of Jung Bahadur Rana dated 1993 BS (Fig. 23), the same artist has fully exploited the western medium and realistic style.

The costumes of Jung Bahadur depict that not only the artist but also the rulers were fascinated and influenced by the western fashion of the aristocrats.

To encourage the Nepali artists in the western art, Chandra Shumshere sent Chandraman Maskey and Tej Bahadur Chitrakar for training in Calcutta where the British India already established art school in 1854. Since India was the British colony, western art education was provided in this school. When these artists returned home, they exploited the western techniques in their paintings. These artists used oil color, water color, charcoal and pestle, and imported canvas in their works, and mainly their style was realistic. Later these artists worked in various schools as an art teacher. Their paintings and their teaching influenced the other young artists.

Not only the Nepali artists went to India for training but also foreign artists came to Nepal to execute the portraits and the scenes of hunting wild animals in the forest. The realistic portrait of Jung Bahadur Rana, dated 1938, which is in Kaiser library now, was painted by A. E. Harris. There are also the huge oil paintings entitled *Tiger Hunting* dated 1928 and *Rhino Hunting* dated 1930 by F. T. Daws. These representational and realistic paintings, executed in western media and style, display the cruelty of the Rana rulers. The western artist, Stigman says about his experience of the portrait painting of Juddha Shumshere:

I painted him sitting on his silver throne, dressed in the Gurkha ceremonial clothes of mulberry-coloured silk with sash, Kukri and sword, and he wore the magnificent Rana head-dress of bird of paradise plumes ringed with a circle of emeralds, and the original Naulakha seven roped necklace of emeralds and diamonds [. . .] He gave me some lovely gifts; musk, state Kukri and garlands

and old tanga paintings ; and then I prepared to return to England (qtd. in N. Singh, *Samasamaik* 40).

The works of such foreign artists also helped to bring the western influences in the field of Nepali painting. Pratapaditya Pal says: “After the mid-nineteenth century Nepali portraits were rendered entirely in the European academic tradition, often by European or Indian artists” (*The Arts* 132). The influence of the paintings of hunting wild animals by F. T. Daws can be seen in the painting *Bardahako Sikar (Tiger Hunting)* dated 1996 BS (Fig. 24) by Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. The painting depicts the hunting of tiger from the elephant back. The artist executed this painting in oil color and western realistic style. The work captures the landscape of the forest and river in the background.

The exposure of the Nepali artists and the rulers to the western art not only brought changes in the field of painting, but also had great impact in the field of sculpture and architecture of Nepal. The Ranas built Gola Baithak, Seto Darbar, Lal Darbar and Simhadarbar in western style, and got the walls and ceilings decorated with the paintings executed in western techniques (Ram Kumar Pandey, “Nepali Chitrakaloko” 15-16). The royalties “commissioned the busts in Europe” brought to Nepal and installed in public places because of “their love for themselves, and love for projecting their awe and power” (Subedi, “Nepali Utopia” 121). The sculptures of the Rana rulers’ huge figures riding horses also suggest their “love for power and exclusiveness” (121). About the condition of art in the period of the Rana rule and its impact on the development of contemporary Nepali painting Manuj Babu Mishra writes:

During the century of Rana autocracy in Nepal before 1950, seeds of contemporary art were germinated in the hearts of Nepalese artists. That was

the era in which Rana rulers visited European countries and were greatly impressed by the exotic western style and methods of arts. Artists who joined the royal entourage had good opportunity to be acquainted with the new techniques, styles and techniques practiced in the western world, consequently, the influence they brought with them gave way to new styles and techniques in the construction of palacial buildings and sculptures in Nepal. Meanwhile painting in oil was initiated. Some talented young artists were sent to study fine arts to Calcutta Art school in British India, subsequently, these trained artists, when they returned to Nepal were commissioned to paint huge oil paintings in western methods and media. (“Contemporary” 19-20)

Nepali artists and rulers’ visit to Europe, importing of western art in Nepal, sending the artists to take training in the Calcutta School of Art, and inviting the western artists in Nepal are the elements which brought western styles, techniques and art media in Nepal. These secular and realistic paintings break away from traditional Nepali style and Mughal-Rajput influences.

The images of mountains, trees, flowers and animals in the background of manuscript illuminations, *paubhas*, *patas* and murals play the complementary role to enhance the meaning of the central figures portrayed in the foreground but these images came into foreground in the form of landscape painting in the period of the Rana rule. On the walls and ceilings of their huge palaces built in western style, they made the artists paint the landscape to decorate their rooms (N. Singh, *Samasamaik* 66). In the landscapes, the images like sun, moon, mountain, rivers, sea, plants, flowers, animals and birds also appear in realistic form

(63-68). Since the aristocrats constructed theatres for entertainment, they made the artists decorate the stage, walls, ceiling and curtains with various landscapes (67). Some of the artists who painted landscapes are Harsa Narayan Chitrakar, Sanu Chitrakar, Bakhatman Chitrakar and Dirghamn Chitrakar. Chadraman Maskey and Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, the well-trained artists in Calcutta developed the landscape as an independent genre of painting, for earlier artists executed landscapes to decorate the palaces and theatres (69).

Some still-life paintings were also used to decorate the walls of the palaces but not as frequently as landscapes. Amar Chitrakar, Tej Bahadur Chitrakar and Chandraman Maskey painted a few still-life paintings independently (73).

The images of animals and birds also appeared independently without their religious connotations after mid-nineteenth century. In manuscript illuminations, *paubhas*, *patas* and murals, the images of birds and animals like *garuda*, duck, peacock, lion, fish, tortoise, bull, elephant, rat, horse, snake and tiger are associated to various deities and most of them are the vehicles of the gods and goddesses. They play the subsidiary role for the central motif in these early paintings. But after mid- nineteenth century, in some paintings of animals, in National Museum, Kathmandu, the artists represent animals in the foreground giving central position and include the Himalaya, trees and rocks in the background. Some of the represented animals are tiger, wild cat, bear and fox. The names of the artists are unknown. According to Narayan Bahadur Singh, these painting must be executed by Bajuman Chitrakar in the sixties of the nineteenth century and these are the finest realistic paintings of animals ever painted (*Samasamaik* 86-87). These paintings are secular, for they do not have any religious connotation.

During the Rana regime, the erotic figures also appeared in paintings without any religious significance. Use of erotic images was not new practice in Nepali art but in the earlier paintings like *paubhas* they have spiritual and symbolic value. According to Narayan Bahadur Singh, the paintings of three female nudes in National Museum do not have such religious connotations but these paintings are not found now in the museum.

The paintings executed during the Rana regime like portraits, landscapes, still lives, the paintings of hunting scenes, nudes, and the paintings of animals break away from the earlier paintings like manuscript illuminations, *paubhas*, *patas* and murals in the sense that they are secular in terms of theme, realistic in terms of representation and western in terms of techniques and media.

Contemporary Nepali paintings are heavily influenced by contemporary western and Indian paintings after the end of autocratic Rana regime in 1950. The artists started to go for art training to various western and Indian cities and began to express themselves freely. Lain Singh Bangdel, Laxman Shrestha and Urmila Upadhyay took art education from Paris. Primila Giri and Dipak Simkhada later went to America for art education though primarily they studied in India. These artists learnt and practiced the contemporary western trends, styles and techniques of western art. When they returned home, they directly brought the western influences in Nepali painting. The influences of impressionism, expressionism, fauvism, abstractionism, cubism, surrealism and abstract expressionism can be seen in contemporary Nepali painting.

Western influence not only directly came to Nepal but also through India. A large number of contemporary artists went to Indian cities for art education. Uttam Nepali went to Lakhanau. Ramananda Joshi, Shashi Shah, Indra Pradhan, Batsa Gopal Vaidhya, Krishna

Manandhar, Raj Manandhar, Govinda Dangol, Sudha Manandhar, Sunita Shrestha and Madan Chitrakar studied art in Bombay. Surendra Raj Bhattari, Kiran Manandhar, Mohan Narasingh Rana, Madhabendra Pratap Singh, Jit Bahadur Rayamajhi, Sudha Ratna Khatiwada and Bijay Thapa went to Banaras to study art. Pramila Giri and Vidya Shrestha studied art at Shantiniketan in Calcutta. Ambika Shrestha, Shankar Raj Singh Suwal, Dipak Simkhada and Shilupyari went to Baroda. Many contemporary Nepali artists are still going to various Indian and western cities for art education.

Western techniques of art were taught in Indian art schools. India remained British colony until 1947. British-India government established art schools in Madras (1850), Calcutta (1854) and Bombay (1857). Later other many schools were established in various cities. In these schools, mainly the western trends of art, styles and techniques were taught. Even after the independence of India from colonialism, the cultural legacy did not break. Nepali artists, who studied in these Indian art schools, certainly learned the western and Indian styles of art.

When Nepali artists returned home, they brought the western and Indian influences in Nepal. Some of them became the art teachers and diffused their knowledge to other many students. The western influence not only came directly from the west but also through India. Thus, before going on to textually trace the alien influences in contemporary Nepali painting, some forms and techniques of western and Indian paintings are discussed in chapter III. The exposure to these alien forms and techniques will help appreciate the working of these influences in Nepali hybrid art forms.

Summary

Early Nepali painting is referential. It refers to the Hindu and Buddhist myths, religio-cultural rituals, and the objects and events of the world. Early Nepali painting is as old as Nepali culture, for painting is a part of cultural rituals like naming ceremony, *Bratabandha*, marriage and other religious ceremonies and festivals like *Durga Puja* and *Deepawali*. It has inter-art relationship, for recitation of scriptures, painting, music, installation and performance are practiced simultaneously. But the earliest Nepali painting is found in the form of manuscript illumination. Both Hindu and Buddhist manuscripts were illuminated. Buddhist manuscript illuminations depict the scenes from Buddha's life, various forms of Buddhas, *bodhisattvas* and other Buddhist deities. Hindu manuscript illuminations depict the images of Hindu deities like Shiva, Parvati, Vishnu, Laxmi, *Shivalinga*, Durga etc., ten incarnations of Vishnu and other narrative scenes related to these deities. These paintings are didactic, symbolic, mystical and anthropomorphic. They depict the religious harmony between Hinduism and Buddhism, for Buddhist and Hindu deities coexist in the same composition.

Paubha, another kind of Nepali painting, was painted on clothes. It has principal deity or other religious images at the centre and other subsidiary deities, images and symbols around it. It has tightly organized geometrical structure, which is also used as a *yantra* for concentration and meditation to assimilate oneself with cosmic being. In some *paubhas*, gods and goddesses are depicted in the posture of sexual union. These paintings exploit the *tantric* philosophy and attempt to resolve the duality between sacred and profane.

Patas were also painted on clothe, and depict the narrative and didactic scenes from Hindu religious texts like the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* and *Devimahatmya*, and also the

scenes from Buddha's life. Wall paintings or the murals deal with the similar themes like that of manuscript illuminations, *paubhas* and *patas*, and executed in similar styles.

Later eighteenth century onward, breaking away from symbolic, mystical, magical and didactic religious paintings, portrait painting developed independently as a secular form with the fine representation of the real person. Later nineteenth century onward, during the Rana regime, western media like oil color, water color, charcoal, pestle and imported canvas were used, and portraits were executed in western realistic style. Landscapes, still lives and the scenes of hunting were also painted in western style independently without religious significance. In whole, early Nepali paintings are representational, for they represent the myths, cultural images, and object and events of the world. In such context, contemporary western and Indian art forms entered in the domain of Nepali art.

III. Sources of Influence: Western and Indian Arts

Chapter II. has studied various types of early Nepali painting like painting as an integral part of religio-cultural rituals, Mithila folk art, manuscript illumination, *paubha*, *pata*, mural and portrait, and discussed their subject matters and stylistic features. On the basis of the study, second chapter concludes that early Nepali painting is referential. But after 1950, because of the cultural encounter between these early forms and western techniques, Nepali painting appears to be non-objective and plural breaking away from the referential mode of representation. The artists exploit the western techniques as tools to express the native contents. Then the questions arise, which western techniques do they use? And what are the characteristics and features of these western forms? The first part of this chapter answers these questions exploring the western art techniques and the latter half focuses on Indian artistic traditions and their influences.

The western art forms like impressionist, post-impressionist, fauvist, expressionist, cubist, abstractionist, surrealist, abstract expressionist, minimal art, pop art, conceptual art, installation art and performance art influence Nepali painting. I will discuss the techniques of these art forms with some details.

Impressionist painting does not represent the objects or images of reality as they are but captures the impression of them as perceived by the artist. As John Canady said, impressionist artist represents the "impression of thing on the canvas hastily which he perceives from the object at particular transitory moment" (182). Since the impression of the thing of that particular moment can change with no time with the change in weather and the intensity of light, the artist attempts to capture the impression hurriedly neglecting fine outline and smooth gradation of colours, employing the play of light and shade with

contrastive colours suggesting "incompleteness" in the figure (182). The artists "shatter the surface of their canvas into thousands of fragmented tints" and painting becomes "a rough texture of dots and dabs of paint" (183-185). The painting becomes "a bare hint of the forms" because of the "mere coloured patches" created through the use of "rapid strokes" (409-10). The artists explore the "vibration of light" and practice "broken colours" discarding the soft colours like gray and brown (Jean Leymarie 13). Rita Gilbert explains how impressionists create painting:

The Impressionist attempted to paint what the eye actually sees, rather than what the brain interprets from visual cues. For example if you look at a house in the distance and you know intellectually that the house is painted a uniform colour of yellow, you might "see" all one shade of yellow, because your brain tells you that is correct. In purely visual terms, however, your eyes register many vibrations of yellow, depending on how light strikes the house and the shadows it creates. This is what the Impressionists were after- the true visual impression, not the version that is filtered through the knowing brain. (459)

Although painting looks flat viewed from near, the "dazzling juxtapositions of pure colours that merged when seen a certain distance from the canvas" which is called the "optical mixture" (Laymarie 13-14). The artists capture the image of the object as it appears at the particular moment discarding the previously known shape and colour combination.

The impressionists break away from the tradition of painting pictures inside the studio. They prefer to capture the impressions of the objects at the spot in the open air. In open air, one does not "usually perceive such even gradation from dark to light" because of the "harsh contrast in the sunlight" (Gombrich, *The Story* 406). Impressionists also used

"cheap rail travel" to go to the open air like seashore and countryside, and back to studio carrying tubes of colour, and canvas. Although such kind of painting techniques were in practice from the early seventies, critics coined the term 'impressionism' in 1874 viewing the group exhibition of paintings, particularly the *Impression: Sunrise* (Fig. 25) painted by Claude Monet.

Impressionism differs from realism in terms of technique, presentation and form rather than content and subject matter. Realist artists gave emphasis on clear outline, smooth gradation of colours, and detailed and well-finished form. Leymarie shows contrast in impressionist and earlier paintings:

As the universal principle of their style, light was the element of reality chosen expressly to reveal no more of reality than the shifting flux of appearances, in other word, the immediate, virgin form taken by sensations before they can be acted upon by will, reason or the passions. The ideal of impressionism lies within the concrete limits of visual sensation; hence the character of autonomy and sensitive receptivity that sets it apart from both romanticism and realism, whose progress it interrupted and whose scope it considerably extended. The realist painter takes his stand on intellectual ground and orders his sensations with respect to what he already Knows; in other words, he fits them into the traditional molds of colour lines, "correct" anatomy, perspective, chiaroscuro and all that goes with it. Impressionism creates free forms of subjectivity, giving back at the same time both a livelier and a more lifelike interpretation of the world than a realist's objective image of it. (27-28)

Impressionism extended the artists' scope for using their subjectivity. These paintings present a "sense of immediacy", "freshness" and "luminosity" (W. Beckett 294). The use of contrastive colours and the play of light and shade give the picture its freshness.

The renowned impressionists are Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, Mary Cassatt, Camille Pissarro, Alfred Sisley and Barthe Morisot. Though all of them followed impressionism, they differed from each other in terms of the selection of subject matter and their treatment. Monet, in his seascapes, landscapes and snowscapes sometimes with sunrise and sunset, using "small, distinct, comma-like brushstrokes" registers the "most fleeting" and "transient effects of atmospheric light" (Denis Rouart 57). He created stimulating visual effects of gleams of sunlight, rippling water, mist, haze or fog. In some of his paintings, he created the impressions of the images like floating lily pads, reeds, and bridge with his "vivid brushstrokes of pure colour" which give a "dazzling brilliance" (Gilbert 459). Monet remained impressionist throughout his life though other artists broke away from impressionism.

Sweetness of the friendship, parties, restaurant, and the beauty of women are the subject matters of August Renoir's paintings. He also presented monumental figures in the foreground and landscape in the background. His paintings have "delineation of forms" and "feathery softness of his touch" (Lynton 797). Edgar Degas gives emphasis on drawing and "meticulously planned composition" (Gilbert 460). He presented the "unusual angle of sight, the 'peephole' view of a scene, and his composition was strongly influenced by the complex spatial relationships in Japanese prints" (460). Instead of "soft-bodied" girls, Degas portrayed "average women caught in extreme pose", and he has been "accused of misogyny" (Lynton 797). Camille Pissarro depicted working class people in the foreground of his landscapes.

Barthe Morisot depicted characters in garden or domestic interiors like charming room and balcony. Her paintings present her "airy style" through the use of free brushstrokes (Gilbert 460). Mary Cassatt mainly portrayed child and mother through the use of Japanese "woodcuts" (Matthew et al. 527). For impressionists, an object can give different impressions depending on perspective, light and time. After impressionism, the art of painting has more proximity to the artists' subjective experience rather than to its dependence upon external world.

Postimpressionist artists like Georges Seurat, Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin and Paul Cezanne broke away from impressionism and developed their own new themes and styles in the mid-eighties though they shared the subjective and non-realistic techniques of impressionism. Seurat created visual patterns of tiny dots of various colours on his canvas. The surface of the canvas in between the dots is visible when the painting is viewed from near. If one views the painting from the particular distance, the dots "fuse in the eye by a process called optical mixture and offer a particularly vivid representation of the original colour complex" (Lynton 798). This painting technique is known as pointillism or divisionism. Since the process is relatively mechanical and laborious one, the artist works "slowly and methodically" (Matthew et al. 528). The features of the technique can be seen in Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (Fig. 26). Seurat's technique differs from impressionism and realism, for he uses dots to create images instead of brushstrokes and linear movement of colours.

On the other hand, Vincent van Gogh exploited colour to "convey emotion more than to represent object" (Beckett 308). His colours suggest anguish and profound melancholy. The images and colours have symbolic value. For example, lamp symbolizes "calm and

security" and star is the symbol of "faith" (Albert Skira 62). Similarly, deep ultramarine blue symbolizes "infinity", and red and green symbolize "terrible things" and man's "passions" respectively (62). Sometimes he presents colour for its own sake. His paintings are more expressive and subjective than the paintings of impressionists.

Paul Gauguin depicted mysterious and primitive images and life style in his paintings. He "began the movement known as primitivism- the term used to describe the west's fascination with non- western culture as well as pre-Renaissance art" (Matthew et al. 528). He was influenced by medieval stained glass, folk art, Japanese paint and oriental religions. He expresses these exotic and primitive themes through the use of "brilliant high-keyed colours", "strong outline" and "flattened forms" (Gilbert 462). Gauguin's *Nevermore* (Fig. 27) depicts these aspects. Bright colours, distinct contours and two dimensional colour, to some extent, resemble to early Nepali art forms.

Paul Cezanne's paintings are influenced by "mythical pastoral world of Renaissance Paganism" (Meyer Schapiro 8). He painted landscape, still-life and portraits. Erotic figures and "sexual themes" are more frequent (14). His paintings have "solidity and geometric order" (Gilbert 462). Cezanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (Fig. 28), for instance, presents solidity and geometric order. In his paintings "opposed qualities are joined in a scrupulously controlled play" and the forms appear to be harmonious and integrated (Schapiro 40). Another post-impressionist artist Edvard Munch expressed "profound personal disturbances that made his streets echo with fear, filled landscape with death and turned woman into vampire" (Lynton 817). His paintings suggest the cruelty, morbidity and restlessness of contemporary world. Though these post-impressionist artists firstly practiced impressionism, later they developed their own styles which are distinct from impressionist paintings.

Fauvist paintings create more distance from objective world than that of post-impressionists through the use of arbitrary colours. Fauvism, an art movement which began in 1905, gave emphasis on expression through the use of harsh, fantastic, bright, "antinaturalistic" and "expressionistic" colours on the canvas (Ray Faulkner et al. 432). The French word 'fauve' means wild beast. French critic Louis Vauxcelles gave this name viewing the paintings of this movement. The colours of these paintings are powerful, arbitrary and disharmonious as the wild beasts. Fauvists gave emphasis on expression through colours rather than the images. Colours and images express the inner feelings of artist rather than the objects and events of the world. Some fauvists are Henri Matisse, Maurice de Vlaminck, Andre Derain, Marquet and Roualt. Matisse's *The Woman with the Hat* (Fig. 29), for example, depicts antinaturalistic and arbitrary colours. Fauvists were inspired by the colour scheme of van Gogh's paintings but they moved ahead than that. Matisse, the leader of this movement, was heavily influenced by African "tribal art" (Beckett 334). Some of his young female figures "pose in Moorish costumes and turbanlike headdress" (Jacques Lassaigne 95). Some of his paintings depict the "Indian ink" and themes of Hindu culture (34). Matisse's paintings are complex to understand, and demand the viewer's imagination to find organization. Herbert Read suggests how one should view his paintings:

To get the complete view of the scene, your vision must shift about from point to point. When it has so to speak, roamed over the whole field, then by an act of synthesis the mind retains the scene as a whole. Unconsciously, as a general rule, we focus on a central point, or prominent light, and the rest of the scene arranges itself rather vaguely round this point . . . visual comfort is a kind of equilibrium (73).

Matisse painted a "kaleidoscope of colours" that did not "derive from the direct observation of nature but from the artist's belief that colour harmonies can control the composition" (Matthew et al. 530). Fauvists used arbitrary colours in the sense that they bear "little resemblance to what one would actually see" in the surrounding (530).

Breaking the linear surface into geometric shapes cubist art differs from earlier art forms. Around 1907, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, exploiting geometric shapes, created a new form of art known as cubism. Cubism is an "attempt to analyze the corporeal qualities of an object breaking it down into its multiple elements toward a reconstructed architecture, attaining to creation" (P. R. Ramachandra Rao 6). The artists break the linear form of the objects in nature and reduce into geometrical forms like triangle, square, cylinder, cone, and jagged, crashing and swinging lines. Then they loosely join and reconstruct these shapes suggesting an image. Then the broken image suggests the depth or fourth dimension. In the painting, the "fourth dimension is movement in depth, or time, or space-time by the simultaneous presentation of multiple aspects of an object" (Canady 456).

Rita Gilbert points out the features of cubism:

Cubism is an art of facets, like the facets in a diamond, forms are flattened into planes, broken apart, and reassembled to make a striking visual (but abstract) reality. We see the same form from different angles simultaneously; top, bottom, side, and frontal views may be combined into one image. Figure and ground are treated in the same way and have equal weight in the composition, blending together into a coherent whole

Cubism was a final, dramatic declaration of independence from Renaissance ideals of natural representation and linear perspective. Picasso's

and Braque's paintings are clearly not an attempt to show us exactly what the model looked like. Instead, they represent a study of forms for their aesthetic possibilities, a statement that a work of art has its own reality and need not be a mirror of the natural world (469).

Picasso was firstly influenced by postimpressionist artist Cezanne's geometrical shapes but he went further ahead by breaking and reassembling the shapes. Later, his sculptures and paintings show the influence of African masks and tribal art.

Picasso's paintings also suggest that aesthetic pleasure is not only perceived from the final product but also on the "process" of creation (Matthew et. al 532). Picasso worked on his painting *Les Femmes d'Alger* (Fig. 30) for a long period of time but "left the painting unfinished- like a scientist's record of a failed laboratory experiment" (532). This painting portrays the prostitutes of Avignon street of Barcelona. Their provocative appearance is not enticing, since the artist creates them using chopped, flat and angular segments. It suggests the degenerated human condition of the contemporary world.

The geometrical shapes in cubism also depict machine and mechanical age without plasticity and organicity. About the cubist paintings that depict mechanical images, Herbert Read remarks:

All organic sensibility is suppressed. We are in a world of organic, of mechanic sensibility. If there is undertone, it is an undertone of the machine: the dynamo, the rock-drill, the hydraulic pump. . . . Here is no concession to sentiment, to charm, or to decorative function. Colour is often a discord, the form agitated and relentless 'there is a real and profound antagonism between sensibility and mechanism (89-99).

The fragmented shapes and images in cubist works suggest the fragmented reality, and critique the mechanical and industrial world.

Some cubist works make the synthesis of colours, verbal texts and various real materials of the world. Artists used stencil letters and numbers, sand particles and bright colours on their canvas and sometimes made the "collage" of wood-board, fabric, photograph and newspaper cut up (W. Beckett 347). The boundary between visual and verbal art, high art and low art, and art and reality blurs. Picasso's *Man with a Hat* (Fig. 31), for instance, combines both verbal text and visual images. Using geometric shapes, cubists broke the linear form of the objects in nature and moved further away from realist techniques than impressionists, post-impressionists and fauvists did.

Simultaneously with cubism, another art movement known as expressionism was also taking place during the first decade of the twentieth century. Expressionism is the "free distortion of form and colour through which a painter gives visual form to inner sensation or emotion" (Canady 420). Because of overpopulation, unemployment and mechanical society insensitive to the human feeling, contemporary industrial and technological society was drifting toward chaos, morbidity and tragedy. Anxiety-ridden individuals could not find coherence and harmony in the world full of poverty, corruption and spiritual violation. The artists could not express their troubled, tortured and disillusioned feelings in the earlier forms of art, and violently distorted the images in the "process of revealing inner responses to external reality" (430). The distorted images suggest the pathos, violence and brutality of the world. The expressionists were visionary and irrationalist, and their paintings are dynamic, exclamatory and bewildering. They expressed their inner sensation, emotion and abnormal state of mind through moody, restless, tortured and horrifying images. Sometimes, their cruel

and razor like sharp lines in the painting suggest suicide, poverty, murder and lust. The expressionists denied the "legitimacy of all logic, all order, all effort" and revealed the "morbid nonsense" of contemporary world (430). Bernard S. Myers shows the features of expressionist paintings:

Unconventionality of subject matter and frightening quality of formal and colouristic distortions, intense mysticism and sense of impending doom represents against the brutality of earthly existence and may be seen as an effort both to escape and to protest it. The vivid swirls of brilliant terrifying colours together with the tortured symbols constitute a background for morbid picture of humanity. (330)

These paintings full of sparkling and bursting energy created through shocking colours and distorted images revolt against industrialization and mechanization.

Some renown expressionists are Max Beckmann, Emil Nolde, Kathe Kollwitz, Oscar Kokoschka and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. The paintings of Beckmann depict the contemporary feeling of "grimness", "resignation" and "cynicism" (Read 85). He attacked "deeply seated hypocrisies of our social life" and "our habitual sensualities" through the use of "sardonic humour" like that of Jonathan Swift (85). To improve the society from its degenerated situation, his paintings depict some "socialistic flavour" (85). He made his images distorted and shocking with his inner feeling. Beckmann himself says, "What I want to do in my work is to show the idea hidden behind reality, to penetrate the invisible world by means of the visible- invisible world is one of personal emotions" (qtd. in Canady 438). The artist expressed inner emotions exploiting arbitrary colours and unusual images.

Emil Nolde was interested in primitive and exotic themes, and sensual colours, and executed remarkable paintings with "dynamic energy, simple rhythms, and visual tension" (Beckett 341). He hybridized "Nordic strain", "Gothic mannerism" and "brooding Negroid forms" in his paintings creating intertextual forms (Graham Reynold 25-26). Nolde's *Still Life with Masks* (Fig. 32) depicts distorted images and unusual colours. The themes of isolation and "loneliness" in urban life are depicted in Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's "haunting" images (Gilbert 470). Similarly, Kathe Kollwitz's paintings depict her own "anguish" about "a world in which there could be war and brutal death" (33).

Expressionists shared some techniques from postimpressionists and fauvists. They borrowed bold and violent brush strokes from van Gogh, distorted and horrifying images from Edvard Munch and stormy and abnormal colours from fauvists. But expressionist paintings are more subjective than earlier paintings.

Despite the fact that impressionist, postimpressionist, fauvist, cubist and expressionist works created distance from realistic art forms, they are not totally disconnected from objective world. One way or the other their images refer to the external objects and events though in distorted mode. In contrast to earlier art forms, abstract painting, in the second decade of the twentieth century, disconnected itself from the objects and events of the world, and forms and colours do not become the means but ends in themselves. The artistic "form is significant not because it informs about our world but because the form is its own significance" (F. David Martin et al. 75). The viewer travels along the lines and through the colours, and makes his own links. The viewer paints one's own composition in one's mind which provides the "spots of time" in William Wordsworth's term (77). In subsequent viewings, the viewer makes different links and creates another new composition. Thus the

painting remains forever new. Different viewers may approach the painting in different manner. Abstract painting is not a fixed and closed form but a plural one.

Since the abstract forms do not represent the objects, events and the places of the world, one need not think about past and future to associate the images, then, an abstract form has presentational immediacy, and it is "timeless within time" (82). Martin et al. have such view on abstract painting:

By eliminating reference to everything but *sensa* from their work, abstract painters liberate us from the habits of referring *sensa* to specific objects and events. They make it easy for us to focus on the *sensa* themselves even though we are not artists ourselves. Then the radiant and vivid values of the sensuous are enjoyed for their own sake, satisfying a primal fundamental need.

Abstractions can help fulfill this need if we dare, despite our habits of practice and Puritan heritage, to behold and treasure the images of the sensuous. Then instead of our controlling the *sensa*, transforming them into data or signs, the *sensa* control us, transforming us into participators. Moreover, because references to specific objects and events are eliminated, there is a peculiar abstraction from the future and the past. Abstract painting, more than any other art, gives us an intensified sense of 'here-now' or presentational immediacy. (76)

Sensa are the qualities of images, colours or lines that cause olfactory, aural, visual or tactile sensations stimulating our sense organs. In abstract painting sensation is not caused by the objects and events but by the abstract images, colours, lines and brushstrokes.

Abstract painting is an art of pure form without content, in which "only aesthetic elements seem to be present" (Schapiro 185). It fully breaks away from the classical concept of "artistic imitation" (186). Abstract form makes the viewer free from the "tyranny of time and space and the fury of functions" (Martin et al. 81). Hilla Rebay points out, "The contemplation of a non-objective picture offers a complete rest to the mind . . . from earthly troubles and thought" (7). As the enlightened person "suspends all corporeal activity", the viewer frees oneself from the activities of the mundane world contemplating in the abstract form (Michel Seuphor 26). In this sense, abstract painting works as an instrument for meditation. Abstract painter Wassily Kandinsky suggests, "serious art can function as a substitute for religion; the artist serves as a sort of 'priest' who, through mystical insight, can tap into the divine" (Matthews et al. 533). Thus abstract painting may aid to realize the spiritual value.

In Kandinsky's compositions, the "fluidity of painting" is like the "lyricism of music" (534). His *Panel for Edwin R. Campbell No. 4* (Fig. 33) presents such features. However, abstract painting demands time and creative exercise to perceive rhythm, music, and mental peace. Windy Beckett writes about Kandinsky's paintings:

It was the liberated colour, the formal independence, so entranced him. It makes us experience one, with its confusion, courage, excitement, furious motion, colour bounces, smudge smears demand prolonged contemplation What some found hard about abstract art is the very demanding, time-consuming labour that is implicitly required. Yet if we do not look long and with an open heart, we shall see nothing but superior wallpaper (355).

In the beginning, abstract art works may confuse the viewers, for they cannot link the colours and images with the objects of the world. Thus, abstract painting is subjective, non-representational, complex and plural art form.

With the beginning of surrealist movement in 1924, figurative image reappeared in the canvas but in different order with different significance. Surrealists created paintings arranging bizarre and seemingly unrelated images with free association as in dream, hallucination and fantasy. The depicted images are condensed and displaced. Surrealists violated standard morality, logical reasoning and artistic conventions revolting against any restraint on free creativity.

Surrealists took inspiration from Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis that unconscious mind determines human personality, and conscious mind plays a minor role in it. Freud's psychoanalysis challenged the ideas of the enlightenment like "human rationality" and "universal moral order" (Matthews et al. 518). Freud also compares creative artists with "daydreamers" in the sense that creative artists juxtapose bizarre and seemingly unrelated images as in dream (715). In Roland Barthes' words, surrealists created their art "by urging the hand to write as fast as possible what the head was unaware of", which is known as "automatic writing" (1131). About the characteristics of surrealism, and the influence of Freud's psychoanalysis on it, Herbert Read remarks:

I doubt if 'Surrealisme' would ever existed in its present form but for professor Freud. He is the real founder of the school, for just as Freud finds a key to the perplexities of life in the material of dreams, so the 'Surrealiste' finds his best inspiration in the same region. It is not that he merely makes a pictorial representation of dream images; his aim is rather to employ any means which

will give him access to the repressed contents of the unconscious,

Surrealism is an art without limits of any kind. Its underlying idea is the recovery, by means of what Breton calls 'a vertiginous descent into ourselves', of the whole force of the mental personality. It believes that there are hidden springs in the unconscious, and that these can be tapped if we give our imagination free rein- if we allow thought to be automatic (*Art Now* 120).

The world of unconscious mind as depicted on the canvas is a "world more real than the normal world" (120). As there is free association of images and symbols in the painting, the effect is disturbing and nightmarish, and the viewers find difficulty to organize them. The painting appeals to the unconscious mind more easily than to the conscious mind. Some surrealist artists are Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Joan Miro, Frida Kahlo, Rene Magritte and Paul Klee. Dali's *The Persistence of Memory* (Fig. 34), for instance, depicts the juxtaposition of contrary images.

After the World War II, abstract expressionism, discarding earlier tradition, gave more emphasis to the process of painting than to the finished product. Chance effects and spontaneous gestures determine abstract expressionist paintings rather than pre-planned structure. "In response to the World War II and the intellectual climate generated by it", abstract expressionists "unwilling to continue known directions or to accept any other dogma", "turned to their own private visions and insights in an anxious search for new values" (Irving Sandler 1). However, they shared some techniques from earlier paintings and exploited them in distinct manner. Since abstract expressionism is a "response to the horrors made so familiar by the war: the destruction of cities and of individuals, the barbarity of concentration camps and of mass annihilation by means of atomic explosion", and the artists

"found expression in paintings that spoke of violence and wounds", this new movement takes these aspects from expressionism (Lynton 895). They also took something from abstract paintings in the sense that abstract expressionist paintings generally do not represent the objects and events of the world. The strong influence in abstract expressionism is the surrealist technique of automatic painting. They handled colours vehemently and freely. Some abstract expressionists are Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Willem de Kooning.

Randomness and spontaneity are the characteristics of Jackson Pollock's works. On the process of painting, Pollock placed huge canvas on the floor and moved around, and at times through it "spotting, dribbling, puddling pigment" employing his "gestural technique to paint as directly as he could" (Sandler 102). Instead of applying the colours with the brush, he painted pouring and spattering them. He did not consider paint as a passive element to be used at will, but storehouse of energy for the artist to release. H. W. Janson explains about the process of Pollock's painting:

He is himself the ultimate source of energy for these forces, and he rides them as a cowboy might ride a wild horse in a frenzy of psychological action. He does not always stay in a saddle, yet the exhilaration of this contest, that strains every fibre of his being, is well worth the risk . . . his total commitment to the act of painting. Hence his preference for huge canvases that provide a "field of combat" large enough for him to paint not merely with his arms but with the motion of his whole body (540).

He interacted with his artwork and he himself was absorbed in the process of painting rather than finished product. The process of his painting became "a kind of private ritual made visible" (Sandler 110). About the process of his painting Pollock himself reveals:

When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of "get acquainted" period that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own, I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well (qtd. in Lynton 895).

His canvas is full of rawness, quickness, tremendous vitality and extremely rapid executions. He brought out the unconscious on his canvas exploiting psychic automatism and free-association. Pollock's huge canvases overwhelm the viewer with his dynamic, violent, interweaving and criss-crossed lines, colours and images. One may view such features in his *Convergence* (Fig. 35). His paintings have spontaneity of movement, fluidity of medium, and are open-ended for interpretation.

On the other hand, another abstract expressionist, Mark Rothko reduced imagery into large field of pure colours in the shape of rectangles. Sometimes, he created many rectangles with soft-edged colour like heavenly clouds, floating within the larger colour rectangle. The boundaries of inner rectangles gently blend and blur which give the inner rectangles floating effect. Floating delicate colours create a "meditative tranquility that draws the viewer in and invites contemplation" (Gilbert 484). Rothko's *Orange and Yellow* (Fig. 36), for example, depicts such colour combination. His paintings with "dim lighting and atmosphere of contemplation" have "essentially emotional rather than mystical meaning" (Beckett 370)

Next artist Willem de Kooning painted figural images though they are not the pure reproductions of the objects of the world. He used large vertical canvas, and splashed, spattered and dribbled the paint and created gestures with spontaneous brush. In his series of

"woman" paintings, he had "erotic attachment to the female body" (Lynton 896). On the process of painting, he interacts and struggles with his monster like female figures. Rita Gilbert interprets de Kooning's female figures:

De Kooning's women through the series are predatory monsters- all eyes and teeth and huge engulfing breasts. The artist himself said that he always began with an image of a young, beautiful woman, only to see it transformed on canvas, as he worked, into a hideous nightmare creature. We have a sense of de Kooning struggling against this woman in his painting, struggling to carve her up and subdue her, using the weapons of harsh, slashing brushstrokes and intense colours. But the more he cuts, the more menacing his woman-monster becomes, until she threatens to destroy the artist who created her. (483)

The woman figure reveals itself as a compilation of "fragmented anatomy" (Lynton 986). Monstrous images of women as "archetypal creatures" are the echoes of "sexually and politically challenging women of today" (896). He did not create these women with forethought and intention but they evolved in the process of painting, and with them he interacted and struggled before giving them the final touch. De Kooning's *Woman and Bicycle* (Fig. 37) is an example of monstrous image of woman.

In the 1960s, another art movement known as minimal art reacted against the "extempore", "impassioned" and "structureless" features of abstract expressionism of 1950s (Faulkner et al. 444). Minimal art "sought to reduce the art elements to a 'minimum'" and used simple shapes and colours (Gilbert 487). Stripping art down to these basic essential substances is "a kind of celebration of the artist's basic materials" (487). The artists created abstract and non-allusive simple forms for their own sake. Since the colours are pure and

unshaded and shapes are precise as if drawn with ruler, minimal art is also known as "hard-edge" painting (488). Some artists who worked in minimal art style are Ad Reinhardt, Frank Stella and Ellsworth Kelly. Frank Stella's *Takht-i-Sulayman I* (Fig. 38) depicts some features of minimal art. According to Ad Reinhardt minimal art is "non-objective, non-representational, non-figurative, non-imagist, non-expressionist, non-subjective" (qtd. in Beckett 378). Minimal art reduces the art elements to the artist's basic materials.

Simultaneously with minimal art, pop art movement attacked earlier serious and nonrealistic arts like cubist, expressionist, abstract, surrealist and abstract expressionist arts and their philosophic, spiritual or metaphysical purpose. Pop art drew its subject matter from everyday life of common people, mass-produced culture, media, advertising and consumer society. Pop art celebrated "post-war consumerism" and worshipped the "god of materialism" (Beckett 380). It exploited the images from comics, newspapers and television. Coke bottles, soup cans, cream pies, hamburgers, supermarket, hoarding board and the photographs of celebrities are familiar images in pop art. Audrey Flack's *Marilyn* (Fig. 39) includes such images. Pop artists attempted to project new meanings from familiar objects of daily life. They created fun, glamour, comedy and irony. Some other pop artists are Robert Rauschenberg, Noel Mahaffey, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, David Hockney and Marisol.

Noel Mahaffey's painting, *My Brother with Janis*, blurs the line between high art and low art incorporating photographs in his painting. Mahaffey took the art of photography not as rival to painting but complementary. He created inter-art relationship in his work integrating painting and photography, the forms of high and low art respectively.

Robert Rauschenberg's work *Canyon* breaks the boundary between abstract and figural art, vision and textuality, photography and painting, sculpture and painting, and art and reality. The artist pastes photographs on the canvas and paints abstract images around the photographs using oil colour. Abstract and figural images, and painting and photographs coexist on the same canvas. Likewise, visual images of painting and photographs appear in juxtaposition with the collage of newspaper text blurring the boundary of vision and textuality. The artist attaches the stuffed bird on the canvas, and hangs a pillow there. These real objects give the art, a three dimensional character like that of sculpture. As a result, the art becomes sculpture and painting at the same time. Denying the distinction between art and reality, real objects like stuffed bird and pillow appear with the painting.

Rauschenberg's graphic art, *Centennial Certificate M. M. A.* (Fig. 40), exploiting painting, collage, photographic and printing processes, depicts intertextual and inter-art relationship. He makes a collage of reproductions of some earlier paintings and sculptures including Rembrandt's self-portrait, Ingres's *Odalisque*, Picasso's portrait of Gertrude Stein and a classical sculpture. He assembles earlier painting and sculpture creating an intertextual and inter-art relationship. In the request of museum director, Rauschenberg created this work to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. So, a text statement of the museum's goals, and the signatures of the museum officials are pasted juxtaposing with other images, which creates the inter-art relationship between visual and verbal texts.

Conceptual art, developed in the late 1960s, emphasizes that the viewers can understand a work of art directly from the artist's mind with the use of less material in the work. In the work of art, there is concept beyond material, and the viewers should understand

the same concept. Conceptual art attempts to "bring the audience into direct contact with the creative concepts of the artist" (Martin et al. 435). Conceptual art is a meta-art, for it is an art about the process of creating art, and it tries to make us understand the concept of art.

Conceptual art is not a finished product but it invites the audience to finish the work through creative engagement. It is a protest against traditional art. Art critic, Harold Rosenberg says that "a painting ought to be considered as a record of the artist's creative processes rather than as a physical object" (qtd. in Martin et al. 437-38). Conceptual art is not associated with "visual stimulation and emotional response" but with "ideas and thought" (Lynton 917). The artist's purpose is not to "represent the world but to change it" (919). Conceptual art has "no physical form" (Gilbert 491). But their process of creation is photographed and filmed. Some conceptual artists are Sol Lewitt, Anthony Christo, Carl Andre, Terry Atkinson, Keith Arnatt, Robert Morris, Joseph Kosuth, David Bainbridge and Michael Baldwin.

Sol Lewitt's conceptual art, *Wall Drawing 111-A Wall Divided Vertically into Five Equal Parts, with Ten Thousand Lines in Each Part: 1:6" Long* (Fig. 41), is the document about the concept of drawing ten thousand lines on a wall. The collector may buy this document and draw ten thousand lines on the wall of his own room. The drawing of the collector may differ from the original drawing. Conceptual art stresses on the concept and the process of creation rather than finished final product. Both the viewer and artist may create and exhibit the art work not only in the galleries but also at home, in other public places and natural sites.

Began in the 1960s, installation art blurred the boundaries among various art forms by exploiting the techniques of painting, sculpture, theatre and music. It has inter-art relationship. By incorporating familiar objects of everyday life and even human being, it

breaks the boundary between life and art. The artist installs the art work into a "planned environment" and installed objects become a part of the environment to "fulfill the artist's expression" (Gilbert 500). Keith Haring and Jennifer Bartlett are installation artists.

Bartlett, in her work, *Spiral: An Ordinary Evening in New Haven* (Fig. 42), installs tipped-over tables of painted wood and cones of break-formed hot-rolled welded steel on the floor in front of the canvas. The images of the canvas show a terrifying firestorm and a blazing inferno that sweeps everything in its path. The work suggests that the world burnt away except the installed objects on the floor.

As a medium installation art generally uses "space as an element, designed to be entered into and a part of the process of experience" (Roobina Karode 216). It uses "complex cultural material" and re-contextualizes them to "evoke more complete and multi-sensorial experiences" (216). It also uses recycling as a strategy (218). Installation art is hybrid, witty and playful.

As installation art, performance art also exploits the techniques of other art forms like theatre, music, painting, sculpture, film and photography. But the performance of the artist is central to it. The presence of other art forms enhances the performance. Recitation of the texts, dance, dialogue and the creation of music can be the parts of artist's performance. Sometimes several people including audience participate in interaction and performance. Thus, performance art has interpersonal and intra-community relationship. Art work senses viewers' presence and responds to them in unpredictable ways.

Performance artist Laurie Anderson's works ignore artistic boundaries and mix high arts like painting, music and theatre with popular arts like film, fads, and rock and roll creating non-reproducible artistic experience. She exploited mixed media like musical

instruments, video and photo projector. Exploiting the techniques of theatre, Rolf Harris performs on stage along with his paintings (Fig. 43). Stage persona is central to the performance art. The artist uses other media to support his/her role in the expression.

Western influence comes to Nepal a detour from Indian traditions of art. The following section now looks at the Indic art and its association with Nepali art. One should notice that Nepali art develops also as a confluence of foreign sources.

Western techniques entered/enter in the domain of Nepali art via India, for most of the contemporary Nepali artists are trained in Indian art schools where the influence of western techniques was much earlier and wide spread. In addition to this, the way Indian artists responded and adopted western techniques to explore the native Indian contents has an impact on Nepali artists. To some extent, the way contemporary Nepali painting evolved has some similarities to the way contemporary Indian painting developed. Besides, the thematic pattern of the Nepali art seems resembling to its Indian counter part. Thus, the study of the evolution of the contemporary Indian art and their characteristics puts us in better position to appreciate the contemporary Nepali art. The second part of this chapter discusses the Indian art.

Contemporary Indian painting treats the Indian subject matters and themes with western techniques of painting. It takes its subject matters from Indian mythologies, folk and pop cultures, and contemporary socio-political life of India. The compositions are not the realistic representations of myths, and objects and events of the world but expressions of the artists' feelings and emotions. They are subjective, heterogeneous and plural. To come to the contemporary form, after the establishment of British colonial rule in India, Indian painting had to cross a number of stages like the lack of support for the traditional art forms, the

forceful implementation of western education, the imitation of western arts, the degeneration of Indian art, the resistance of western art styles and finally the exploitation of western techniques in contemporary Indian painting to depict native themes. After reviewing these phases of Indian art briefly, I will discuss some contemporary Indian artists and their works in terms of western techniques and native forms and contents.

Western colonizers not only ignored the Indian art heritage but also looked down upon it. The official handbook of Victoria and Albert Museum declared, "the monstrous shapes of the *puranic* deities are unsuitable for the highest forms of artistic representation and this is possibly why sculpture and painting are unknown as fine arts in India" (qtd. in Archer 20). Likewise British art critic John Ruskin down-graded Indian art:

The art of India formed its compositions out of meaningless fragments of colours and flowing of line to all the facts and forms of nature, it willfully and resolutely opposed itself; it will not draw a man but eight armed monster (qtd. in Rao 3).

The colonizers created apathetic attitude by misrepresenting Indian art through the use of discourse as a tool of power. Since the western colonizers did not evaluate traditional Indian art as fine art, naturally they did not support and encourage the artistic activity. As a result, long existing tradition of Indian art declined.

Since they considered Indians as unchanging, passive, non-autonomous and radically peculiar objects, and their arts monstrous and hideous, they planned to improve Indians and their arts by imposing western education as a part of their so called civilizing mission. About imposing western education in India, Thomas Macaulay says, "We have to a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother tongue. We must teach them some

foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate" (428). The purpose of western education was to create "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (430). About the way how the revolution can be prevented, Charles Trevelyan points out, "The only means at our disposal for preventing revolution is to set the natives on a process of European improvement. They will then cease to desire and aim at independence on the old Indian footing" (qtd. in Archer 18). As a part of this project, the colonizers introduced western education in India. Educational institutions during colonial period aimed to support the existing system though they beautifully covered their motive by euphemism. To educate Indian artists in western styles and media and to produce the arts of western taste, the British-India established art schools in Madras (1850), Calcutta (1854), Bombay (1857) and Lahore (1875). These schools trained the students to use western realistic techniques and, oil and water colour.

There was sharp contrast between the techniques taught in these art schools and traditional Indian art techniques. Traditional arts like that of Ajanta, Mughal-Rajput, manuscript illumination and miniature paintings were mythical, spiritual and guided by Indian aesthetic. They represented the spiritual values through the use of minimum shade and perspective, flat treatment of the surface and two dimensionality. They did not represent the object and events exactly as they appear in the world. Artists used home-made natural colours on the walls, manuscripts and Indian clothes. On the other hand, western realistic techniques taught in newly established art schools aimed to represent the objects and events as they appear in the world through the use of careful combination of light and shade, subtle gradation of colours and linear perspective so that the composition could give the illusion of

three dimensionality. The media were oil, water colour and imported canvas. They also taught the Indian artists to deal with secular subject matter. There was sharp contrast between art education and traditional Indian art practice in terms of subject matter, technique and medium.

Indian artists who were used to practicing traditional art styles could not easily acquire the western techniques of painting. As a result western art education "caused confusion which led to mediocre and kitsch art" (Chawla 33). The trained artists neither could follow their own tradition nor could adopt the newly taught European techniques. B. C. Sanyal says that the art schools were mainly required to "produce painters and draughtsmen for the railway and survey Departments" (30). As a result Indian art followed a "path of decline and finally degenerated into soulless skill of artisans only" (29). The techniques of fresco and miniature painting, unique in the history of Indian art, were nearly lost. The process of disintegration worked on relentlessly throughout the nineteenth century. However, a few artists like Ravi Verma exploited newly- acquired western technique successfully to "promulgate the beauty of Indian mythology" and "legendry themes" (Rao 4). Most of the artists neither could follow the tradition effectively nor could use the western techniques successfully.

However, Ravi Verma, 1980 onward, negotiated western realistic technique and oil medium with native Indian themes. He painted the mythological and legendry figures and the portraits of elites using oil medium successfully. He exploited linear perspective, eliminated the "use of contour lines" and applied "light and shade in the manner of western artists", and the resultant composition gave an illusion of three-dimensionality (A. Ramachandran 25). The paintings of Ravi Verma showed that western techniques and media were also useful for

Indian artists. He painted the mythological figures from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavata Mahapurana*, Kalidasa's epic *Shakuntal* and portraits of historical, political and national heroes giving "importance to patriotism and nationalism" (34). In Tapati Guha Thakurta's word, the "modern" in Indian painting is "clearly marked by Ravi Verma's mastery over oil painting and academic realist style" (118-119). Ravi Verma's realistic works depict the effective use of oil medium.

In contrast to Thakurta's view, some critics opined that his paintings lacked poetic and creative faculty because of his plebian imagination for the satisfaction of a degenerate demand of some elites. P. R. Ramachandra Rao points out the failure of Ravi Verma to create serious art works:

Ravi Verma fails by his own postulates, according to his own lights, even by the contextual standards he set himself. His studies of Indian life and portraiture have a certain technical competence, an apprehension of colour, but are otherwise without distinction. In the sum, the service of his national pencil utterly failed it captured little of the beauty of traditional Indian painting and did less credit to the powers of European art. Modern Indian painting was far from being born; it was not even in gestation (4).

Although his compositions lacked poetic faculty, he practiced oil medium with a certain technical competence.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, the artists of Bengal School of Art including Abanindranath Tagore opposed and resisted the western influences, for they thought, Indian art declined and degenerated because of the western art education. The movement of Bengal School is also known as "Indian artistic 'renaissance'" and "revivalist"

movement, for it turned toward traditional Indian arts rejecting western academic style (Santo Datta 51-55). Indian mythologies, India's traditional *Shilpa Shastras*, classical literature, manuscript illuminations, Ajanta cave murals and Mughal-Rajput miniatures inspired them. They painted the traditional subject matters using native style and media. They painted characters and events from Indian mythologies and Hindu epics like the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*.

E. B. Havell, Ananda Coomaraswamy and other scholars assisted for the development of Bengal School. Havell, the principal of Calcutta School of Art thought that the western education did more harm than good for the development of Indian art. So, he inspired the artists of Bengal School to learn more from their own tradition. Havell himself expresses his opinion on Indian art:

Following too closely the lead of the European connoisseurs, they have done very little constructive work to prevent the extinction of the living traditional art of India Indian painting is not a decadent and "degenerate copy of a Graeco-Roman prototype" or "a form of artistic cretinism" but "an opening into new world of aesthetic thought" (preface).

Like Havell's, Ananda Coomaraswamy's ideas also assisted to the rise of Bengal School.

Coomaraswamy argues:

The true function of School of Art is not to introduce European methods and ideals but to gather up and revitalize the broken threads of Indian tradition, to build up the idea of Indian art as an integral part of the national culture, and to relate the work of Indian craftsmen to the life and thought of Indian people (qtd. in Rao 5).

To spread the ideas and beliefs of Bengal School, they created parallel oppositional discourses against western colonialism through the *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*. Such discourses inspired many other Indian artists to revive the traditional Indian art. The movement of Bengal School is compatible with *Swadeshi* or national movement and emergent political struggle against colonial rule. Bengal school revived the earlier art forms and made many artists aware of their age old artistic heritage. Thus it was "hailed as a renaissance of national art" (Goetz 249).

Bengal School made Indian artists aware of their traditional art forms but did not respond to the issues and problems of contemporary changing world. About its retro-active gesture and its effect, S. K. Bhattacharya says, "Revivalist made us conscious of India's glorious past, but did not point the way to the future, with their flight into the past, they only left a more glaring emptiness" (101). Because of the "continuous replication and perpetuation" of stereotype, the movement revolved "round an identifiable set of themes, forms, conventions, and mannerism" (Thakurta 122). The artists were tired of reproducing and repeating old art forms. Modernization and industrialization had added the complexities in life but the arts of Bengal School did not address these complexities. There was mismatch between artist's feeling and imagination, and age old art forms. As a result, the "monotony and the lack of vitality drove the young painters almost to despair" (Ajit Mookerjee 14). P. R. Ramachandra Rao points out the lack of expression and failure to address contemporary issues in the paintings of Bengal School:

It was basically an intellectual movement, reasoned into existence without spontaneity, as if painting was a matter of literary or sentimental references; it generated, artificially, a retro-active style, in conscious imitation of an archaic

idiom. An idiom requires for its realization a contemporaneous experience, a contextual affinity; it must be expressive of a felt emotional necessity and issue out of the ethos of an epoch. An idiom is not a formula nor can an epoch can be re-lived in a willed throw-back into history. A Moghul style can only belong to the Moghul period. And, the paintings of the Bengal school were technically incoherent. (6)

From 1920, the dissatisfaction toward the style of Bengal School became intense, and artists began to express themselves spontaneously ignoring any limitation in terms of subject matter and style. Until 1930, a number of art styles evolved in the west like impressionism, post-impressionism, fauvism, cubism, abstractionism and surrealism. Because of the colonial connection and western art schools in India, contemporary western styles of art began to influence the Indian artists.

Poet-painter Rabindranath Tagore revolted against Bengal School and stressed on the freedom of expression. He said that deliberate imitation of ancient art forms did not respond artist's feeling and the problems of the changing society. He criticizes the arts of Bengal School:

When in the name of Indian art, we cultivate, with deliberate aggressiveness a certain bigotry born out of the habit of a past generation, we smother our souls under idiosyncrasies unearthed from buried centuries. These are like masks with exaggerated grimaces, that fail to respond to the ever-changing play of life (qtd. in Anand 6).

Tagore did not lean to the myths or legends for inspiration but to his subjective feeling.

He made daring experiments with his rhythmic lines and colours and ventured out into the open space in the face of all risks defying any prohibition. Lines, colours and images, in his paintings, are not the carriers of information and the objective representations of the objects and events of the world but appeal to our imagination through the rhythmic form. His pictures echo to the music of his poems. The use of rhythmic lines and colours, for instance, can be seen in his *Brooding* (Fig. 44). About the importance of rhythm in his art Tagore himself expressed:

My pictures are my versification in lines. If by chance they are entitled to claim recognition, it must be primarily for some rhythmic significance of form which is ultimate and not for any interpretation of an idea or representation of fact. The only training which I had in young days was the training in rhythm, the rhythm in thought, the rhythm in sound. One thing which is common to all arts is the principle of rhythm which transforms inert materials into living creations (qtd. in Archer 51).

His spontaneous and flowing colours, lines and brushstrokes create rhythm in his works.

Tagore's paintings depict the working of unconscious and psychic automatism. There is contrast between manifest and latent content. There is considerable divergence between what actually the eye sees and perspective representation of the same object. The manifest contents depict savage humans, vicious monsters, sad monumental women, turrets, rocks, birds and snakes. About the role of unconscious mind in the creation of art, Tagore writes:

The hand must be trained to work freely and without control by practice in making simple forms with a continuous involved line without after thought, i.e. its intention should just escape consciousness. Drawing should be made by

allowing the hand to run freely with the least possible deliberation. In time shapes will be found to evolve suggesting conceptions of forms and ultimately having personal or individual style (qtd. in Archer 56).

In these lines, there is the echo of surrealistic jolt and automatic writing. In his paintings, conscious mind left no room for the expression of his hidden force. In W. G. Archer's word the latent contents of his works are "almost always sexual", for the images usually have "visual affinities with the phallus or vagina" (75-76). He was influenced by the ideas of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, and the techniques of surrealism.

Some of his paintings depict the influence of expressionism and cubism. The distorted figures charged with tragic despair show the resemblance with expressionist paintings. Beaky noses, rigid stances and harsh defiant lines arouse a sense of agony, horror and cruelty of world and life. Angular and geometric female figures of Tagore are similar to that of haunting and distorted female forms of Picasso.

Although Tagore's paintings depict the western influence, they locate themselves in the Indian context, and integrate the earlier forms of Indian art unconsciously. He expressed the horror and cruelty of the last years of British rule in India. As religious and sexual images coexist in early Indian art, sexual and non-sexual elements blend in his paintings. W. G.

Archer relates his painting with early forms of Indian art:

Such an intimate blending of sexual and non-sexual would, at first sight, seem completely un-Indian- a sophisticated expression of western fantasy. But we must remember that one of the most important contributions made by India to human culture has been the discreet imbuing of religious and romantic situation with sexual feeling. As a result, far from being aberrations of the

western mind, each of . . . [his works] is strongly Indian in character and possesses exact parallels in previous forms of Indian art (76).

Tagore was internationalist, for he defied narrowly defined cultural frontiers and ghetto mentality. He exploited the useful elements irrespective of west and east in his paintings. His paintings are not the realistic representations of the objects and events but subjective and plural. The form is more important than the content. Tagore's works marked the beginning of the contemporary Indian painting.

During the 1930s, Amrita Sher-Gil depicted the sad and melancholic feelings of poor country men and women by hybridizing the western techniques and the techniques of early Indian art. She was aware of the western art techniques because of her art training in Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. The influence of postimpressionist paintings of Paul Gauguin is apparent in her works. From Gauguin, she shared the aspects of sensual outlines, flat and bold treatment of space, symbolic dark colours and monumental simplicity. Such features of Sher-Gil's paintings are apparent in *The Child Bride* (Fig. 45). She shared the techniques of creating big eyes and nearly two-dimensional representations from Ajanta and Mughal-Rajput miniature paintings. Although she exploited western techniques and oil medium, she depicts her intense romantic longing to an imagined Indian country-side. Her dark-bodied, sad-faced, silent and incredibly thin men and women almost look like "silhouettes and over which an indefinable melancholy reigns" (Rao 10). Her lanky and angular figures with large doleful eyes and vacant stares, presented with lyrical grace and a purveyance of rural innocence, are beautiful in their ugliness. She explored Indian subject matters with western techniques. Her compositions are "hauntingly Parisique in feeling but colours were Indianesque" (Bhattacharya 101). Her style is "rooted in the matrix of India, in its ethos and

imagery, but stridently modern in its execution with a contemporary awareness" (101). Rao declares her a catalyst in the evolution of contemporary Indian art:

She became the window of India on to the international expression in art, a catalyst in the evolution of modern Indian painting. Her importance is that the window was opened sooner than later, that her work became the straight-point of experimental forays, striding impulses unshackled by imitative, stagnant art forms. (11)

Sher-Gil romantically interprets the life of Indian and particularly poor Indians who are images of infinite submission and patience exploiting western style and the techniques of early Indian paintings.

During the thirties and forties of the twentieth century, Jamini Roy hybridized the techniques of western art and native folk art in his works. Western techniques of art influenced his works, for his figures and images do not represent the objects and events of the world realistically but they are "non-representational and non-objective" (Mookerjee 16). His paintings have "vigorously expressive style" (Shanti Swarup 166).

He exploited native Indian art media and shared the techniques of Indian folk art. His works appear on paper, palm leaves, torn *saris*, old clothes, scrolls of fabric, clay plates and terracotta. He prepared his colours from roots, fruit, leaves, mud and lampshoot. Bold outlines, flat treatment of space, rhythmic lines, two-dimensional colours, decorative borders and naïve figures in his works are like that of Indian folk art. Roy's *A Woman* (Fig. 46), for example, depicts distinct contours, rhythmic lines and two dimensional colours. P. R.

Ramachandra Rao traces the elements of folk art in Roy's works:

The communicative power of this folk art was unquestionably sprung from its creative symbolism, rooted in myths; the flattened colour surfaces, held together in a central focus by audacious binding lines, made for decorative patterns of monumental import. Jamini Roy distilled his imagery from this variegated folk tradition, in a summary realization of human and animal forms, in elliptical sweeps of line; his derivative symbolism became progressively minimal in its patterning. And the spectrum of his colours, also drawn from folk usage, both in their selection and in their making . . . (10).

Jamini Roy's paintings depict the negotiation and hybridization of western non-representational technique, and primitive and folk art forms of India.

During the late forties and fifties Progressive Artists' Group (PAG) exploited the contemporary western techniques freely to express the diverse native themes in the context of independent, secular and technological India. As India became free from western colonial rule and was going ahead for political and social transformation, the artist attempted to create art works with freedom of choice in terms of techniques, subject matters, themes and media, which depict contemporary problems, hopes and ethos. They had the "willingness to learn" from western art rather than the "antipathy" like that of revivalists (Chaitanya Sambrani 99). Before the movement of PAG, almost all the Indian artists were elite but PAG included the artists of working class also and dealt about socialist themes as the group's name suggests. They also depicted the festivals, rituals and life styles of typically rural inhabitants. They negotiated and synthesized the western influences with traditional Indian forms without deliberation. About the synthesis of western techniques and Indian tradition Balraj Khanna et al. explain:

Too many influences were evident in their work- from the Indus Valley Civilization, the erotic sculpture of Khajuraho and Indian folk art, on the one hand, to the works of Impressionists, Fauvists and Cubists on the other. But there was enough force to suggest that these were artists of substance who had the necessary courage to discard those influences and evolve their own coherent style. (22)

The depiction of big elongated eyes, bold outlines, flat treatment of shapes and two-dimensional colours suggests the influences of Mughal-Rajput paintings and Indian folk art. But they are not the objective representations of the objects and events of the world. They are subjective, expressive and plural.

The founder members of PAG were F. N. Souza, S. H. Raza, F. M. Husain, K. H. Ara, Sadanand Bakre and H. A. Gade. F. N. Souza's shocking nudes synthesize the themes of traditional Indian erotic arts with expressionistic technique. Bold outlines, big elongated eyes and facial features in his *Nude* (Fig. 47) suggest the influences of Mughal-Rajput, Ajanta murals and folk art. He reintegrated the cross-currents of Indian and western art styles creating his own distinct identity. Souza himself reveals:

Today we paint with absolute freedom of contents and techniques, almost anarchic; save that we are governed by one or two sound elemental and eternal laws, of aesthetic order, plastic coordination and colour composition. We have no pretensions of making vapid revivals of any school or movement in art. We have studied the various schools of painting and sculpture to arrive at a vigorous synthesis (qtd. in Sambrani 104-105).

Souza did not borrow the forms and contents of earlier works deliberately but exploited them unconsciously to give expression to his personal feeling.

S. H. Raza's works depict the Hindu concept of concentration and meditation by using abstract form. In his painting, *Jala Bindu* (Fig. 48), circular and triangular forms lead the viewer toward the central point on which the viewer or meditating figure concentrates his/her mind. The form does not represent the object or figure but abstract concept of meditation. On the other hand, H. A. Gade's works depict the Indian rural life and landscape exploiting impressionistic technique. His painting, *Huts* (Fig. 49), captures the impression of the rural huts and landscape. The composition is not the objective representation of the things but the artist's impression of them.

M. F. Husain exploited various western techniques to explore native themes. His work, *Urdu Poetry Series* (Fig. 50), depicts the conflict between Hindu and Muslim religion in contemporary India using expressionist form. The artist distorts the images in the composition. Visual images and an Urdu poem coexist in the same canvas. His work, *Splash Front Page* (Fig. 51), is a pop art, for he paints images on a page of the newspaper, *Times of India*. Here also he juxtaposes visual images with text on the newspaper. He exploits cubist technique in his work, *Horse* (Fig. 52). He breaks the natural surface of the horse and suggests fourth dimension or the depth. PAG uses western techniques, and native forms and contents spontaneously and unconsciously without prejudice and deliberation. The artists did not regard western influences as obstacles for their creativity.

Other forthcoming contemporary artists also exploited contemporary western techniques of art and depicted socio-cultural and political themes in their works. They also reinterpreted and reintegrated the Indian mythologies, traditional and folk art forms with new

significance. G. R. Santosh hybridizes Hindu concept of meditation and concentration, and cubist technique in *Being and Becoming* (Fig. 53). He depicts meditating human figure in geometric shapes who is concentrating to arouse *kundalini* through which he is supposed to achieve enlightenment. He recycles the content and form of traditional Indian arts, for the depicted posture of the figure and the concept of meditation are frequent in early Indian painting. But the figure is not objectively represented as in early paintings.

Tyeb Mehta depicts goddess Kali using expressionist form in *Kali III* (Fig. 54). Goddess Kali is also the theme of Hindu mythologies and early Indian paintings. The artist reinterprets the early form of Kali and reintegrates in his work. Manjit Bawa depicts goddess Durga on her vehicle tiger in *Goddess on Tiger* exploiting surrealist form. Jyoti Bhatt depicts the archetypal images of unconscious using surrealist and collage techniques in his *Nostalgic Images* (Fig. 55). The painting is intertextual, for it brings together the images of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Verbal texts and visual images appear in juxtaposition on the canvas. He also incorporates the decorative motifs of Indian folk art. He also exploits the form of Mughal-Rajput and Ajanta murals, for he uses bold outlines, flat shapes and two dimensional colours. He not only hybridizes western and Indian art techniques but also uses Latin and Devanagari scripts simultaneously in the same canvas. He expresses his nostalgic feeling through archetypal images using both western and Indian techniques.

Bhupen Khakhar's *Pooja* (Fig. 56) depicts the daily ritual of a *Brahmin* using surrealist technique. The *Brahmin* has just taken bath in the pond, and he is praying with water and sacred thread in his hand. Instead of visualizing the image of the god, he visualizes naked and sensual images of bathing women around him. This depicts the hidden sexual passion of the Brahmin. The praying *Brahminical* figure is also the subject matter of early

Indian paintings. But the artist reincorporates this traditional theme with different significance, for he depicts the vision of the praying figure upside down with the use of irony.

Shanti Panchal's *The Paper Boat* depicts the fantasy of Indian children using expressionist technique. Indian children make paper boats as toys. Panchal takes this theme and explores the imagination of a boy. In his imaginative mood, boy finds the paper boat on the sea and a fish near the boat. He dreams of catching fish using the paper boat.

In *The Chillie Pounder* (Fig. 57), Rekha Rodwittiya depicts the job of Indian village woman using both expressionist technique and the techniques of Indian folk art. Flat colours and big long eyes as depicted in the painting are like that of Indian folk arts. The garment of the woman is also typical Indian.

Some artists explored feminist themes using various western techniques. Bal Chhabda's *Frailty, Thy Name is Woman*, an intertextual painting, depicts how Indian patriarchal society treats women. Women are behaved as weak, inactive and fragile creature. The artist gives the title of the painting from Shakespeare's play and presents it ironically using expressionist technique. The work is intertextual, for it is connected to the Shakespeare's play.

K. G. Subramanyam's *Fire Extinguisher* (Fig. 58) depicts how women are brutalized, dominated and exploited as commodity to pacify the aggressive desires of men. In the painting, demon-like male figures terrorize women and force them to have relationship. Arpita Singh's *A Woman and a Man* depicts how men treat women as commodity for their pleasure. The artist portrays a naked female figure to entertain the dressed male figure. She presents the male as the agent and the female as the patient upon which male acts. The rising

female figure in Sheera Betnag's *Untitled* suggests that woman is no longer the thing to be used by men but she has her own independent existence and identity. These feminist paintings disclose the inhuman condition of Indian women, and their resistance, opposition and search for identity. The works depict these themes exploiting non-objective western techniques.

Some contemporary Indian artists depicted socio-economic problems of contemporary society exploiting western techniques. Ram Kninkar Vaij's *Famine* (Fig. 59), for instance, depicts the thin, weak and distorted human figures suffering from famine. The artist depicts the tragedy and pain using expressionist technique. Gieve Patel's *Battered Body in Landscape* (Fig. 60) depicts the wounded, distorted and collapsed human figure in the landscape. The work suggests the condition of poor and lower class people in industrial and prosperous India. Tassadaq Sohail's *Pillar of Darkness* ironically forecasts the gruesome and chaotic situation of India in future exploiting surrealist technique. Demon-like figures, skulls and the jumble of incongruous dark images suggest the impending doom and tragedy. Using non-objective western techniques the artists explored the socio-economic condition of contemporary India.

Bhupen Khakhar's *Night Out* (Fig. 61) depicts the popular images of Indian life exploiting the techniques of pop art. He makes the collage of familiar images among Indians like the portrait of Jawaharlal Nehru, Hindu priest, temples, dancing couples in a concert, sea beach and people in the swimming pool. Saroj Pal's pop arts incorporate the images of television, magazine, comic books, hoarding boards, and the advertisements of soap, toothpaste and washing machine. Vivan Sundaran used metal, engine oil and perspex in his three dimensional painting.

Performance artist, Rummana Hussain created heterogeneous art form incorporating painted images, photographs, textual narration and physical performance, and expressed the fear, pain and suffering of minority race in India.

Contemporary Indian art recycles Indian mythologies, reintegrates traditional art forms and incorporates socio-cultural and political themes of contemporary India exploiting the techniques of western art. Pran Nath Mago evaluates contemporary Indian art:

The works today reflect the times that we are passing through, as also the weight of art traditions. It's no wonder that the art scene today reflects the dilemma of the Indian artist in recent times, caught between an irretrievable past and inescapable reality of the present.

The most authentic expression of this period is rooted once again in history and a meaningful dialogue between the past and the present. And, in spite of the multiple influences from abroad and the deep desire to seek inspiration from India's own past (212).

Contemporary Indian art creates balance between past and present, and the native Indian elements and the techniques of western art. To come to this form, Indian art crossed various stages like the imitation of western art and the degeneration of Indian art, turning toward myths, legends and tradition through resistance and opposition of western influence, and finally the synthesis of native Indian elements and western techniques.

Summary

Contemporary western paintings are not the realistic representations of the objects and events of the world but the subjective expressions of the artists. Since 1970, artists have created various art forms exploiting a number of techniques. Impressionists stressed on the

impression of the things they perceived at particular transitory moment. Post-impressionists shared the non-realistic style of impressionism but went beyond that creating their own styles. Some post-impressionists started to practice on geometric shapes and others turned toward oriental, medieval and classical themes and styles.

The art movements like fauvism, cubism and expressionism further distanced art works from the objective reality. Fauvism stressed on expression through the use of harsh, fantastic, bright and antinaturalistic colours on the canvas. Cubists broke linear surface of the images using geometric shapes. Expressionists depicted troubled, tortured and disillusioned feeling through the use of distorted colours and images.

Abstract painting disconnects itself from the objects and events of the world, and forms and colours do not become the means but ends in themselves. Surrealists exploit bizarre and seemingly unrelated images with free association as in dream, hallucination and fantasy. Abstract expressionists give emphasis to the process of painting than to the finished product.

During the 1960s, a number of art movements revolted against the earlier art traditions. Minimal art reduces the art elements to a minimum using simple shapes and colours. Pop arts celebrate the post-war consumerism using the subject matter from the everyday life of common people, mass-produced culture, media and advertising. Conceptual arts focus on the concept of art which lies beyond the work of art and their material. Installation and performance arts blur the boundaries among various art forms exploiting the techniques of painting, sculpture, theatre, literature and music. Contemporary western paintings are subjective, heterogeneous, plural and open-ended.

Contemporary Indian painting addresses the socio-cultural and political issues of contemporary India exploiting western techniques and reintegrating traditional Indian art forms. To create such art forms, Indian painting went through a number of stages like destruction of traditional forms under colonialism, imitation of the western forms, degeneration in the aesthetic quality of the art works, resistance and opposition of the western techniques, and turning toward myths and early art forms, monotony of the stereotypical images, and finally spontaneous use of available images, forms and techniques irrespective to the west and the east. Despite the use of western forms, the artists integrated native images to give expression to their personal emotions in response to their context. Their use of native and alien motifs is spontaneous and unconscious rather than deliberate one.

The study of western forms and techniques in the first part of this chapter will make easier trace the western influences in contemporary hybrid and heterogeneous Nepali paintings. The knowledge of the sources of influence better equips one to recognize, appreciate and interpret the appropriated, reformulated and transformed forms. The brief discussion of the development of contemporary Indian painting, and some features of it in the latter part of the chapter will throw light upon the influences brought home by Nepali artists, who went to Indian cities for art education. Furthermore, since both Indian and Nepali arts have been influenced by western forms, the study of Indian hybrid art forms provides some insight to interpret and analyze Nepali hybrid art forms.

IV. Contemporary Painters, Works and the Tradition of Nepali Criticism

The previous chapters have discussed, early Nepali painting, western techniques and Indian painting, the three major components of contemporary Nepali painting. Early Nepali painting is religious, mystical and referential whereas contemporary western painting is non-objective and plural. On the other hand, contemporary Indian paintings are heterogeneous that depict the *mélange* of western techniques and Indian native contents. After 1950, these three different art forms encountered in the context of Nepali art. In such situation, the question arises, how did Nepali artists deal with these forms? This chapter answers this question on the basis of the available critiques on contemporary Nepali painting. Then, it studies the works of some artists from the perspective of critics. Despite the fact that the critics have not divided the time span of contemporary painting in different periods, the study attempts to classify the duration in three phases—entry, establishment and creativity. The knowledge of contemporary art forms' development and its critical survey will make it easier to analyze and interpret the individual texts in informed manner.

Nepali paintings from mid twentieth century onward are expressive and give emphasis to the subjective feelings of the artists than the objective representation of myths, objects and events of the world. The artists create the images which are different from the images of the external world. Even if they take the images of reality, they alter the represented images for expressing personal feelings. According to Manuj Babu Mishra, contemporary Nepali arts "give expression to the powerful feeling of mind" ("Contemporary" 22). The artists break the linear surface of the objects as found in reality in art works using geometric shapes, and sometimes they juxtapose contrary images as in dream. Despite the

difference between represented form, and external objects and events, artists' expressions are the responses to the contemporary society. Abhi Subedi points out:

The modern paintings create the motion not necessarily by referring or responding to the outer events affecting the life of the artist, but by creating an internal, psychological reality. Therefore, the modern Nepali paintings do not necessarily depict the event and times of the transitional Nepali society. But they are certainly the expressions of the modern Nepali artists' response to the changing times, the changing values and norms. ("Nepali Utopia" 125)

The unusual images and colours give expression to the artists' responses to the external world and their subjective feeling. Since the altered images and colours are more important than referential images to give expression to the artist's feeling, the form becomes more dominant than the content and subject matter. Some paintings only present colours, lines, brushstrokes and abstract shapes without referential images. In such paintings, the form is its own significance. About the importance of forms and colours in contemporary Nepali paintings, Abhi Subedi remarks:

The imagery is drowned into the abstract form. The coloured shapes and the brush strokes give the painting a pattern. The colours themselves, not the images, spring to the eyes of the viewers and influence the mind. ("Nepali Utopia" 124)

Altered images, broken forms and unusual combination of images and colours in art works create distance from the objects and events of the world whereas the use of images and

colours for their own sake fully disconnects the art form from external world. The artists foreground the form.

Some contemporary Nepali paintings share the techniques of other genres of art, and sometimes artists execute and present paintings simultaneously with other art forms. According to Mukesh Malla, Nepali paintings share the techniques of painting, sculpture, literature, theatre and music (*Adhunik Nepali* 112). The art works juxtapose verbal texts with visual images on the canvas. As in sculpture, three dimensional images appear on the canvas. Installation and performance arts also incorporate paintings. Recitation of poem and music support the expression of the artist. Sometimes, the audience takes part in performance and interaction. Denying the already defined principles and rules of art, the works blur the boundary between various art genres.

These contemporary art forms exploit the techniques and media of western art as tools for their expression. The influence of western techniques like impressionism, pointillism, fauvism, cubism, expressionism, surrealism, abstract expressionism, pop art, installation and performance art appears in non-objective and plural forms of contemporary Nepali paintings (Surendra Bhattarai 77). Nepali artists "fully used the techniques and media now universally recognized as occidental" (A. Subedi, "Nepali Utopia" 124). The influence of the techniques of western art is one of the important factors in the development of contemporary Nepali painting. Now it will be worth mentioning how these western techniques came to Nepal and influenced many contemporary Nepali artists.

The political change of 1950 created the atmosphere for the reception of western techniques in Nepali art, and Nepali artists got exposure to the western art forms because of the changes. During the century of Rana autocracy, there was limited freedom for expression,

and education was not available for the common people. Because of the ban in the cross-flow of people, artists could not go to foreign countries freely and exchange their ideas. Likewise, foreigners also could not come to Nepal easily. Art was confined within the palaces of the Ranas.

Artists painted the portraits of the rulers and their family members. The other significant representations were the hunting scenes in the jungle. These arts decorated the walls and ceilings of their huge palaces. Such paintings of the worldly events and objects came to the foreground replacing the earlier religious, mystical and magical paintings. Only few court artists like Bhajuman Chitrakar, Dirghaman Chitrakar, Tej Bahadur Chitrakar and Chandraman Maskey got exposure to the western art forms and media. They exploited the realistic techniques of western art in their paintings. Since the Ranas were interested in the realistic representation of their own images and hunting scenes, the paintings remained referential. About the limitation of expression during the Rana rule, Manuj Babu Mishra writes:

Under the Rana patronage, the works of artists were focused on them [sic] according to the tastes and preferences of their patrons. Therefore artists had to paint, not in accordance with the spontaneous overflow of their powerful feelings but they had to paint family portraits and picturesque landscapes etc., to please their patrons. ("Contemporary" 20)

As a result, their arts remained referential. Until 1950 Nepali artists remained unaware of the contemporary western art forms developed since 1870.

After the country became free from the Rana autocracy, Nepal was interconnected with other countries. The cross-flow of artists and people increased. Nepali artists also had

the opportunity to view the exhibition of the works of foreign artists in Nepal. The artists and audience got exposure to the western art forms which ultimately influenced the Nepali art. On the other hand, government established many schools and colleges. The educated people became aware of the contemporary ideas around the world. Because of the education, on the one hand, the artists got access to the new techniques of arts and exploited them in their works; on the other hand, viewers also were prepared to some extent the reception of new arts. Nepali artists' use of western techniques in their works for their expression breaks through the rigid tradition, and opens up the space for the beginning and development of the contemporary Nepali painting after the political change of 1950. Manuj Babu Mishra describes the scenario of that time:

After 1950 the political environment for the development of art gradually turned out to be conducive. Some young painters publicly appeared with a new strategy towards breaking through the rigid tradition and tried to establish their own identity in art by supplementing new dimensions in their lines forms, shapes and colours. One could easily visualize the parallel development of traditional and contemporary art, nevertheless artists of young generation was [sic] growing more inquisitive for discovering something heartily acceptable for them in the western method. The transition of young artists from tradition to modernity was taking a fast stride in the early period of democratic atmosphere of Nepal. ("Contemporary" 20)

Democratic atmosphere after mid twentieth century facilitated for the entry of contemporary western forms, which brought tangible changes in the domain of Nepali art.

Some Nepali artists went to western countries for art education and learned contemporary art techniques of the western world. Many artists went to Indian cities to study art. Since India was British colony until 1947, the schools of art in India taught western techniques of art to the students. While returning home, they brought the western techniques of art with them, and their works also influenced the other artists working in Nepal. Some of these trained artists became art teachers in schools and colleges. The teachers taught what they had learned in the western and Indian art schools, and ultimately influenced their students.

The development of information technology, telecommunication, satellite television and modern means of transportation facilitated the Nepali artists to come into contact with the knowledge, ideas and art techniques developed in the distant world. Modern means of communication and transportation created the environment for globalization, and globalization brought cultural encounter in locality between western and native forms of art. Referential native tradition came into contact with impressionist, expressionist, cubist, abstractionist, surrealist and abstract expressionist forms. These non-objective and plural western art forms attracted Nepali artists, for they found wider scope to express their personal feelings, emotions and their problems in the use of western techniques.

Western forms not only attracted the Nepali artists but also confused them. The sudden influence of numerous alien art forms of various styles in different socio-cultural context, that also in a short period of time, sometimes, made difficult to the contemporary Nepali artists accommodate them in their works, and as a result created a sort of dilemma and confusion. An art critic of *The Indian Express* comments on the paintings of Nepali artists around 1973:

In the history of modern painting, impressionism and expressionism are inalienably associated with the European experience of industrialization and technicised life style. The movements, when transformed into modern idioms of visual expression and used by painters in other parts of the globe where the social history has had a different run, tend to betray a confused pattern of imagery and execution. Contemporary Nepalese paintings, now on view at the Shridha Fami art Gallery, have this contradiction. Most of the abstract expressionist paintings are confused (qtd. in N. Singh, "Nepalma Adhunik" 66).

The art forms, developed in the industrial and technological society since 1870, made their presence suddenly in the agrarian society like that of Nepal that created dilemma among Nepali artists. Nevertheless, the artists resolve the confrontation and crisis brought up by cultural encounter gradually.

The cultural encounter between western and native art forms, 1950 onward, opened possible three courses of action for Nepali artists at the beginning. Some artists imitated the western art forms while some others rejected these new styles and turned toward their native tradition. On the other hand, some artists negotiated, appropriated and hybridized the techniques of both western and native art forms in their works. Sanjeev Uprety points out these possibilities:

It seems possible to argue that while in some cases the forms of western modernity were imitated or copied, in some other instances they were rejected as the non-western societies sought to protect the forms of their own indigenous traditions. In addition to these two cultural responses of mimicry

and indigenization, a third alternative was also possible. This consisted in a selective appropriation of the forms of both western modernity and native traditions in a production of what might be called hybrid forms in the areas of music, economy, painting and literature among others. ("Non-Western Studies" 22)

At the beginning, only few Nepali artists were able to create their identities in their works exploiting western techniques of art. About the identity of contemporary Nepali painting, Ram Kumar Pandey opines:

Although the paintings of Nepal are not distinctly different from such arts in other countries, some of the contemporary artists are successful in evolving their styles by a selection of symbols and abstract forms. However, the paintings exhibited in the recent international exhibitions present the glimpses of the contemporary art development in Nepal. Artists have not developed their own styles and in the selection of motifs in the contemporary arts, the artists do not use native subjects on a large scale. As such very few artists influenced by western styles and colours are successful in giving Nepalese touch and identity in their works while most of artists share the same features as any artists of the globe. ("Identification" 41)

Some artists created their own idiom of expression negotiating native motifs and western forms whereas others continued working to accommodate western techniques to render native themes.

On the one hand, Nepali artists were attracted toward expressive and plural western art forms, on the other hand, they were aware of losing their native tradition and cultural root.

As a result, they did not imitate western forms and follow western techniques blindly but became selective in the use of alien techniques for their personal expression. Their "ambivalent approach" towards contemporary western forms has been "both a strength and unnecessarily problematic" and they "appear to meet this challenge by combining tradition with modernity and thematic obtrusiveness with stylistic experiments" (A. Subedi "Overview" 117). Native tradition reconciles with western form. Nepali artists recycled native myths, reincorporated traditional art forms, and explored contemporary political and socio-cultural themes with the use of western techniques. They found western techniques as "a useful opening for presenting experiences and expressing and exercising freedom in terms of the choice of the subject and structure of the discourse", and "asserting their individualities in relation to the cultural and physical contexts as well" (A. Subedi, "Poems and Paintings" 1). Despite the use of western techniques, the artists used the native subject matters.

Although the influence of western art forms created confusion and dilemma among Nepali artists at the beginning, slowly and gradually they exploited western techniques effectively to render native subject matters and contents. The influence of western art forms broadened the range of Nepali artists' skills for their expression. Abhi Subedi writes:

The westernization of the Nepali art does not mean the loss or the complete rejection of the traditions: it certainly makes a departure. But modern artists of Nepal create their own milieu and create their works in it. Their 'modern' is basically a western concept, but they only exploit the western education to broaden the range of their skills in painting. So, the Nepali identity of the artist in this country should be sought in their own cultural and folk

environments created by themselves in their works by making the best use of their skills, whether they be western or oriental. ("Nepali Utopia" 123)

Nepali artists reinterpreted, read anew and reintegrated early art forms in contemporary paintings. According to Julia Hegewald, contemporary Nepali artists acquired the tradition of Nepali art, and are trying to elaborate and develop it further with the use of contemporary western techniques of art (100). Hegewald further explains, contemporary Nepali artists

consider tradition not as something static, but as a continuously changing and progressing movement, out of which they have emerged, and on the basis of which they are trying to elaborate. They are working on improving and progressively developing their ancient artistic heritage into 21st century, their main criterion for judging whether their art deserves to be called "Nepali" being that it be good. Only good art, influenced by new and foreign ideas but allegedly coming out of their own tradition, as they would have it, is considered to be true modern Nepali art. (100)

Exploiting western techniques of art, contemporary Nepali artists depict the images of nature like mountains, Himalaya, rivers, and cultural images like temples, religious places, and the life style of various ethnic communities. Gyanendra Bibas traces the native elements:

Apart from the nature, the artists choose their subject for their creative work from the various temples, religious places and from different caste and culture. For the study of art the artists desire their inspiration from these subjects. ("Contemporary Art" 134)

Although contemporary Nepali artists exploit the western art forms and techniques, they are able to create their identities incorporating native Nepali images.

Despite the fact that critics have not divided the period of almost sixty years, this research tentatively divides the period of contemporary Nepali painting in three phases- entry of contemporary western forms, establishment and creativity. The period of first two decades since 1950 is the phase of entry of contemporary western forms. In this phase, few Nepali artists are attracted toward non-referential plural western forms, endeavored to acquire them and exploited them in their works. During this period using western techniques in painting was new and strange phenomenon, and the non-objective art works baffled, shocked and challenged the viewers who were used to traditional referential art forms. Nevertheless, in this phase, western forms entered in the domain of Nepali art in substantial and tangible manner that played key role in the evolution of contemporary Nepali painting.

The period of twenty years since 1970 is the phase of establishment of western forms. During this period, many Nepali artists returned home completing their art education in Indian art schools, and some of them in western art schools. The trained artists started to work with confidence exploiting western techniques and media. Some of these artists became art teachers in native land. In addition to this, viewers also got exposure to various western art forms and were able to appreciate new works of art. Now, many Nepali artists were able to use western techniques and media spontaneously. Neither creating art works using western techniques was the new thing for the artist nor these works bewildered and puzzled the viewers. Thus, using western techniques became the established norm.

The period since 1990 is the phase of creativity. The artists are aware that only using western techniques does not make a work of art. Using western techniques and media, they strive to create their own idiom and signature for expression. They innovate new techniques and attempt to explore unconventional subject matters. This is the phase of constructing

individual identities in their art works rather than to be satisfied from the use of western techniques. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the artists working in the phases of entry and establishment did not have their individual style. This study only indicates that where the emphasis lied/lies in these respective phases.

We have briefly studied the ways how western influences entered into the domain of Nepali art and brought tangible changes in Nepali painting. We are also aware about some characteristics and features of contemporary Nepali painting in general. Now, I will study the works of some individual contemporary Nepali artists in terms of western influence, artist's response, native images, and continuity and change of the tradition from the point of view of critics. The research also attempts to classify some representative artists on the basis that in which phase (entry, establishment and creativity) they worked/are working more actively.

Lain Singh Bangdel, Gehendraman Amatya, Uttam Nepali, Balkrishna Sama, Kalidash Shrestha, Jagadish Sumsher Rana, Laxman Shrestha, Ramananda Joshi, Dipak Simkhada and Shilu Pyari were the artists who introduced contemporary western forms during 1950s and 60s in the domain of Nepali art. They attempted to break away from traditional referential mode of representation exploiting non-objective and plural western art forms. Lain Singh Bangdel exploited the techniques of contemporary western art to depict the life of country people, socio-cultural images and nature. Antonia Neubauer writes:

Lain Bangdel painted his country people in their everyday lives and quiet dignity, and his distinctive landscape- immense, majestic mountains and terraced fields, simple peasant huts and country temples. Yet he painted these local images in an international style- a special blend of western technique

learned in London, Paris and America, and Indian traditional line drawings and religious representations. ("Foreword")

Despite the use of western forms, Bangdel's works reintegrate the images of traditional arts and geo-cultural context.

However, before creating such art works, western forms not only provided opportunity for his expression but also confused him. According to Dina Bangdel, when he got exposure to innumerable art forms of various styles, a "new vista of art was opened for him, he was both excited and confused in trying to internalize the plethora of art movements, styles and artists" (*Fifty Years* 11). His intense attraction toward western art forms and constant practice to use western techniques "immeasurably enriched his artistic horizons, and broadened his technical ability, and multiplied available creative options" (Neubauer, "Foreword").

Bangdel's works depict the influence of a number of western styles. His early figurative works and their colour scheme, which depict sadness, poignancy and loneliness, echo to the Picasso's paintings of blue period (N. Singh, *Samasamaik* 237). His later works were influenced by Gauguin, Cezanne and van Gogh's post-impressionism, Braque's cubism, Kandinsky's abstraction, and Pollock, Rothko and de Kooning's abstract expressionism (D. Bangdel 12-16). He practiced these art styles to internalize and master the western media and technique.

When he became able to use western techniques and media effectively, he gradually freed himself from these influences and created his distinct style in his paintings. About various western artists' influence on Bangdel, his struggle to free himself from these influences and his attempt to create his own style, Dina Bangdel writes:

One finds in many of these works the undeniable influence of the elongated rhythms of Modigliani's works, the quite vigor and laborious sobriety of Braque as well as the balance and force Gauguin's colours [sic]. As experimental works, Bangdel considered these influences necessary and helpful in grasping the technique to master the oil medium. However, he soon realized that the difficulty lay not in the control over the medium but rather in the gradual elimination of these influences, so as to create a style of his own—one that would express his own vision and creativity. (*Fifty Years* 12)

Bangdel "successfully resolved" his earlier dilemma and confusion "by creating paintings that on the one hand were genuinely close to the spirit of his homeland, while on the other hand were stylistically compatible with the trends in modern art" (D. Bangdel, *Fifty Years* 13). Despite the use of western techniques, he incorporates native images in his works.

His works developed in a certain sequence. At first he executed his figurative works in impressionist, post-impressionist, expressionist and cubist style one after the other. Then he exploited abstract abstractionist technique to express his complex feelings and emotions. And lately he had been working in abstract expressionist style which "merges a rare synthesis of tradition and modernity" (9).

Although few artists have used western techniques and created no-referential, non-objective and abstract paintings since mid-fifties, the exhibition of Bangdel's works played a vital role to influence other artists which brought a significant change in contemporary Nepali painting in 1960s. About the impact of the exhibition of Bangdel's paintings in contemporary Nepali art Abhi Subedi remarks:

The exhibition of Bangdel's paintings in the oldest college gallery in Kathmandu in 1962 marks the turning point in the history of Nepali art. It is perhaps the beginning of the contemporary or modern period of Nepali paintings.

. . . . The cultural basis of the subcontinental and Nepali art saw a new configuration of emulation which was new, alien, complex and challenging. But in the abstract canvas the viewers of Kathmandu saw a possibility, and hope for freedom and expression, since for the first time in a painting many Nepali viewers saw a unique presentation of human drama ("Nepali Utopia" 123-24).

Evaluating his technical skill and individual style of his matured art forms, and their widespread influence over other Nepali artists, Bangdel can be considered as "a pioneer of [sic] contemporary art" (Mishra, "Contemporary" 21).

Uttam Nepali's paintings synthesize western art techniques with some aspects of traditional Nepali art. Nepali himself says that modern art evolves from the tradition ("Nepal ra Adhunik Kala" 23). He learned to use western techniques and media from the College of Arts and Crafts in Lucknow, India. Since he studied art in Indian college, some of his works depict the influence of the traditional and contemporary Indian arts (N. Singh, *Samasamaik* 240). The viewers can see his attachment toward tradition and spiritual feeling in his rhythmic and plural images of dancing Ganesha, the Hindu god who is considered to remove obstacles from the way that leads to success (Laya Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 53). About his spiritual attachment and the inspiration he got from it for his creations, Uttam Nepali himself accepts, "I must confess that the main source of my inspiration is God from whom my

creative energy emanate, [sic] and religiosity is the source of my strength" ("Confluence"). Spiritual and philosophical aspects of early Nepali art are the sources of his inspiration.

Despite the depiction of spiritual motifs, his works are subjective, for he exploited lines, colours and images to express his personal feelings and imagination in response to the existing tradition and contemporary situation. About his art works and the concept of creation, Uttam Nepali himself explains:

A creation germinates from one's imagination and conscience. Sources of expression are no other than one's own experience on practice and attachment with life and nature. Philosophy and spiritualism are additional vigour and inspiration for an artist in the creation of a work of art. . . .

My works, displayed in this exhibition are pure expressions of a human mind, manifested through lines, shapes and colours, blended with my experience of spiritualism and philosophy of life and nature ("Emotions").

Although he uses traditional themes and subject matters, his forms are not objective and referential like that of traditional arts but coloured with his subjective feelings and imagination. Colour combination creates movement, rhythm and musical effect in his works (Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 54). In his paintings, viewers find figures in abstraction, and abstract feelings in figurative works (54). In Sangeeta Thapa's word, Uttam Nepali is "undoubtedly one of the vanguards of the contemporary Nepalese art scene, and is a doyen of contemporary abstract expression, in a country still struggling to give the arts, modern arts, its due recognition" (*Himalayan* 4).

Some of his works juxtapose poems and other verbal texts with visual images in the same canvas. Madhab Lal Karmacharya says that the union of literature and visual art in his

works appeals to the inner feelings of the viewers ("Sahitya"). About the reconciliation of vision and textuality in his paintings, Abhi Subedi opines:

The main thrust of his modern paintings is the spirit of inter-art. From the beginning he has sought to bring the cumulative experience of artists who use different mediums, from words to colours in his canvas. He projects themes that carry the sensitivity of experience, environment and peace as represented by Buddhas. ("Confluence")

Verbal texts reinforce the expression of visual form. The artist shares the technique of presenting visual and verbal texts simultaneously from early art forms like manuscript illuminations.

Gehendraman Amatya depicts the contemporary problems of Nepali society in his abstract forms. His works render the pain and suffering of the common people created by the social evils (Kalidash Shrestha, Preface). According to Indra K. C., exploitation of women, sexual abuse, murder and terrorism are the recurrent subject matters of his paintings (qtd. in Amatya, *Adhunik Kala* 135). He learned the techniques of abstract painting from the French artist Nicolai Michateuskin and the German art teacher Alex Wolder Maan. Rajan Karki says that Amatya is a "leading figure among the modern Nepalese painters representing the abstract school of Modern Painting" (qtd. in Amatya, *Adhunik Kala* 32). Amatya claims that he is the first Nepali artist who created and exhibited modern paintings. He writes about himself:

Today we are celebrating Golden Jubilee of the first man show painting exhibition of Modern Art in the history of Nepal. The Modern period in Nepalese Art may be said the date from the year 1955 [sic] when my first one

man show of Modern painting exhibition was held in Nepal. ("One Man Show")

Narendra Raj Prasai also accepts Amatya's view in these words: "The first man to hold an exhibition of modern art was Gehendra Man Amatya. He has held a solo art exhibition in 1955" (qtd. in Amatya, *Adhunik Kala* 30). Regarding the influence of western art forms, Amatya insists that he has been practicing almost all the modern techniques of painting (Interview 138). However, Narayan Bahadur Singh says that although his later works are abstract, his early works are figurative with slight distortion (*Adhunik* 246-47). Since he practices various techniques in his works, his paintings can not be classified and put under particular style (246). Like Amatya, Nepali and Bangdel, other artists working in the beginning phase also tried to acquire and internalize the western techniques.

The artists working in the 1970s and 80s established the western techniques in the field of Nepali painting. Some of the active artists in this phase were Shashi Shah, Krishna Manandhar, Indra Pradhan Batsa Gopal Vaidya, Manuj Babu Mishra, Vijay Thapa, Shyam Lal Shrestha, Govinda Dangol, Durga Baral Shashikala Tiwari, Pramila Giri, Shankar Raj Singh Suwal, Urmila Upadhyay, Tekbir Mukhiya, K. K. Karmacharya, Raj Manandhar and Madan Chitrakar. These artists, most of them trained in foreign art school, followed the foot steps of earlier artist in terms of using western techniques and disseminated the new art forms among new artist and the viewers of wide range. As a result, the acts of using western techniques did not appear as new phenomena but the familiar practices.

In 1971, four young artists returning from Sir J. J. School of Arts, Bombay, founded an art group, SKIB-71 which has remarkable contribution in the development of Nepali art (Andre Alexander, "Nepalese" 28). The acronym SKIB stands for the names of four founding

members of the group- Shashi Shah, Krishna Manandhar, Indra Pradhan and Batsa Gopal Vaidya. Although they have their own idiom for their expression, one thing they share is the reinvention of traditional images with new significance. Andre Alexander points out the features of the works of SKIB-71:

Each artist represents many breakthroughs for contemporary Nepalese art, showing the way to even younger artists, urging them by their example to take visual risks. Shashi Shah, the surrealist, Krishna Manandhar, the abstract painter, Indra Pradhan who specializes in fine line paintings and Batsa Gopal Vaidya a symbolist. However different they are artistically, they seem to have one thing in common: they cling to traditional beliefs and influences which they view as an important basis of their work.

Wishing to preserve an artistic heritage, they take up age-old images and colour schemes and transfer them during their exploration of modern canvas. ("Nepalese" 28)

Despite the use of western form, the images and colours in their works echo to the early Nepali art.

Shashi Shah's paintings explore the Hindu myths in surrealist form. Horse is the recurrent image in his work which symbolizes the *Kalki*, the tenth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. According to a Hindu mythology, in *Kali yuga*, the present age, when evil forces dominate the world, Lord Vishnu will take *Kalki avatara* and save the world from its possible doom. Andre Alexander interprets Shashi Shah's paintings:

Shah's vision is power, the immense energy of the horse. All of Shah's canvases are of galloping, frenetic bright horses. That he is able to convey so much energy and to sustain it without being dull is impressive. . . .

The imagery is highly symbolic: Hindu belief regards our era as the age of cheaters and liars. When the time is ripe, Vishnu, the Supreme Self and Creator, will deliver the world from evil and bring about a new golden age. He will arrive riding on or personified by white horses of energy ("Shashi Shah" 47).

The energetic movement of the horses suggests their "gallop across time, on their mission to save the world" (S. Thapa, *Himalayan* 6). The colour of the horse is also symbolic. The white horse as Kalki attacks black horse, the evil force, "symbolizing the battle between good and evil" (6). His paintings "reveal a time of spirituality in chaos, a world turned topsy-turvy as symbolized by the scattered chess pieces" (6). Shashi Shah himself mentions the significance of horses in his paintings:

Kalki Avatar is the protagonist of my paintings, a symbol. The declaration of Lord Vishnu "Whenever there is a crisis in humanity, I take on the incarnation to protect the world" is the basic element for the survival of our world and civilization. We are living and our world is living with this hope. Though the Kalki Avatar is the last one of all our philosophical avatars, it is the expression of a desire/hope for peace and a vision for the continuity of the future. No matter what the crisis we face and whatever the dangers may be, the world is surviving up to now. In order to protect the world from its possible doom, a situation is always created in one form or another. . . Our

world, civilization and creation must survive at any cost. This is the Kalki mission. ("Sculptures and Paintings")

In response to the fragmentation, tragedy, brutality and terrorism of the contemporary world, Shashi Shah turns toward Hindu mythology for consolation.

The images of horse are not the objective representation of the real horse. Using surrealist technique, the artist plays between illusion and reality. Kedar Bhakta Mathema traces the surrealist features in his paintings:

Here the horses are both real and unreal. Although they look real at casual glance, in close scrutiny they are outside the realm of possibility. Like other surrealists' images, Shashi's horses are both undeniable and impossible. The illusion of movement expressed in the vitality of lines and shapes of the horses and their floating manes and tails give the painting and [sic] undeniable vibrancy. (20)

Shashi Shah's works reintegrate the Hindu myth using surrealist technique.

Although the horse is a recurrent image in most of his works, human figures in mess and misery appear in some of his paintings (Prayag Shukla 44). His highly evocative drawings reflect ably the face, the posture, flesh and bone, skull and skeleton as a massive integrated structure like a tower of skull (44). Sangeeta Thapa indicates that these drawings "tell the story of a restless and sensitive artist, seeking to give an evocative voice to the injustices and inequalities of life: twisted figures merge in a surreal nuclear landscape" (*Himalayan* 6).

Krishna Manandhar creates music and rhythm within the images of nature exploiting abstractionist and abstract expressionist techniques. Rather than the content, form dominates

his canvas. He does not use colours to represent objects and events but to create music and rhythm (Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 90-91). He depicts the feelings and emotions associated with the objects rather than objects themselves. Juliet Bourne interprets the abstract forms of Krishna Manandhar:

Krishna Manandhar presents a vibrant combination of colour and form that is exciting, disturbing and filled with emotion.

"I try to give a message to others in abstract language." Manandhar said of his art. "For me abstract painting is not much different from figurative; the image is only one sort of medium. To 'understand' a work of art is not only to understand what, for example, ladies in a painting are wearing, but to understand the feeling that's within the work, so I think abstraction is really easier to understand". (6)

Within his abstract works the images of wood, green mountain, Himalaya, river and cool breeze appear and disappear continuously (Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 90). Rather than seeing, viewers feel about river and mountain. They are not the realistic representations of the images of nature but the expressions of his feeling and imagination. Kedar Bhakta Mathema points out the unearthly and romantic dimension of Manandhar's abstract expressionist paintings:

Indeed the mountain painted here is not the breathtakingly beautiful, picturesque and almost photographic mountain there we see in realistic works. This is a mountain 'you think' you see; it is the mountain you feel about. This mountain is cold, unearthly and hostile. The predominance of blue is suggestive of the mystery and unearthliness of the mountain. It is one thing to

see the majestic beauty of the mountain from distance and quite other thing to be actually there and experience its loneliness. Like all other abstract expressionists, Krishna is essentially a romantic in the extreme personalization of his art. (21)

The images in his painting, for example mountains, are native whereas the forms like abstract and abstract expressionist are western.

Indra Pradhan's works revitalize the images of traditional Nepali art using expressionist technique. Pradhan himself agrees that modernity in art should develop out of tradition (81). He took the images of mask from traditional Nepali rituals and depicted them in expressionist style. The "expressionist use of colours and the mask figures" do not evoke the "ritualistic and the revelatory energy" but only present the "variations in the colour structuralism" (A. Subedi "Modern Nepalese" 10). The images and colours are non-referential and non-objective. According to Narayan Bahadur Singh, his paintings are associated to inner vision rather than external objects (*Samasamaik* 254). About western influence in his works, Pradhan himself accepts that many western artists especially Paul Klee influenced him (80). Despite the western influence, his works depict native themes.

Batsa Gopal Vaidya's abstract art forms are associated with symbols and images of Nepali culture. His works show the influences of Tantric philosophy and Hindu mythologies (N. Singh, *Samsamaik* 260). Abhi Subedi also points out that there is "Tantric abstractionism and the use of Hindu sacramental pigmentation" in his paintings ("Modern Nepalese" 10).

Sangeeta Thapa interprets Vaidya's paintings in terms of cultural and mythological themes:

Culture and heritage dominate his paintings. The preservation of heritage in a rapidly changing urban setting is one of his main concerns.

His oil paintings have a pleasing graphic and impressionistic quality about them. Each painting is a dream landscape shimmering out of the artists [sic] own windows, ethereal hues. A magical ambience is created with recurring motifs: mountains, thick clouds and temples. Sharp, triangular tantric mountain shapes appear from within the womb of the more solid mountain forms, symbolizing the hidden mystery, spirituality and power of nature. A pensive Ganesha broods in the heavens, God is everywhere. To him, Ganesh is an Icon, Motif and Mandala-the symbol of the expansion of consciousness. (*Himalayan* 8)

The images of gods and mountains in his paintings are not the realistic representations but suggestions created by lines, colours and texture. At a glance, his compositions are "abstract pieces in vibrant colours, but a closer look reveals a hint of the god" (Alexander, "Nepalese" 28). Some of his works are intertextual, for he exploits the images of traditional Nepali art forms. S. K. Singh points out the native elements in his works: "Constructed around symbolic images, Vaidya's works are truly Nepalese in character and original without being avant-garde, creating an atmosphere which is spiritual, the central characteristic of ancient Nepalese art" (qtd. in Thapa, *Himalayan* 8). Thus using western techniques, the artist incorporates some aspects of early Nepali art.

Manuj Babu Mishra's paintings attack social evils using expressionist forms. He portrays the victimized figures of human beings because of war, poverty, domination, rape, murder and genocides (A. Subedi, "Nepali Utopia" 125-26). The characters seem to be indulging in "targeting, destruction and overriding" (126). The brutality, tragedy and catastrophe have been depicted through the recurrent images of "missiles, tunnels, birds,

serpents and terrified heads" (126). The artist alters the images and colours to express the inner feelings of tortured, troubled and disillusioned characters. His works are progressive, for he satirizes the agents who create social disharmony, and appeals to develop humanistic feeling (Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 59). Abhi Subedi interprets Mishra's paintings:

His works reflect the physical crisis in a very tangible form, but in each canvas he introduces ideas which are directly related to the catastrophe depicted in the art. The base of the dramatic relationship between modern scientifically fortified war machinery and the helpless anthropomorphic forms in the art is humanism. His subject matter is humanism- its catastrophe, thwarted hopes and bleak futurity. Overt representation rather than a subtle one is the feature of his art. Because of the need to foreground the theme, the subject of the predicament of humanity under the shadow of the war, he does not delineate the theme in a subtle manner. ("Nepali Utopia" 125)

His works depict the conflict between science and religion, and suggest that industrial and technological world without spirituality is heading toward destruction (Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 61). He juxtaposes technological and religious images through the use of "the irony and the symbolism" to depict fragmentation and chaos in the contemporary society (A. Subedi, "Nepali Utopia" 126). To depict such themes, the artist exploits expressionist form. Regarding western influence in his works, Mishra himself accepts that various styles of western arts influenced him ("Bisuddha Kala" 6). He considers that alien influences should be integrated in the mainstream of Nepali art without prejudice (5). He acquired western techniques through his study in the art college of Dhaka University and his visit to various western countries like Germany, Austria, Russia, Netherlands, Denmark and Greece. He

exploits western techniques to depict hardship, suffering and anxiety of the self and his fellow beings (N. Singh, *Samasamaik* 248-49).

Vijay Thapa depicts social conflict and suffering human figures in his impressionist and cubist paintings. Like impressionists, he plays with light and shade in his canvas (Mainali, *Sirjana* 38). Geometric forms of Cezanne and Picasso influence his works (Gyanhari Adhikari 28). He learned these western techniques from the Fine Art College of Banaras Hindu University. In Narayan Bahadur Singh's word, his early works, however, depict the dilemma in the use of western techniques (*Samasamaik* 253). Gradually he freed himself from these influences and has created his distinct style. His works depict tortured, anxiety-ridden, disillusioned and rebellious human figures (Mainali, *Sirjana* 39). In his paintings, he creates balance between native Nepali elements and western techniques, concrete and abstract images, and warm and cool colours (40). He also depicts conflict between good and evil forces of the society, and suggests the victory of spiritual power through the symbolic forms (39).

To depict the theme of peace and harmony in conflict-ridden contemporary society Shankar Raj Singh Suwal exploits the subject matters of traditional Nepali painting, and Hindu and Buddhist mythologies using surrealist technique. Religious and cultural images are recurrent in his paintings (Krishna Shah Yatri, "On the Spot" 57). He reincorporates the images of ancient Nepali architecture and sculpture, and symbolic postures and gestures of gods and goddesses and meditating figures as depicted in traditional Nepali paintings. (Yam Prasad Sharma, "Spirit" II). His works also depict the artist's quest for freedom and peace in the world where there is social disharmony, exploitation and terrorism (Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 101). Yam Prasad Sharma further traces the patriotic aspects in Suwal's paintings:

Shankar Raj Singh Suwal, using the multiple aspects of Nepali culture, creates a single solid vision of peaceful and glorious Nepal. Patriotism is the central theme, which unites and brings together all the other motifs, symbols and images creating organic whole. However, his canvas does not open all his secrets at first sight. He invites the viewer within his rhythm, and presents us conflicting images, and later guides the viewer to reconcile these images in the imagination. ("Spirit" II)

In his compositions, he juxtaposes contrary images with free association like the surrealist artists (N. Singh, *Samasamaik* 264). He took inspiration from the works of van Gogh, Cezanne, Salvador Dali and Picasso (Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 100). He learned western techniques from M. S. University, Baroda. His works combine the images of myths, early art forms and Nepali culture using surrealist technique.

Shyam Lal Shrestha's paintings depict socio-cultural life of ordinary Nepali people and various images of nature through cubist and abstract forms. Landscapes, cultural rituals and general household activities of women get life in his canvas (Bimalbabu Khattri 12). He does not depict the pain and suffering of the working people but pleasure and warmth in their toil. Lain Singh Bangdel interprets Shrestha's paintings:

He projects his own vision as a versatile artist and creates a very familiar world which he finds around him. The farmers in the field or mother playing with the children or village women washing clothes or house wife carrying water are the common scenes that dominate his canvas. Yet the warmth of feeling is there, the pathos of love is every where [sic]. ("Expression")

About his works Abhi Subedi says that in "abstract forms he has created human drama through the dominant use of cubes and tiles created by large brush strokes that move up and down the canvas by forming invisible lines" ("Continuity"). The smooth flow of harmonious colours creates a sense of rhythm. (Bibas, "Kala, Akriti" 44). Soft, warm and friendly colours in his works produce aesthetic feeling in the viewer (Malla, "Nepali Sanskritika" Kha). Soft and friendly colours suggest the feeling of warmth in the life of toiling humble characters.

Govinda Lal Singh Dangol works in various styles and media. He creates landscape, still-life and portrait using oil colour, charcoal, pencil and water colour (Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 72). In some of his works, he also uses collage technique (N. Singh, *Samasamaik* 261). He synthesizes native tradition with modernity (Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 72). Influenced by tantric and Hindu philosophy he presents *paubha* painting with new significance using modern techniques of painting (72). There is spiritual undercurrent in his works (72).

Durga Baral depicts socio-political problems satirically and humourously using impressionist and surrealist techniques. He attacks social injustice, corruption, hypocrisy, domination and conservative concepts in contemporary Nepali society, and appeals for the social reform (Mainali, *Sirjana* 24-25). He reveals the follies of the ruling elite and makes the exploited people aware of their basic right. CK Lal says that Baral has explored "some of the most pressing issues of the time with detachment" ("Our Times"). Baral himself agrees that he creates art in response to the socio-political conditions of conflict-ridden Nepali society ("Transcending"). Chirag Bangdel interprets Baral's paintings:

Baral's paintings are amalgamations of narratives, stories, experiences, personal sentiments, and his perspectives on social events are presented in a

fine artistic manner. Today, to be an artist is an intellectual thing to do—more than anything else. And with every painting Durga Baral sends us on a trip to soul searching. ("Transcending")

About his style Narayan Bahadur Singh says that his works depict the influence of impressionism and surrealism (*Samasamaik* 269). Viewing Baral's works Bal Krishna Sama said, "I believe a Salvador Dali has been born in the country" ("Transcending"). He expresses ideas through his bold and free lines in water colour (Malla, *Adhunik Nepali* 28). In CK Lal's word, "not just his lines on the faces of the characters, even the shades in the background" have been used effectively to express their feelings ("Our Times"). Baral's works attack socio-political evils using impressionist and surrealist techniques.

Shashikala Tiwari's works depict her attempt to resolve social conflicts of our time using post-impressionist and cubist forms. Her works suggest that suppression, gender inequality and poverty give way to social disharmony. To resolve the social conflict and create peaceful and harmonious atmosphere, the artist uses Hindu and Buddhist mythologies, religious allegories, symbolic colours and the images of nature. About her inspiration from myths and nature, Sangeeta Thapa explains:

Shashikala is a deeply spiritual person, drawing her inspiration from the myths of the valley and Hindu-Buddhist allegory. "Footmarks of Peace", was the theme of her first exhibition, which explored the life of the Buddha. Shashi is also the proverbial nature's child- constantly seeking her inspiration from nature: the mountains and streams, trees, leaves and flowers, birds. Her last three Exhibitions reflected a joyous celebration of nature ("My Earth and Sky", "When Seasons Change", "My Earth: Our Earth"). (*Himalayan* 10)

Some of her paintings depict the troubled, tortured and exploited female figures in the patriarchal society through the use of mythical characters, and suggest their possible rebellion against the oppressors (Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 104). The combination of cool colours creates movement, rhythm and music (104-105). She develops a "distinct lyrical style" in her works with the "synthesis of literature and art" (S. Thapa, *Himalayan* 10). Not only the lines and images but also the colours in her compositions are symbolic, and convey certain message. Abhi Subedi points out the symbolic value of her colours:

The predominance of blue and green in her paintings is an important feature of her style. In most of her well-known canvases blue is used to mark a positive experience. Negative concepts associated with blue such as the blue mood, the dejected mind, and the world of misery, however, sometimes stand at odds with her use of colour. She nevertheless, manages to use blue as an effective symbols of nature and even of optimistic moods. ("Overview" 112-13)

Her works are influenced by the paintings of Picasso's cubism and Cezanne's post-impressionism (Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 105). Most of her paintings are created in cubist style using oil colour (N. Singh, *Samasamaik* 278). She learned to use western techniques and media in M. S. University, Baroda, India where she studied art. Using the western forms as tools, her works incorporate the images of myths and nature to explore the social issues of contemporary Nepal.

Madan Chitrakar creates both abstract and figurative paintings. His figurative works make the viewers aware of the Nepali culture capturing the medieval sculptures and

architecture of Kathmandu valley. Madan Chitrakar himself explains the significance of his figurative sketches and drawings:

The Vanishing Heritage- a collection of sketches and drawings rendered from and around Kathmandu valley is an expression of concern on the fast eroding sense of pride on the past heritage of Kathmandu. A time will soon come when all the grandeurs of the medieval art-forms would be overwhelmed by concrete boxes. ("Vanishing Heritage")

His figurative sketches and drawings appeal for the preservation of early art forms.

On the other hand, his abstract works are experimental (Mainali, *Sirjana* 32). They suggest peace and harmony in conflict-ridden world through the use of abstract colours and forms (32). Banshi Shrestha interprets Chitrakar's abstract paintings:

Madan Chitrakar- an established painter of today, expresses his feeling of abstraction through lines, forms and colours. Abstract is only feeling beyond physical reality where one simply experiences peace and serenity.

But once an artist gets a vision and becomes conscious of the imagery formed within it, the artist instantly translates the vision into colours or forms. Only then abstract becomes real with a certain shape or form. Here, artist Madan has done exactly this with colours by traveling between infinity and concrete; and in some cases back to nature. ("Symphony")

He creates balance between concrete images and abstract feelings through the use of rhythmic lines, and complementary and harmonious colours (Mainali, *Sirjana* 31-32). His paintings do not depict social conflict, pain and suffering but suggest peace and serenity (32).

He studied art in Sir J. J. School of Art, Bombay, India. These artists among others established the western forms in the domain of Nepali painting.

As the artists widely practiced western techniques until 1990, now the artists' concern is not about acquiring these new techniques but to go beyond that to create their own idioms for expression. Using these western techniques as tools, the artists of this phase attempt to explore new subject matters and invent their own individual style of representation. Thus, the study classifies the period since 1990 as the phase of creativity. Many artists of new generation are working actively toward this direction. Some of them are Ragini Upadhyay, Kiran Manandhar, Seema Sharma Shah, Umashankar Shah, Mukesh Malla, Uttam Kharel, Laya Mainali, Ashmina Ranjit, Puran Khadka, Buddhi Thapa, Sujan Chitrakar, Sarita Dangol, Sunil Sigdel, Sudarsan Rana, Sunita Rana, Umesh Shrestha, Uttam Dangol, Rabin Koirala, Nabendra Limbu, Kriti Kausal Joshi and Devendra Thumkeli.

Ragini Upadhyay's works revolt against political violence and patriarchal domination through intertextual graphic forms. She depicts social unrest and degeneration, and looks forward to the peace and stability. Sangeeta Thapa interprets a series of her graphic arts:

This series of prints has been inspired by the teachings and and [sic] philosophy of Lord Buddha- they reveal a yearning for peace and compassion that is of relevance nationally and internationally. Her prints questioned the prevailing violence as in "why this bloodshed" and move on to touch people of all cultures with a definite message: "Ahimsa Paramo Dharma- non-violence is the true path." (*Himalayan* 14)

Thapa further adds that Ragini "endeavours to promote the importance of cultural and religious tolerance and more importantly to appeal for peace through the medium of art" (14).

Ragini also depicts the follies, cruelty and violence of the patriarchal society through feminist perspective, and attempts to carve the women's space in history. Abhi Subedi remarks:

Ragini in the paintings of the Nepali paper series has captured the weak points of human nature, especially the games monopolized by men as their prerogatives, like politics, violence, backbiting and fighting for gains. Woman also figures up in these works but only as someone who standing by the corner of the horizontal space watches the drama. But the narrator, the moderator and the censor of these stories is a woman. The gap between the visible and the invisible therefore is the state of irony in her paintings. ("Nepali Utopia" 128)

Her female personas seem to be aware of the patriarchal injustice and to be working silently to oppose them.

The themes of political violence and patriarchal domination get expressed through intertextual forms, for she takes allusions from fables, oriental myths and folktales (Ram Kumar Bhaukaji "Katu" 6). Verbal texts in "Devanagari scripts", and "comic strips" appear in juxtaposition with visual images creating intertextuality (A. Subedi, "Nepali Utopia" 128-29). Her works combine "the comic with the serious, the graphics with paintings, fun with sadness and forms with empty space" (129).

Her lines and colours are bold, aggressive and direct (Malla, *Chitrakala* 76). She gives emphasis to the internal feeling, emotion and imagination rather than objective representation of the images (Mainali, *Kala ra Kalakar* 119). Her works are experimental, for she always invents new techniques for her presentation (120). Her forms are not predetermined but evolve on the process of creation (121). The artist's favourite medium is

graphics which she learned to handle in Lakhanau College of Arts and Crafts India and her art training in England, Scotland and Germany. The works of Monet, van Gogh and Dali also influence her paintings (119). Political and gender issues of contemporary Nepal get expressed in her intertextual works, which depict the synthesis of western forms and native contents.

Kiran Manandhar recycles some of the contents and forms of early Nepali arts in his abstract, abstract expressionist, collage and performance arts. Influenced by the *mandalaic* structure of *paubha* paintings, he explores the theme of concentration, meditation and enlightenment through his *mandalas* which are subjective, plural and open-ended. Abhi Subedi interprets Kiran Manandhar's *mandalas*:

He used the mandalic art that he executed on Nepali rural hand-made paper to create this effect. To him Mandala was/is everything-solidity, surface, sky, earth, confluence of mind and universe, a consciousness symbolized by the vulva and the movement of energy to and from it. They have psychological dimension. They create an atmosphere of the mind through brush strokes, distribution of colours not in tonal merger but in terms of the distribution of each over the entire surface, a technique used by Kiran Manandhar in nearly all of his paintings to create linear effects of both the visible and invisible lines. The total effect is a sense of movement round a certain anthropomorphic image. ("Art Odyssey" ix)

However, his *mandalas* are not the objective representations of the mythical *mandalas* but expressed through abstract shapes and colours. About his artistic forms, Manandhar himself says, "I transform my imaginations and feelings into abstract forms" ("My Odyssey" xi). He

further adds that he transcends the "cognitive side" of the image and tries to "figure out its inner beauty" (xii). Because of the subjective elements and abstract forms, his *mandalas* differ from early Nepali *mandalas*.

A number of western forms like Emil Nolde's expressionist forms, Willem de Kooning's abstract expressionism, Pablo Picasso and Braque's collage and Matisse's abstractions influence his works. Regarding the influence of other artist in his works, Manandhar himself agrees, "I adore the artists Willem de Kooning, Emile Nolde, Pablo Picasso, Braque, Matisse, Uttam Nepali and Laxman Shrestha whose paintings have motivated me in a number of ways" (xi). He learned western techniques of painting from Banaras Hindu University, India.

Despite the influence of expressionism and abstract expressionism, his works do not depict the degeneration, disillusionment and angst like that of de Kooning and Nolde's paintings but suggest peace and create meditative mood in the viewers. R. T. Shahani points out:

Any influences governing the art of Kiran? Among many others, perhaps there is one of De Kooning of German School of Abstract Expressionism, where figures are not always banished but flow out of the abstract canvas. However, mercifully for us, Kiran's exhibits are not akin to the fierce looks and grotesque forms which some of the German artist's characters in woman series are depicted as. ("Kaleidoscopic" 54)

Manandhar appropriates western form to suggest peace and harmony.

Some of Kiran's works have intertextual and interart relationship. He presents visual and verbal texts simultaneously in the same canvas. Sometimes he makes the collage of

poems by other poets on his canvas and creates visual images around and over them using colours. He also creates pictures simultaneously with the recitation of poems and performance of plays. Abhi Subedi traces the interart relationship in his works:

Kiran has worked with poets and theatre workers. He creates texts in his paintings and reads colours and brush strokes in poetry. He drew figures for each of my poem in the collection *Chasing Dreams* (1996) and when a group of young University teachers were performing the long poem "Kathmandu Odyssey" in that collection, Kiran Manandhar participated in the performance with his huge canvas. He was doing that for widening his experience of art. After that participation with theatre artists in 1996, Kiran Manandhar worked in yet another performance of my poetic play *The River Stage*. ("Kiran Odyssey" ix)

Having flexible attitude towards the medium, he gives performative power to his paintings. He commences his painting process on the curtain like canvas on the stage simultaneously with the beginning of the performance of the plays or poems, continues as long as the drama keeps unfolding and captures his impressions of the play or the poem in visual form. Performance art, with the participation of poets, painters, musicians and actors, interpenetrates the boundaries among various art forms and creates a sort of mosaic. Arun Gupto interprets the performance of Abhi Subedi's "Kathmandu Odyssey":

Manjul's music, created on the stage is also a part of the mosaic that facilitates the freeing of sensibilities. Manjul becomes the music, like Kiran Manandhar dissolves into the canvas. Like the poet becomes the painting of myth and reality, like Anita, as the female voice becomes the image.

"We wanted to say that we are all part of the mosaic. We have tried to create just as if we are also part of the audience," says Sajag Rana, the director. ("Kathmandu Odyssey" 62)

His visual text not only exists independently in canvas but also becomes an integral part of mosaic or the multimedia text.

Despite the alien influences, his works create a "synthesis of Eastern and Western art traditions" (Deepak Adhikari 190). About the reintegration of native elements in his works Shailendra Kumar Singh writes:

What makes him distinct from the rest is the way his art has absorbed a number of a "foreign elements" in terms of stylistic tendencies without affecting his individual mode of expression, which while corresponding to the international character of modern art, derives its inspiration whenever possible, from native sources. ("Modernity" 66)

Kiran not only exploits the forms and contents of *mandala*, found in Nepali *paubha* paintings but also Nepali medium like hand made rice paper. In his works, the "primitive Himalayan paper enters into a dialogue with the western media" (A. Subedi, "Nepali Utopia" 127).

Feminist artist Ashmina Ranjit resists, opposes and questions the patriarchal perspective of Nepali society, and celebrates the ecstatic feelings, emotions and sensations of women putting female body in the foreground through her paintings, graphics, installation and performance art. She expresses her attachment with herself and other women in this way, "I love you woman, the one within me. another within you. . . do you love to touch me. my hair" ("Hair Warp"). She breaks the taboos associated with menstrual flow and takes it as a significant element for women's identity (Malla, *Adhunik Nepali* 42). She depicts the power

of female body, and sexual and sensual joy of women's experience. Manjushree Thapa explains:

Ashmina began to directly take on women's physical experiences, focusing on their sensual and sexual joy, and the power of their bodies. This has been an important move from an artist working in a society that too often denies woman the right to claim their own body.

Working, more recently, on the theme of menstrual blood, Ashmina continues to break barriers about what is permissible for a female artist to say in Nepal, and enlarging the public discourse within Nepal on women's identity and experience. ("Feminine Force")

Bringing the images of female body and menstrual blood at the foreground of her works, the artist subverts the conventional values associated with them.

Ranjit depicts the images of menstrual blood and *yoni* not only to express ecstasy and joy but also to link these images with life force, *Shakti* and the origin of all creations. Ashmina herself mentions that "menstruation is a natural phenomenon without which creation would come to a standstill" ("Feminine Force"). To reinforce her concept of creation, she depicts the similar underlined conditions both in human beings and plants. She creates the images of germinating seeds, shells and plants resembling genital parts. About the significance of such natural images, Ashmina herself agrees, "In my images, I have been looking at shells and plants, whose forms and inner space are seen as the female body parts and in some case male body parts. This is a kind of anthropomorphism in which I ascribe a human body to natural aspect, a suggestion of something more than simple physical forms" ("Sensuality").

Her works are experimental, for she always invents new techniques for her expression. She is also skillful in graphics, installation and performance art. Her style is "closer to postmodernist forms" and her works have the "effect of a theatrical performance without a reusable text" (A. Subedi, "Overview" 117). She learned these techniques in Australian and American universities.

Trees are the recurrent images in Sarita Dongol's paintings. On the one hand, her works depict trees and green environment, on the other hand, they express the exploitation, pain and suffering of the women. She creates music and movement within leaves, branches, twigs, stems and roots of the trees through her rhythmic lines and balanced combination of colours (Mainali, *Sirjana* 15). Some images suggest joy, harmony and peace whereas others depict the feeling of melancholy, pain and suffering (51).

She gives the human characteristics to the trees. Dangol expresses her emotional attachment with trees: "I'm fond of talking with the green branches of the tree, they ask me various types of questions and express their troubles, they share joy and woe with me" ("Trees and Trails"). She further adds, "I become the tree on the canvas. I became hard, soft, fallen, broken, withered, and bent" ("Defining Trees"). Giving anthropomorphic attributes to the trees, she appeals to save the forest and environment. Batsa Gopal Vaidya interprets her works:

Her works are mostly based upon nature, and they have their own effect on the viewer. The dry branches of the trees seem to speak their own language-some seem to be dancing in their own rhythm, some crying, some pleading-all tend to evoke a different sentiment inside you. The paintings speak against the cruelty of man against nature. ("Creations")

Her works suggest that trees, the integral parts of our life, should be preserved for human happiness.

Dangol not only pleads against the deforestation but also depicts the trouble, torture and the exploitation of women through the various images of trees. She herself says, "I have tried to expand the matter about the slavery, injustice the troubles [sic] of women and problems relating to equality through the medium of my dear and near trees" ("Trees and Trails"). Abhi Subedi points out that Dangol's "eco-paintings" "create an expressive rebellion against the depletion of forest which is synonymous with the exploitation of woman" ("Overview" 117). The development of her works shows that she is moving ahead from figurative images toward abstract form (Mainali, *Sirjana* 52).

Puran Kahadka's abstract paintings depict the artist's meditation and concentration to unify oneself with the cosmic being or the soul. He attempts to present the essence of the visual shapes of all beings and non-beings. Khadka searches answer to the philosophical questions related to universe, life, death and existence (Indra K. C. 7). He tries to capture the invisible and intangible aspects of the world and human being in visual form. Khadka himself suggests that "something is secret" in the various phenomena of the world ("Artist, Painter"). If an individual perceives and realizes this secret, he/she achieves "wholeness" and "Eternal Aliveness", and "our life is a toll for knowing and being this Eternal Aliveness" ("Artist, Painter"). In his works, Khadka is in the quest of this harmony and wholeness between himself and cosmic being. About his works, Khadka himself says:

The true significance of the works presented in the exhibition is that they serve the need of the soul and our reason. They are reminders as well as supports of contemplation, since contemplation and understanding serve the

needs of our soul, i.e. "To attune our own distorted modes of thought to cosmic harmony." ("Artist, Painter")

As he meditates on the process of creation, his works appeal the viewers to meditate and realize the essence. Arun Ranjit says, "His work is a resistance against the lack of spirituality of modern times and an attempt to make the viewers realize the necessity of observing the true values of human existence and it is like retracing the emotional history of mankind" ("Puran Khadka"). Exploiting abstract forms, Puran Khadka attempts to depict the invisible force in the beings and things (Diwas Guragain 10). He learned the techniques of abstract painting in Sir J. J. School of Art, Bombay, India.

Buddhi Thapa's paintings depict the microcosm of universe as the *yantra* for meditation, concentration and the realization of the cosmic being. He synthesizes the influences of the both western and oriental mythologies and spiritual philosophy for his expression. About his inclination toward spiritual philosophy and his motive for creation Buddhi Thapa himself reveals:

Now my desire was not just to understand the physical arrangements of Nature but the abstract expansion of the cosmos surrounded by the realm of my curiosity. I was able to comfort this curiosity by going through various books on Hindu religion and mythology, Christian & Muslim philosophical & spiritual beliefs. Questions of science & its calculative verifications of existential phenomena also grew larger in my mind. Books on meditation helped me understand my discovery of the existential mysticism. ("Creation")

Thapa's works depict the harmony and union of physical self and abstract spiritual existence. About his anthropomorphic figurative works, Abhi Subedi comments that "mother earth with

her greenery & power was an integral part of the cosmic consciousness" suggesting the "joy of the green, peace & serenity" "at a time when violence has become the order of the body" ("Creation"). In his abstract works, he represents the cosmos in the form of *mandala* using geometric forms like polygons, square, triangle, circle and a *bindu* (dot) at the centre. Chitra Thakuri Pradhan indicates that geometric images around lead the viewers toward the centre, the "focal point" representing the union of individual self and cosmic consciousness ("Shristi"). The title of his works like *Creation*, *Cosmic Waves*, *Cosmic Union*, *Surya Mandalas*, *Cosmic Centre* suggest his spiritual attachment. K. L. Kaul says that "he integrates a number of ideas and elements connected with a cosmic lore" using abstract images ("Creation"). He took the training of art in Calcutta.

Seem Sharma Shah's graphic works depict the images of ancient Nepali sculpture and architecture, Nepali cultural rituals, and Hindu and Buddhist mythologies. Hindu temples, Buddhist stupas, Hindu gods and goddesses, Buddha and Buddhist monks are the recurrent images in her paintings. Madan Chitrakar opines that the images look as if they are "bursting out of a deep mystic past" ("Mystical"). Chitrakar further adds that her works "reflect a total gamut of motifs and forms from the religious/cultural life of medieval Kahmandu" and suggest "a mystic journey-leading a viewer in a deep dreamspace filled with forms and imagery from the bygone days" ("Mystical"). Shailendra Kumar Singh comments on her works:

Shah's works featuring in this exhibition are primarily concerned with the vision of the mystery of life in terms of spiritual consciousness. Here, she draws our attention to awesome universal mysteries and incomprehensive power of various gods and goddesses drawn basically from Hindu myths. The

use of surrealistic, dream-like imagery, in some works, however, defies any fixed interpretation and reflects the inexplicable spiritual realm of the subconscious. ("Mystical")

She does not present the mythical and religious images as they appear in reality and myths, but combines them with free association. Since she studied art in Banaras Hindu University, her works show some influences of Indian art. Sangeeta Thapa says, "Though Seema's imagery is derived subconsciously from her Indian heritage, we can conclude from her recent etchings that her life in Nepal has had a direct impact on her work and is a synthesis of her visual exploration of these two worlds" ("Magical Realm"). Her mystical and magical graphic works appeal for the spiritual, harmonious and peaceful Nepal.

Mukesh Malla depicts the problems and anxieties of contemporary Nepali society through his abstract and abstract expressionist forms. Malla himself agrees that his paintings are not the "outcome of the preconceived ideas" but the responses to his "surrounding through the canvas" ("Emergence"). Malla further adds, "I myself am unaware how my paintings will shape up. After the work is completed, I witness spurt of colours that are also new to me" ("Emergence"). According to Saroj Bajracharya, his paintings can be viewed as the "records of the process rather than a finished result" like that of "abstract expressionist" paintings ("Emergence"). His abstract paintings do not represent the social conflict and problems directly as in figurative and representational works but present them through colours and abstract images. Using abstract form, he also represented a theatre performance on the spot. Abhi Subedi interprets his paintings:

His paintings do not represent that anxiety directly. But his paintings done mainly in acrylic medium and sometimes in oil on large and mostly smaller

canvas are more charming than frighteningly daunting. Abstractionism is their main stylistic feature, but Malla has not limited himself rigidly to any particular form. For example, in his paintings executed on the spot while the street theatre of his brother Ashesh Malla was going on, Mukesh Malla has captured the movement in semi-figural forms. ("Emergence")

In Malla's works, the form and the process of creation are more important than the content and the final product. His paintings are plural and open-ended, and have the potentiality of multiple interpretations. According to Sanjeev Uprety, his works "celebrate the age of reader" by "refusing to limit the 'play' of meanings", and seem to "share a common historical and social context" ("Keys" 4). Thus, Malla's works are open for multiple interpretations.

Uttam Kharel depicts his feelings and emotions in response to his surrounding using abstract forms. In his paintings, concrete images evoke abstract feelings. About his abstract art forms, Kharel himself explains:

Many things, existing around me reside in mind too. Such things frequently keep on presenting up their presence on different situations. The forms and feelings, they create do not seem to resemble. When abstract feelings are presented in a concrete form, the characters of the image gradually fade away and something superb comes forth. ("Characters")

His paintings express both pain and pleasure of human characters living in complex social context. About his paintings, Binita Pandey says, "The human character comprises one side rush, fatigue, depression, horror, anger and envy, and reveals on the other side motivation, inquisitiveness and interest" (28). According to Uttam Nepali, black, gray and red colours are dominant in his paintings and particularly black and dark colours lead to the artist's theme

("Characters"). Smooth and harmonious development of colours suggests calm and soothing feeling (Malla, "Uttamka" gha).

Uma Shankar Shah's graphic works depict the images of nature and Hindu mythologies appealing for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage of Nepal. He incorporates the forms and contents of early Nepali religious and folk arts. About his paintings, Shailendra Kumar Singh comments:

In Shah's early prints-etching, woodcuts, lithographs, etc,-we find the abstraction of nature in simplified form, dominated by the recurrent images of the gliding fishes in particular and life under water in general. Nevertheless, themes drawn from the realms of philosophy (sunrise), mythology and religion (Shiva) and folk culture (Lok Jeewan) also feature in them.

("Glimpses")

He is concerned about fast eroding spiritual values and ancient art works. Shah himself says about his works, "It is a small step of mine, to express my views regarding the religious traditions, and social practices, in the light of spiritual thought in the context of this valley" ("Glimpses"). His graphic works capture the images of Nepali architecture, and sculptures of various gods and goddesses, and the images of devotees worshipping the deities with various colours and flowers. The colours in his works are playful in the sense that they function not only as the material to create art works but also the things to worship the icons of divinities.

Sunil Sigdel's paintings depict the synthesis of science and art, reason and imagination, and masculine and feminine energy. Sigdel himself accepts that the science book of human anatomy "inspired" him to express the "mystery" of his "emotions" in the form of art ("Science and Emotions"). He fuses the reason of science with the imagination of

art. He associates feminine qualities with art and masculine qualities with science. Saroj Bajracharya points out that Sunil Sigdel is "convinced that there exists a feminine quality in every man" ("Science and Emotions"). He further adds that Sigdel is "affected by the rational and irrational" forces ("Science and Emotions"). Sanjeev Uprety comments on Sigdel's paintings:

What is new and original about Sunil's paintings, however, is his innovative and aesthetic superimposition of colours upon the rational black and white images of science; a juxtaposition that not only represented the binary division between male and female, science and art, logic and emotion, but also deconstructed such opposition simultaneously. ("Deconstructions" 5)

His works depict that art shares some aspects of science. There is no watertight boundary between art and science, reason and imagination, and masculine and feminine experiences.

Devendra Thumkeli's paintings depict his attachment toward peace and serenity of nature, and his concern about deforestation and degradation of natural environment. Madan Chitrakar indicates that his recurrent images of trees suggest his "constant dialogue with these trees" ("Realities"). He also expresses human feelings and emotions through the use of trees analogically. Sangeeta Thapa says that the combination of colours and images depict the "story of humanity and nature in flux" ("Realities"). Thapa further adds that the "story of the trees, though overtly simplified, is the story of our independent struggles" ("Realities"). His works depict the crisis in humanity and natural environment in the present context. I have already studied the characteristics and features of some specific contemporary artists' works. The study depicts that the artists are working on developing their individual idiom of

expression exploiting western techniques as tools. Now, I would like to present some critical views on contemporary Nepali painting as a whole.

Because of the political change and the development of modern means of transportation and communication, western art forms heavily influenced the Nepali painting since 1950 (N. Singh, *Samasamaik* 211). These paintings break away from the traditional Nepali paintings, for they are not the objective and fine representations of the myths, and objects and events of the world but the expressions of subjective feelings (Mishra, "Contemporary" 20). Contemporary Nepali artists used the western techniques of art like impressionism, cubism, expressionism, surrealism, abstract-expressionism, installation, and performance art, and some other western techniques (Malla, "Attyadhunik" 16-17). Although Nepali artists shared the western art techniques, they "sought the representation of their own culture, society and life of people with native-nature" (B. Shrestha, "Creative Artists" 29).

Manuj Babu Mishra comments on contemporary Nepali art:

The contemporary art of Nepal today is proceeding with various trends. Some artists are akin to reflect national identity in art, whereas others look interested to assimilate some prevailing trends from outside world to give out a unique creation. However, the trends of contemporary art of Nepal can be summed up with conclusion that fresh and renewed attempts have been made in art through different media to give expression to the powerful feeling of mind.

("Contemporary" 22)

The images of the "Himalayas", "hills" and Nepali "culture" in Nepali painting contribute to create "native identity" (R. K. Pandey, "Identification" 39). Contemporary Nepali artists synthesize the traditional art forms with western art techniques to express their feelings. Julia

Hagewald says that Nepali artists "consider tradition not as something static, but as a continuously changing and progressing movement, out of which they have emerged, and on the basis of which they are trying to elaborate" (100).

Contemporary Nepali artists do not imitate the western art forms but exploit the western techniques of art as tools to develop their own personal idiom for their expression. Abhi Subedi writes: "The Eurocentric art forms did not necessarily depress the traditions of art in countries like India and through its impact the arts of Nepal. But their thrust for standardization of culture took its tools" ("Nepali Utopia" 123). Contemporary Nepali paintings are expressions of the artists' inner response to the changing society rather than the objective representation of the external world. Rather than sticking to the tradition and representing the social events as they are, Nepali artists "take a more critical look at their traditions and interpret what is going on within their society" (Alexander, "Contemporary" 26).

Few critics have pointed out the problems faced by Nepali artist in the execution of painting which has its own identity. According to Narayan Bahadur Singh, contemporary Nepali artists have exploited the western art techniques from impressionist to abstract expressionist which are already old in the western world (*Samasamaik* 214). To create true identity of Nepali painting, Nepali artists now should make themselves free from the influence of these western art forms (214). They have not been able to develop their own distinct idiom for their expression yet (214). Lain Singh Bangdel pointed out that during the last forty years Nepali art could not achieve any concrete progress, and it still remains as if it is in the beginning stage ("Kalasahityama"). Although there were some attempts to give new trends in Nepali art, artists could not give continuity to them ("Kalasahityama"). In

Gyanendra Bibas's view, the western influence disrupted the smooth and continuous development of Nepali art (*Canvaska Tarangaharu* 29). Likewise, contemporary Nepali artists have failed to create their distinct identity in their works by exploiting the alien influences (31). They are only imitating alien art forms and pretending of being so called artist which is a suicidal act (29). Due to the lack of the artists' sensibility toward native tradition and personal vision, contemporary Nepali art has degenerated and declined (31). According to Ramkumar Bhaukaji, contemporary Nepali painting is degenerated due to the lack of thought, creativity, craftsmanship and expression ("Chitrakalako Bartaman" 6). In the name of creation, so called artists are splashing the colours in the canvas randomly and superficially (6).

Western influences in contemporary Nepali artists not only broadened the scope for their expression but also challenged to create native identity in their works. Some artists are successful to synthesize alien influences with the native tradition while others are in confusion and dilemma. Nevertheless, they are working on to internalize western forms and techniques to create their own idiom. On the process of creating the painting of distinct style, images of native myths and early art forms are reintegrated with new significance using western techniques as tool. The other elements that contribute to depict Nepali identity in the art works are images of nature and socio-cultural life, and political issues of contemporary Nepal.

This study is unable to present the critics' interpretation and analysis on individual works, for such critique has not been developed yet. The criticism is found about the artists and their works as a whole in exhibition catalogues and newspapers. Chapter V. attempts to

interpret and analyze some representative individual paintings in terms of western influence, native elements and hybridity.

Summary

Bringing the artistic form to the foreground, contemporary Nepali painting breaks away from the referential mode of representation as seen in early Nepali art forms. The artists alter the figures and images to give expression to the personal feelings and emotions. As a result, the works of art appear to be the artist's response to the external world rather than objective representation. In some paintings, colours, lines and brushstrokes are used for their own sake, and the artistic form is its own significance. The art works depict the influence of western techniques like impressionist, expressionist, cubist, abstractionist, surrealist, etc.. The influence of western form brought such changes in the domain of Nepali art.

The political change of 1950 facilitated the entry of western forms. The cross-flow of people including artists, and art works increased with the end of the Rana autocracy. A number of Nepali artists went to western and Indian cities to study art. On the other hand, the modern means of communication made distant cultural forms and knowledge available to the artists at home. The entry of alien art forms brought the cultural encounter between native and alien forms. Nepali artist neither fully assimilated the western forms nor wholly rejected. Western techniques are exploited to explore the native contents and themes. The images of nature like rivers and Himalayan mountains are frequent. The art works represent socio-cultural images and symbols, and political issues of contemporary times using western forms.

Most of the critics believe that western influences opened new vista for the creative artists. The use of plural and subjective form gave space for the creative aspects. On the other hand, few critics think that the quality of Nepali art declined because of the western

influences. The artists are able to emulate the western forms but failed to create their distinct idiom for expression.

V. Contemporary Nepali Paintings: Analysis and Interpretation

Chapter IV. studies contemporary Nepali Painting on the basis of available critiques on Nepali art. The research reveals that the critiques, mostly found in exhibition catalogues and newspaper articles, are on the artists and their works as a whole, but not on the individual works. Feeling the need of critical discourse on individual paintings, this chapter supports the thesis by analyzing and interpreting the individual contemporary art works of representative Nepali artists.

In the context of the focus of the research that contemporary Nepali paintings hybridize, negotiate, and appropriate western and early Nepali paintings, the chapter aims at interpreting, analyzing, and critiquing a wide variety of selection of Nepali paintings of contemporary times. The readings are oriented around the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of hybridization, negotiation, and appropriation. Western techniques of painting like impressionist, expressionist, cubist, abstractionist, surrealist, abstract-expressionist, etc. are exploited as tools to explore the native subject matters. Furthermore, Nepali paintings also share the techniques of western pop art, installation art and performance art. The native contents, at the same time, in contemporary Nepali painting include the subject matters of early Nepali art, religio-cultural rituals, images of nature and socio-political issues. The techniques of using flat colours, two dimensional images, distinct contour, *mandalaic* structure and decorative pattern are shared from early Nepali tradition of painting. I have already mentioned in the Introduction that the interconnection of the native arts and western techniques makes the contemporary Nepali painting a visual intertext. The art work cites or/and refers to both western forms and native forms and contents.

Since the heterogeneous and intergeneric images, art genres and techniques are interconnected in the hybrid art works, the form of contemporary painting is a pervasive text of interart experimentation. To trace these diverse aspects in Nepali painting, firstly three representative works are interpreted here in terms of hybridity, intertextuality, interart relationship, and their geo-cultural and socio-political significances.

Batsa Gopal Vaidhya's *Creation* (Fig. 62) recycles the contents of early Nepali art and the images of nature exploiting not only the surrealist and expressionist techniques but also the techniques of early Nepali painting. A trident is on the round dark solid object at the centre of the canvas. In Hindu myths, the trident is generally a weapon of lord Shiva. There is other image like *Shivalinga* or the *damaru* (A musical instrument of Lord Shiva), which strangely appears to be both *Shivalinga* and *damaru*. It appears to be *damaru* in the sense that it is positioned near the three spikes of the trident as the traditional Shiva iconography generally places the musical instrument hanging with the upper part of the trident. The instrument due to its placement and stonelike size and form looks like *Shivalinga* too. Batsa Gopal Vaidhya reintegrates these images in his work, *Creation*.

Despite the fact that the work recycles the images of early art, their representation and combination is different. The image of the trident is not referential as in early Nepali painting but expressionist in terms with alternation and arbitrariness of colours and shapes. The shapes and colours of the three spikes are unconventional. The two spikes at the side are not sharp but blunt, and unusually short. Likewise, the spike in the middle is unusually longer and appears to be round in contrast to the shape one sees in traditional trident. The colour and shape of the trident also is not traditionally representational. The colour of the two spikes is golden with shade variation. In contrast to the colour of these two spikes, the colour of the

spike in the middle is red. In like manner, the two spikes at the side seem flat or two dimensional whereas the middle one is round and three dimensional. One generally does not find such arbitrary shapes and colours in early Nepali painting. The artist with such altered and modified modes of painting tries to bring in the expressionist techniques as well as traditional native imagery creating hybrid visual intertextuality.

The image of the round dark object, and the combination of the trident and the round image are surrealist. The image appear to be *damaru* and *Shivalinga* at same time. *Shivalinga* melts into *damaru*, and vice versa, as the images melt and change shape as in a dream. *Linga* hangs just below the spikes of the trident, but seems to be on the ground and floating in the air at the same time. The combination of the trident and the plural image is also dreamlike. The image is amplified exceptionally. The trident seems to have sprouted from the *damaru*. The arrangement of the images is surrealistic. The trident comes out from the centre of the *Shivalinga*.

The images of the Himalaya and river are colorist expressionist in mode in which there is an abundance of play of colors. The Himalayan peaks are unusually sharp. The artist exaggerates the shapes of the peaks. The work alters the normal pattern of the Himalayan mountains with the cascades of mathematical exactness. The colours are also arbitrary, for the Himalayan peaks appear in pink, red, orange and yellow. Blazing flame like shapes and colours are represented instead of snow white serenity of the Himalaya. Likewise, the colour of the water in the river is also arbitrary. There is the sharp contrast of the sky blue and deep blue. Furthermore, the river follows horizontally creating the uniform pattern of similar curves. In this sense the image of the river is expressionist.

The artist has not only used expressionist and surrealist techniques but also realism, and decorative pattern of Mithila folk art. The images of green mountains just below the Himalaya and above the border of the decorative pattern are realistic. The subtle gradation of colour and the use of light and shadow make the images resemble to the mountains that we see in Nepal. On the other hand, the work shares the decorative pattern from Mithila folk art. Despite the fact that the images in the decorative pattern resemble to the folk art, it does not surround the picture frame as in Mithila art. Moreover, the decorative pattern appears to be the part of inner composition. In this sense, the work refers to the tradition but goes beyond it. The use of shared element is altered. The work is the *mélange* of multiple styles like expressionism, surrealism, realism and Nepali folk art.

The individual images and their representation are described so far. As far as the overall combination of the images is concerned, the composition appears to be surrealist. The artist arranges the images with free association as in dream. The *Shivalinga* or the *damaru* are bigger in proportion to the river, green mountains and the Himalaya. The trident is taller than the Himalayan peaks. The images of the Himalaya, green mountain and the river are condensed whereas the images of the trident, *Shivalinga* and *damaru* are amplified. The river seems to be floating above the mountain in horizontal line rather than flowing vertically between the mountains. The *damaru* melts into *Shivalinga* and vice versa. Likewise, the combination of the trident, *Shivalinga* and *damaru* is also unconventional. The unexpected appearance of the decorative pattern along the bottom is also contrary. The work juxtaposes expressionist, surrealist, realistic and the folk art images as in dream. Thus, the overall combination appears to be surrealist.

The images of *Shivalinga* and the trident at the centre are dominant because of their size and position, and this dominance reveals the structure of *mandala* which was frequently used in Nepali *paubha*, a form of early Nepali painting. In early Nepali *mandala*, the central image, the figure of divinity is surrounded by subsidiary deities and other images in periphery are positioned within certain geometric shapes. The figure of central divinity is bigger than the images around them. The composition is structured in such a way that the images in the periphery lead the viewers' eyes toward the centre where the individual is supposed to concentrate. In the socio-cultural context of early Nepali painting, the *mandala* is taken as the *yantra* (instrument) for meditation and concentration. As in early Nepal *mandala*, the central images are dominant in Vaidya's *Creation* as well. The images in periphery like the mountains, the Himalaya and the river are smaller. The central position and the bigger size of the trident and *Shivalinga* attract the viewers' attention as in *mandala*. The use of surrealist technique allows the artist to make the central images dominant. Despite the fact that the structure of the composition resembles with *mandala*, the work goes beyond it. Instead of representing the central image in figure, lord Shiva for that matter, the artist uses the metonymic images like *Shivalinga* and the trident. In the same way, mountains, the Himalaya and the river appear in the periphery instead of subsidiary deities, geometric shapes and decorative pattern in four sides. The form differs from early paintings, for *paubhas* are referential to the myths whereas this composition is surrealist and expressionist. The artist rereads and reformulates the structure of *mandala* using western techniques as tools.

As the composition is linked to the structure of *mandala*, the theme of concentration and meditation comes along with it. As the trident and *Shivalinga* are positioned at the centre in bold and assertive manner, they become the object of concentration, and the images

around them create the atmosphere of meditation. The *Shivalinga* is situated on serene green mountain just below the Himalaya at the side of clean river. Such images and structure reminds one about the mythological setting where lord Shiva is supposed to be meditating. The concentration of the viewer upon the *Shivalinga* may remind one the mythological ideas associated with lord Shiva. Mythologically, *Shivalinga*, the phallus of lord Shiva, is the source of all creation. It encompasses the whole universe. The creation, preservation and destruction as symbolized by the three spikes of the trident are supposed to take place within it. When the viewer realizes this concept through meditation, he/she is supposed to resolve the duality between the self and the other or inner self and the external world. One remains in constant bliss, once he/she experiences the union of the self and the cosmic being. In this sense, Vaidhya's *Creation* can also be taken as the *yantra* for meditation like early Nepali *mandala*.

Despite the fact that viewer's eyes are firstly drawn to the dominant image of *Shivalinga*, gradually the eyes move toward the middle spike of the trident because of its sharpness and redness. And the point of the spike shows the direction beyond the visible concrete world toward the abstract intangible void. To realize the existence of cosmic being, the work suggests, one should go beyond the material reality toward underlined conditions of beings. Likewise, the overtly pointed peaks of Himalaya also point to the same direction as the trident reinforcing the theme of unshakable concentration.

The arrangement of the images of green mountain, Himalayan peaks and trident depict the gradual development in the process of concentration. The peaks of green mountains in lower part of the canvas are blunt. As the viewer moves higher, one finds the pointed Himalayan peaks suggesting the higher degree of concentration. As one moves

further above, he/she finds only the sharp point of the trident suggesting the concentration and meditation over the focal point. The dominant red colour in the Himalaya and trident are expressionist, for their colour is altered and represented unconventionally. The fire like red colour suggests that the process of meditation and concentration is painful though the result is rewarding and blissful. The sharp and triangular images in the composition aid to the concentration of the viewer pointing toward the hidden mystery and spiritual power.

The artist not only reorganizes the structure of the early *mandala* but also modifies the object and manner of the meditation related to the *mandala*. In the early *mandalas*, object of concentration is the central divinity in anthropomorphic form whereas in this composition the object is, at first, *Shivalinga*, then the spike of the trident and finally the intangible void or the abstraction beyond the concrete reality. On the process of meditation, the viewer's consciousness first moves toward the centre from the periphery and goes beyond it. The artist goes beyond the anthropomorphic figure of lord Shiva toward the icon (*Shivalinga*) and the symbol (the trident), and finally toward the abstract intangible cosmic power. Taking the age old icon and symbol, and the structure of *mandala*, the artist goes beyond, modifying them and adding further significance. About the relationship of Vaidya's works toward early Nepali art forms, S. K. Singh says, "Constructed around symbolic images, Vaidya's works are truly Nepalese in character and original without being avant-garde, creating an atmosphere which is spiritual, the central characteristic of ancient Nepalese art" (qtd. in Thapa, *Himalayan* 8).

Since the work is intricate nexus of the images of the early Nepali art (*Shivalinga* and trident), structure of *mandala*, decorative pattern of Mithila folk art, and western techniques of surrealism and expressionism, it is intertextual. The painting interconnects various art

forms and techniques, both western and native. The dialogue between *paubha* and Mithila folk art creates intracultural negotiation. Two Nepali cultures interact to each other. On the other hand, the interaction between early Nepali art and western technique brings up intercultural hybridization.

The artist appropriates surrealist and expressionist techniques, for he uses them in different context for different purpose. Generally, western artists use these techniques to depict the tragic vision related to alienation, disillusionment and brutality in the context of industrial and technological western world. But Vaidya's *Creation* exploits these western techniques to explore the theme of concentration and meditation. The artist decontextualizes and recontextualizes the shared western techniques. Such process renews and revitalizes the age old images and subject matters of traditional Nepali art.

Despite the fact that the work is interpreted in this manner, the form is opened and plural. The images are not objective representations of the object and events of the external world but expressionist and surrealist. The artist portrays the images of the trident, the Himalaya and the river by exploiting arbitrary colours and shapes. The images and form demand the viewer's imagination and active participation for appreciation. Different viewers may associate the images with different objects. Some viewers, for instance, may associate the middle spike of the trident with a carrot, the Himalaya with the blazing flame. The images are expressionistically represented. Likewise, the image of round black object signifies *damaru* and *Shivalinga* at the same time, and it may signify something else to the different audience. The combination of contrary images in free association in the canvas may be provisionally reorganized by the active viewers drawing imaginary links among the depicted images. On the other hand, the intertextuality and copresence of multiple cultural

semiotics bring forth the attributes of the constituents. And their voices may not be synthesized with finality. Thus, this hybrid art form is plural, and has multiple significances.

Sujan Chitrakar's multimedia work, *Masticated Faces* (Fig. 63) explores the theme of death, destruction and tragedy in relation to the context of contemporary Nepal exploiting the techniques of multiple genres like painting, sculpture, photography, music, literature, journalism, installation and theatrical performance. Saroj Bajracharya points out the theme of the work in the article, "Masticated Faces...a Glance"¹:

The expressions in the masticated faces show the remains of torturous and violent experiences. It deals with the trauma of psychological death, which are [sic] the outcome of tragic incidents that are occurring in the country and across the world. Death is the actual theme here, which is being experimentally brought into the gallery through varied art presentations.

The work can be taken as the artist's response to the socio-political context of contemporary Nepal where the tragic news of violence, torture and death has become frequent.

In this work, painting functions only as a part of the whole. Thirty expressionist pen and ink portraits of the artist himself hang on a string. The face of the figures in the paintings are twisted, torn, wounded and squeezed to give expression to the artist's tortured, troubled and disillusioned feelings. Thirty expressionist masks stuck on the wall are also the portraits of the artist in the form of sculpture. The expressionist portrayal makes the mask a plural image with multiple significances. According to Saroj Bajracharya,

¹ The dots within the title are in the original source.

The presentation of masks deals with the philosophy of Death. Death never shows its face. Its true identity is always hidden in the veil of incident or accident. . . .

Mask may also be witnessed as a shield to escape the fear of uncertainty. Masks cover everything and what lies beneath – is the true self ("Masticated Faces...a Glance").

Thirty photographs of the artist himself cover the floor where he presents his performance. The artist arranges piles of newspapers on the broken mirror to form a well. Mock newspaper boys distribute pseudo newspapers to the audience, which is also the catalogue of the exhibition, announcing the death of soldiers, Maoists and other ordinary people. The artist as the wounded character with bandaged head and leg, and squeezed and twisted face depicts his disillusionment, melancholy, anxiety and agony through his movement and facial expression. Two musicians, Salil Subedi and Dipesh Budhathoki with their discordant music further terrify the artist. The audience step onto the photographs that are lying on the floor and look into the pond where they see their fragmented images reflected by the broken mirror. As the audience stamp their feet on the photographs, the portraits of the artist are repainted with the dust, and the images are blurred. The unconventional pen and ink portraits and masks, the blurred photographs, the artist's squeezed and torn face, and the fragmented images of the audience, all coherently create the multiple images of masticated face despite the use of multiple media and forms. Although the pen and ink portraits are themselves individual paintings, they are also the parts of overall installation and performance. The simultaneous presentation of a number of art forms like paintings, sculptures, photographs, newspapers, poems, music and theatrical performance makes the work a pastiche.

Despite being the integral parts of the whole, some constituent art forms can also be appreciated and interpreted individually. The eight page bilingual mock newspaper-cum-catalogue, for example, functions as a powerful medium to communicate the artist's expression. News reports, articles and poems are found that have been written in English and Nepali. The catalogue, the intertextual art form, includes news items related to death and violence, a condolence message, photographs of an orphan and a widow, pen and ink portraits of the artist himself, tragic poems by four poets, analytical articles of contemporary situation, and the editorial column by the artist himself. About the reason of creating the catalogue in the form of a newspaper, Saroj Bajracharya remarks:

The word Death itself is not perhaps tragic but the dreadful way it comes, shocks everybody. And that shock of Death dominates every pages of the newspaper that makes our lives. Therefore the artist has published his brochure in a form of newspaper, which itself is a communicable work of art. ("Masticated Faces...a Glance")

Most of the news items, articles and photographs are cut from a number of newspapers like *The Himalayan Times*, *Spacetime Today*, *The Kathmandu Post*, *The Rising Nepal*, *Kantipur* and *Spacetime Rastriya Dainik*, and pasted together with portraits and poems creating a pastiche of vision and textuality. Besides, 'Masticated faces', the title of the work and the mock newspaper is the translation of *Chapaieka Anuhar*, a book by Daulat Bikram Bista.

Both visual and verbal texts in the mock newspaper create the atmosphere of war, death and destruction. "Maoists Killed in Clash", "Student Killed in Bomb Blast", "11 Security Men, 19 Rebels Killed in Clashes", "Two Shot Dead in City", "Untimely Death", "Bisphotma Dui Balakako Mrityu" (Two Children Killed in Explosion) and "Nirdoshko

"Hatya Gareko Dabi" (Allegation of Murdering Innocents) are headlines of some of the news items included in the catalogue. Such news dominated most of the newspapers in Nepal during the last decade. A news item under the heading "What My Fault" attached with a photograph of an orphan reports such a sad event:

Seven-year-old Santosh Thakur, son of Ganesh Thakur who was killed in Maoist bomb blast at Koteshwor, watches the funeral pyre of his father at Pashupati Aryaghat on Sunday. Ganesh Thakur from Kalaiya, Bara, was a poor barber and his relatives had to collect donations for his funeral. (6)

Every morning the people of this country including the artist encounter the news of violence, crossfire and murder as Sujan Chitrakar himself says, "Every sunrise alarms me as my breakfast is always served with violence and deaths. Strange . . . people die for some bizarre purpose, some reason, or no reason at all" ("Stains of Emotion" 2).

Like the news, the poems also deal about the horror and tragedy. The poems included are "Nimeshko Kura (Within Very Short Time)" by Salil Kanika, "Today Lived" and "Regressive Noon" by Abha Eli, "Shabda, Artha ra Khojihar (Word, Meaning and Exploration)" by Sujan Chitrakar and two lines from a poem by Lekhanath Paudyal.

"Regressive Noon" depicts that the conflict, violence and war have landed the individuals in an impasse:

Somebody
had uprooted
the bars on
the sidewalks
I have no

guiding line now.

The cars take

a different route.

Shall none

pass this

phase - -

cordoned off

by narrow mindedness. (Abha Eli 7)

Since both news reports and poems depict the vivid picture of horror, they have thematic cohesion despite the difference in form. The art of journalism and poetry coexist in the same work.

Some analytical articles in the catalogue attempt to figure out the causes of the bloody war and its effect in human civilization, and others interpret the work, *Masticated Faces*. Sanjeev Uprety's "Quagmire of History" points out the causes of the conflict and war as: "it is a consequence of a number of interrelated factors, including corruption at high places, extreme poverty and certain disjunctions in the global system" (5). Uprety's another article "Legends of the Fall" in the same catalogue suggests the effect of the frequent and excessive violence and depicts the experience of ordinary people:

Once, such news used to shock us. But, with events of the last few months we no longer experience a sense of shock or outrage at slaughter and death.

Erratic events of scattered violence are slowly becoming assimilated into the rhythmic practices of our everyday lives. In the process our senses of shock and outrage is often transformed raw uneasy anxiety, feelings of helplessness,

acceptance and finally indifference. This gradual process seems to be robbing us of our human capacity to feel for other humans, transforming us from human beings to something less than humans. (5)

Such insensitivity and indifference in human beings toward the suffering of other fellow beings has made us resemble to the primitive aquatic creatures as Sanjeev Uprety says, "Suspended between the impulses towards human sensitivity and sub-human indifference we gaze at the spectacles of killing and death as half humans and half fish or frogs from our arrested positions of partial fallen-ness" (5). On the other hand, Saroj Bajracharya and Alexander Gargilis' article "Love Ballad of Drowning Manniquins: Human Agony from Shujan's View" interprets Chitrakar's *Masticated Faces* as "the drama of Death" (4).

Bajracharya and Gargilis further write:

Life is cheap and death is an alternative. Morality is dead for those who commit murder and for the other life is at an end. "Masticated Faces" bring out these issues. Death is the hero and the artist reaches out for conscious reality. (4)

Thematically linked with the tragic photographs, the news reports of violence and death, and the poems of disillusionment, the articles prepare the audience to appreciate the work of art. The mock newspaper appears to be the intricate nexus of diverse visual and verbal texts that creates the vivid picture of the horror and tragedy.

Masticated Faces deconstructs the binary opposition between art and criticism. The mock newspaper-cum-catalogue, as a part of the whole art work, includes the interpretations of the work. The work critiques itself from within. In this sense Chitrakar's *Masticated Faces* is a work of art and a criticism at the same time.

The artist's use of equal numbers of pen and ink portraits, masks and photographs also carries a meaning, that is, the "death of birth" as suggested by one of the articles in the catalogue ("~~Date~~ Death of Birth" 1). Sujan Chitrakar presented the work on his thirty-first birthday, 3 August, 2004. The thirty portraits of the artist himself in the form of painting, sculpture and photography mark the years he lived. But on the thirty-first birthday he celebrates the death of his own birth, for he visualizes death hovering around him, and finds himself psychologically dead with the untimely death of the innocent. The artist depicts his experience:

Fresh smell of the crimson fluid chokes my breath. Death of army men, policemen, innocent countrymen and even those who rebel, has been a part of my life now. I die psychologically every moment as I see myself in the corpses that lay still. ("Stains of Emotion" 2)

In some cases of violence, no sooner had the babies been born than they were killed. Then the birthday celebration changes into funeral ceremony. The celebration of birthday, in our spatio-temporal context, has become irrelevant in the artist's view. To quote the artist again, "Somewhere a new mother smiles but her baby wails as it chokes its first breath of this freaky air. Frightened and suffocated it is, but has just been pulled out from the coziest place in the universe – the womb" (2). To express the inner feeling, the artist subverts the conventional ritual of celebrating birthday.

The work demands the viewer's participation. The audiences take part in the creation of some images. The viewer's walking over the photographic portraits on the floor adds the layers of colours over the photographic images because of the dust that is falling from their shoes. The identities of the figures are blurred. Like the expressionist drawings and masks,

the photographs also give expression to the artist's disillusioned feelings. In Saroj Bajracharya's view, "tormented images", are the icons of loss of hope "inside the artist's psyche" with "every tragic occurrence of death" ("Masticated Faces...a Glance"). In the same way, the audience's glance over the well, constructed by piling newspapers, creates the fragmented images in the broken mirrors. The fragmented images suggest the fragmented experiences of both the artist and the audience. Involving the viewers in the process of creation, Chitrakar questions the conventional distance between artist and audience.

The conventional boundary between the genres of painting and the sculpture is blurred. On the one hand, the artist presents sculptures and paintings simultaneously. On the other hand, to create various moods and expressions of the masticated face, the artist alters the shapes of the masks using expressionist colours. To express the artist's inner feeling, Chitrakar takes help of the colours in addition to the conventional techniques of sculpture. The masks appear to be sculptures and paintings at the same time.

Likewise, this intergeneric art form deconstructs the binary oppositions like high art and low art. The artist hybridizes photography, a form of low art for that matter, with painting, a form of high art. Not only the paintings and photographs are presented together but also the images in photographs are changed and altered by the dust which functions as colour over the photographs. As the audience move, the images on the photographs slightly change their shape. In this sense, the images in the photographs are not final but plural and on the process of becoming.

Although the artist explores the contemporary socio-political issue of the country, the work shares the techniques of various western forms. The artist exploits expressionist techniques of painting and sculpture to create the unusual drawings and masks. The work

arranges newspapers, broken mirrors, masks, drawings and photographs in a certain setting appropriating the techniques of western installation art. The artist's theatrical presentation accompanied by music among other art works, to some extent, resembles to the forms of western performance art.

The integration of installation and performance in the work echoes not only to the western forms but also to the Nepali cultural rituals, for such rituals, from immemorial time, have been including the music of conch shell and bells, the painted *mandalas* on the floor, the installation of images of divinities, the recitation of mantras and scriptures, and the performance of the patrons as we have already studied in chapter II. In Nepali religio-cultural rituals like *Tulasi Bibaha*, naming ceremony and *Bratabandha*, priests draw *mandalas* on the floor, install icons of deities in their respective seats, recite mantras from the religious books, blow conch shell, and the patrons perform ritual according to the direction of the priest. The influence of western performance art reawakens the age old cultural performance. The artist decontextualizes and appropriates shared forms through dialogue and negotiation. The artist alters and modifies the forms to explore different contents and themes.

The connection of *Masticated Faces* with other visual, verbal and auditory texts makes the work intertextual. The exploitation of various genres of art creates interart relationship. The accommodation of heterogeneous images and forms makes the work hybrid. Such intertextual, intergeneric and hybrid art form also explores the socio-political issues of contemporary Nepal.

Beginning after the End (Fig. 64), the experimental work created by fifteen artists, shows that a painting is not only created by a single artist but also in collaboration of many artists. Next, this visual art form also shares the ideas from verbal art form like poem, for the

artists execute this painting in response to the poems recited by poets on the spot. Another important point the painting depicts is that a work of art is not always coherent and organized in which the parts contribute to the whole, and does not depict the fixed and unified meaning but also fragmented, heterogeneous and contingent, for this work is an assemblage of the fifteen different compositions which are not apparently connected to each other though the viewers may perceive thematic or formal coherence provisionally in some of them. The individual artists do not only exploit various western techniques but also some contents and techniques of early Nepali art.

Puran Khadka's abstract composition lies on the left hand side corner at the bottom of the canvas. In this composition, the form is its own significance because images and colours do not refer to the objects and events of world but to themselves. Fragmented and disintegrated images, and dark red colours, however, are dimly associated to the violence and fragmented reality. The black round shape and the small triangular images vaguely resemble to the grenade and bullets respectively. These images rather than objectively representing the objects and events of the reality arouse the viewers' memory about the terrorism and war of contemporary Nepal through the abstract form. The viewers may, however, appreciate the work without associating the images and colours to the objects of reality as well.

Just above the Puran Khadka's composition, Govinda Dangol creates a *mandala* with geometric shapes like triangles, squares, rectangles and circles. In this *mandala*, triangular shapes are more dominant than others, for not only the outline of the *mandala* is triangular but the combination of the images also leads the viewers toward depth of another triangle at the bottom. The triangle at the bottom represents *yoni*, the source of creation, and the image of *yoni* is further reinforced by another small triangle within the triangle at the bottom. The

combination of colours creates depth and leads the viewers toward the vulva. The square at the centre in rhythmic and fluid colours represents the womb where creation is supposed to be taking place. The two round images within the womb represent the male and female principles that are on the process of union through which life continues in the world.

Discarding the external world, the artist leads the viewers toward the source of our creation.

Dangol's composition depicts the reintegration of the native tradition and the creative appropriation of the western form. *Mandalaic* form and the concept of the union between the male and female principles are also the elements frequently exploited in Nepali *paubha* paintings. In *paubha* paintings, *mandalas* are generally found within circular or square outline, and the images in the periphery lead the viewer toward the central deity. But in this composition the artist creates the *mandala* in triangular outline, and the images lead the viewer toward the bottom where there is vulva within another triangle. Instead of presenting the figures of deities as in the early paintings, the artist presents only abstract images. However, the theme of union between male and female principles is the same. The composition breaks away from the early art form, yet rooted to it. The technique of dividing space with lines and filling them with colours echoes to the Mondrian's compositions. Yet the composition differs from Mondrian's works in the sense that Mondrian only creates rectangles and squares whereas Dangol creates rectangles, squares, and circles. The work appeals the viewers to meditate upon the origin and source of our creation through the creative appropriation of native Nepali art tradition and western art techniques.

Uma Shankar Sha's composition, on the left hand side corner at the top, represents the image of meditating *yogi* (sage) seated on the earth-like round shape. The size and the proportion of the images are surrealist because the artist condenses the image of the earth

whereas he amplifies the figure of the *yogi*. The position of the earth as the seat of the *yogi* implies that the enlightened *yogi* has controlled the mundane desires of the world, and they are no longer important in his consciousness. When he unites himself with the cosmic being he finds the world within himself. Despite the use of surrealist form, the artist reintegrates one of the themes of traditional Nepali arts, that is, the union of individual self with cosmic being through meditation.

Uttam Nepali's abstract expressionist composition, next to Uma Shankar Sha's at the top, represents the images of nature like cool breeze, clouds, mountains and rivers in rhythmic movement. The sweeping spontaneous brushstrokes create the rhythm and movement within the images. Such spontaneity and movement of colours and brushstrokes echo to the Jackson Pollock's abstract expressionist works. On the other hand, the rhythm of natural images implies the beauty and adventure that can be found in the natural heritage of Nepal.

Vijay Thapa's fauvist composition, below the Uttam Nepali's, depicts the alienation and tragic vision of the contemporary youths. The human figure with bloody head and dark body is falling down from the height into chaotic depth. The artist borrows the technique of using harsh, arbitrary and antinaturalistic colours from fauvist paintings. In such paintings, artists express their inner feeling not only through images but also arbitrary colours. In Thapa's composition, as the character lost the hope of living adjusting himself within the complex surrounding, he becomes alienated. Frustration, melancholy and tragic feeling overshadow his consciousness and he attempts to escape from life. Poverty, unemployment and terrorism have created similar experience in the life of Nepali youths who are alienated and disillusioned.

K. K. Karmacharya's impressionist composition, below Vijay Thapa's, explores the beauty of white Himalaya and green mountain. The play of light and shadow, contrastive colours and swift brush strokes do not create the realistic images but the artist's impressions of the Himalayan mountains in the transitory moment.

Shashikala Tiwari's feminist composition, below K. K. Karmacharya's, depicts the mentally and physically wounded female figure in patriarchal Nepali society through the use of expressionist technique. The dripping of blood from her body represents the violence imposed upon her. The falling down of female figure suggests Nepali women's degenerated living condition and oppressed social status. The image of broken tree is coherent to the image of wounded female figure. Representing the gruesome situation of Nepali women, the artist questions the authority of patriarchal society.

Surendra Raj Bhattarai's composition, next to Vijay Thapa's, depicts the way how innocent people are victimized in the recent war. They are unaware of the situation that is going to fall upon them. In the composition, the standing woman figure is unaware of the bullet that is approaching toward the lower part of her body. The composition implies that the violence and tragedy are unexpected and sudden. The common people like this woman can not guess what will happen next moment. The artist exploits both cubist and expressionist techniques to depict this theme. The artist presents the triangular face within the circular head, and the shape of breast is rectangular. By breaking the linear surface of the figure, the artist attempts to represent the depth or underlined condition of the situation. The unconventional colours and images depict the tortured feeling of the character.

Ramesh Khanal's abstract expressionist composition, next to Surendra Raj Bhattarai's, also creates the atmosphere of the war and confrontation through the use of abstract images.

The artist creates images through splashing, dribbling and dripping the colours rather than applying them with brush. The images of falling liquid resemble to the tears and blood. The work seems to have evolved on the process rather than created with forethought. The techniques of splashing, dribbling and dripping the colours rather than applying them with brush, and the emphasis on the process of creation than to the final product are abstract expressionist features. Despite the use of western technique, the feelings evoked by the colours and the abstract shapes have proximity to the violence and confrontation of contemporary Nepal.

Shankar Raj Singh Suwal's composition, next to Ramesh Khanal at the top, first, presents the fragmented reality and then attempts to reconnect them. To represent the fragmented reality, the artist breaks the linear surface of the objects using cubist technique. The artist creates most of the broken images using geometric shapes like squares and rectangles. These broken shapes represent the disorder and fragmented reality. They also suggest the lack of understanding and the failure of communication among people in the context of contemporary Nepali society. Emphasizing the necessity of understanding and communication among people, the artist reconnects the fragmented images using spontaneous and rhythmic curves and lines.

Kiran Manandhar's composition, below Shankar Raj Singh Suwal's, represents the images of ordinary people as if they are watching the drama being unattached with the events in their surrounding. The composition shares some aspects of minimal art in the sense that the artist depicts two dimensional figures exploiting very few shapes, colours, lines and brushstrokes. The circles represent the heads, the two curves below the heads create the images of neck and other two strokes create the shoulders and the bodies. The enclosed

surface within lines and shapes are not filled with colour. The technique of minimal art is not fully applied but appropriated in the sense that Manandhar's images remain referential whereas western minimal art forms are nonreferential. Within his composition, it is not clear that what event they are watching. But, if one connects this composition with other paintings around, there are enough dramatic events to be watched. These unattached innocent human figures might be watching the human drama of falling human figure in Vijay Thapa's composition, wounded female figure in Shashikala Tiwari's, the innocent victim of the bullet in Surendra Raj Bhattari's and the images of dripping blood and falling tears in Ramesh Khanal's composition. The shock of tragedy might have made them surprised, stunned and immobile. Common Nepalis have been watching similar tragic drama of socio-political violence, and shocked and stunned from the view. The artist implies this situation through the visual form.

Tekbir Mukhiya's expressionist composition, next to Suwal's, portrays the image of a devilish dictator who is controlling his surrounding by means of violence. The bloody giant with a long and heavy wooden block in his hand is moving blindly pounding and battering the people and things around him. The blood and broken bones on the floor imply the consequence of his action. The images of caged bird's nest and a cobra pouncing over the chicks analogically suggest the way how the dictator has imprisoned the innocents, and tortured them. The expressionist colours and images represent ugly appearance of the dictator, and the destroyed and disordered surrounding. The images, colours and actions in the composition represent the political scenario of contemporary Nepal like abduction, detention, torture, rampant killing and the ambition of political actors.

Krishna Manandhar's composition, next to Tekbir Mukhiya and Kiran Manandhar's compositions, depicts the peaceful environment and the natural beauty of Nepal which have been threatened by the ongoing conflict, confrontation and violence. The artist juxtaposes the images that are associated to the opposite values. The rhythmic images of flowing rivers, blue lakes, green woods and yellow mustard fields represent the natural beauty whereas black and red abstract images overshadowing the beautiful ones represent conflict, violence and tragedy. The images of blood falling over the lakes and river are about to make the water red. The immense abstract images that surround beautiful landscape are about to destroy the surrounding. The viewers may link the images in the painting to the contemporary reality. The forest has been occupied by the rebels and the army. The farmers who go to the forest to gather firewood and graze cattle are murdered. They are kidnapped and tortured no matter they are working in the field or fetching water from the river. Dark and violent forces are omnipresent. The conflict and confrontation has not only destroyed the social harmony but also the natural beauty of the country. To depict such theme the artist exploits techniques of both realism and abstractionism, for the landscape is realistic whereas the images of violent forces are abstract.

Shyam Lal Shresth's cubist composition, next to Krishna Manandhar's at the top, depicts the inner feelings of the hopeless and tortured human figure. The human figure is inclining toward the bold vertical red pole expressing his vision of violence and tragedy. The image of red vertical pole resembles to the falling brook of blood. He visualizes nothing in front of him but the flow of blood. The broken body of the human figure created using geometric shapes suggests the depth of his inner feeling.

Ragini Upadhyay's surrealist composition, on the right hand side of the canvas, depicts the possible intervention of the supernatural and mythical power to restore the order and harmony in the conflict-ridden fragmented socio-political scenario of contemporary Nepal. This theme will be clear as the visual images are described and interpreted. A serpent surrounds all the images present in the canvas like the floor, a chair, temples, the sky and even the sun. Most of the represented images are mythical, and have symbolic value. The chair protected by the hood of serpent is the representation of the throne and thereby Hindu monarch. The king has been taken as the incarnation of lord Vishnu, for as the seat of Vishnu consists of serpents, the throne of the king has been protected by the serpent hood in the painting. The serpent or the *naga* in Nepali is considered as the deity in Hindu mythology. The temples are the metonymical representations of the Hinduism. The sun is also worshipped as a god. The image of the sun is also the symbol of nationalism, for it is the image present in the Nepali flag. The tail of the *naga* is wounded and the blood is gushing out from the wound. As the *naga* has supernatural power, it does not endure the pain and humiliation, and springs up destroying the evil forces to protect the Hindu monarch, Hindu Kingdom and Hindu religion. The image of *kundalini shakti* next to the sun is coherent to the reviving *naga* in the sense that the *naga* has sprung up as the arousal of *kundalini*.

The composition implies that the artist is dissatisfied with the burgeoning political forces of various sorts which threaten to dismantle the traditional order and authority. To preserve the deeprooted institution, the artist dreams of the revival of the mythical and supernatural power. The work is the visual response of the artist to the contemporary political situation expressed through recycled mythical images and surrealist form.

These unconnected fifteen compositions in a huge canvas represent the fragmented reality. The work, *Beginning after the End*, puts the question: why to always look for coherence and organization in a work of art since the objects and events in reality are fragmented and incoherent? As the unconnected objects exist in the same space, heterogeneous and contrary images can coexist in the same canvas. The work questions the hypocrisy and pretension that the work of art is always organized and has certain unified meaning.

Nevertheless, there are the possibilities of temporal organizations within heterogeneous images, and provisional and plural meanings. The images of grenade and bullet in Puran Khadka and Surendra Raj Bhattarai's compositions, the wounded female figure in Shashikala Tiwari's, the falling down character in Vijay Thapa's, fragmented cubist shapes in Suwal's, patches of blood in Ramesh Khanal and Krishna Manandhar's and the devilish giant figure in Tekbir Mukhiya's compositions are coherent in the sense that all these images represent the tragedy, brutality and violence in contemporary Nepal. On the other hand, the images of white Himalaya and green mountains in K. K. Karmacharya's composition and the landscapes of mustard field, blue lakes and clean rivers in Krishna Manandhar's work represent the beautiful natural heritage of the country which has been threatened by the socio-political confrontations and violence. The images of spontaneous and rhythmic lines that attempt to connect the fragmented cubes in Suwal's composition and the rhythm of abstract images and colours in Uttam Nepali's suggest the possibility of new order and socio-political harmony that may be achieved through mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation. Likewise, the images of *mandala* in Govinda Dangol's composition, the figure of meditating sage in Uma Shankar's, and temples and symbolic

images like the sun, the *kundalini* and *naga* in Ragini Upadhyay's work imply that social harmony and order can be restored by reintegrating the traditional spiritual values in the social practice of the contemporary time. The work is the visual response of Nepali artists to the contemporary situation, for first it discloses the socio-political conflict and violence of present time, and then suggests the possible solutions to the problems.

The work hybridizes a number of heterogeneous elements through dialogue and negotiation. Abstract and figurative images coexist in the same canvas. Puran Khadka, Uttam Nepali, Shankar Raj Singh Suwal and Ramesh Khanal's compositions present abstract images whereas Uma Shankar Shah, Vijay Thapa, Shashikala Tiwari, K. K. Karmacharya, Kiran Manandhar, Krishna Manandhar and Ragini Upadhyay's compositions depict figurative images. Putting together both abstract and referential images in the same canvas the artists communicate both tangible and intangible aspects of the reality.

Both eastern images and symbols, and western techniques coexist in the same canvas. *Mandala* in Govinda Dangol's composition, meditating figure in Uma Shankar Shah's, images of lakes, rivers and mustard field in Krishna Manandhar's, and *naga*, temples, throne and the *kundalini* in Ragini Upadhyay's composition are eastern images whereas the techniques of surrealism, abstractionism, impressionism, expressionism, cubism, abstract expressionism, minimalism and fauvism exploited in different compositions are western.

The reintegration of traditional Nepali art forms and images in this work implies that contemporary Nepali painting has not totally broken away from the tradition but developed on the basis of native tradition. The *mandalic* form of Dangol and the meditating figure in Shah's composition are the images frequently exploited in Nepali manuscript illuminations and *paubhas*.

The work has interart relationship in the sense that the artists take inspiration from the expression of the poems recited by a number of poets. The execution of the painting and the recitation of the poems took place at the same time and the same spot in Dhulikhel. The artists shared the expressions of the poems on the one hand, and the poets were inspired by the visual images in the canvas to create their poems on the other. The creative process was the dialogue and interaction between verbal and visual art forms.

Sharing the ideas of a number of poets and artists, reintegrating native traditional art forms with new significance, recycling Hindu myths and incorporating various heterogeneous images and techniques, the work depicts the socio-political situation of contemporary Nepal.

As I have already interpreted and analyzed the three representative paintings, now I would like to support the thesis analyzing other contemporary works in terms of the reintegration of the tradition, recycling of the religio-cultural images, socio-political concerns, meta art and interart relationship. It should be noted that the chapter has multiple subdivisions so as to critically identify multiple features and characteristics of Nepali painting.

Reinterpretation and Reintegration of Early Art

Contemporary Nepali painting shares the forms and contents of early Nepali art. The art works reinterpret and recycle the Hindu and Buddhist myths, the subject matters of early art using western techniques. The artists appropriate and rehistoricize *mandala*, one of the important forms of early Nepali painting for that matter, to give expression to the artist's feelings. The decontextualized *mandala* does not remain referential but altered, subjective and plural. There is the copresence of both western and traditional Nepali forms. In Saroj

Bajracharya's view, contemporary Nepali painting shares "all the values that our tradition had to offer us with a blend of fresh ideas" made available by "cultural globalization" ("Nearness"). In like manner the artists revise and reincorporate two dimensional colours, distinct contours and decorative patterns, the techniques of early Nepali painting in contemporary forms. Similarly, they subvert established icons, images and symbols of early art forms. Contemporary Nepali artists have ambivalent attitude toward early Nepali art forms because they are "divided between rejection and acceptance of the tradition – its values and techniques" (A. Subedi, "Utopia" 125). According to Julia Hegewald, they are aware of their tradition and cultural root, and trying to broaden them with the use of western techniques as troupes (100). Hegewald further comments, contemporary Nepali artists

consider tradition not as something static, but as a continuously changing and progressing movement, out of which they have emerged, and on the basis of which they are trying to elaborate. They are working on improving and progressively developing their ancient artistic heritage into 21st century, their main criterion for judging whether their art deserves to be called "Nepali" being that it be good. Only good art, influenced by new and foreign ideas but allegedly coming out of their own tradition, as they would have it, is considered to be true modern Nepali art. (100)

The interconnectivity of western and native forms makes contemporary Nepali painting a visual intertext. Now, I would like to interpret and analyze some contemporary Nepali paintings in terms of their connection with early Nepali art.

Yogendra Dangol's surrealist work *Vajra Mandala* (Fig. 65) rereads and reintegrates the *mandala*, one of the forms of early Nepali art, and attempts to resolve the dualities of the

self and the world, and sacred and profane. *Vajra* is the *yantra* (instrument) held by various Buddhist deities in early Nepali religious art. In *paubhas* and *mandalas*, the figure of central deity who holds the *vajra* is more important than the *vajra* itself. It is one of the many *yantras* of the deity. Naturally, the size of deity is bigger than the *yantra* one holds. But in this work, Dangol subverts the structure of early Nepali *mandalas* by creating the *vajra* as big as the canvas itself symbolically encompassing the whole universe, and presenting the deity in comparatively very small size within the *vajra* at the centre. Such condensation and displacement are the techniques of surrealism.

Vajra is the symbol of the union of *prakriti* and *purusa* or female and male principles. *Vajra*, the symbol of *purusa* or phallus penetrates open lotus, the symbol of *prakriti* or *yoni* suggesting that wisdom and nirvana is possible only through the union of *prakriti* and *purusa*. In this composition, at the centre of the open lotus, where *vajra* intersects, a Buddhist deity appears in minute form suggesting the realization of the deity or the *nirvana*. The work aestheticizes the tabooed concept like the union of *yoni* and phallus. The artist depicts the profane concept as sacred. Thus, he deconstructs the binary opposition of sacred and profane.

The concept of the union of the *prakriti* and *purusa* can be further elaborated as the union of individual self with cosmic being. According to Buddhist mythology, *prakriti*, the symbol of passive worldly elements including individuals get power through the union with *purusa*. And then individual self creates harmonious relationship with cosmic being and achieves *nirvana*. The union of lotus and *vajra* also depicts all the worldly things' union with cosmic being. The images of mountain, forest and lakes, and some other abstract images represent the innumerable things of the world which are found around and within the *vajra* and they oriented toward the central deity suggesting the union of *prakriti* and *purusa*.

The union of individual self with the cosmic being is also the theme of *paubhas* and *mandalas*, the early paintings. Since all the images are oriented toward central deity, the structure also resembles with early Nepali *mandalas* to some extent. However, *vajra*, a *yantra* is more dominant than the central deity unlike in early Nepali *mandalas* and *paubhas*. In this sense, *Vajra Mandala* subverts the structure of these early paintings. The work has ambivalent attitude toward tradition. It is rooted to the tradition, and at the same time, goes beyond the tradition.

Similarly, in *Cosmic Wave* (Fig. 66), Buddhi Thapa depicts the theme of cosmic rhythm and harmony, one of the themes of *paubhas* using expressionist colours. The inclusion of wide range of colours symbolizes the presence of almost all the things of the universe. From the things present in the world, the artist takes only their colours to represent them through the use of metonymy. He takes part from the whole. Then he presents his vision of cosmic harmony through the use of rhythmic waves. Most of the images of waves are unconventional and expressionist though few images resemble to the waves as we see in the ocean. There is the presence of the waves in red, green, yellow, brown, white, blue and other various shades of these colours. The purpose of altering the colours is to include the innumerable colours found in the various objects of the world. He transforms the images of various objects into the form of waves. These are all inclusive waves. The artist creates balance between realistic and expressionist techniques, for some waves are objective representations of the real waves whereas others are arbitrary.

The artist recycles the Hindu mythological belief of the omnipresence of cosmic power in everything, and primordial harmony. According to *Bhagavata Gita*, the Hindu religious text, everything in the universe is created by God and every event takes place in the

wish of God. Since everything happens because of God, they have underlined purpose. The universe is already harmonious and in rhythm which can be perceived and realized only through meditation and enlightenment. As one achieves nirvana, there is no duality in the self and cosmic being. There is no conflict between himself and the things around him. S/he finds the presence of same spirit in all things. About his inclination toward spiritual philosophy and his motive for creation, Buddhi Thapa himself expresses:

Now my desire was not just to understand the physical arrangements of Nature but the abstract expansion of the cosmos surrounded by the realm of my curiosity. I was able to comfort this curiosity by going through various books on Hindu religion and mythology, Christian & Muslim philosophical & spiritual beliefs. Questions of science & its calculative verifications of existential phenomena also grew larger in my mind. Books on meditation helped me to understand my discovery of the existential mysticism.

("Creation")

As the movement of waves, the universe and its constituents come up, develop and dissolve within cosmic being in harmonious and rhythmic manner. There is the existence of world spirit. About his works, K. L. Kaul opines that Thapa "integrates a number of ideas and elements connected with a cosmic lore" using abstract images ("Creation"). In this work, the content of Hindu mythology comes into dialogue with expressionist technique. The artist appropriates the western technique to depict the peace and harmony unlike western expressionists who explore their tragic vision of the world.

In the same way, Puran Khadka's *The Form to the Formless* (Fig. 67) explores the invisible and intangible aspect of reality through abstract form. The artist attempts to capture

such essence which our senses can not perceive. The quest of invisible power beyond concrete reality is one of the major themes of early Nepali art as well. He searches for the underlined conditions of beings exploiting abstract colours and shapes. The images and forms do not refer to the objects and events of the world but suggest something else beyond. The work depicts that our understanding of the self and the world can not be complete from the knowledge perceived through the senses but by realizing the power beyond that which drives all beings remained invisible.

Many people believe that the world of concrete reality and the experience perceived through senses are important. But Khadka's work goes beyond this, and asks such questions as: who created the world? How it is created? How the bodies of living animals move, see and feel which one day will be inanimate as non-living matter? The work is a quest for the underlined essence which governs the universe. Khadka searches answer to the philosophical questions related to universe, life, death and existence (Indra K. C. 7). According to Hindu mythology, the world of concrete reality and sense perception is *maya*, which will be destroyed one day. The person who wants to realize the essence should not take this *maya* as reality. One should attempt to recognize the true essence of the self and world. One should not think his/her body as truth but the soul within it. Khadka himself agrees that "something is secret" in the various phenomena of the world ("Artist, Painter"). Once a person realizes one's soul through study, religious act and/or meditation, s/he finds the universe within himself. Khadka further adds, if an individual perceives and realizes this secret, s/he achieves "wholeness" and "Eternal Aliveness", and "our life is a toll for knowing and being this Eternal Aliveness" ("Artist, Painter"). About the spiritual significance of his art works Khadka further comments:

The true significance of the works presented in the exhibition is that they serve the need of the soul and our reason. They are reminders as well as supports of contemplation, since contemplation and understanding serve the needs of our soul, i.e. "To attune our own distorted modes of thought to cosmic harmony." ("Artist, Painter")

The artist attempts to resolve the contradictions of the body and the soul, the world and the self through this visual composition. The work may be the source of inspiration to achieve *nirvana* or absolute bliss.

The artist attempts to capture the experience of the individual when one realizes soul through the use of abstract shapes, images and colours. In Uttam Nepali's words, Puran Khadka's works are the experiments to represent the soul in visual shape ("Puran Khadka"). In contrast to the figurative forms of the concrete reality, the artist presents formless form, for soul can not be represented in worldly images. The spontaneous and rhythmic lines, colours and images suggest the harmony and smooth communion between the self and the cosmic being. The work may offer the spiritual solace to the viewers who are suffering from disillusionment, faithlessness and melancholy in the conflict-ridden materialistic contemporary world. Emphasizing the spirituality, Arun Ranjit evaluates Khadka's works, "His work is a resistance against the lack of spirituality of modern times and an attempt to make the viewers realize the necessity of observing the true values of human existence and it is like retracing the emotional history of mankind" ("Puran Khadka").

Despite the fact that the work shares the technique of western abstractionism, his images, lines and colours depict his own idiom of his expression, and Hindu myth regarding soul is the driving force. Western form and eastern content coexist in harmony.

Likewise, Shankar Nath Rimal's expressionist work *Dance of Shiva-Shakti* (Fig. 68) presents the theme of cosmic harmony by incorporating the content of the *paubha* painting, *Nritesvara*. Early Nepali painting and western technique interact to each other creating a visual intertext. *Nritesvara* depicts the union of Shiva and Shakti and their rhythmic dance at the center of the *paubha*, and other subsidiary deities surround the central deities. The deities are the representations of the mythical figures. They are accompanied by their vehicles, and have many hands with weapons and other symbolic images. The artist, in *Dance of Shiva-Shakti*, takes the theme of their dance, and their union is implied but not presented overtly. The artist does not depict the deities with their vehicles and many hands. Shiva and Shakti occupy the whole canvas displacing subsidiary deities. Leaving behind every detail of the early art form, the artist takes the part and represents it expressionistically. Since Rimal's work depicts Shiva and Shakti in human form neglecting the mystical many hands, weapons and symbols, it is more anthropomorphic than the early painting. *Dance of Shiva-Shakti* resembles to *Nritesvara* and differs from it at the same time. It creatively acknowledges the tradition and goes beyond it.

According to Hindu mythology Shiva represents the male principle or *purusa* whereas Shakti represents the female principle or *prakriti*, the union of these two forces creates cosmic harmony with continuity of life and world. When an individual *sadhaka* (practitioner of *yoga*) as *purusa* unites oneself with *prakriti* or cosmic force through meditation, s/he is supposed to achieve the status of Shiva. He finds himself as Shiva being united with Shakti, and dancing in cosmic rhythm. The difficulties and obstacles between individual self and the world are swept away, for s/he finds himself/herself in every part of the world and the whole cosmos within himself/herself. In *Dance of Shiva-Shakti*, Rimal

explores the same theme with expressionist form. Because the artist alters the images of dancing figures, their gender is blurred suggesting the absence of duality as the union of *prakriti* and *purusa*. As the Himalayan mountain, the abode of Shiva and Shakti, appears small at the back of the dancing figures in the lower part of the canvas, all the constituents of the world become the integral parts of the dancing figures. The lack of the external world and the depiction of the pervasive dancing figures of Shiva and Shakti suggest that the world is within the bodies of the deities. Western artists generally exploited expressionist form to explore the tragic themes but Rimal's work uses the same form to depict the theme of cosmic harmony. Thus the artist creatively appropriates the western form to promulgate one of the principal themes of the early Nepali arts.

In like manner, Radheshyam Mulmi's surrealist work, *Untitled* (Fig. 69) depicts Buddha's teachings, one of the subject matters of Buddhist manuscript illuminations with objective correlative of visual images. The central figure of the composition is meditating Buddha on the lotus seat. The artist connects the edges of Buddha's body and his garment to the lotus petals, and they merge and melt into each other. One cannot draw the clear line between his body and lotus. Then, lotus petals melt into water below and a woman on the right. The fish melt into water. Feathers of the birds on the left melt into the women's body above as in dream. The sky melts into land, and land into sea. All the images are plural and playful. Flowing, rhythmic and unbroken lines, images and colours connect every figure with all the other ones.

The images appear together in unexpected manner. Fish, the creature which lives in water rises above the water and reaches at the side of Buddha's seat. The flying bird and fish

also appear together. Similarly human beings, the creatures of land appear to be flying in the sky. The images of folded hands are bigger than meditating Buddha.

Although the work juxtaposes contrary images with free association, they coexist in harmony and spontaneous rhythm. Two birds seem to be communicating some secret intimately. Birds and human characters coexist in friendship and intimacy. Elder woman at the top is guiding younger one below. Both big and small fish are playing spontaneously in carefree manner.

The combination of images depicts some of the teachings of Buddha after he achieved *nirvana*, they are, equality in all living beings, and kindness and love toward them. The merging and melting of one living being into another represents the equality between them whereas the intimacy, friendship and caring of one to another represents love. Through such relationship and attitude, human beings not only achieve the peace in their mind but also create harmonious society. The folded hands at the back of meditating Buddha express the artist's attitude. He respects and prays Buddha for his love toward all living things.

The artist, in his work, recycles some of the images of manuscript illuminations and incorporates native images to give his expression. The image of meditating Buddha refers back to *Prajnaparamita* manuscript illuminations. The miniature paintings of this manuscript represent the events from Buddha's life including his meditation, achievement of *nirvana* and his preaching. These paintings are referential, for they represent the scenes from Buddhist myths, whereas Mulmi's *Untitled* is surrealist. Since the work is linked to the compositions of *Prajnaparamita* manuscript, it is intertextual. The facial features of the human characters, the style of clothes and the use of ornaments are other native elements incorporated in the work.

Govinda Dangol's *Artist* (Fig. 70) depicts the working of an artist's consciousness on the process of creation through the creative appropriation of western abstractionism and the structure of *mandala* in early Nepali paintings. The arrangement of the squares, circle and gate-like structures in four different colours leading toward the centre resembles to the early Nepali *mandalas*. As the images of principal deity at the centre and subsidiary deities around are missing, the work differs from these early art forms. Early Nepali *mandalas* are the *yantras* (instruments) for meditation and concentration which lead the *sadhaka's* (practitioner of *yoga*) consciousness toward the central deity where individual self is supposed to unite oneself with the cosmic being. These *mandalas* are the representation of concepts as represented in the myths. Although the artist takes the geometric structure of early Nepali *mandalas*, he explores different theme, the working of an artist's consciousness on the process of creating art. In the absence of the images of deities, the structure seems abstract. Nevertheless, the composition can be interpreted as the representation of an artist's consciousness as the title of the work is *Artist*.

The composition presents Dangol's concept that an artist, on the process of creation, withdrawing himself from the external world, first, gives shape to his vision in his consciousness and then represents his mental vision on the canvas. The abstract surface outside the circle, the representative of the external world, from where the artist orients himself toward the circle, the representative of his consciousness. Comparatively denser colours around the circle than that of background suggest the movement from external world to the consciousness. As the artist enters into his consciousness, one constructs and reconstructs his vision in his mind going through several stages as represented by gates and layers of squares. When the artist creates one's mental picture that satisfies him/her for the

time being, the mental fluctuation stops, as the inward movement stops at the centre of the *mandala*, and then one begins to create visual shapes accordingly depicting the process of creation. Creating mental picture may take longer time than representing the mental picture in the canvas. Since the work is about artist and the process of creating art, it is a meta art. Synthesizing native tradition with western techniques, Dangol revitalizes the *paubha* painting with new significance.

Laya Mainali's *Saswat* (Fig. 71) attempts to represent the whole universe within and around the *Shivalinga* through the use of expressionist, surrealist and abstractionist techniques. The image of *Shivalinga* is one of the popular icons of early Nepali painting and sculpture. The circular disc which the *Shivalinga* has penetrated to, and the *Shivalinga* itself are expressionistically altered. The surface of the circular disk is not even as one sees it in the *Shivalinga* that is found in temples. The excessively rough surface brings up other images in one's imagination. The images of mountain, road, the bank of river and uninhabited grassy land appear within the rough surface. The colours of the *Shivalinga* are also unconventional. Generally, *Shivalingas* are found in black colours but, here, the artist depicts it in three dominant colours like blue, white and orange, and other various shades of these colours. Though the colours and images seem abstract, in close viewing, the images vaguely resemble to the figures of white Himalayas, mountains, fields, houses, rivers, ocean and boats and human beings. The background of the *Shivalinga* is also unusual, for it has been crowded with unusual abstract colours and images which do not represent open air around it as one finds around traditional *Shivalingas*.

The combination of some of the images is surrealist. Three flowers on the circular disk do not seem to be flowers offered to the *Shivalinga* while worshipping but the flowers

on plants which grow on the disk. On the other hand, the appearance of the images like mountains, rivers and ocean in the *Shivalinga* as mentioned in the above paragraph are contrary, for, traditionally, *Shivalinga* appears in particular places of the world, not the world within *Shivalinga*.

The work represents the belief that the whole universe is within the *Shivalinga*. According to Hindu mythology, it is the united form of *prakriti* and *purusa* or female and male principles. In the union of *prakriti* and *purusa* or Shakti and Shiva, all the constituents of the universe become one. The duality between the self and the other does not exist. This is visually depicted through the penetrated disk (*yoni*) by the *Shivalinga* (phallus). The individual *sadhaka* (practitioner) realizes this non-duality through *sadhana* or meditation. He finds the whole cosmos within himself. The appearance of various worldly images within and around the *Shivalinga* represents the *sadhaka's* enlightenment who finds the cosmos within himself. The artist himself writes about the significance of *Shivalinga* in his art works:

Art is beauty, and beauty is bliss. *Shivalinga*, which is beyond beauty and bliss, is the symbol of absolute bliss (*paramananda*), light, peace and infinity. It has been extended beyond land and sky encompassing every particle of the universe. It is beyond the beginning and the end, and timeless within time. I have attempted to *aestheticise* this spiritual faith in *Saswat*. ("Saswat")

Mainali's *Saswat* depicts the whole universe within and around the *Shivalinga*.

Although the artist exploits the techniques of contemporary western painting like expressionist, surrealist and abstractionist, the work links itself to the tradition of Nepali art. *Shivalinga* is one of the frequent images in early Nepali paintings and sculptures.

Furthermore, the theme of union between sacred and profane, and individual self and the cosmic being are also the themes of many early Nepali *paubhas*.

Asha Dangol's surrealist work, *Myth and Reality* (Fig. 72) depicts the experience of alienated and disillusioned contemporary youths by reincorporating the images of myths and Mithila folk art. The combination of images is shocking and dream like. On the left of the canvas, the artist presents a human figure with his body being upside down. Since his body has not yet fallen flat on the ground, he seems to be still falling down. He seems to be pulled or dragged down, for a rope connects his neck and the floor below. In the middle, another human figure with at least three faces is standing on an elephant raising his hands up and guarded by two huge female figures in green. Though, at first sight, the human figure seems to be on the elephant, it is actually over the elephant on the air because his feet are near the elephant but not touching the surface of the elephant's back. He seems to be flying up. Furthermore, he appears to be both a child and an old man at the same time. He is a child because proportionally he is not as tall as other human characters standing on the floor even if he is over the elephant. On the other hand, he is also an old man, for his face resembles to the face of aged people. The structure of the head is also playful and plural, for within the same head three faces appear, two at the sides and one at the front. The *tika* in the shape of trident on the forehead of the man is also strange because people do not generally put on *tika* that way. The trident is a symbol associated to Lord Shiva. The image of trident further helps to reconstruct another image, that is *Chaturmukhi Shivalinga* (*Shivalinga* having four faces). Three faces are visually represented and one can imagine the fourth face facing backward. Furthermore, the lack of hair on the head, and its round and smooth surface create the resemblance to the top of *Shivalinga*. The artist combines the contrary images with free

association exploiting surrealist technique. According to Salil Subedi, his art works create "a symbolic connection of the myth and reality, past and present" ("Folk Images"). The work is the *mélange* of religious and socio-cultural images and symbols.

The combination of images can be interpreted as the representation of the alienated and disillusioned condition of contemporary youths and their nostalgia for carefree childhood and attraction toward mythical world for consolation. The people of new generation have been unable to face the challenges of contemporary Nepali society like unemployment, social discrimination, terrorism and other various social contradictions. Since they fail to adjust themselves with this complex surrounding, they have become melancholic, disillusioned and alienated, and visualized their bleak future. The falling human figure suggests this situation whose posture is upside down and neck tied and body dragged toward the ground. Then the question arises: How can he go on living in such tragic situation?

The alienated and disillusioned character becomes nostalgic about his childhood, wishes to take refuge in undefiled nature and wants to escape in mythical and folk world for consolation. In Salil Subedi's words, "It's a feeling of losing the old" ("Folk Images"). The image of child over the toy-like elephant represents the man's nostalgia. The two huge women in green flanking the child are the personifications of clean and green nature. Abandoning the corrupted and chaotic society the character returns to nature as a child. The depiction of trident and *Chaturmukhi Shivalinga* on his head suggests that he wishes to live in mythological world. The gestures of his hands indicating upward represent his ascending journey toward mythical world. The sun, the symbol of light at the top of the canvas toward which the character is moving, suggests the possibility of living in mythical world.

The work depicts the juxtaposition of the reality and imaginary mythical world. In reality, the character is falling down and tied to the ground whereas in mythical world he is free and rising up. As the space occupied in the canvas, real world is narrow and monotonous whereas mythical world is wider and more variegated.

The use of some images and techniques of Mithila folk art also creates the mythical atmosphere. The work takes the images of horse, elephant and the sun, and flat colours and decorative pattern on the right border from Mithila folk art. The artist, remaining at the inbetween space, negotiates with western surrealist form, Hindu myth and Nepali folk art, and creates hybrid art form to express the disillusionment and alienation of contemporary Nepali youths and their imaginary flight to the mythical world. This inbetweenness is the dynamism of this work.

The analysis and interpretation of these works depicts that contemporary Nepali painting is the intricate nexus of western techniques and native art forms. The use of western techniques as tools does not challenge the Nepali identity in art works but revitalizes the traditional art forms. Abhi Subedi writes:

The westernization of the Nepali art does not mean the loss or the complete rejection of the traditions: it certainly makes a departure. But modern artists of Nepal create their own milieu and create their works in it. Their 'modern' is basically a western concept, but they only exploit the western education to broaden the range of their skills in painting. So, the Nepali identity of the artist in this country should be sought in their own cultural and folk environments created by themselves in their works by making the best use of their skills, whether they be western or oriental. ("Nepali Utopia" 123)

Despite the fact that contemporary Nepali painting exploits western techniques, it is interconnected to the early Nepali art forms. The art works revisit and reinterpret early Nepali art forms with new significances.

Recycling Religio-cultural Images

Contemporary Nepali paintings incorporate native religio-cultural images using western techniques as tools. They recycle and reinterpret the Hindu and Buddhist myths (R. K. Pandey, "Identification" 39). The artists give space to the icons of gods, goddesses and saints, and images of stupas and temples (Bibas, "Nepalese Contemporary" 134). Not only native culture is intertwined with western form through intercultural dialogue but also one native culture merges to the other through intracultural interaction representing cultural harmony. Because of the copresence of heterogeneous cultural images, the art works speak of the cultural self and the cultural other. Now, I would like to interpret some contemporary Nepali paintings in terms of their relationship with native religio-cultural images.

Seema Sharma Shah's inrtertextual work, *Kathmandu Dreamscape* (Fig. 73) hybridizes western technique of graphic art, etching, and surrealism with the religious and cultural images of Kathmandu valley. Etching is a graphic technique of painting that was already in practice in the west in the seventeenth century. In this technique, artist first coats the entire surface of a metal plate with an acid resistant substance, made of asphalt, wax and some other materials. The artist creates figures drawing on the coated plate with a needle. The needle removes the coat where the figures have been drawn. Then the plate is dipped in acid. The acid reacts with the metal which has been exposed leaving the rest of the plate intact. The plate is taken out and the remaining acid-resistant substance is removed. Finally

the plate is inked and printed. In *Kathmandu Dreamscape*, the artist uses this graphic technique.

In *Kathmandu Dreamscape*, the artist has taken the heterogeneous religious and cultural images. The work is an assemblage of images of Nepali culture, Hindu and Buddhist religions, stone sculptures and wood-carving, and Nepali architecture. The combines the images and icons with free association as in dream. Madan Chitrakar points out that the images look as if they are "bursting out of a deep mystic past" ("Mystical"). The artist mixes a little of everything and the parts can be separated from the whole and adored for themselves. This work is an intertextual pastiche, for it takes the images of earlier arts like sculptures of Budhanilkantha and Bhairava, woodcarving of the Kumari, architecture of temples and stupa, and cultural images of *Bhotejatra* (a ceremony of displaying the vest of deity Machhindranath). Chitrakar further adds that her works "reflect a total gamut of motifs and forms from the religious/cultural life of medieval Kathmandu" and suggest "a mystic journey-leading a viewer in a deep dreamspace filled with forms and imagery from the bygone days" ("Mystical"). Shailendra Kumar Singh interprets her works:

Shah's works featuring in this exhibition are primarily concerned with the vision of the mystery of life in terms of spiritual consciousness. Here, she draws our attention to awesome universal mysteries and incomprehensive power of various gods and goddesses drawn basically from Hindu myths. The use of surrealistic, dream-like imagery, in some works, however, defies any fixed interpretation and reflects the inexplicable spiritual realm of the subconscious. ("Mystical")

The artist juxtaposes heterogeneous images of Nepali culture, and Hindu and Buddhist religions using surrealist technique.

The hybridity of heterogenous cultural images suggests religious harmony. The images of Hindu temples and Buddhist stupas appear in juxtaposition. The images of the living goddess Kumari and *Bhotejatra* are equally popular among Buddhists and Hindus. Both Hindus and Buddhists observe *Bhotejatra* and *Kumarijatra*. Kumari is selected from the Buddhist Shakya family and worshipped also by the Hindu king and other people. The depiction of such cultural images represents the religious harmony in Nepal. Despite the fact that the artist exploits the western techniques of surrealism and etching, she reintegrates the heterogeneous native religious and cultural images in her hybrid art work.

Ramananda Joshi's *Pranayam*, (Fig. 74) through expressionist form, incorporates the content of the daily ritual of Hindus particularly the Brahmins, and depicts the process of uniting individual self with cosmic consciousness. *Pranayam*, the daily ritual of Hindus, is conducted early in the morning after taking bath to realize the existence of *Brahma* in which the whole universe is supposed to be embedded, and the individual is the integral part of this cosmic being. While practicing *pranayam*, the individual sits in *padmasana* (lotus posture), controls his breathing in various ways and concentrates his mind.

According to Hindu mythology, through *pranayam*, *kundalini*, the coiled and dormant cosmic power which lies asleep in *muladhara*, the base of the spinal column, can be aroused. The arousal of *kundalini* activates the vast dormant areas of the brain. As the *sadhaka*, the individual self practices *pranayam* properly, the *kundalini shakti* ascends step by step from *muladhara* through various *charkas*, the psychic centres of energy situated in human body, and reaches the highest point *sahasrara*, the psychic centre above the head symbolized by

thousand petalled lotus where the *kundalini shakti* unites with Shiva, the cosmic power. At this moment, the *sadhaka* experiences the radiating waves rise into the brain causing ecstatic transformation of consciousness. Individual self and the cosmic consciousness become one. Then the *sadhaka* does not find any obstacles and troubles in the world and remains in constant communion with cosmic being in absolute bliss. Without meditation and *pranayam*, the vast dormant areas of the brain remain untapped and unutilized, and *kundalini shakti* remains coiled and asleep in *muladhara*. As a result the individual gets interested in material world, find troubles and obstacles in life and experiences pain, suffering and anxiety. Joshi's work *Pranayama* shares the *tantric* philosophy of meditation. Banshi Shrestha says that Ramananda Joshi executed some "Tantra paintings based on philosophy and spirituality" ("Inspired Expression").

Joshi recycles this Hindu myth regarding the arousal of the *kundalini* exploiting expressionist technique and depicts the theme of union between individual self and cosmic being. However, the artist does not represent the *charkas*, the psychic centres within body objectively as mentioned in the myth. According to the myth, seven *charkas*- *muladhara*, *svadhisthana*, *manipura*, *anahata*, *visuddha*, *ajna* and *sahasrara* are situated in human body in ascending order. Coiled and asleep *kundalini* gradually ascends from *muladhara*, through these other *charkas* with the degree of the transformation of consciousness on the process of *pranayam* and meditation, and finally reaches to *sahasrara*, the *charka* represented by thousand-petalled lotus. The number of lotus petals increase in the succeeding *charkas* as the *kundalini* ascends step by step symbolizing the gradual development of the *sadhak's* consciousness. *Pranayam*, depicts this mythological theme with the use of three *charkas*- *muladhara*, *ajna* and *sahasrara*. He alters the mythological structure. The artist leaves space

for viewer's imagination to create other *chakras* in their mind. The size of *sahasrara* in this composition is bigger than it is found in traditional representations. It is also unconventional, for the thousand petals of lotus are missing. The image is plural and playful, for it resembles and differs from thousand-petalled lotus at the same time. The circular shape resembles with lotus whereas the lack of distinct thousand petals creates difference from the original image. He inscribes two characters in *devanagari* script suggesting the importance of *mantra* to be chanted in the process of *pranayam*. The visual form negotiates with verbal art. In traditional art forms while representing *pranayam* and *chakras*, human body is presented with clarity including external organs. But in this work, abstract rhythmic lines suggest human body excluding recognizable human organs.

The work is the creative appropriation of the Hindu myth and western expressionist technique. Western art exploit expressionist techniques to depict the theme of anxiety, disillusionment, melancholy and brutality whereas this work employs this technique to explore the theme of meditation and enlightenment.

Shova Wagle's *Divine Melody* (Fig. 75), through the use expressionist and surrealist techniques, incorporates the theme of religio-cultural rituals of Nepali society and explores her pantheistic vision. Various images of nature like trees, lakes, lawn, mountains and animals are not the objective representations of the real objects but expressive. On the other hand, the artist condenses and arranges some images with free association. The wide spread presence of red and yellow *tika* (powder) in almost all the images suggests that they have been worshipped as gods and goddesses. The images can be linked to the objects and events of the external world. Hindu devotees treat various images of nature as divine beings. They worship the earth as mother which creates and nourishes every living being. Rivers are

personified in the images of goddesses which support the life. They believe that lakes and rivers are the abode of water god. During the certain days of the year, devotees worship rivers. Similarly devotees consider pipal tree as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu in the form of plant. The devotees of Vishnu worship pipal with *tika*, flower, *naibedhya* (the food offered to deities) and clean water. The dominating image of the tall tree at the centre, which covers all the other images below, may be pipal thereby suggesting the omnipresence of cosmic being. The composition suggests that the cosmic being is present in every part of the universe. As a result all the components of the universe are existing with rhythmic harmony. The work suggests this theme through the combination of images and reinforces it through rhythmic colours and lines.

Such Hindu ritual practices have pragmatic values. In the past, they not only provided the spiritual solace but also assisted to maintain the ecological balance. Since people visualized Lord Vishnu in pipal tree, they planted it in the open area near the village and constructed *chautari* around it, and even now the tradition is continuing though in small scale. *Chautaris* are the cool places under the shadow of the huge pipal tree where porters, travelers, peasants and cowherds take rest and refresh themselves. Likewise, people kept the sources of water like rivers, lakes and ponds clean thinking that water god may be furious and misfortune could follow. Religious people treated serpents as gods and worship them once a year in *Nagapanchami* (The festival of worshipping serpents). Rat, tiger, elephant and peacock are the vehicles of Ganesha, Durga, Indra and Kartikeya respectively. These animals and birds are worshipped as gods and goddesses. The myths and rituals unconsciously and spontaneously oriented the ordinary people for the conservation of nature. Such cultural practices attempted to create harmony between human beings and their surrounding. The

artist recreates the same harmony in visual form in this work and appeals the viewers to be conscious about their tradition.

This work evolves through dialogue and compromise between Hindu cultural rituals and western expressionist and surrealist techniques. Generally, expressionist and surrealist works in west depicted disillusionment, morbidity and tragedy. But in this work, the artist creatively appropriates these western techniques to suggest peace, harmony and divine melody. Remaining at inbetween space it speaks of both the west and the east.

K. K. Karmacharya's *Untitled* (Fig. 76) reintegrates Nepali cultural ritual related to *Shraddha* employing surrealist form. The images of some skulls turned upward with their mouths opened lie on the ground and a cow from above is showering milk from its udder on their open mouths. Because, in reality, one has never seen the skulls turning upward with open mouth expecting something to fall on them, the images of skulls are unexpected and shocking. Furthermore, it is strange that the cow is dropping milk in the mouth of dead people. The cow, an animal, acts as if it understands the dead's feeling that they are thirsty and hungry, and want to eat something. Such juxtapositions of contrary images are found in surrealist paintings.

The combination of images in the work is linked to Nepali cultural ritual, *Shraddha*. The family of the dead person particularly the sons, daughters and wife observe the ritual of *Shraddha* twice a year. They remember their dead relative and pay homage to one offering water, white flower, cow's milk, honey, fruit and rice pudding cooked in cow's milk. The milk, dung and urine of a cow are necessary elements without which they can not observe the ritual. They use cow dung to clean the floor where the ritual is observed. The priest mixes cow's urine into water and sprinkles around the *mandala* where various deities are installed

for the ritual, and over everybody who are present in the ritual to purify them. The urine is also used to make *panchagavya* (the drink prepared mixing five auspicious things). The performers of the ritual drink *panchagavya* which is supposed to purify them. Cow's milk is used to make *panchamrit* (sweet drink prepared mixing five auspicious things) that is offered to everybody including the guests at the end of the ritual. The performers of the ritual offer cow's milk and the rice pudding cooked in cow's milks to the image of the dead person. People believe that the soul of the dead person gets satisfaction from such offering, and sons and daughters receive blessings from their dead parents. Without these elements which come from cow, people can not observe *Shraddha*, and if the ritual is not observed properly, the soul of the dead, it is supposed, suffers in hell. The composition depicts that cow is not only important to the living human beings but a hope for the soul of the dead.

According to Hindu mythology, if a person observes the ritual of *godana* (offering cow to *Brahmin*) in his/her life, the cow will rescue one's soul from the hellish sea to the heaven after death. Perhaps, the cow in the composition is rescuing the dead from their miserable condition.

In Hindu culture personifies cow as mother. She is also called as Laxmi and Gauri. Although people pray or worship cow several times in a year, the day of *Laxmipuja* is the most important one when cow is worshipped in special manner. They decorate the cow with various colours, garlands, beautiful garments and offer sweet food to her.

Hindu myths and rituals related to cow are not only culturally important but also have pragmatic value. Since people respect cow as mother and she has cultural importance, they protect and care her. When people keep cows at home, they will get enough milk and organic fertilizer. Cow's milk enhances their health, and they produce good crops using cow-dung.

Such myths and rituals automate the socio-cultural practice and enhance the pragmatic values for the socio-economical development.

The work is also an artist's response in visual form to the contemporary Nepali society where such cultural values are degenerating and declining. It is very difficult to get the dung, urine and milk of cow to observe cultural rituals like *Shraddha*, because nowadays farmers are not so much interested to keep cows. *Brahmins* reject to take cows which are offered to them. It is heard that some people illegally export cows to the neighbouring countries to be consumed as meat. It is said that cows are killed secretly within country itself. The artist seems anxious about such deteriorating situation and appeals for the preservation of native culture.

Mohan Khadka's *Dilapidated Pati, Sankhamul* (Fig. 77) depicts philanthropic and humanistic values of Nepali culture, and contemporary people's ignorance about it using some aspects of impressionist technique. The images of a stupa, temples, dilapidated buildings and plants in the rural landscape are not the objects as they appear in reality but the artist's impressions of those objects at particular transitory moment. The artist experiments with vibration of light, broken colours and rapid brushstrokes. The play of light and shade suggests incompleteness in the represented figures. Ignoring subtle gradation of colours and delineation, the artist hastily creates tints, dots and dabs which suggest the bare hint of forms. Despite the fact that he employs impressionist technique, the images of temples, stupa and dilapidated buildings tilt toward realism whereas the images of tree and the ground are fully impressionist. The artist plays with impressionism and realism simultaneously.

The work deals about two socio-cultural themes: religious harmony in shrines and declining social values in contemporary Nepali society. The depiction of Hindu temples and

Buddhist stupa in the same shrine represents the religious harmony. In Nepal, both Hindu and Buddhist icons, images and symbols coexist in the same religious place, and people pray and worship both Hindu and Buddhist deities.

The depiction of the dilapidated *patis* implies eroding social values in contemporary Nepali society. A *patis* is a building in public space, where the poor, homeless people or the travellers live for short period without paying rent. The community or philanthropic people build these buildings. In Nepal, there are a lot of old and dilapidated *patis*. The people of earlier generation built them but the people of our time neither build new *patis* nor preserve and renovate older ones. Such oblivious attitude of the new generation toward altruism suggests the erosion of social and moral values. This is the irony of so called modern civilization. Furthermore, as dilapidated *patis*, beautiful ancient architectures of the country are transformed into ruins. Presenting the images of dilapidated *patis*, the artist makes the viewers aware of the socio-cultural values of Nepali society and the need of their preservation. The analysis and interpretation of these works depicts that contemporary Nepali painting recycles and revitalizes the religio-cultural images using western techniques as tools.

Images of Nature and Nepali Landscape with Cultural Images

Contemporary Nepali painting not only explores the religio-cultural motifs but also incorporates the images of nature found in Nepali landscapes. The cultural and geographical surroundings of the artists influence their works. Bipin Ghimire says that integration of multiple geo-cultural images in Nepali paintings depicts the theme of unity within diversity ("Diversity"). Vijay Thapa believes that the dialogue and interaction among intracultural images within art works appeal the viewers for socio-cultural harmony ("Lumbini").

Surendra Raj Bhattarai's *Peace, Development and Cooperation* (Fig. 78) depicts the geo-cultural microcosm of Nepal exploiting cubist and surrealist techniques. The artist presents the geographical structure of Nepal in condensed form. The plain in the lower part of the canvas represents Terai, the hills and green mountains in the middle represent the hilly region and the snowcapped mountains at the top represent the Himalaya. The trees represent the green forest. The depiction of the expansion of water just above the left corner at the bottom represents the lakes and the rivers of Nepal. The presence of bright shining spots suggests the open sky, sunshine and warmth. The artist presents these images of nature using metonymy. He presents parts to suggest whole. Such condensed structure suggests the geographical diversity of Nepal.

The images of temples, stupa and houses depict the architecture of Nepal. The presentation of these images is cubist, for the artist exploits geometric forms like rectangle and triangle. The dominant shapes of triangles in the middle of the canvas resemble to the shapes of mountain and hill. The images of architecture are plural, for they also suggest the structure of mountain. Buildings melt into mountain and vice versa as in dream. This is one of the surrealist features of this composition.

The depiction of two female figures with their bamboo baskets on their back suggests the daily works of Nepali women. They seem to be going to cut grass for their domestic animals. The presence of women in their daily works and absence of men suggest the heavier burden carried by women in the family. This discloses the suppression and domination of women in patriarchal Nepali society.

The hybrid form of stupa and temple at the centre of the canvas suggests the religious harmony in Nepali society. The round base and rectangular middle part with two eyes in the

hybrid form resemble to the Buddhist stupa whereas the triangular top resembles to the Hindu temple. The artist juxtaposes the contrary images with free association as in surrealist paintings. The heterogeneous cultural images appear together. The same image appears to be temple and stupa at the same time. The stupa dissolves into temple and vice versa. This suggests the religious tolerance between Hinduism and Buddhism. In Nepal, temples and stupas coexist side by side in the same religious place. Both Hindus and Buddhists worship and pray in each other's shrines. The central position of stupa and temple, and other socio-cultural images around implies the dominantly religious Nepali society.

This composition incorporates the images of early Nepali art. Stupas and temples are also the frequent subject matters of the early Nepali paintings and architecture. In the *paubha* and *pata*, the images of stupa and temples are frequently represented. However Bhattarai's presentation differs from the forms of *paubha* and *pata*. These early Nepali paintings refer and represent the stupas and temples that exist in the reality or myths whereas the hybrid form of stupa and temple as depicted in *Peace, Development and cooperation* does not represent the images as found in the myth or reality. Through the use of metonymy, the artist draws the parts from the images of reality and recombines them creating the heterogeneous and hybrid form. At the same time, this composition associates itself with the tradition and crosses the boundary of traditional art.

The painting suggests that peace can be achieved through cooperation among the people of diverse ideologies, and development and prosperity is possible only in peaceful environment. The composition is the response to the violent and conflict-ridden contemporary situation of Nepal. The artist articulates the possible suggestion that cooperation and tolerance can resolve the conflict and bring peace and prosperity. The artist

hopes for the end of the terrorism and conflict and imagines peaceful and prosperous Nepal in visual form.

The art work incorporates the diverse socio-cultural and geographical images in condensed form through the use of metonymy and free association. Using surrealist and cubist techniques as tools, the artist renders the images of nature, traditional Nepali art and the socio-cultural life of Nepal. The art work has ambivalent attitude toward both native tradition and contemporary western forms. This hybrid form negotiates and compromises with native content and alien form.

Response to Nature

Some contemporary Nepali paintings address the problems of deforestation and ecological complexities. They appeal for the preservation of forest, wild animals and birds. Sarita Dangol's surrealist work, *Untitled* (Fig. 79) explores the problem of deforestation in contemporary Nepal. She depicts the image of a tree with two sparkling human-like eyes on its stem which has been chopped into two pieces. The branches are torn and broken forcefully. The white fluid is coming out from the cut or broken part as the blood gushes out from the body when animals are chopped. For the presence of two eyes and the movement like that of flowing blood give the work human attributes, the artist personifies the tree as human being. Some of the parts of the tree resemble to the human muscles. She expresses the condition of chopped tree as the pain of wounded human character. The tree is chopped from between the two eyes separating one from the other suggesting the agony one feels when human being is chopped from between the eyes. Dangol expresses her emotional attachment with trees: "I'm fond of talking with the green branches of the tree, they ask me various types of questions and express their troubles, they share joy and woe with me" ("Trees and Trails").

She further adds, "I become the tree on the canvas. I became hard, soft, fallen, broken, withered, and bent" ("Defining"). She has emotional attachment toward trees.

The work makes the viewers aware of their follies that destroying trees, they are destroying themselves. The absence of agent and instrument in the destruction of the tree suggests that it is inexcusable by whomever and with whatever means the act is done. According to Abhi Subedi, Dangol's "echo-paintings" "create an expressive rebellion against the depletion of forest" ("Overview" 117). Similarly in Batsa Gopal Vaidya's word, her works "speak against the cruelty of man against nature" ("Creation"). Personifying the tree as human being, the artist explores the problem of deforestation and appeals the viewers for preserving forest.

Uttam Kharel's *Human Beings, Animals and Birds* (Fig. 80), through surrealist form, depicts the artist's vision of the mutual coexistence in harmony among human beings, animals and birds by deconstructing the binary oppositions of man/animal. The artist combines the images of birds, animals and human characters with free association as in dream. On the one hand, a human character is embracing a horse and the elephant trunk with intense love, next human character is holding child with care and compassion on the other. As the woman is showing her love to the child, the man is showing his passion and friendliness toward the animals. The work treats the love between two human beings, and between men and animals equally. The birds are not afraid of human beings but fly around them rhythmically in carefree manner. Even wild animals and domestic animals coexist in the same place. The meditating figure in the lower part of the canvas is hybrid, for the artist creates its body combining human and animal parts. The body below the neck resembles to

the human body whereas the head looks like that of monkey. Such combination implies that animals also feel like human beings and vice versa.

The composition questions the concept that human beings are superior to animal and birds. It presents animals and birds not as the commodities to be exploited but friends and cooperative neighbours. The expression suggests that the earth is the common home of all living beings and all of them have the equal right to live.

The artist, through this work, makes the viewers aware of the ecosystem and the interconnectedness among various living beings and their environment. This is also a critique against careless deforestation and poaching in Nepal. The work appeals the viewers to save environment and biodiversity.

Kalyani Rajopadhyay's *Untitled* (Fig. 81) captures the images of birds that are found in Nepal using the pieces of various bangles instead of colours. The depicted images of birds are that of lophophorus and peacock which are popular birds in Nepal. For lophophorus is also a national bird, the work implies the artist's fascination with national images and her attempt to give the national identity in her work.

The work is experimental and innovative in the sense that she creates almost realistic images exploiting unconventional medium. She sticks the colourful pieces of bangles on the canvas and creates the images of tree, grass and birds. The pieces of bangles create rough texture, for these three dimensional pieces come out of the surface of the canvas. Since the images are, to some extent, three dimensional, it resembles to the low relief sculpture. The use of colours in the background, colour like combination of the pieces of bangles and the use of canvas bring the work under the genre of painting whereas the three dimensionality of images and the tactile appeal bring the work nearer to the sculpture. As a result, the work

appears to be sculpture and painting at the same time. The work blurs the boundary between sculpture and painting. The exploitation of the things of reality like bangles shows the influence of western pop art. Although she shared the technique of pop art, the images of birds and the use of bangle pieces are her own innovations.

The use of bangles is also associated with women's identity. The types of bangles as used in the work are used by Nepali women both married and unmarried. When the husband is dead, bangles are broken from the hand, and she no longer uses bangles thereafter. The beauty created in the images of birds and nature is the icon of the celebration of her conjugal life. Unlike radical feminists the artist finds woman's identity in the conventional image and the values associated with it. As the bangles are the symbols of conjugal life, the artist seems to suggest that women's identity can not be revealed through separation but through coexistence of male and female.

Alienation and Disillusionment

Some contemporary Nepali paintings explore melancholy, alienation and mental horror of contemporary Nepali youths that are unable to adjust themselves in the complex social surrounding. Overpopulation, poverty, lack of opportunities and unemployment have added complexities in Nepali society. Because of such situation, the people of young generation have gone through mental torture. Since they lose the hope of prosperity and bright future, they have become the victim of melancholy and alienation. Sunil Sigdel writes:

We float on the fragmented ocean of the post modern times and hardly know in which piece of depth we will drown into. In such divided realities of economical inefficiencies, religious prejudices and political incompetence, modern human is pressurized in such a way that his/her natural growth is

unknowingly obstructed. But eventually when they grow through unnatural channeling, they bear ugliness as part of their appearance. Furthermore, the physical disfiguring humans suffer due to exposure to various harmful radiations and a chemical reaction adds yet another tragic page to the chapters of human civilization. Therefore, this exposure to mental and physical disorder has made human beings unnatural animals in many ways. And delving deep into the human psyche, the many symbols that we have created for various reasons also bear unnatural forms. ("Bonsai")

The themes of alienation, disillusionment, fragmentation and degeneration get expressed using western techniques of art. Shreejan K. Rajbhandari's surrealist work *Mood* (Fig. 82), for example, depicts the mental horror, anxiety and split consciousness of contemporary Nepali youth. The tense posture, the gestures of his hands and facial expression suggest the horrible condition which the central character's mind is going through. Other two figures on both sides of the central character at the bottom of the canvas are the representations of the deeper horrors existing in the consciousness of the central character. Although the character is suffering from extreme nervousness, conflict, dilemma and disillusionment, he tries to present himself balanced and normal by hiding these aspects as depicted in the central figure. But the tense body and tortured face suggest his failure in his attempt. The burning fire at the back is the metaphor of his burning heart in being unable to manage his life in conflict-ridden and horrible situation.

The artist presents the horrible condition of his mind in three stages. The central figure's squeezed body and gloomy face appeal the viewer to imagine what is going on in his mind. The dark and more horrible figures below disclose his unbearable awe and

embarrassment, and take the viewer to the deeper level of his consciousness. The split consciousness of the character searches various ways to resolve the conflicts but visualizes only the inevitable catastrophe. Yet, the troubled and tortured consciousness could not get expressed to the fullest with the representations of human figures. Then the artist takes the metaphor of burning fire to express the further deeper level of his consciousness.

The colourful borders of triangles at the back of the central character lead to the depth of the dark cave suggesting the underlying horror despite the fact that the world looks bright and varied externally. The sun on the top right, the symbol of hope and prosperity, is clouded blocking the light. This suggests the frustrated hope of the character.

The juxtaposition of images also suggests the split consciousness of the character. The divided upper triangles in two parts suggest the split consciousness. The dividing line touches the head thereby dividing the mind symbolically. The bigger part of the divided head lies toward the side of fire and the darker lines of triangles whereas smaller part falls toward the side of the sun and brighter lines of triangles suggesting higher degree of frustration and anxiety than that of hope and prosperity.

The rhombus at the centre is also divided into two triangles. The lower triangle is fully dark whereas upper triangle is comparatively brighter. The darker triangle is cohesive to the more gloomy expressions of the two figures below. Since the dark triangle points downward, it suggests the darker and horrible side of the consciousness. On the other hand, slightly brighter upper triangle is cohesive to the image of the sun and the superficial attempt of the character to show the brightness in his face. The bright images and colours are weaker since the dark images and colours overlap and overshadow suggesting the hopelessness of the character.

The work depicts such nightmarish condition through the use of surrealist technique. The artist arranges the images of fire, sun, human figures and geometric shapes with free association as in dream. The complex psychic experience gets expression through surrealist arrangement of the images and colours.

Such nervous mental condition of the character is representative of the contemporary Nepali youths' disillusioned consciousness. The wide spread poverty and unemployment brought crisis in survival. In poverty stricken society, first, it is difficult to be educated. Even if one is educated, s/he can not find any work to support himself. Having the hope of prosperous future one invest his/her time and money in education even by selling one's farm. In the name of study, one stops to work in the field. When the study is completed, neither one has vocational skills to create opportunities by himself nor one's farm or strong hands to endure manual labour. Then the youths plan to go abroad searching for opportunity. It is hard to live in the native land doing nothing and even harder to find loan for the expenses to go abroad. Then these youths fall into vicious circle. The artist, exploiting surrealist technique, depicts dark and gloomy feelings of such restless and tortured Nepali youths who visualize catastrophe ahead.

Since the youths are disillusioned and alienated from the surrounding, they remember the joyful moments of their childhood. Manuj Babu Mishra's surrealist painting, *My Mother* (Fig. 83) depicts the artist's nostalgia for his childhood and his attachment to his mother as an escape from the complex society. The artist combines unexpected and contrary images to express his dreamlike feeling. The seated skull in red robe holding a man in its lap flanked by two grasshoppers is the image of his mother who died when he was child. The crawling grasshoppers over the skull as tall as the skull itself suggest that her dead body is mixed in

soil and insects are her companions and friends. He presents the skull, for her flesh is devoured by the insects. On the other hand, her seated figure in red attire holding a man in her lap suggests her life. The presentation of her living status is the product of the artist's imagination and fantasy. The figure of the woman is plural because she appears as living as well as dead at the same time. Although she is dead physically, she is living in the artist's imagination.

The artist depicts his dead mother as living to explore his nostalgia about his childhood and his attachment toward his mother. He longs for her love and care. The laying body in her lap, the spoon in front of her and a pot on the left suggest that he wants to be spoon fed by his mother lying comfortably in her lap. The figure in the lap is not a child but a matured man. This suggests that he not only retrieves the childhood memory but also wants to be treated as a child even though he is a matured man. The expression of such feeling discloses something more about the artist's life. He finds difficulty to adjust himself in the surrounding and his society. He can not bear the responsibility of a man. On the one hand, there is the hardship of life, and wicked and corrupted society on the other. The disillusioned mind can not resolve the problems of his life, and he becomes nostalgic of his safe and comfortable life in his mother's lap. Rather than facing the challenges of life, the alienated artist wishes for the benevolent and all-giving mother. He wants to forget the world around him lying in his mother's lap. The image of crossed two leaves in front of the seated female figure is the metaphor of the proximity and union between the mother and the son. The fantasy and the nostalgic feeling is the consolation for the melancholic, disillusioned and alienated artist.

Although the work explores the personal emotions of the artist, it can be associated with the experiences of alienation of contemporary Nepali youths in the sense that the disillusioned young people of today within this complex and disintegrated society lose the hope of prosperous future and become melancholic and nostalgic of their childhood. According to Laya Mainali, Mishra's works depict the experience of anxiety-ridden contemporary youths in industrial and technological world (*Kala ra Kalakar* 61). Unemployment, corruption, lack of faith and violence, the problems existing in the society make an individual lose one's hope for prosperous life, and drive him/her into anxiety and disillusioned condition. Escaping from this mental torture, one takes refuge in his/her fantasy and nostalgia. This is an expression of an individual's alienation from contemporary society.

Kiran Manandhar's intertextual and inter-generic art *Mixed Media on Canvas* (Fig. 84) hybridizes expressionist and collage techniques of the western art with native images, and depicts a female character's imaginary and symbolic way to escape from troubled and tortured state of mind. In Manandhar's, *Mixed Media on Canvas*, the figures of a woman, images of mountains at the bottom of the canvas and white Himalaya at upper part and even the red background are unconventional. They are not the fine representation of the reality. The positions of the images are also unusual, for the human figures are bigger than the mountains and the Himalaya. The artist also exploits the Western collage technique, for he pastes the fabric of Buddhist prayer having text in Tibetan script and visual image of meditating figure on the canvas.

The distorted woman figure depicts her disillusioned condition. Despite the depiction of two women figures, actually, more distorted figure at the back is the mask of the figure at the front. Although the figure at the front seems comparatively calm, her disillusioned

emotion is depicted by the figure at the back. The red background also suggests the troubled emotions. The female character is tortured and disillusioned because of the misery, misfortune, violence and brutality of the contemporary world, and searching for freedom from such chaotic and tragic world. Women are not only suffering from poverty, lack of opportunities and unemployment but also from the suppression and domination of patriarchal Nepali society.

The white Himalaya is the symbol of her destination where she hopes to find peace and freedom. She is in quest for the way through which she can achieve her goal. She makes the symbolic path for her journey which is not so easy to travel. The symbolic path is to climb mountain and to go to the white Himalaya. Climbing green mountain is easier than to climb the Himalaya. To resolve this difficulty, she takes the help of the Buddhist prayer which has been represented by the fabric collage of the Buddhist prayer that links white Himalaya and the green mountain. The painting depicts that the freedom can be achieved from this tragic world through the Buddhist way of life. The symbolic journey of the persona in the composition is linked to the artist's personal experience as well. About his works, Kiran Manandhar himself says:

Through my paintings I am always launching on a quest for the universal truth. I am never satisfied with what I find, for I am a seeker, always searching for that which is ultimate, and infinite, and indescribable. I feel that I have a long way yet to travel, and that my journey will last as long as I continue to breathe. The world today is urgently in need of peace, and today my work too expresses this cry. ("Kiran's Paintings")

The disillusioned character seeks consolation through Buddhist way of life.

Achieving peace and freedom through the Buddhist way of life is the native theme which the artist depicts through western techniques of painting. The artist appropriates, negotiates and hybridizes both western forms and native contents. Mountains and white Himalayas are also typical Nepali images. Despite the use of expressionist form, unlike western expressionist artists, Manandhar explores the theme of peace and harmony, and creates meditative atmosphere in his work as R. T. Shahani says, "Kiran's exhibits are not akin to fierce looks and grotesque forms which some of the German artist's characters in woman series are depicted as" ("Kaleidoscopic" 54).

Mixed Media on Canvas is an intertextual work, for the meditating figure on the pasted fabric is similar to the meditating figures of Buddhist manuscript illuminations and *paubhas*. In this sense, this painting is interconnected with earlier paintings. The artist has negotiating attitude not only to the western forms but also to the native tradition. Kiran Manandhar's painting, despite the use of western form, refers to the culture, icons and images of Nepal. About the reintegration of native elements in his works, Shailendra Kumar Singh writes:

What makes him distinct from the rest is the way his art has absorbed a number of a "foreign elements" in terms of stylistic tendencies without affecting his individual mode of expression, which while corresponding to the international character of modern art, derives its inspiration whenever possible, from native sources. ("Modernity" 66)

The shared image of meditating Buddha links Kiran's work to early Nepali paintings and makes it intertextual.

This hybrid painting is inter-generic, for it incorporates verbal text on the canvas. In Abhi Subedi's words, "He creates texts in his paintings and reads colours and brush strokes in poetry" ("Kiran Odyssey" ix). The artist pastes the fabric of the Buddhist prayer with verbal text on the canvas. The work negotiates and hybridizes vision and textuality. Thus this intertextual and intergeneric art hybridizes the techniques of expressionism and collage with native images, and depicts the quest for freedom of disillusioned character.

Socio-Political Concerns

Some Nepali paintings explore the socio-political issues of contemporary Nepal exploiting western techniques. According to Manish Lal Shrestha, such attempts "enable 'Art' to impact society at aesthetic and social levels" ("New Voices"). Lain Singh Bangdel's intertextual painting *Muna-Madan* (Fig. 85) depicts the painful life of lower class Nepali people exploiting expressionist technique. This painting is intertextual, for the artist takes the title and subject matter from Laxmi Prasad Devkota's poem *Muna Madan*. In this poem, Devkota depicts the tragic condition of a typical underclass Nepali family. Since the family does not have enough property, and family members do not have any job to support it, the family has to take loan from the rich. The family cannot pay back the loan, and there is no even thin hope to be able to do so and go on living normal life. Then Madan, the newly married young man and the protagonist of the poem, decides to go to Tibet to earn money. When he is abroad, his old mother dies. His wife Muna also faces tragic death, for an enemy of Madan in the village gives her the false message of Madan's death. Although Madan returns home with money and now can pay back loan, he lost his lovely wife and mother. This is the fate of the lower class Nepali family.

Bangdel, in this work, depicts the painful feeling and the overwhelming emotions of Muna and Madan before their separation using expressionist technique. To express the inner emotions, the artist alters the images and colours. The images of Muna and Madan, their garments and gestures are not the objective representations of the people, their actions and things as found in reality. Rather than referring to the external world, the composition appeals to the imagination and the inner feeling. The colours are also unconventional, for they are not combined in the way they are found in reality. There is the predominance of blue which suggests melancholy and suffering of the characters. Bangdel, in this composition, has borrowed the use of blue colour from the works of Picasso's blue period. In the early works of Picasso, he has expressed his own melancholy and pain exploiting blue. Bangdel appropriates expressionist technique and Picasso's blue colour to explore the gruesome and pathetic condition of ordinary Nepalis (N. Singh, *Samasamaik* 237). Characters' tattered and torn garments, drooping faces and thin bodies standing on the bare floor without their shoes or sandal on, and narrow room without necessary household articles suggest the miserable living condition.

The artist has not only taken the Native Nepali subject matter but also some typical native images. Madan's top, trousers and cap, Muna's sari and shawl, the way she wears them, and small pitcher at the corner are the typical Nepali images which suggest the life style of ordinary Nepalis.

Bangdel's work negotiates, compromises and hybridizes native content with western form. There is the coexistence of heterogeneous elements. The work is interconnected with western expressionist paintings, Picasso's works of blue period, Devkota's *Muna Madan* and socio-economic condition of contemporary Nepal. According to Abhi Subedi, "Bangdel was

an important bridge between the Western aesthetics of art and the Eastern perceptions of life, creation and beauty" ("Tribute" 16). Although the painting depicts the socio-economic condition of Nepal in the early twentieth century, the composition is equally relevant even today, for several young people of our time are leaving country in the hope of prosperous life but facing tragic fate. The difference is they are leaving for western and Arabian countries instead of Tibet.

Bangdel's *Muna-Madan* not only breaks away from traditional Nepali paintings in terms of techniques and presentation but also in terms of subject matter. Ordinary people do not have place in the early works of art but gods, goddesses and ruling elites. Bangdel, in this work, attempts to rewrite the history of these mute and suppressed characters bringing them in the foreground. He explores this native theme using western techniques.

Durga Baral's *Tamasuk* (Fig. 86), the work with verbal text and visual images, depicts one of the ways how the rich grab the land of the poor in the villages of Nepal and make them homeless. The artist inscribes a *tamasuk* with fingerprints on it as the signature on the top left corner of the canvas and paints two magnified fingerprints in the remained part of the canvas. A *tamasuk* is the traditional form of contract paper between money lender and borrower. Although some word are illegible in the *tamasuk* inscribed in the canvas, what is understood is like this: a man with his last name Kshetri has borrowed rupees 3500 from Bodharaj Upadhyay, the money lender in *Baisakha* (month), 2035 BS at the interest rate of 35%, and the amount including interest should be paid back at the end of Magha, 2043 B.S., otherwise, his house and land will be taken by the money lender. Then the borrower signs the document with his finger prints.

The *tamasuka* discloses socio-economic condition of poor villagers in Nepal. They are unable to support themselves from their daily work, for they can neither produce enough crops from infertile and sloppy land nor find any job opportunity in the village. Taking loan is compulsion for the poor villager. If they borrow, they can not pay back and they have to abandon their house; if they do not borrow at the moment, they and their family may starve to death. They fall into vicious circle. One can imagine the torture, horror and dark feeling they are going through in this situation. Even if they earn some money, they can not pay back the loan because the amount becomes more than three times of the taken money due to the extremely high interest rate. Such document discloses the sinister motive of the money lender to grab the land of the poor villagers.

The artist represents the effect of the *tamasuk* upon the borrowers through the two magnified ambiguous finger prints in the canvas exploiting surrealist and expressionist techniques. The images of these two fingerprints are plural, playful and ambiguous, for in close viewing they appear to be the heads of the human figures. The depiction of the finger prints in unusually bigger shapes, and the transformation of one image (fingerprint) into another (human head) are the surrealist features of the painting. As the finger prints appear to be heads, they do not appear like the realistic images but expressionist. The colours of both the background and the images in the foreground are also altered in the sense that they are painted in black which creates distance from the real images. The artist creates unusual images and colours to express the inner feelings of the characters. This is the expressionist feature of the painting. The dark colour on their distorted face represents their gruesome feeling, torture and bleak future. Their heads stamped with finger prints as depicted in the painting imply that their thinking is tortured by the fingerprints of the *tamsuk* and their

waiting for the catastrophe of leaving home. On the other hand, their gaze toward unknown direction suggests their dilemma about their destination after they have already been driven away from their home.

Baral's work also subtly suggests that such injustice and tragic situation lays foundation for social unrest and serious crimes like terrorism, theft, human trafficking and slavery. Since there is no opportunity for employment, homeless poor parents are forced to sell their children as slaves and prostitutes. Some children become the members of terrorist gang whereas others become thieves and beggars. These people are not born as criminals but socio-economical domination and exploitation have created the fertile ground for this which has ultimately threatened the exploiters. The work, through visual and verbal texts, questions the existing social practices in the villages of Nepal. In Laya Mainali's view, Baral's works depict social injustice, corruption, domination and conservative concepts of contemporary Nepali society, and revolt against them (Mainali, *Sirjana* 24-25). About Baral's paintings, Chirag Bangdel writes:

Baral's paintings are amalgamations of narratives, stories, experiences, personal sentiments, and his perspectives on social events are presented in a fine artistic manner. Today, to be an artist is an intellectual thing to do- more than anything else. And with every painting Durga Baral sends us on a trip to soul searching. ("Trnscending")

Despite the use of surrealist and expressionist technique, the artist explores socio-economic injustice in contemporary Nepali society.

Rajesh Manandhar's *Beggar* (Fig. 87), exploiting surrealist and expressionist techniques, depicts the inhuman condition of helpless people who are forced to be beggars by

the brutal social forces of contemporary Nepal. The figures of the beggars are not objectively represented. The artist presents the parts of the human anatomy like head, leg and hand to represent the whole body. The images are arranged with free association. They are presented in such a way as if human bodies are cut and heaped together randomly. The nightmarish and shocking arrangement of the images reminds the viewers of a butcher's shop where animals' parts are scattered thereby suggesting the horrible condition which the beggars are going through. The deformed and distorted heads, legs and hands suggest their hardship, undernourished body, melancholy and anxiety. Both mental and physical pain and suffering get expressed. These nightmarish and expressive images draw the viewer to the deeper level beyond physical appearance. One visualizes their hunger, fear to be scolded and beaten, and shivering bodies in the biting cold of winter.

The composition poses the question how they came into such gruesome situation. One imagines the narratives which s/he listens from the beggars and associates these stories with the characters of this composition. Since the beggars assemble themselves in the streets from the various parts of the country, they present their own heart rending tales of their painful journey from their birth place. Some beggars disclose the cruelty of their sons and daughters in law that they drove them away from home, for they became old and could not work. Such story depicts the declining humane and moral values among new generation. Some say that they could not pay back their loan, the money lender took their land and house, and they were compelled to be beggars. The question arises: Why could not they pay back their loan despite their hard work from dawn to dusk? Most of them are uneducated and became the victim of their dominating, sly and corrupted creditor. Such social injustice transforms normal citizens to the beggars. Some women are thrown out from home by their

husbands. They treat women as commodity and discard them when they think their wives useless. Such story depicts the cruelty of patriarchal Nepali society. Some parents deliberately put their children in the street, for they can not feed them at home. The composition puts question marks in front of the state, political parties, social reformers and nongovernmental organization: Are we justified? Is not our situation avoidable? The gazing eyes in pure black and white attract viewers' attention and ask similar questions. They make the viewers feel ashamed as they might be responsible in the pathetic situation of these deformed figures.

The artist takes surrealist and expressionist technique as tools to explore the socio-economic injustice of Nepali society. Native Nepali content and western forms have space in the composition. The artist contextualizes the alien forms to convey his message.

Vijay Thapa's *Darkness under the Lamp* (Fig. 88) depicts the social ironies of contemporary Nepali society by exploiting some aspects of cubist and expressionist techniques. Breaking the linear surface of the objects, the artist suggests the depth through the use of geometric forms like circle, triangle, rectangle and parallelogram. He presents the various layers of reality at once.

Not only the colours around the lamp but also the size and proportion of images like the human character and the lamp are expressionists. The lamp is supposed to brighten the surrounding around it and make the things near it visible but it makes the atmosphere around it murkier and more confusing. Moreover, the light of the lamp though murky is restricted within narrow space near it. The mountain like images near the lamp are darker than the images just below. The artist achieves this effect through the use of expressionist colours. The size and the proportion of the lamp and human figure are also unusual. The lamp is

bigger than the man. The lamp is supposed to be near the man and brighten his surrounding but it is out of the reach of the human character as depicted in the composition.

The artist breaks the linear surface and alters the images and colours with purpose. Using the analogy regarding darkness under the lamp, the work discloses the social contradictions of contemporary Nepali society. In Nepali culture lamp is the symbol of light, wisdom and order. Light is supposed to show the path in the journey of life. But ironically, there is pitch darkness under the lamp where the man is walking with the help of his hands and going to fall into the ditch that lies in front of him. The man represents the ordinary Nepali citizens. The garments, he is wearing, like cap, *daura* (upper garment) and *suruwal* (trousers) are typical Nepali clothes. And here, the lamp is the symbol of the agencies within the country which have the responsibilities to improve the lives of such ordinary people and create order in society. Ironically, instead of brightening the path of these people, the lamp itself has created unfathomable darkness in their life. About the relationship of Thapa's paintings with contemporary life and society, Naveen Prakash Jung Shah writes:

He has combined certain colours and lines in his paintings to generate intense emotional feelings, aspirations, innocence, complexities of life, natural and unnatural impacts of joy and sorrow upon life. His paintings at this exhibition not only centre entirely around social life in different dimensions but also reflect rays of hope and humbly warn against evils that are rampant in the world. ("Colour of Life")

Thapa's works revolt against socio-political corruption and domination (Mainali, *Sirjana* 39). The security force, one of the agencies to create order in the society by controlling crimes and providing security to the people, terrorizes people thinking the citizens as subordinate to

themselves, for they are armed whereas people are not. As a result, villagers become suspicious and sad when a police station is established in their locality.

Public servants, instead of trying to solve the problems of people, weave a net to trap and extort them. They make the work more difficult than it really is as the lamp creates darkness in the composition. Political leaders, who are supposed to have public will and dedicate themselves for the development of the nation, run after name, fame, power and money for themselves ignoring their duty. They say they are working for the nation but ironically their action is against the well being of people. The corrupted judges and lawyers imprison the innocents and reward the criminals in the name of so called evidence or lack of evidence even if the truth is as bright as day light. They are the hungry leech who turn black into white for the sake of bribe. Nongovernmental organizations take donations to uplift the life of dominated and minority races. But, instead of improvement in their living condition, it has degraded. By advertising the poverty and misery of the people, they accumulate the wealth for themselves.

Teachers, who are responsible to equip their students with skills, knowledge and wisdom, think that they are working for their salary and it does not matter for them how they pass their time in schools. Educational agencies rob off the students' time and money, and finally leave them with disillusioned mind and dark future. The presence of all these agencies mentioned above which are associated with light creates darkness in their surrounding. The pitch darkness under the lamp and murky atmosphere around the flame in this composition represent the social reality of contemporary Nepal.

However, the artist does not mean that there is darkness everywhere in Nepali society, for he creates wide bright spaces between the dark shapes where the presence of the

lamp has not affected. These bright shapes suggest that there still exist wise and moral human beings, and organized and harmonious societies where these above mentioned agencies of light are absent. These individuals and societies are bright because of their own conscience and effort. The artist subverts the traditional symbol, that is, the lamp is the symbol of light and wisdom, and parodies its conventional significance. The expressionist colours speak equally well as the unconventional images do. Breaking linear form of the objects, the artist presents the layers of social reality through the use of geometric shapes.

Children's Year (Fig. 89) by Shashi Shah mocks the so called children's year exploiting expressionist technique. Bullets and missiles are falling over the head of distorted and deformed child. The distorted body expresses the tortured and tragic condition of the child. The head, proportionally bigger than the body, suggests the undernourished condition. The guns and missile projectors pointed over suggest that children are the victims of armed conflict. Shah's work discloses injustices of life through twisted figure in a surreal nuclear landscape. The viewers may link the contents of the painting to the social context. Some children are forced to work as soldiers in the war whereas some others are thrown helpless in the world by losing their parents and relatives in the conflict.

On another level guns and bullets are the metaphors of brutal social forces which exploit and abuse the children. In Nepal children are kept as domestic servant. In school, teachers harshly scold and beat children, and at home parents force them to work instead of encouraging them to study. They are also sexually abused at home and neighbourhood. Sometimes, parents themselves throw their children in the street. Some children are even sexually abused in foster care centres. So called non-governmental organizations working for children are interested to accumulate wealth for their luxury than to serve children. The

figure of the child as shown in the painting depicts the torture and psychological trauma through which he goes through.

There is distance between what one expects during children's year and the ground reality. Children's year is supposed to bring programmes for the happiness and prosperity of the children who are in painful and gruesome condition. But there are no strategies to improve this morbid situation except political leader's speech and talks about it in media. Instead of progress, there is more exploitation and abuse. The artist mocks the so called children's year through the use of irony and parody. The work depicts such tragic condition of Nepali children exploiting expressionist technique.

Sharada Chitrakar's surrealist art, *Cry* (Fig. 90) depicts the horrible and gruesome condition of ordinary Nepalis under the omnipresent tyranny and domination in the past and present through analogy. The huge flying eagle covers the greater part of the canvas casting its terrible shadow over the cityscape. The tiny white birds under the eagle, nervous and horrified, are flying down in futile hope of escaping from the deathlike shadow. They fall into the cobweb like trap and cry endlessly, and become the victim of the eagle. The proportion of the towers and the eagle is unnatural, for the size of the eagle is exponentially bigger than the size of the temples, stupas and other buildings although the distance between them and the eagle is very short. This implies that the eagle controls every nook and corner of the surrounding and atmosphere.

The colours reinforce the values associated to the images. The immediate background of the white birds, the trap consisted of the network of wires and the pervasive eagle are in black representing dominating, tyrannical and evil forces whereas the images of small birds, and temples and stupas in white represent innocent and subdued patient. The red background

below the eagle and its red beak suggest the eagle's violence and aggression over the life of innocent and powerless beings.

The artist, through the analogy of small white birds and huge black eagle, depicts the socio-political condition of Nepal. Political system and constitution have been changed but the socio-economic condition of ordinary people has remained same. A new group of tyrants replaces the earlier one with different mask without any substantial change in attitude and action. A group of so called leaders performs the drama of democracy and leaves the stage for other actors to perform the same ritual in different guise. They use cosmetics to whiten their face as the presence of white on the feathers of the eagle. Ordinary people have not yet felt and experienced the democracy. Political tyrants exploit the words only to cheat the people. The network of tyranny, domination and corruption reaches to every corner from centre to periphery. The ordinary citizens are forced to believe lies and roam within impasse with agony and terror. Innumerable women pass their life in legalized slavery. Many have-nots work as machine for their landlords and creditors whose conduct is legalized with the twist of words. As there is no way out in real life situation, the alienated victims turn toward myths and supernatural power as the white birds move toward the stupas and temples in the composition to get their fortune changed. Using surrealist technique and analogy, the artist depicts the ever present tyranny and domination in Nepali socio-political scenario.

In *Bikashko Sapana*, (Fig. 91) Krishna Prasad Shrestha depicts the frustrated dream of prosperity and developed nation exploiting analogy and surrealist technique. The artist uses the analogy of the castration of a bull. A bull is laid on the floor its legs and mouth tied. A man and a woman are controlling the bull by pressing the fore part of its body and another man has put the testicles of the bull into the wooden lock while next man is pressing the lock

with a wooden block to crush the testicles. Other two women are gazing the event from a side in terrified manner. The represented images and event look as if it is a simple act of castrating bull but the title of the work suggests for the possibility of analogical interpretation. The title, *Bikashko Sapana* means the dream of development in Nepali.

The act of castrating bull depicts the political and socio-economical concerns of contemporary Nepal analogically. The bull stands for the nation and ordinary people's dream for development and prosperity. The three men and a woman who are involved in castrating the bull stand for the agents and the leaders who have the responsibility for developing the nation. The two women figures at the side, the onlookers, stand for the ordinary people who have the dream of development. The ordinary people have been listening too much about democracy, development and the prosperity of the people from the leaders' speech and media. Almost all the political parties and their leaders say that they are working, fighting and even dying for the sake of Nepali people and the nation but the living condition of the ordinary people is deteriorating instead of improving. They are facing more serious problems than they have experienced previously. In the name of traitor or reactionary, innocent individuals have been kidnapped, tortured, dismembered and even murdered. The men/women, who call themselves that they are working for the nation and its people, cheat, intimidate and extort them. Innocent people who have seen the drama ask such questions mutely: Is it the way of developing nation? Is it the way they are working and dying for the nation? The masks and cosmetics no longer hide the true identity of the so called public servants, social servants and political leaders. Ordinary people no longer believe in the clichéd words of agents like development and prosperity. They have realized that the agents of the development have exploited the nation and brutalized its people as the bull has been

castrated as depicted in the canvas. Common people are suffering as the bull is suffering while being castrated.

Though the composition, at first, seems realistic, there is the influence of surrealism. The overall atmosphere seems unusual, dark and dreamlike. Although there is presence of green, blue, red and white, the veil of thin black layer dims all these colours. The images of human figures, who are involved in the castration, seem horrible and sinister as if they have come from underworld. The image of the bull is also unusual because in Nepal only the young bulls are castrated to use them for plowing field but in the painting, it seems older and heavier for the purpose. The presence of women in the scene is also unexpected, for women are not generally present while a bull is castrated in the context of Nepal. The combination of the setting and the event is also strange. The well paved floor and the cemented wall implies that the setting is not of remote village but a place near a city where there are some facilities. Despite such setting, the way of castrating bull is primitive. In the places where there are some facilities, a bull is castrated by removing the testicles not by crushing them. Such unusual and bizarre combination of images and colours suggests that the composition is not the mere representation of the castrating a bull but something else beyond this. And the title of the composition, *Bikashko Sapana*, further assists to decode the analogy. Exploiting analogy and surrealist technique, the artist presents the political criticism in visual form in relation to contemporary Nepal.

Chandra Shrestha's abstract expressionist painting *Acrylic on Canvas* (Fig. 92) depicts the violence and bloodshed which has disintegrated the contemporary Nepali society. Abstract expressionist artists give emphasis to the process of painting rather than the final product. They begin to paint without forethought and play with colours spontaneously, and

images evolve and colours are combined on the process. They not only apply colours with their brush but also splash, drip and dribble the paint on the canvas. In abstract expressionist works, forms and colours are more dominant than content and figural images. Colours and images have emotional appeal which triggers the viewer's imagination.

Chandra Shrestha exploits abstract expressionist techniques in her work. The movement of her brushstrokes in the canvas suggests her spontaneity on the process of creation. She creates abstract patches of colour by splashing the paint. The artist creates the images of liquid colour running on the vertical surface through dripping and dribbling. The upward movement of the liquid paint shows that the artist has made the canvas upside down and dripped the paint. Abstract images appear on the process. Gradually, images and colours seem to be organized in unexpected manner with some significance. She borrows this technique from abstract expressionists especially from Jackson Pollock and exploits it to express her feelings and emotions.

The abstract images and the combination of colours suggest fragmentation, violence, bloodshed and chaos in contemporary Nepal. The shapes seem to be the parts which are violently cut off or broken apart and separated from the whole. The images of liquid projecting upward from the broken part resemble to the blood that comes up when the animals are chopped. The combination of colours also gives the same effect. The artist presents the red colour in movement between the broken black shapes suggesting that the object is forcefully broken and blood is gushing out from the broken parts. The viewers may associate these broken abstract objects to the people who are broken apart and killed or wounded in the bloody war which is still continuing in Nepal. The splashed patches of colours represent the projected missile or grenade.

The artist represents the morbid and tragic condition of Nepal through the abstract images and colours. The school children become the victim of exploded bomb at bus station or within bus. The farmers are shot dead in the jungle or their field. The travellers are unexpectedly blocked on the way, tortured, beaten and even killed. A person gone out in the morning does not expect that he would return home safely in the evening. The death of these people creates helplessness and trauma in their family. Suddenly children become orphan and old people beggar. Rather than representing such situation objectively, the artist depicts her response to the tragic situation through abstract expressionist form.

Gender and Identity

Some contemporary Nepali artists bring gender issues in the foreground of their art works. They resist and question the conventional roles of women in patriarchal society like Nepal. Women have been suppressed, tortured and exploited in real life situation though they are free and equal in constitution. They are suffering from nonrepresentation and misrepresentation. Revolting against such situation, some artists encourage women to rewrite their history carving their own place in the society.

Durga Baral's *Women in Cage, Kandhar* (Fig. 93) presents the suppressed and inhuman condition of women in patriarchal contemporary Nepali society exploiting surrealist and expressionist techniques. To depict the commodified condition of Nepali women, he employs the analogy of caged bird. The artist not only presents the image of the caged bird but also explores its significance through expressionist female figure. For the body of the figure inside the cage is like that of a bird whereas the head is that of a woman, the image is surrealist. Despite the fact that the whole image of caged figure is surrealist, the head is expressionist because the unusual face suggests the woman's melancholy and sadness. The

bright and colourful body of the bird is juxtaposed to the comparatively darker head and distorted face. External appearance suggests beauty whereas internal feeling presents darkness and anxiety.

The artist interprets the significance of the image of the caged bird on the right part of the canvas through the expressionist female figure. The drooping head and the unusual face represent her agony which is cohesive to the image of the bird's head. She does not look toward the external world but turns toward her inner feeling. Despite her bright and beautiful body like that of the bird, her inner feeling is dark and melancholic. The huge dark patch surrounded by bright and variegated images and colours at the back of the woman is cohesive to her inner emotions. In CK Lal's word, "not just his lines on the faces of the characters, even the shades in the background" have been used effectively to express their feelings ("Our Times").

The juxtaposition of dark and bright colours represents the external appearance and underlined reality. The bright, beautiful and variegated colours and images suggest the external appearance of women's life whereas dark images and colours present their inhuman and painful existence. The artist juxtaposes the bright abstract images in various colours below the cage with the dominating dark background. Women's life, in patriarch's view, seems to be as beautiful and romantic as the variegated and colourful abstract shapes, but it is as morbid and gruesome as the pitch darkness at the back. Not only the images but also the combination of colours is significant to depict the difference between external life of women and their internal experience.

Denying them freedom and choice, the patriarchal society has commodified the women as the caged bird. As the bird is kept in the cage, she is imprisoned in the house, and

forced to follow the orders of the males. Father offers his daughter to a man in marriage as a devotee offers flowers to a religious icon. In Hindu marriage this act is called *kanyadan*, that is, to donate the girl to a man. In some cases the brokers buy girls from her parents and sell as servant for the rich or drive her to a whorehouse. She is exploited as commodity. Presenting such social disparity through analogy, the artist mocks the so called civilization, encourages the suppressed women to break the cage of patriarchy and appeals the power holders indirectly to rethink about the problem.

Kulman Singh Bhandari's *Salyakriya* (Fig. 94) depicts internal and abstract sickness of a woman in patriarchal Nepali society through the use of expressionist images and form. The domination, suppression and exploitation obstruct the woman's mental and emotional growth. As a result her feeling and experience are troubled and she feels like a disabled person. Such feeling and experience are abstract entities. To communicate such abstract feelings to the audience, the artist alters the shape of her body, particularly the legs. Although the woman character seems to be young, her legs are bent and crooked, and seems to be suffering from elephantiasis. The calf of her right leg is swollen. To be free from the disease, she feels the necessity of *salyakriya*, that is, surgery in Nepali. For this, she does not go to the surgeon but attempts to perform surgery by herself cutting the swollen calf with a *khukuri* (a type of sword). The question arises: is it possible to perform surgery with a *khukuri*?

The woman's attack upon the disease symbolizes her struggle against the dominators, the causes of disease. The leg affected from elephantiasis represents her sick internal feeling and emotion under patriarchy. The torture and domination brought such sickness. Her balanced hands and meditative head depict her firm determination and the intensity of action. She is determined to be free from the disease and sickness caused by the patriarchy. She does

not hope any other people will fight for her. It is possible only by her own struggle. The struggle is not easy but as painful as cutting one's own calf with a *khukuri*. The blood and the wound in the calf also suggest about the pain she is going through. The plastered wall and the dark surrounding around her depict her gruesome social condition whereas the light blue colour around her head represents her hope and vision of freedom. She wants to dismantle the wall, go out of the confined space and experience the open blue sky. In other words, she questions the commodity like status of women and determines to fight for equality.

The female character in the composition is not only an individual but also a representative of revolutionary Nepali women. Many Nepali women are wounded mentally and emotionally because of torture and exploitation. The work encourages the suppressed and dominated women to carve their own space in society. In Laya Mainali's word, Bhandari's works are progressive and pragmatic that bring awareness among exploited people and encourage them to struggle for equality (*Kala ra Kalakar* 30-31). Similarly, Govinda Bhatta calls him the people's artist whose works are inspired by the Marxist thinking ("Kalalai"). Bhatta further adds that his works voice against imperialism and feudalism ("Kalalai"). In this work, the woman struggles against the colonization of her body.

Ashmina Ranjit's *Hair Warp* (Fig. 95) depicts the celebration of woman's body in symbolic form questioning and resisting the patriarchy. Her hair warp in the canvas represents the women's body, for generally women grow long hair. She presents part to represent the whole using metonymy. The work appeals women to celebrate the sensuality of their body, for women's experience, emotion and feeling are different from that of men because of their different body. And this difference is the root of their identity. According to

the work, women should not feel humiliated in being women but should be proud of their body and celebrate it. Patriarchal society like that of Nepal confines most of the women to their house, forces them to work according to the wish of their husbands and father and does not allow the freedom of expression in the grass root though they are free constitutionally. They are suffering from nonrepresentation, underrepresentation and misrepresentation. Women's history is yet to be rewritten. In such social convention, to raise the issue of the celebration of women's body is challenging. She tries to give voice to the women through the representation of women's body in visual art. Ranjit expresses her attachment with herself and other women, "I love you woman, the one within me. another within you. . . do you love to touch me. my hair" ("Hair Warp "). She questions, resists and breaks away from the patriarchal social convention. In *Hair Warp*, she attempts to carve the women's space in society and rewrite the history of Nepali women.

Ranjit associates menstrual blood with the women's identity through surrealist juxtaposition of contrary images. The unusual combination of black and blood like red hair is unexpected and shocking. The red strands of hair are the metonymic representation of the flow of menstrual blood. The artist subverts the attitude of conventional society's view toward menstruation. Nepali society treats menstrual period with taboo. During menstrual period, family members and relatives treat women as untouchable and they have to live in separate room or cowshed. They are not allowed to touch household goods and other people. In this period, people consider them to be impure and the things they touch as useless. The artist brings the image of menstrual blood in the foreground in forceful manner. She considers menstrual blood not as the thing to be looked down upon but to be celebrated. She breaks the taboos associated with menstrual flow and takes it as a significant element for

women's identity (Malla, *Adhunik Nepali* 42). She depicts the power of female body, and sexual and sensual joy of women's experience. Manjushree Thapa writes:

Ashmina began to directly take on women's physical experiences, focusing on their sensual and sexual joy, and the power of their bodies. This has been an important move from an artist working in a society that too often denies women the right to claim their own body.

Working, more recently, on the theme of menstrual blood, Ashmina continues to break barriers about what is permissible for a female artist to say in Nepal, and enlarging the public discourse within Nepal on women's identity and experience. ("Feminine Force ")

The artist subverts the conventional belief regarding menstrual blood and treats it as the matter of celebration bringing it in the foreground of her canvas.

She also associates menstrual blood with the source of creation. Menstrual blood flows from womb, and the womb where creation begins. Ranjit herself says that "menstruation is a natural phenomenon without which creation would come to a standstill" ("Feminine Force"). Mother is the source of all creations through which life continues. She is the *shakti* who creates and nourishes the living being. The artist subverts the patriarchal concept that woman is inferior to man. Her work, *Hair Warp*, revolts against patriarchal domination and misrepresentation of women and encourages them to celebrate their body recognizing their power. She depicts this feminist theme exploiting surrealist technique.

Shashikala Tiwari's *Pain* (Fig. 96), exploiting expressionist technique, depicts the sub-human condition of Nepali women, their pain and anxiety and their determination to carve their own space in society. Her rebellion against social injustice unfolds gradually in

the arbitrary visual images. The artist presents the condition of Nepali women in three different stages on the left half of the canvas. At the bottom, two abstract figures without face and recognizable shape present the non-existing situation of women and their non-representation. Their identity is buried and covered with a veil. Their social status is like that of non-living things in patriarchal society though they are living human beings. They are not free to decide anything for themselves. The patriarchy exploits them as the commodity.

Denying to remain in commodified and non-existing situation, in the second stage represented by the figure between taller and bigger image of distorted woman above and small abstract images below, she opens the veil partially and attempts to gaze the dark and dominant patriarchal world in front of her. The dark abstract shapes and colours in front of her symbolically represent the violent, cruel and inhuman patriarchal society. From within the partially opened veil, she shows her face suggesting that she also exists and wants her place in the society. Her gaze suggests that she is not only the commodity to be exploited by males but also the agent who has the right to see the world and to decide things for herself. However, her face in agony and head held by her hand suggests that trying to find her place in society is a hard struggle against society. Her not yet fully recognizable semi-abstract face suggests that she has not been able to carve her place in the society though she has begun her journey for the quest of her identity.

In the third stage, the expressionist female figure throws away her veil, discloses her face fully and looks upward. Her assertive figure suggests her potential power within her. The comparatively brighter background in front of her than that of below suggests her hope for possible independent and free life. Her unusual figure and face suggest her anxiety, agony, pain and struggle. She has not been able to carve her space in the society yet.

However, she is hopeful and determined to face the challenge and free herself from the shackles of patriarchy. She is on the process to inscribe the identity of her being.

The images in the second stage are playful and ambiguous, for they also appear as the images of her legs partly covered by her skirts. The figure of the woman in the second stage melts within the body of assertive tall and big female figure suggesting that the female figures in the three stages are not separate but integral parts of one woman representative of suppressed Nepali women. According to Laya Mainali, some of her works depict the troubled, tortured and exploited female figures in the patriarchal society and suggest their possible rebellion against the oppressors (*Kala ra Kalakar* 104). Exploiting expressionist technique, Tiwari discloses the dominated and suppressed condition of Nepali women, questions and resists such situation, and tries to carve the women's space in society.

Meta Art

Some contemporary Nepali paintings deal about the process of creating art works, artist's relationship with his/her artworks and media. Such art works are called as meta arts. In *Musician* (Fig. 97), Ragini Upadhyay explores an artist's relationship with one's art work and his/her media exploiting surrealist technique. Musical instruments being played are shown in the periphery. An artist is playing *sarangi* and the other *tabla*. These musical instruments assimilate themselves with the senses of the central figure, the representative of an artist who seems to be in contemplative mood. *Tablas* appear in place of her ears and *sarangi* in nose. The artist assimilates herself with her media. The hair at the top of her head rise as the roots of uprooted bamboo plant suggesting the feeling and the sensation created by music. This is the surrealist combination of the images. Such shocking juxtaposition of the images implies that the musician, on the process of creation, assimilates herself with the

musical instruments, the media of art thereby uniting to the music, the art she creates. She experiences epiphany by suspending her existence and becoming one with the work of art. There is no distance between the subject and the object. Her introvert expression and inward looking eyes indicate her contemplation and the suspension of external world.

As the images presented in the various segments of the canvas, the union of the artist with her art work is not the sudden achievement but the gradual development from one stage to another through constant engagement with her media. The missing head of the musician who is holding *sarangi* suggests that his mind is concentrated on the creation of music. The images of hands playing *tabla* and missing body suggest the higher degree of the artist's contemplation on the process of creation. Then at last the artist suspends herself and becomes music and media as depicted by *tabla* like ears and *sarangi* like nose. The nose in the shape of *sarangi* also suggests that music is not only heard but smelt and felt.

The musician's relation with music and musical instrument is analogical to the artist's relation with painting, colour and canvas. The work is the self portrait of the artist herself. The title word, 'Musician' means '*Ragini*' in Nepali thereby associating to her name Ragini Upadhyay. Not only the title of the work but also the character's forehead and eyes, though a bit expressionist, resemble to the artist's respective parts to some extent. The upper part of the *sarangi* at the middle of the central figure's forehead resembles with Ragini's *tika* flowing from her forehead to the bridge, which she still puts on. This self portrait suggests that the artist is inspired by music, and works like the musician. The artist, defying the conventional boundaries, intermingles the ideas of the genres like music and painting. In addition to this, the work can be taken as meta art, for the artist explores about the process of creating art and

drives home the idea that one should dissolve himself/herself with the work of art and media to be an artist.

The artist negotiates with surrealist technique to express her personal vision on creativity. The artist's self portrait, and the images of the *tabla* and the *sarangi* are the native Nepali images. The work has ambivalent attitude toward both the images of Nepali culture and western art forms.

Uttam Nepali's *Art & Literature* (Fig. 98) depicts the proximity of feeling between poet and painter, and poetry and visual art through the combination of expressionist, abstractionist and realistic techniques. The artist portrays the figure of Kedarman Byathit, the renown Nepali poet in the foreground using both expressionist and realistic techniques. The image of head is realistic, for it is the objective representation of the poet's head whereas the body is expressionist because the images of organs and clothes are unconventional. The artist inscribes the verbal text in *Devanagari* script on the right and the partial portrait of another figure, perhaps the artist himself on the left. The hand of the figure on the left resting on the lap of the central figure represents the artist and poet's intimate relationship and shared feelings. The work further reinforces the sharedness of feelings through the presentation of shared and melting colours. The brown colour on the lap of the poet runs over the artist's hand and extends toward his portrait. An image of white cord which runs downs diagonally from the artist's lap toward the poet further suggests the connection between them. The abstract images and melting colours blur the distance between the two portraits and suggest their intimate communication. The merged figures of poet and painter suggest that they work with common feeling, experience and vision. More or less they perceive the reality in the same manner and depict the similar vision in their creation.

The work depicts the proximity of the poet and the painter through visual images and colours whereas it presents their vision through verbal text. In Abhi Subedi's word, "His style of representing poetry in art was by directly writing short text along the conceptual dimension of the painting" ("Voyeurism" 10). The inscribed verbal text includes four words, *dristi*, *satya*, *shristi* and *sundar* which economically depict the process of creating art and aesthetic effect of the resultant creation. *Dristi* means sight or to see and *satya* means truth, that is, the poet and painter, before starting to execute the work of art, see or perceive the underlying truth of worldly objects, events and situations. *Shristi* means creation and *sunder* means beautiful, that is, when the artist perceives the truth, s/he gives shape to truth in the form of poem or painting. The work is the emblem of truth and beauty as John Keats says, 'Truth is beauty and beauty is truth'. The same concept is expressed in Sanskrit as '*Satyam Shivam Sundaram*.' Madhab Lal Karmacharya says that the union of literature and visual art in his works appeals to the inner feelings of the viewers ("Kala ra Sahitya "). About the interart relationship of his paintings Abhi Subedi writes: "The main thrust of his modern paintings is the spirit of inter-art. From the beginning he has sought to bring the cumulative experience of artists who use different mediums, from words to colours in his canvas" ("Confluence "). While creating art, both poet and painter go through the "similar experience in the realms of creative arts" as shown in the composition ("Voyeurism" 10). Since the work of art deals about artist, art and the process of creation, it may be taken as meta-art.

Rejecting duality between various elements, the artist reconciles heterogeneous images, concepts and techniques like poet and painter, vision and textuality, abstract and figural images, and western form and native content. The artist attempts to open up new modes of interart discourse.

Painting and Film

Jiwan Suwal's *Untitled* (Fig. 99) explores the theme of interart relationship between Nepali films and paintings using some techniques of impressionism. The artist does not fully employ the impressionist technique but appropriates it in the sense that the depicted images are not the impressions of the things in reality as perceived by the artist in transitory moment despite the fact that the excessive use of light and shadow, and fragmented colours are like that of impressionists.

The composition depicts the totality of the artist's perception in visual and verbal forms regarding the history of Nepali film. The verbal texts in *Devanagari* script inscribed in the canvas like *Paralko Aago*, *Balidan*, *Aama*, *Basanti*, *Jiwan Rekha*, etc. are some of the names of Nepali films. A character is applying glue on the back of the film poster and other two characters are pasting the poster with film scene on the wall. The scene in the poster includes the images of a pagoda temple at the back, a man playing *sarangi*, and a boy and a girl in typical Nepali dress dancing spontaneously. The images of Nepali flag on the garment of the girl depict artist's patriotic spirit. The work suggests that all forms of Nepali art like film, painting, dance, music and architecture are interacting to each other for the cultural development of Nepal. Because the work includes the images of various art genres although it is a form created on a canvas, the work has interart relationship. The work does not only depicts the influences of other forms of art but also promotes the other genres of art. The coexistence and interaction of various genres makes the work intertextual and depicts the vision of sharedness in various art forms.

Some artists create their paintings taking inspiration from films. A number of artists interpreted the film, *Numafung* in a number of ways in their works. The film depicts the

suppressed and exploited condition of Nepali women and their rebellion against patriarchy.

About *Numafung*, Manjushree Thapa writes:

In *Numafung*, Nabin Subba demonstrates how Nepal's women negotiate, and ultimately overcome the many barriers to their happiness. The protagonist Numa is unlike any other female character in Nepali cinema. Victimized, she does not submit: she seeks, instead, means to rebel, and to breakthrough to her freedom. In so doing, she paves a path for her younger sister Lojina to follow her, towards greater rebellions. Both Numa and Lojina embody the new Nepali woman, who will not compromise with our society's patriarchal norms. ("Nurturing Numas")

A group of artists like Asha Dongol, Binod Pradhan, Erina Tamrakar, Gautam Ratna Tuladhar, Indra KC, Kiran Manandhar, Krishna Manandhar, Madan Chitrakar, Mukesh Malla, Pradeep Bajracharya, Radheshyam Mulmi, Ramesh Khanal, Sangee Shrestha, Shanta Kumar Rai, Shashikala Tiwari, Shashi Shah, Shyam Lal Shrestha, Sunila Bajracharya, Sushma Rajbhandari and Uttam Nepali interpreted the film in multiple ways. They not only depicted the conventional roles of women in their socio-cultural and political context but also their rebellion against them. Different artists took the different aspects of women's life. They interpret the same text, *Numafung* in multiple ways in their paintings. About these paintings, Ajit Baral writes:

Film speaks in the languages of sound, word and visual images, while art speaks only in a visual language. It is, therefore, difficult to capture the essence of a film on a canvas. Yet this is what a group of Nepali artists have done after watching the much-acclaimed film 'Numafung'. . . . Each individual

painting in 'Reinterpreting Numafung' thus offers us a private response to the original film, turning the exhibition into a delightful multimedia text ("Reinterpreting").

Since these works are interconnected to the film, they are intertextual and intergeneric.

Shashi Shah's *Untitled* (Fig. 100) is one of the twenty works created being influenced by the *Numafung*. Shah's work depicts the suppressed Nepali women's wish of freedom from patriarchy. An image of wild horse in spontaneous motion is crossing the circular boundary around it. A girl with her lifted hands like birds wings is on the horseback. The girl is in harmony with the horse's motion. The circular boundary is the representation of patriarchal convention that limits the freedom of Nepali women whereas the horse that crosses the boundary is the metaphor of the women's wish for freedom. The lack of reins on the horse implies that the women do not want to be controlled by the patriarchy. As the film *Numafung*, the painting questions the patriarchal convention and inspires Nepali women to seek for their freedom. Despite the difference in medium, the painting shares the subject matters of the film. In this sense the work is intertextual.

Painting and Theatre

Nepali painting is not only linked to Nepali literature and film but also to the theatre. The artists execute paintings on the subject matter of dramas. About forty nine artists execute paintings after viewing the drama *The Remaining Pages of History*. The artists of Sarwanam theatre group performed the drama in Kathmandu, Dharan, Dhangadi, Pokhara and Narayangad in the occasion of 'National Drama Movement-2064'. After the performance of drama, the local artists of the city and other renown artists took part in creating painting on the subject matter of the play. In Mukesh Malla's word the event "fused art with theatre"

("Theatre"). These paintings depict the consequences of ongoing conflicts and violence in Nepal, and appeal for the peace and social harmony. Mukesh Malla interprets the paintings:

[T]he similarities in all these paintings are the issues and wants of freedom, human rights and eternal peace raised by drama. Each artist has tried to express these feelings through the medium of art. These paintings also welcome the people to start discussions about the never ending conflicts in our nation. Thus, they are not just created to please an eye. Rather they, as a mirror of the present conflicting situations carry an important message and request to bring peace in the nation. ("Theatre")

Since the visual texts are interconnected with drama and theatre, they are intertextual and have interart relationship. Debal Kumar Rai's *Untitled* (Fig. 101) is a painting out of fifty eight works in the exhibition.

Rai's *Untitled*, exploiting surrealist technique, captures the condition of the nation in the transitional phase after the restoration of democracy in Nepal in 2006. The artist represents the human character in the composition metonymically, for the face and two hands represent the whole body. As our eyes run on the upper part of the canvas, the white Himalaya appears on the head on the human image. The Himalaya merges with the head. In other words, the Himalaya melts into the head and vice versa. The playful hybrid image is the Himalaya and a human figure at the same time. This is the surrealist juxtaposition of images. The image of the Himalaya is the metonymical representation of Nepal. Then the human image becomes the metaphor of the nation.

The work depicts the condition of the nation in the transitional phase through the metaphor of struggling human figure, who is attempting to break the boundary of the barbed

wires. The upright confident arms with clenched fist break the boundary at one point symbolizing partial success achieved through revolution. A pool forms with the blood that is falling from the wounded arm. Proportionally bigger blood pool on the ground implies the sacrifice of other human images as well. Since the barbed wires, the symbols of tyranny, stick around the head, the human image can not free oneself despite the fact the boundary is broken at one point. The composition suggests that another revolution is inevitable to break and pull out the barbed wire stuck around the head. Despite the presence of painful and agonizing situation, the expression of the character's face reflects calmness and unwavering determination to struggle and set oneself free. The struggle of the human image in the composition is the metaphor of the nation's struggle against tyranny and autocracy. The work suggests that the revolution is not complete, yet, the hope is there. The transitional phase is another struggle to achieve freedom and peace. The artist explores the political issue of contemporary Nepal exploiting surrealist technique. The western form and native content interact in the same canvas.

Collaborative Works

Generally paintings are executed by single artist and s/he has authorship over one's work. Yet some contemporary artists deconstruct this concept working collaboratively on one canvas creating interactive and interpersonal relationship among many artists. Tyeba Begum Lipi, Mandala Thakur and Rebati Mandal, in *Woman from Janakpur* (Fig. 102), explore the contradictions in the life of Maithili women creatively negotiating the techniques of Mithila folk art and expressionism. Beautiful tiny female figures in colourful dress and ornaments in the background, and decorative pattern around the neck of central figure represent the external life of Maithili women as variegated and romantic whereas the partial face of central

figure with expressionist colour suggests the inner agony and dark feelings within them. The figures of Maithili women are decorated as if they were dolls, busy in putting on ornaments, playing musical instruments and dancing. Such representation gives impressions to the viewers that their life is romantic and bright. On the other hand, the figures of women cutting grass for animals and watering plants represent their daily work which they seem to be enjoying. In contrast to these doll-like women figures, the central female figure decorated with tattoos around her neck expresses the inner reality of Maithili women. The face, darker than the body created with unusual colours, implies her anxiety and tragic feeling. The face, cut half, suggests the absence of her real identity. Patriarchy externally idealizes and glorifies the Maithili women but exploits internally like commodity.

The size of the images and the organization of space also reinforce the same theme. The images of dancing, playing musical instruments and working women are small and occupy extremely less space which suggests that it is only the representation of a tiny fragment of their actual life. In contrast to this, the huge central female figure in expressionist colour occupying most of the space of the canvas represents the real tragic condition of Maithili women. Even if the artists allow the whole canvas, they can not represent the whole portrait of the woman. This signifies that Maithili women's tragic condition is unfathomable and they can not represent them in whole but in part. The composition discloses how people look at them and what the real situation the women are going through. Presenting the contrast between appearance and reality, the artists question the doll-like social status of Maithili women.

The work hybridizes western expressionist technique with Mithila folk art. The artist borrows the images of small women figures in profile, elongated eyes, distinct outlines, flat

two dimensional colours and tattooed decorative pattern from Mithila folk art whereas the face of central figure is expressionist. Both native and alien forms coexist in same composition.

Since the three artists create the work together, they break the general convention that a painting is created by single artist. Tyeba Begum Lipi, the artist from Bangladesh, painted the expressionist central female figure, then Mandala Thakur and Rebati Mandal, the Mithila artists, created small figures of women and decorative pattern in Mithila folk art techniques. Not only the folk and contemporary art forms, and native and alien art forms coexist in the same composition but also the foreign and native artists work together in the same canvas.

Interart

Some contemporary Nepali art works blur the boundary between various art genres. The artists present the visual and verbal texts simultaneously. They not only stick the three dimensional objects on the canvas giving painting an aspect of sculpture but also paint sculptures with colours to reinforce the artist's expression. Sometimes, paintings, sculptures, photographs, verbal texts and other objects of daily use become the integral part of an installation art. Some artists present their works with music, artist's theatrical performance and the other works of various genres including painting. As a result painting not only exists as an individual art form but also functions as an integral part of intertextual pastiche or mosaic. Transgressing boundary between artist and audience, some works demand the viewer's participation to be complete. The viewer becomes the artist as one takes part in the creation. Gallery Nine writes about its interart activities:

Mixing high and low art forms, merging the traditional and modern with the postmodern and experimental, gallery nine has established itself as a uniquely

engaged, cutting-edge art space. It aims to enable artists and art lovers to open up to new ideas and new media, cross-pollinating their fields with others and infusing the arts, as a whole, with great liveliness. (prospectus)

In such art works, the connection of one text to other texts creates intertextual network whereas the exploitation of multimedia and the techniques of various art genres creates interart relationship. As the artists cross the conventional principles of creation, the works become experimental. Nevertheless, such art works appropriate some characteristics of pop art, conceptual art, installation art and performance art. Sujan Chitrakar's work www.meditateonself.com (Fig. 103) depicts some of these techniques.

Chitrakar's intertextual work www.meditateonself.com depicts the theme of meditation, as the title suggests, using the forms of painting, sculpture and literature, and the techniques of abstract expressionism, installation and conceptual art. The painting, an integral part of this work, is not hanged on the wall of the gallery independently but installed in front of a cushion on which the artist or the viewers may sit and meditate using the painting as a *yantra* (instrument) for concentrating their mind. The artist installs some flaps of paper which contain the artist's poem "Song of Breath" by the painting. He also puts a small bamboo basket with small pieces of paper in it on the floor near the cushion. The title of the work, www.meditateonself.com appears on the pieces. The artist sticks a small block of wood with two words carved in Ranjana script on the surface in the middle of the canvas. Ranjana is the script which is also found on the Buddhist prayer wheels around stupas and monasteries in Nepal. The artist not only brings the conventional art forms together but also integrates the objects of daily use in the art work to express the theme of meditation.

Both visual and verbal texts in the work create meditative atmosphere. The imperative sentence within the title directs the viewer to meditate on himself/herself. The cushion made of soft fabric in the shape of lotus appeals the viewer to sit on it. The periphery of the cushion appears in a number of segments, and each segment resembles to the lotus petal. It reminds the viewer of the lotus seat of the divinities as depicted in manuscript illuminations and *paubhas*. Furthermore, the soft texture appeals the tactile senses, and subdued colours of the fabric create a feeling of coolness. As the meditator/viewer sits on the cushion and views toward the canvas, the first thing that probably strikes is the wooden block and the verbal text on it carved in Ranjana script. Since the style of inscription and the script resemble to the mantras inscribed on the Buddhist prayer wheels, the verbal text reminds him/her of the religious atmosphere at Buddhist shrines. Not only the script but also the meaning of the text create meditative mood. The text may be translated as 'utopian introspection'. Nevertheless, the concept of meditation, here, seems to imply that 'to meditate on self' as the title suggests than to meditate for the union of the self and the cosmic being or any divinity. Floating, soft-edged and dimmed yellow and orange colours in the canvas evoke the atmosphere of meditative tranquility as at the time of sunset. As the viewer goes through the lines of his poem, they drive him/her into introspection. The poem depicts the resemblance in creating a work of art and meditation. Moreover, the poem implies that www.meditateonself.com is the outcome of the artist's utopian introspection. Arun Gupto, one of the viewers, expresses his response:

I particularly refer to the piece where there is a panel and a cushion. The leaves on the board are chemically cloned and are spread in orange and yellow colours. On the board there is a manuscript printed on *lokta* and you will read

poems if you open the book. This Friday afternoon I sat on the gallery floor in front of the work. The work literally demands meditation: it forces you to look at it silently. ("Thinking" 5)

The artist wishes to sustain the meditative mood in the viewers not only in the gallery but also at their home. As the viewers go away from the gallery, they may take a piece of paper with inscription 'www.meditateonself.com' on it from the bamboo basket, and visit the website, where they can find the work of art. The images, colours, objects and the verbal texts contribute to create the meditative atmosphere.

But why does the artist give so much stress on the themes of introspection and meditation on self? The socio-political condition of the country created disillusionment and alienation in the artist. To console himself he defines a narrow periphery, as represented by the canvas, avoiding external world and goes on to meditate on himself as the artist says, "The work is executed within a defined periphery of 2x6 ft...a space enough for me" ("Random Expression"). The artist can not bear the bloodshed, confusion and chaos that exist around him. Chitrakar himself expresses his condition:

Amidst a distant past and unseen future, I now stand on a bloodshed arena of confusion, chaos, and despair. My past fades out in the mist of memories. I foresee my destiny on the crimson stained pebbles I walk on. My future floats in the space that has just been abandoned hastily. My situation is the condition of the time around me. My frustration prevails even through a faintest smile that surface on my face. Then I dream - a realistic illusion - in a state of void. Life sustains apathetically. ("Random Expression")

www.meditateonself.com is not only the result of the artist's disillusionment and alienation from the morbid surrounding but also attempts to persuade the audience for introspection and meditation on self so that they could know the self and the others. The linking of the feeling and understanding of the self to the others may create communication and harmony. As a result violence and aggression could decrease. The artist's own lines depict a flicker of hope:

My introspective glimpses witness self to be expanded with the whole.

Knowing myself, I know thyself to find my interlinked extension in thee. This

utopian introspection is a mantra that relates me with the universe ...and ...

thee- a bond in perfect harmony: a bond of completeness. So I dare to remain

silent... to every thing that happens around me... Meditate-on-self guides me

to my limitation of my existence that I have mutely accepted. ("Random

expression")²

The artist presents the theme of meditation and introspection not only as an escape from brutal and tragic world but also as a process of communication and harmony.

The artist creates intertextual pastiche putting together the works of various genres of art. He juxtaposes the text and visuality by sticking a block of wood with two words on it, installing a manuscript of the poem by the painting and putting the bamboo basket full of pieces of paper with the inscription, 'www.meditateonself.com' on them. The artist creates three dimensionality, a characteristic of sculpture, by sticking the wooden block on the canvas. As the artist organizes the works of art and the objects of reality to create the setting for meditation, the work shares some techniques of installation art. The work is the intricate nexus of various forms.

² All the dots in the text are the writer's own.

The artist appropriates both western form and contents of early Nepali paintings. He shares floating, soft-edged and dimmed yellow and orange colours from the abstract expressionist artist Mark Rothko as the artist himself admits, "Rothko's canvases pull you into their very beings" (qtd. in A. Shrestha 31). However, the colour rectangles are not as distinct as Rothko's and the edges of the colours sometimes become sharp. Besides, unlike Rothko, Chitrakar sticks a solid object on the canvas. The artist hybridizes his own techniques with Rothko's colours. The work appropriates the image of lotus and the theme of meditation from manuscript illuminations and *paubhas*. Creating the image of a lotus in the cushion, the artist alters the painted lotus seat of the divinities. The artist shares the concept of using painting as a *yantra* for meditation and concentration from early Nepali *mandalas*. However, the work represents the theme of meditation in the different form than that of traditional arts. Moreover, in these early forms of art the theme of meditation stresses on the union of the self and the cosmic being whereas Chitrakar emphasizes on the introspection and knowing the self. The artist modifies and alters the contents of early arts through the use of western forms.

The work seems to be on the process of becoming. As the pieces of paper in the bamboo basket with the inscription 'www.meditateonself.com' imply that the viewers should visit this website and get the work of art at their home, the work demands the viewers' participation to be complete. The work on process in the gallery will progress when the viewers act as the artist indicates. Moreover, the concept or the project of the artist is to lead the viewers toward introspection and meditation on self. The work will be on process until the artist achieves this goal. The artist shares this dimension of the work from conceptual art.

Despite the hybridization of heterogeneous elements like the contents of native art forms and western techniques, and sculpture, painting and installation art, the work is a response to the socio-political condition of the country.

Summary

Western and native forms are intertwined in contemporary Nepali painting. Not only the western forms like impressionist, expressionist, cubist, abstractionist, surrealist, etc. but also the images, symbols and forms of early Nepali art like manuscript illumination, *paubha* and *pata* are negotiated and appropriated. The artists decontextualize the borrowed images and forms, and exploit them for different purpose. The art works represent the concept of religious harmony and the union of individual and the cosmic being, the themes of early Nepali art, using western form. They also recycle the Hindu and Buddhist myths. The works also revise and reformulate the structure of *mandala* in altered form. Distinct contours and two dimensional colours, the formal qualities of early art, appear in juxtaposition with western form in the same canvas. There is the copresence of figural and abstract images. Traditional icons and early forms are sometimes subverted and parodied.

The art works transgress the conventional boundaries between different art genres. Textual and visual images, poem and painting appear in the same composition. The presence of three dimensional physical images on the canvas gives sculptural feature to the painting. The integration of real or popular objects of the external world in the work brings the painting nearer to reality. Some artists present poems, music, paintings, sculptures, photographs and theatrical performance at the same time. The presence of such heterogeneous art forms in a work of art creates a pastiche. The interconnection among various art forms and genres makes the work a visual intertext. The copresence of

heterogeneous form and distorted images makes the artistic form plural. The same form may have multiple significances.

Such intertextual and hybrid art forms explore the socio-political issues of our time. The themes of alienation, suppression of marginal people including women, violence and deforestation are frequently brought to the foreground. The women and disadvantaged characters in the work question the authority that has exploited them from ages in the name of religion and social convention. They attempt to carve their space in the society. These contemporary issues are dealt with the hybrid form, which is the confluence of the early Nepali and western art forms. Such dynamisms and pluralism determine contemporary Nepali painting. As mentioned earlier in the Introduction chapter, Nepali painting is in the process of becoming: the continuity of creativity may lead to a harmonious future though such claims are necessary yet conceptually unsafe.

VI. Conclusion: Implications and Signification

The implication of the research is based on the study of contemporary Nepali paintings. The study has delved into the multiplicity of Nepali painting in terms of influences from early Nepali tradition, western impacts and contemporary experiments. Since I have focused on the hybridized and negotiated forms and contents of Nepali art, the work may be considered and reviewed from various significations and implications.

Globalization can be understood in terms of creative flow of ideas and events, especially in the domain of art. The issue of globalization is contextualized in a particular discipline which appears as the nature, feature, and role of Nepali painting. The thesis discusses the concepts like cultural encounter, ambivalence, inbetweenness and appropriation as the effects of globalization by tracing the native images, symbols, icons and forms interacting with western techniques in the art works. The interpretations and analyses of paintings depict the representation of cultural self and cultural other in art works. Tracing the working of irony, parody and pastiche in the visual texts, the thesis discusses how Nepali artists respond and accommodate the alien influences in the context of cultural encounters brought up by globalization. The discussion on Shankar Raj Singh Suwal's *Peace* (Fig. 1), for instance, shows the copresence of native Nepali images like stupa, the Himalayan mountains, typical Nepali cottages and human figures attired in Nepali costumes, and the surrealist techniques. We can understand how heterogeneous images and cultures are criss-crossed and negotiated in the context of pervasive semiotic flow brought up by modern means of transportation and communication.

The research is also an extensive discourse about the dialogue of tradition and modernity in relation to contemporary Nepali art. Despite the fact that Nepali artists create

opened, plural and subjective art forms by exploiting western techniques, they recycle, reformulate and reintegrate the forms and contents of early Nepali arts. The structure of *mandala*, themes of meditation and concentration, two dimensional colours, decorative patterns and religious iconography, the features of manuscript illuminations and *paubhas*, reappear in unconventional and altered forms. On the process of creativity, the influence of the other in the formation of the self creativity should be understood as important phenomena. The artists from Lain Singh Bangdel to Sujan Chitrakar have assimilated their ancient arts and western techniques to give continuity of Nepali tradition in painting. To be more specific, I have shown the structure of *mandala*, Shivalinga as icon, trident as symbol, and decorative pattern of Mithila folk art presented with expressionist and surrealist forms in Batsa Gopal Vaidhya's *Creation* (Fig. 62). Likewise, Shankar Nath Rimal's *Dance of Shiva-Shakti* (Fig. 68) rereads and reinterprets the *paubha* of *Nritesvara* (Fig. 6), the early Nepali art form. The age old images and subject matters appear in renewed and revitalized forms. The analysis of art works stresses that continuity and change are the important features of Nepali art.

The interpretation of some visual texts explores the religio-cultural rituals in relation to the art works. Some of the core ideas of Nepali culture can be studied with the impact of images, icons, symbols and other visual significations. Seema Sharma Shah's *Kathmandu Dreamscape* (Fig. 73), for example, includes the images of *Bhotejatra* (the ritual of displaying the vest of the deity Machhindranath) among others. The images lead toward the discussion of the ritual. Likewise, Ramananda Joshi's *Pranayam* (Fig. 74) represents *kundalini*. The interpretation of the iconography brings up the discourse of the religio-cultural ritual (*Pranayam*) which is practiced daily by religious Brahmins on the process of

meditation and concentration. Similarly, K. K. Karmacharya's *Untitled* (Fig. 76) integrates the image of a cow showering milk into the mouth of a skull. The images bring forth the significance of *Shraddha* ritual. The analysis of religio-cultural images in the painting unfolds the various aspects of Nepali culture.

The interpretation of some works creates socio-political critical awareness in contemporary time. The discussion on Durga Baral's *Tamasuk* (Fig. 86), for instance reveals how the money lenders in rural areas make the poor flee away from their village. The criticism on Vijay Thapa's *Darkness under the Lamp* (Fig. 88) deals about the existing contradictions and ironies in Nepali society. The authorities having responsibility to serve people turn out to be agents of darkness and brutality. Similarly, allegorical interpretation of Krishna Prasad Shrestha's *Bikas ko Sapana* (Fig. 91) is a satire toward political leadership. The research shows how Nepali artists respond to their contemporary context.

Interpreting the images of nature in terms of the artists' concern about degrading environment and their appeal to preserve biodiversity, the thesis attempts to create ecological discourse. Sarita Dangol's *Untitled* (Fig. 79), for instance, personifies the image of chopped tree as the human being to render the viewer's feeling thereby appealing to save trees. Likewise Uttam Kharel's *Human Beings, Animals and Birds* (Fig. 80) emphasizes the importance of ecological chain. The visual language expresses the ideas with immediacy of thought and feeling to make the viewers aware about contemporary ecological problems.

The research also explores the intertextuality of Nepali paintings. It shows the interconnectedness of various art forms. Contemporary Nepali paintings are not only connected to native visual and verbal texts but also western forms. Exploiting western techniques like impressionist, cubist and surrealist among other, the artists present the images

and symbols of manuscript illuminations and *paubhas* in renewed and altered forms.

Govinda Lal Singh Dangol's *Artist* (Fig. 70), for instance, recreates the *mandala* in abstract form. Similarly, Sabin Prakash Sinju's *Sayaun Thuga Phulka Hami Eutai Maala Nepali* cites the first line of National anthem, and integrates the photographs of ethnic people and real Nepali flag creating intertextuality. The discourse of intertextuality on the basis of art works gives a sense of sharedness and interconnectedness among heterogeneous culture and art works.

The research is a discourse on interart. It explores the intergeneric nature of Nepali art by discussing music, sculpture, poetry and theatrical performance in the context of Nepali painting. I have also analyzed how the art works blur the boundaries among various art forms to give expression to the creative urge of the artists. The artists create a pastiche by assembling the heterogeneous art forms. Sujan Chitrakar's *Masticated Faces* (Fig. 63), for example, presents the artist's performance accompanied with the exhibition of his portraits in the forms of painting, sculpture and photography, and the music of other artists. He also presents the critique of the art work itself in the form of newspaper-cum-catalogue by including the verbal texts like poems, news items and analytical articles. Visual and verbal arts accompanied by music are presented simultaneously. Transgressing the boundary, one genre of art interpenetrates the other. The discourse on intergeneric art works shows how Nepali artists create interart relationships.

The study on the art works as a part of cultural ritual reveals that the creation of interart relationship is not the contemporary phenomena but as old as Nepali culture. Cultural rituals like naming ceremony, *Bratabandha*, marriage and other religious ceremonies and festivals like *Durga Puja* and *Deepawali* depict painting, sculpture, music, recitation of

mantras, installation and performance art creating interart relationships. In such rituals, one can see the painted *mandalas* on the floor, installation of the images of divinities, music of conch Shell and bell, prayer and devotional songs accompanied by dance, and worshipping and performance by patrons in the direction of priests. The study shows that contemporary Nepali artists share the features of such rituals in different form with different purpose. Furthermore, manuscript illuminations also present visual and verbal texts simultaneously. Contemporary art works give continuity to the early art traditions despite the difference in the mode of expression.

The thesis is an archival presentation of contemporary Nepali paintings. It not only studies the development and characteristics of contemporary art forms but also goes back to its cultural root depicting the characteristics and features of various early art forms. The work studies the early religious arts like manuscript illuminations, miniature paintings, *paubha*, *pata* and wall painting. I have traced the magical, mystical, didactic, symbolic and anthropomorphic features of these visual texts. Besides, the interpretation highlights the art works' attempts to resolve the dualities between Hinduism and Buddhism, sacred and profane, and individual self and cosmic being. Despite the fact that the works are religious, the discourse also traces the worldly elements like the landscapes and the portraits of donors in the later religious works. One can see the movement from religiosity to worldliness.

The discussion of the art works from the beginning of the rule of Shah Kings, another part of the archive, depicts the portraits of the royalties existing independently from the religious motifs. And these works share the techniques of Mughal-Rajput paintings.

Next part of the archive discusses the portraits of the Ranas and the paintings of hunting scenes. These works depict the influence of western media and realistic techniques.

The study stresses that despite the thematic and stylistic variation all these early works are referential. They represent objects, events and persons of myths and external world.

The critical survey of contemporary arts and artist, another part of the archive, studies the paintings from the perspective of the critics. The thesis interprets and analyzes the individual art works. The thesis also introduces the plural, openended and subjective Indian and western art forms and creative activities that have influenced the Nepali art. It records the historical development of Nepali art. The thesis as an archive of Nepali painting can be the stepping stone for the forthcoming researchers in the domain of Nepali art.

Above all, the study is an academic critical discourse on individual contemporary Nepali paintings. It interprets and analyzes the works on the basis of the presented images, icons, symbols, colours, lines, texture and forms in the visual texts. Then it attempts to link them with Nepali art tradition and religio-cultural rituals. Furthermore, the research shows the use of western techniques as tools to explore the native subject matters and themes. Besides, the work studies the Nepali artists' response to contemporary socio-political context. Next it also traces the interconnectedness among other art works. Likewise, it studies the exploitation of the techniques of other genres of art in relation to painting. It also discusses the representation of the cultural self and the cultural other in the works of art on the basis of represented heterogeneous images, symbols and forms. The research also shows the potentiality of Nepali art works for multiple interpretations. The discourse emphasizes that plurality, openendedness, ambivalence and inbetweenness are the dynamisms of contemporary Nepali painting. All these characteristics and features are brought to light on the basis of textual evidences. Thus the work is the extensive discourse of contemporary Nepali painting.

Finally, the thesis raises some important questions which may help other researchers: Is there any distinct identity of Nepali art? Do we need to borrow western terms of reference to interpret Nepali art? Do we need to develop special vocabulary or exclusive terms of reference separate from Indian and western language of art criticism to interpret the art works created in different socio-political context? The vocabulary for Nepali art in general and paintings in particular needs to be taken into account for other researchers in the field so as to identify the exclusiveness of the native artistic tradition even to see its connectedness with other traditions and their influences.

The story of Nepali painting, thus, is an intense dynamism of interart and intertext, hybridization, negotiation, and appropriation. The art of a nation is the story of its culture in metaphoric ways, creative plays of realism and abstractions, deviations and distortions, pluralism and historicisms. Such multiplicities evoke more discourses and a continuity of academic critical tradition. The work has endeavored to accomplish an elaborated critical analysis of Nepali art.

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