

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Interpellation of the Individual in Lil Bahadur Chhetri's *Basain*

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Masters of Arts in English

By

Sushma Rai

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Date: 2065-11-22

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Central Department of English

Letter of Recommendation

Miss Sushma Rai has completed her thesis entitled “Interpellation of the Individual in Lil Bahadur Chhetri’s *Basain*” under my supervision. She carried out her research work from July 13, 2008 to March 5, 2009. I hereby recommended her thesis be submitted for viva voce.

Harihar Jnawali

Lecturer

Central Department of English

Date: 2065-11-22

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled “Interpellation of the Individual in Lil Bahadur Chhetri’s *Basain*” by Sushma Rai submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, has been approved by the under signed members of the Research Committee.

Members of Research Committee

Internal Examiner: _____

External Examiner: _____

Head of Department

Central Department of English

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to extend my gratitude to my supervisor Mr. Harihar Jnawali, lecturer of the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur for his valuable guidance and supervision and precious time. His regular support and guidance helped me complete my thesis. I could not have made it possible without his support and instruction.

I am highly indebted to Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, Head of the Department for his help in carrying out this thesis. I am equally thankful to my respected teacher Mr. Badri Acharya who suggested me the title of thesis and other teachers and staff of the Department for their continuous support.

Last but not least, I am thankful to those who helped me during the preparation of my thesis, especially my friend Om Astha Rai, who helped me in writing and other friends Damber Tumbapo, Punya Prasad Adhikari and Madan Dahal for their support in library research.

Sushma Rai

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

March, 2009

Abstract

This research analyses how the poor farmer is outcast from the village in Lil Bahadur Chhetri's famous novel *Basain*. Dhane, the main character of the novel, suffers a series of problems one after another. His family lives precarious yet contented existence but the acute poverty and hostile social elements destroy the integrity of his family, eventually forcing to move towards unknown horizon Muglan. When he gets exploited, he can not speak for justice before the powerful villagers because he is mentally and physically subordinated and oppressed by their ideology and gets trapped in vicious cycle of poverty engineered by malicious money-lenders. He even can not utter a single word in his favor because of his bad economic condition and can not influence the decision makers. He is subjected to social exploitation and injustice. Had he not got exploited and tortured by them, he could have managed money for his sister's marriage and he could have established his dignity in society. He should not be homeless and landless and should not have suffered shameful situation but they render him helpless and his heart wrenching departure from the village.

Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
i	
Abstract	ii
1. Introduction	1
2. Theoretical Tools: Neo-Marxism	6
3. Textual Analysis	24
4. Conclusion	40

1. Introduction

Lil Bahadur Chhetri, the author of *Basain*, is a descendant of immigrants from the hills of Nepal and lives in Assam in northeast India. Grown up in an educated society of Assam, he had been yearning for writing a Nepali novel for years but finding no topic to work on. It was only in 1954 when he encountered with a couple of youths migrated from eastern Nepal in search of job. A brief talk with them made him ponder what would indeed cause migration. It struck a strong theme in his mind to craft a beautiful novel. In 1957, he eventually came up with *Basain* that earned him fame and honor. Afterwards, he penned down two more novels, *Atripa* (The Unfulfilled) and *Brahmaputrako Chheuchhau* (On the Banks of the Brahmaputra) but none of them became as famous as *Basain*, even though all of his works deal with cursed course of migration and dig up sorrows relentlessly endured by people residing in the Nepali Diaspora of Assam. What makes *Basain* prominent is its outstanding illustration of village life. His magnum opus is equally famous for unraveling the common story of poor peasants who live in remote villages and endure frequent hardship to overcome their crisis.

This research mainly focuses on interpellation of the individual at this hand of feudal conservative social ideology and practices. He is appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration. (Interpellation is the process of recognition of the individual/self with ideology or transformation of the individual as a subject). He even can not utter a single word in his favor because of his bad economic condition and can not influence the decision makers. He is subjected to social exploitation and injustice. Mentally and physically, he is tortured by the money lenders. They render him helpless resulting in his heart-wrenching departure from the village.

The novel evolves around a pathetic yet gutsy character and ends up with his sorrowful migration. Dhane, the central character of the novel, has no big dream. He just wants to feed his family and marry off his younger sister. He buys a buffalo from a local money lender in credit expecting to make enough money to realize his dream. But he can not pay off the loan due to the high rate of interest. Meanwhile, his buffalo suffers a miscarriage and newly-born calf dies. As a result, the money lender owns up his oxen. After losing a single pair of oxen, he finds no way to tile his land and takes loan from another money lender mortgaging his house. But he kills the money lender's pregnant buffalo in a pitch of anger after seeing her grazing on his seedbed. The money lender convenes an assembly that holds Dhane guilty and fines him for killing a pregnant buffalo. Meanwhile, he comes to know that his sister is pregnant and the man who seduced her has already vanished from the village. Trapped in embarrassment and bankruptcy, Dhane decides to head for Muglan in pursuit of a better life. This is how a laborious but poor peasant falls prey to malicious money lender. Despite struggling hard to overcome his crisis, Dhane makes no headway because his society is dominated by wealthy ones where poor peasants really have no place to go for justice.

Dhane is a representative character of all poor Nepalese farmers who fall prey to a bunch of malicious money lenders and an unjust social system set up by none other than themselves. Despite his hard work, he can not maintain a level in the society due to his bad economic condition. He can not improve his condition ever. Nobody stands for him even when he is subjected to social exploitation and injustice. He has to bow down before whatever these powerful villagers decide. Dhane can not utter even a single word in his favor because he has no money to influence the decision makers. He is tortured not only physically but mentally too. Moreover, he feels mentally wrecked and isolated in society.

Despite this, he does not attempt to question the repressive norms of the society, nor does he speak anything against the money lenders. It is because Dhane is subordinated and

oppressed by conservative social ideology and gets trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty engineered by malicious money lenders.

Lil Bahadur Chhetri's novel *Basain* has been analyzed by various critics. Donald Richie interprets it from the realistic point of view. He writes, "*Basain* is a real craft product, using patterns and skills honed by history, celebrating our common vision...engrossing, instructive and moving" (11). And the Booklist comments; "A simple yet thought-provoking tale, A subtle, eye-opening look at Third World mores and the winnowing of society's weakest links."

Donald Richie and the Booklist emphasize more on aesthetic part of *Basain*, rather than its ideological stand. Unlike them, Manhushree Thapa emphasizes translation rather than its own ideological and thematic issues. She writes:

Michael J. Hutt's contribution as a translator and critic of Nepali literature has been invaluable. With *Mountains Painted with Turmeric*, he brings to light an iconic Nepali novel: the story of sheltered villagers faced with a harsh, hanging world. Hutt's rendition is sensitive and skilled. Through this translation he shares with us his deep empathy for and fine understanding of Nepali reality. (5)

Unlike Thapa, Tim Kindseth deals with the novel from the realistic point of view. He thinks that *Basain* gives a picture of the villages in the hills of Nepal. He writes:

A well-captured docudrama- it is not plot that propels the novella, but rather the intimate, unfolding portrait of village life in eastern Nepal that Chhetri sketches in masterfully stark but occasionally lyrical prose—like a brisk, cold brook dappled with sun. Chhetri vividly conjures the social and natural landscapes in which Dhane's miserable story takes place, from trade councils lorded by ruthless landowners, to placid livestock pastures and swollen rice

paddies pleating the hills and Jhuma's acquiescence makes sense in a novella that chronicles life in an isolated 1950s Nepalese village. Dhane's misfortune, though heartbreaking, is also true to life. Readers may pity him as he and his family members run out of town, and yet, as rural tragedies go, theirs is distressingly mundane — and timeless. (50)

Kunda Dixit's point of view is quite similar to that of Kindseth, for him, it is a simple story of a universal family. He remarks:

Lil Bahadur Chhetri, a descendant of Nepali immigrants, wrote the book in Assam where he still lives. Although he never really stayed in Nepal, he based the portrayal of rural Nepal on interviews with more recent Nepali migrants to Assam [...] this is a moving and simple story of a universal family forced to leave home. (13)

With reference to these critical responses from various critics that reflect their own perceptions, Neo-Marxism has not been applied yet. Regarding it, interpellation of the individual is significant to this thesis. There exists a strong need to carry out research on this novel from a new perspective. Without a proper study on the issue, the meaning of the text will remain incomplete. The issue is different from other perspectives.

This research paper has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter is the general introduction of this thesis. It includes brief life and works of the authors along with critic's views, the general survey of the novel, context, problem, hypothesis, critics and the point of departure. The second chapter discusses the theoretical modality of this research paper. It shortly explains Neo-Marxism. This thesis will try to prove the hypothesis. The idea of Neo-Marxist like Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci and Terry Eagleton will be applied to prove the very hypothesis. The third chapter, based on the theoretical modality discussed in chapter two, analyzes Chhetri's novel in relation to the suffering of lower class people living

in feudal conservative society. It will basically seek to trace causes behind tremendous suffering of working class people in the novel. Finally, the fourth chapter concludes this research paper on the basis of the textual analysis of Lil Bahadur Chhetri's novel *Basain* in chapter three based on theoretical modality of chapter two. It indeed comes to the conclusion as a summary of the explanation and arguments as presented in the preceding chapters that prove Lil Bahadur Chhetri's novel to be burdened with minorities group's suffering.

2. Theoretical Tool: Neo-Marxism

Neo-Marxism:

Neo-Marxism is a school of Marxism that began in the 20th century and hearkened back to the early writing of Marx, before the influence of Engels, which focused on dialectical idealism rather than dialectical materialism. Neo-Marxist literary theorists perceive Marxism as a science. Ideology is the key concept of Neo-Marxism. The Neo-Marxist critics of ideology are Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci and Terry Eagleton.

Ideology is a set of beliefs, aims and ideas. The main purpose behind an ideology is to offer change in society through a normative thought process. Ideologies are systems of abstract thought applied to public matters and thus make this concept central to politics. It represents the belief pattern, when we see it from Marxist point of view; ideology is false consciousness because it is not based on socio-economic background. Marx views that capitalists or bourgeois are trying to dominate the people of lower socio-economic status through their ideology. Many latter Marxists consider it to be constituted largely by unconscious prepossessions that are illusory, in contrast to the 'scientific' knowledge of the economic determinants, historical evolution, and present constitution of the social world. A further claim is that, in the present era of capitalist economic organization that emerged during the eighteenth century, the reigning ideology incorporates the interests of the dominant and exploitative class, the bourgeoisie who are the owner of the means of production and distribution as opposed to the proletariat or wage earning working class. This ideology to those who live in and with it, it is claimed, seems a natural and inevitable way of seeing, explaining, and dealing with the environing world, but in fact, it has an invisible function of legitimizing and maintaining the position, power and economic interests of the ruling class. Bourgeois ideology is regarded as both producing and permeating the social and

cultural institutions and practices of the present era-including religion, morality, philosophy, politics and the legal system, as well as literature and other arts.

Discourse is a discussion of a subject in speech or writing. The process of writing books, newspapers, and producing speeches are discourse formation and whatever is produced it is discourse. Discourse may be both written and spoken. For Michael Foucault, discourse carries three things: power, knowledge and truth. Power is circulated from different forms of representation, and now this much represented power creates certain truths, which ultimately becomes truth to everyone who is under the system. Power determines the truth and as soon as the system of society changes the truth also changes. So, discourse is related to the production of any information that provides knowledge. For instance, mother creates discourse for her children by saying 'do this' and 'do not do that'. This knowledge becomes truth for the children. The power is generated in society by producing the discourse and by constructing the truths. Discourse deals with the interpersonal relationship. For instance, the western people have created discourse about non-western people. In their discourse, non-western people were given limited space. For western people, non-western people were not mentionable. Their discourse says that non-western people need strict guidance and western people place themselves as a teacher and role model creating the discourse. Thus, those people who are in power, produce a body of knowledge for those who are not in the power.

The force of the term ideology lies in its capacity to discriminate between those power struggles, which are somehow central to a whole form of social life, and those, which are not. Ideology manifests itself in different ways in the discourse of each of the semi-autonomous institutions of an era, including literature, and also that ideology operates covertly to form and position the users of language as the 'subject' in a 'discourse,' in a way that in fact that 'subject' them that is, subordinates them-to the interests of the ruling classes.

French structural Marxist, Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" establishes the concept of ideology, which is also based on Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Whereas hegemony is ultimately determined entirely by political force, Ideology draws on Freud's and Lacan's concept of the unconscious and mirror phase respectively, and describe the structure and systems that enable the concept of self.

He sees Marxism as a science and his work is in the structural tradition. One feature of Althusserian Marxism is a rejection of Marx's Hegelian essentialism i.e. a reduction of things to a single principle or essence. Althusser rejects two kinds of Marxist essentialism: 'economism' - economic determinism and 'humanism'- in which social developments were seen as expressive of a pre-given human nature. He condemns ideas like 'human potential' and 'species being' which are often put forth by Marxist as outgrowth of a bourgeois ideology of humanity. Therefore, Althusserian Marxism is anti-humanist. In rejecting economism, he sees ideology as itself a determining force shaping consciousness, embodied in the material signifying practices of ideological state apparatus and enjoying 'relative autonomy'.

Althusser builds up the work of Jacques Lacan to understand the way that ideology functions in society. Thus, he moves away from the earlier Marxist understanding of ideology. In the earlier model, ideology was believed to create what was termed "false consciousness" but he opposes its definition, he declares instead that ideologies vary according to the form and practices of each mode of state apparatus, that the ideology of each mode operated by means of a type of discourse which interpellates the individual to take up a pre-established "subject position" that is a position as person with certain views and values which in every instance, serve the ultimate interest of the ruling class. Althusser explains that for Marx, "ideology is thought as an imaginary construction whose status is exactly the theoretical status of the dream among writers before Freud. For those writers, the dream was the purely imaginary that null, result of the day's residues" (56). Althusser, by contrast

approximates ideology to Lacan's understanding of "reality" the world we construct around us after our entrance into the symbolic order. For Althusser, as for Lacan, it is impossible to access the "real conditions of existence" due to our dependence on language; however, though a rigorous 'scientific' approach to society, economics and history, we can come close to perceiving if not these 'real conditions' at least the ways that we are inscribed in ideology by complex processes of recognition.

Althusser introduces the concept of interpellation, in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" to describe the process by which ideology addresses the pre-ideological individual thus, effectively producing him as subject proper. Unlike classical definition of the subject, he argues that an individual is always-already interpellated as a subject by ideology, even before he is born because he bears his own identity, which is irreplaceable. His argument here strongly draws from Lacan's concept of the Mirror Stage. According to Althusser, interpellation is the process of recognition of the individual/self with ideology or transformation of the individual as a subject Althusser posits a series of hypotheses that he explores to clarify his understanding of ideology:

Firstly, Althusser argues; "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real condition of existence" (123). The traditional way of thinking of ideology led Marxists to show how ideologies are false by pointing to the real world hidden by ideology that the real economic base for ideology. According to Althusser, by contrast, ideology does not reflect the real world but represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to the real world; the thing ideology represents is itself already at one remove from the real. In this, Althusser follows the Lacanian understanding of the imaginary order, which is itself at one step removed from the Lacanian Real. In other words, we are always within ideology because of our dependence on language to establish our reality, different ideologies are but different representations of our social and imaginary reality not a

representation of the real itself. Thus, for Althusser, ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. Ideology transforms human beings into subjects, leading them to see themselves as self-determining agents when they are in fact shaped by ideological processes.

Secondly, he argues: "Ideology has a material existence" (126). Althusser contends that ideology has a material existence because an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. Ideology always manifests itself through actions, which are inserted into practices such as rituals, conventional behaviors and so on. Indeed, Althusser goes so far as to adopt Pascal's formula for belief: Pascal says, "more or less Kneel down, move your lips in prayer and you will believe" (87)

Thirdly, he argues: "all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects" (128). According to Althusser, the main purpose of ideology is in constituting concrete individuals as subjects. At this level, concrete subjects only exist in so far as they are supported by concrete individual. So, pervasive is ideology of subjects that it forms our very reality and thus appears to us as true or obvious. The rituals of ideological recognition guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and irreplaceable subject. According to Althusser, ideology functions or acts in such a way that it 'recruits' subject among the individuals or transforms the individual into subject by that very precise operation which he called interpellation or hailing. Through "interpellation," individuals are turned into subjects that are always ideological. To make clear of it, he gives an example of the "hello" on a street; he writes:

Somewhere the hail rings out: 'Hey, you are there!' one individual turns round, believing/suspecting/knowing that it is for him, i.e. recognizing that 'it really is he' you is meant by hailing. However, in reality these things happen without any succession. The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of

individuals as subjects is one and the same thing [...] What reality takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it. That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: Ideology never says I am ideological. (Althusser-131)

He becomes a subject by this very ideology. In fact, we do not recognize this interaction as ideological speaks to the power of ideology: what thus seems to take place outside ideology, in reality takes place in ideology. As he puts it, the individual is interpellated as a subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandment of the subject, i.e. in order that he shall freely accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection all by himself.

Finally, he argues: "Individuals are always-already subjects" (129). Although he presents his example of interpellation in a temporal form (I am interpellated and thus I became a subject, I enter ideology). Althusser makes it clear that the "becoming-subject" happens even before we are born. This proposition might seem paradoxical but Althusser writes:

That an individual is always-already a subject, even before is born, and is nevertheless the plain reality, accessible to everyone and not paradox at all [...] i.e. the forms of family ideology -paternal, maternal, conjugal and fraternal, in which the unborn child is expected: it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father's Name and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. Before its birth, the child is, therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration in which it is 'expected' once, it has been conceived. (Althusser-132)

Thus, Althusser proves that how an individual is interpellated as a subject even before his/her birth and once again invokes Lacan's idea, that understanding of the Name-of-the-Father.

Althusser argues that many of our roles and activities are given to us by social practices: for instance, the production of steelworkers is a part of economic practice, while the production of lawyers is a part of politico-legal practice. However, other characteristics of individuals, such as their beliefs about good life or their metaphysical reflections in nature of the self, do not easily fit into these categories. In Althusser's view, our values, desires and preferences are inculcated in us by ideological practices, the sphere that has the defining property of constituting individuals as subject through the process of interpellation. Ideological practice consists of an assortment of institutions called Ideological State Apparatuses which includes the family, the media, religious organizations and most importantly the education system as well as the receive ideas they propagate.

According to him, State Apparatus contains two bodies: Repressive State Apparatus and Ideological State Apparatus. State Apparatus belongs to entirely to the public domain, much larger part of the Ideological State Apparatus are part, on contrary, of the private domain. Churches, some schools, trade etc. are private. He writes:

In Marxist theory, the State Apparatus contains the government, the administration, the army, the police, the court, the prison etc. [...] Ideological State Apparatus contains: the religious Ideological state Apparatus, the educational ideological State Apparatus, the family Ideological State Apparatus, the legal Ideological State Apparatus, the political ISA, the trade-union ISA, the communication ISA, the cultural ISA etc. (Althusser 110)

Althusser differentiates State Apparatus from Ideological State Apparatus that Repressive State Apparatus functions by violence, whereas Ideological State Apparatus

functions by ideology. State Apparatus functions massively, predominantly by repression while functioning secondarily by ideology whereas the Ideological State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by ideology but functions secondarily by repression. The ruling class in principle holds State Power and therefore has at its disposal the State Apparatus and this same ruling class is active in the Ideological State Apparatus in so far as it is ultimately the ruling ideology within is realized in the Ideological State Apparatus precisely in its contradiction. But for Althusser, no class holds State Power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the Ideological State Apparatus.

Similarly, another critic, the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci came up with the concept of hegemony. While he was imprisoned by the fascist government, wrote approximately thirty documents on political, social and cultural subjects, known as the “*Prison Notebooks*” edited and published in English translation as *Selection from Prison Notebooks*. Gramsci's exploration and elaboration of the concept of hegemony has become a central tenet on Neo-Marxist theorizing. Gramsci uses the term "hegemony," or moral, ethical leadership, to describe the means by which consent is organized.

Gramsci defines hegemony as the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their consents are the interests of all, that a social class achieves a predominant influence and power, not by direct and overt means, but by succeeding in making its ideological view of society so pervasive that the subordinate classes unwillingly accept and participate in their own oppression. Hegemony consists of socio-political power that flows from enabling the spontaneous consent of the populace through intellectual and moral leadership or authority as employed by the subalterns of the State. The power of hegemony is thus primarily through coercion and consent rather than armed force.

For Gramsci, hegemony is a form of control exercised primarily through a society's superstructure as opposed to its base or social relations of production of a predominantly

economic character. Gramsci splits superstructure into two major levels: the one that can be called ‘civil society’ that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called ‘private’ and that of ‘political society’, or the State. Civil society includes organizations such as churches, trade unions, and schools which as Gramsci notes are typically thought of as private or non-political, including economy. Political society is the arena of political institutions and legal constitutional control. A major piece of Gramsci’s project is to show that civil society’s ways of establishing and organizing human relationship and consciousness are deeply political and should in fact be considered integral to class domination, especially in Western Europe. According to Gramsci; civil society corresponds to ‘hegemony’ while political society or State corresponds to ‘direct domination or command’. The former is the realm of consent and the latter of force.

Gramsci further delineates these two relatively distinct forms of control as: firstly, social hegemony names the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group i.e. the ruling class- in Gramsci's Western Europe, the bourgeois; this consent is historically prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. Secondly, political government" names the "apparatus of state coercive power which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not consent either actively or passively. However, this apparatus is constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed.

While Gramsci at times uses ‘State’ narrowly to refer the governmental coercive apparatus, he also deploys a broader ‘general notion of State’ or integral State, which includes both the functions of social hegemony and political government as, described above. In this general or integral sense, “State = dictatorship and hegemony” (239). “State is the

entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules” (244). Moreover, Gramsci writes,

The general notion of State includes elements which need to be referred back to the notion of civil society (in the sense that might say that State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armor of coercion). In a doctrine of the State, which convinces the later as tendentially capable of withering away and of being subsumed into regulated society, the argument is the fundamental one. (263)

His concept of hegemony is intimately linked to his formulation of the relationship between the superstructure and the economic base. He specifies two ways in which the superstructure reproduces capitalist relation. The first is hegemonic through ideology and universalized 'spontaneous consent' while the second is through legal enforcement of judiciaries and other institutions associated with the state. With his focus on the processes of hegemony and domination and the state's role in the two, Gramsci places an emphasis on the superstructure's autonomy from the economic base. He argues:

[...] the fact that the State/government, conceived as an autonomous force, should reflect back its prestige upon the class upon which it is based, is of the greatest practical and theoretical importance, and deserves to be analyzed more fully if one wants a more realistic concept of the State itself. (Gramsci-269)

However, Gramsci does not elevate the superstructure to independent status. Rather, he conceives of the superstructure as being dialectically related to the economic base: Economic structures and superstructures form a historical bloc. That is to say, the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructure is the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production. From this, that only a totalitarian system of ideologies

gives a rational reflection of the contradiction of the structure. Gramsci's description of the superstructure as a complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble is an expression of the superstructure as dynamic, fluid and consisting of an assemblage of parts, suggesting a dialectical, non-functionalist conception of the relationship, a conception he reiterates through his work.

Gramsci sees the role of the intellectuals as a crucial one in the context of creating a counter hegemony. He is clear that the transformation from capitalism to socialism requires mass participation. There is no question that socialism could be brought by an elite group of dedicated revolutionaries acting for the working class. It has to be the work of the majority of the population conscious of what they are doing; and not an organized party leadership. The revolution led by Lenin and the Bolshevik in Russia in 1917 was not the model suitable for Western Europe or indeed any advanced industrial countries. The Leninist model took place in a backward country with a huge peasantry and a tiny working class. The result was that the mass of the population were not involved. For Gramsci, mass consciousness is essential and the role of the intellectuals is crucial. It is important at this juncture to note that when Gramsci writes about intellectuals, he is not referring solely to the boffins and academics that sat in ivory towers or wrote erudite pieces for academic journals only read by others of same ilk.

He writes that all men are potentially intellectual in the sense of having an intellect and using it but not all intellectuals by social function. He means that everyone has an intellect and uses it but not all are intellectuals by social function. He explains this by stating that everyone at some time fries a couple of eggs or sews up a tear in a jacket; we do not necessarily say that everyone is a cook or tailor. Each social group that comes into existence creates within itself one or more strata of intellectuals that give it meaning that helps to bind it together and helps it function. They can take the form of managers, civil servants, the

clergy, professors and teachers, technicians and scientists, lawyers, doctors etc. essentially, they have developed organically alongside the ruling class and function for the benefit of the ruling class. Gramsci maintains that the notion of intellectuals as being a distinct social category independent of class was a myth. He identifies two types of intellectuals- traditional and organic. He writes:

Intellectuals in the functional sense fall into two groups. In the first place, there the “traditional” professional intellectuals, literary, scientific and so on, whose position in the interstices of society has a certain inter-class aura about it but derives ultimately from past and present class relations and conceals as attachment to various historical class formations. (3)

Traditional intellectuals give themselves an aura of historical continuity despite all the social upheavals that they might go through. The clergy are an example of that as are the men of letters, the philosophers. These are what we tend to think of when we think intellectuals. They like to think of themselves as independent of ruling groups, this is usually a myth and illusion. They are essentially conservative allied to and assisting the ruling group in society.

The second type is the organic intellectuals.

There are the “organic” intellectuals, the thinking and organizing elements of a particular fundamental social class. Those organic intellectuals are distinguished less by their professional, which may be any job characteristic of their class than by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class, which they organically belong. (3)

This is the group mentioned earlier that grows organically with the dominant social group, the ruling class and is their thinking and organizing element. For Gramsci, it is important to see them for what they are. They produce by the educational system to perform a function for the dominant social group in society. It is through this group that the ruling class

maintains its hegemony over the rest of society. Having said that what is required for those who wish to overthrow the present system was a counter hegemony, a method of upsetting the consensus, of countering the 'common sense' view of society, how could this be done?

Gramsci sees one of his roles as assisting on the creation of organic intellectuals from the working class and the winning over of as many traditional intellectuals to the revolutionary causes as possible. He attempts this through the columns of a journal called *L'Ordine Nuovo*, subtitled "a weekly review of Socialist Culture". This journal came out at the same time as the huge spontaneous outbreak of industrial and political militancy that swept Turin in 1919. This outbreak mirrored events throughout the industrial world that shook the very foundations of capitalist society. Gramsci's insistence on the fundamental importance of the ideological struggle to social change means that this struggle is not limited to consciousness rising but must aim at consciousness transformation-the creation of socialist consciousness. It is not something that could be imposed on people; but must arise from their actual working lives. The intellectual realm therefore is not to be seen as something confined to elite but to be seen as something grounded in everyday life. The creation of working class intellectuals actively participating in practical life, helping to create a counter hegemony that would undermine existing social relations is Gramsci's contribution to the development of a philosophy that would link theory with practice. His philosophy is a direct counter to those elitists and authoritarian philosophies associated with fascism and Stalinism. His approach is open and non-sectarian. He believes in innate capacity of human beings to understand their world and to change it. In his Notebooks, he asks the question: "is it better to think" without having critical awareness, or on the other hand, is it better to work out consciously and critically one's own conception of the world? Gramsci writes:

One of the most important functions of a State is to raise the great mass of population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level which corresponds

to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling class. The school as a positive educative function and the court as a repressive and negative educative function are the most important State activities in this sense. (258)

The ruling class in Gramsci's Italy was the bourgeois, though it seems that his remarks might function also as a blueprint for communist rule. Gramsci proceeds to claim that the State which at one point Gramsci asserts is equivalent to the fundamental economic group or ruling class itself implements its educative project of channels, both public and private with the school as a positive educative function and the courts as a repressive and negative educative function constituting the most important State activities in this sense.

But, in reality, Gramsci maintains, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end-initiatives and activities, which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes. Hegemony, therefore, is process by which educative pressure is applied to single individuals so as to obtain their consent and their collaboration, turning necessity and coercion into freedom. The freedom produced by instrument of the ruling class thus moulds the free subject to the needs of an economic base, the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production. It is difficult to determine the status of this educated freedom in Gramsci's writing, but Gramsci does assert its immense political value in a discussion of political parties, which for Gramsci must show in their specific internal life that they have assimilated as principles of moral conduct those rules, which in the state are legal obligations.

Thus, schooling plays an important part in Gramsci's analysis of modern society. The school system is just one part of the system of ideological hegemony in which individuals are socialized into maintaining the status quo. He does not write much in his Notebooks on the school system but what he writes is essentially a critique of the increased specialization

occurring within the Italian school system and a plea for a more comprehensive form of education. The vocational school is being created in order to help modernize Italy. This new system is advocated as being democratic while in fact it is destined not merely to perpetuate social differences but to crystallize them in Chinese complexities. Gramsci writes:

The social character of the traditional schools as determined by the fact that each social group throughout society has its own type of school intended to perpetuate a specific traditional function, ruling or subordinate but the answer to the question of modernizing education is not to create a whole system different type of vocational schools but to create a single type of formative school which would take the child up to the threshold of his choice of job, forming him during this time as a person capable of thinking, studying and ruling or controlling those who rule. (Gramsci - 40)

Gramsci maintains that this type of school could only achieve success with the active participation of pupils and in order for this to happen, the school must relate to everyday life. This does not mean that education should not include abstract ideas but that philosophical concepts, formal logics, rules of grammar etc needed to be acquired in school through work and reflection. He is clear that learning is not something that comes easily for the majority of young people. “The individual consciousness of the overwhelming majority of children reflects social and cultural relation, which are different from an antagonistic to those, which are represented in the school curricula”. (35)

For him, a learner has to active not a passive and mechanical recipient. The relationship between the pupil’s psychology and the educational forms must always be active and creative.

Although nobody has come up with a single adequate definition of ideology so far, Terry Eagleton, an eminent professor of English literature at the University of Oxford, has

tried his best to sum up the most precise definition that deals with the features of ideology. An erudite author of several books about ideology and critical theory, Eagleton has figured out the role of ideology in shaping the political nature of a society and its various courses. How ideology functions and propels people to establish a certain kind of polity is an issue Eagleton meticulously tries to deal with. Despite the vagueness of the term, Eagleton has definitely been able to make a sense of what ideology is by extracting almost all useful meanings of ideology given by key Marxist thinkers and some others like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Freud. In addition, he has looked at the definitions of some prominent post-structuralists as well in an attempt to deal with each and every aspect of ideology.

Going by what Eagleton suggests, compressing all useful meanings of ideology into a single comprehensive definition is not a good idea as it would be unhelpful to understand all angles and points of ideology. It is not just because ideology boasts of a wide range of useful meanings, but, more importantly, not all of these are compatible with one another. Eagleton has listed out some definitions that currently exist in the circle of intellectuals.

Looking at surrounding political landscape of South Asia, we may get a sense of what Eagleton means by ideology. In India, rightist political parties want to impose the Hindu theology in their country and they seem to have presumed it as an appropriate model of political system. How these rightist parties view the society and what sort of political remedy they look for to maintain peace, stability and economic growth is instructed by what Eagleton terms as ideology. Similarly, in a number of Muslim countries some extremist political organizations are up in arms demanding for an Islamic republic where no other religious community can have an easy access to freedom. These Hindu and Muslim extremist political parties believe that the ideology they stand by is modest, scientific and pragmatic but others think that they are fundamental forces.

Although Eagleton emphasizes on rigidity of ideology, he raises an objection by asserting that every rigid set of ideas or beliefs is not ideology. For example, he writes; I may have unusual inflexible beliefs about how to brush my teeth, submitting each individual tooth to an exact number of strokes and favoring mauve toothbrush only, but it would seem strange in most circumstances to call such views ideological. He suggests that the term pathological would be rather appropriate to deal with such rigid habit. Likewise, the common perception about ideology that it is always associated with a dominant political power is not true, either. In his view, the political left, in particular, tends almost instinctively to think of such dominant modes when it considers the topic of ideology.

He writes more on this matter:

It is true that people some times use the word ideology to refer systematic belief in general, as when someone says that they abstain from eating meat for practical rather than ideological reasons. Ideology here is more or less synonymous with the broad sense of the term philosophy as in the phrase the president has not philosophy, which was spoken approvingly about Richard Nixon by one of his aides. [...] if I make a fetish of physical health because I belong to society which can exert technology dominion over just about everything but death, ten it might make more sense to subscribe my behaviors as ideologically motivated. (Eagleton -3)

He expresses himself on the wider of narrower senses of ideology:

My own view is that both the wider or narrower senses of ideology have their uses, and that their mutual incompatibility, descending as they do from divergent political and conceptual histories, must be simply acknowledged. This view has the advantage of remaining loyal to the implicit slogan of

Bertolt Brecht-use what you can-and the disadvantage of excessive charity.

(Eagleton - 7)

Eagleton argues that most theories of ideology have arisen from materialist tradition of thought. In such materialist theories, consciousness alone can not bring about epochal changes in a social system. Eagleton deals with Thatcherism in this respect. According to him, what helped Margaret Thatcher assume the power and continue with it for a remarkably long period of time in Britain was not ideology. The British people did not adhere to her values; however, she succeeded in securing the power because of a mundane cause than any talk of 'hegemonic discourses'. How she managed to grab the power was by breaking the power of organized laborers by deliberately creating massive unemployment. Laborers could not stand up against Thatcher, as they had to focus on managing two squares of meals a day. Besides, she traded upon weak opposition parties.

3. Textual Analysis: Interpellation of the Individual in Lil Bahadur Chhetri's *Basain*

Lil Bahadur Chhetri's *Basain* reveals a prevalent Neo-Marxist tract. Basically, set in the hills of far eastern Nepal, the novel offers its readers a window into the lives of the people by depicting in subtle detail the stark realities of village life. *Basain* tells the story of a peasant farmer named Dhane, which means ironically "wealthy one" who is struggling to provide foods for his wife and son and arrange the marriage of his beautiful younger sister. He tries to improve his economic condition but gets exploited by the local money-lenders. Therefore, he can not improve his economic condition. Unable to cope up with the financial demand of the wealthy people of the village, Dhane and his family suffer a series of problems and quarrels with fellow villagers. Eventually, they force him to leave his village and move to Muglan.

Chhetri, in the novel, has tried to expose the oppression of the money-lenders and landowners upon the poor farmers. He portrays suffering endured by ordinary peasants; the exploitation of the poor by the rich and powerful; and the social conservatism that twists a community into punishing a woman for being the victim of a crime. Dhane, the central character of the novel buys a buffalo in credit with Baidar. But Baidar allots him loan with the high rate of interest. Baidar said:

Hariram ! This is the way it is: the buffalo's price is six times twenty rupees, at the end of every month you must bring the interest to my house. Yes- and listen! Hariram! After six months, even if you're one day late I'll take the oxen and buffalo from your shed. So! Put your thumb print on the agreement.

(5)

Dhane gets exploited and mentally tortured by the money-lenders. He loses all properties in the hand of the riches. As a result, he can not get marry off his sister. Then, she

falls into crime. It outrages the villagers. Which, Chhetri writes; “Also some of the villagers made it appear that they would not drink water in Dhane’s defiled household” (97).

Chhetri describes the hardship, dispossession, and banishment of Dhane’s family to expose profound divisions between those who prosper and those who are slowly stripped of their meager possessions. Yet he also conveys the warmth and intimacy of village society, from which Dhane and his family are ultimately excluded. Relating to this fact, critic Tim Kinseth writes:

They hoed and sowed all day, everyday, to feed their bellies, save money for the sister’s dowry and earn enough for new clothes. But implacable Fate played tricks on them. Usurious money-lenders fleeced the farmer of his land and house. A jive-talking soldier ravished the virginal sister. Destitute and socially shunned, the family fled their home village.” (50)

Moreover, he writes on the novel:

Everything is rooted in the soil, from Dhane’s financial crisis that sets from the repossession of his livestock – floated as security for a bad loan – to the elemental metaphor of wood, fire and water that Chhetri uses to define his characters. Strapped with debt, Dhane’s thoughts raced by like a powerful torrent; Maina, his wife, bemoans the “log that fate had flung at them” after learning that Jhuma, the sister, has been raped. The swaggering soldier, who deceives Jhuma with his khakis foreign words and hollow marriage proposal before committing the outrage, is a “blazing flame.”

Unlike Kinseth, Ann Hunkins, a poet and translator, comments on the novel from Marxist point of view. He tries to link the social injustice and exploitation that Dhane is subjected to with the Maoist cause. If it prevails in the society, as he interprets, people by and large incline to these ultra-revolutionary political forces. He argues:

This is a moving story, depicting in wonderfully rich detail the round of village life; the daily farm work and chores, the gossip chain, the weekly market, the limited opportunities, the rapacious rich preying the poor, and women's particular vulnerabilities. Reading this story could contribute to understanding why poor villagers would join the Maoist cause. (5)

Indeed, Hunkins tries to link the issues from Marxist point of view to some extent but does not show how Dhane gets exploited and falls into an unjust social system. On the contrary, Kinseth only deals with the novel from the realistic point of view. According to him, the novel gives a picture of the village in the hills of Nepal.

In the novel, Dhane buys a buffalo from a local money-lender in credit expecting to make enough money to realize his dreams. Before owning the buffalo, he knows that to deal with Baidar, a money-lender is like setting his own house on fire. However, he does not find any option and takes buffalo from Baidar. But he can not pay off the loan due to the high rate of interest and an unidentified villager severely beats his buffalo when she is about to give birth to a new calf. Meanwhile, his buffalo suffers a miscarriage and newly born calf dies. Even though, he can not speak for justice before the villagers. Which, Chhetri writes:

He was speechless when he saw blue bruises on her body from being beaten with a stick. But destitute Dhane, what could he do? He humbled slowly, who beat you like this? May be you ate someone else's crop- that must be it. There was a gash near the buffalo's womb and four days later, she had miscarriage. (9)

A fellow villager, Leute Damai, has already accused his buffalo of damaging his crops. He has called the headman of the village and other villagers seeking compensation from Dhane. The assembly of villagers pressures and compels Dhane to pay three rupees. Not only by these reasons, but also that Dhane and all villagers are motivated by the conservative

social ideology. They do not think about solution and economic growth of the poor. Rather, they assume that Dhane should pay the loan; otherwise he has to lose his oxen along with buffalo, which Chhetri writes:

The old Baidar, the village headman, and three of four other villagers were arriving. Dhane got down and went to the house to welcome his guests; and asked them to sit down. The headman addressed Dhane: Jetha, eldest among the sons, how could it be that you took the Baidar's property without regularly paying the interest? Count out the loan money together with the interest that you owe him right now; if you don't hand it over, your barn will be emptied forthwith according to the agreement I. (42)

Headman reminds him that if he can not pay off the loan according to the agreement, his barn will be emptied. So, Dhane requests Headman with hopeless voice to give him two months more to pay the debt. But he gets his request just as futile. Thus, Chhetri displays a pathetic condition of poor Dhane and writes, "Dhane said with a hopeless voice, 'Headman, Sir, it wasn't my intention to not pay. If I can't pay it back what can I do? Now, give me two months' extension; after the buffalo has her calf, I'll get the money and hand it over.'" (42)

However, headman replies that he is not responsible to it. It's just an affair between Dhane and the Baidar. Headman articulates that Dhane needs to persuade Baidar who is in front of him. But Baidar refuses headman and says:

No Headman Saheb, why are you chewing words around like this? I must get justice. Hariram, how long has it been since he took the buffalo? Hariram we made an agreement for payment in six months and now it's the forth day of Phagun, a whole year to the day. Hariram he didn't pay the interest on time, nor did he send any workers to work in my field. What could I say to him? Hariram now I am showing the village council the agreement. The money

must be paid in full today and if not, I'll take away the animals from the shed.

(42)

As Althusser argues that ideology hails or interpellates concrete individual as concrete subject. Dhane is interpellated as a subject by the ideology. His identity is of a poor farmer who is appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration. He never dares speak before powerful money-lenders. And he is subjected to the social unjust and exploitation. As Louis Althusser sees ideology is itself a determining force shaping consciousness, embodied in the material signifying practices of ideological state apparatus and enjoying 'relative autonomy'. All the poor believe that they should agree and do what the rich order them. When Dhane gets trapped in the hand of money-lenders, no one is ready to speak for him. He really finds him stuck in a harsh situation. Where another poor Sahilo supports Baidar and says Dhane should pay the loan, if he does not pay loan in the time others will not get loan from him next time. Sahilo was poor himself and was debtor to many. But he mixes with the rich and experiences greatest pleasure at poking fun at his neighbors who are as poor as him. Perhaps it's the nature of mankind to be like that. A man always sees things from his own point of view, not from that of another. If bad luck falls to him, he cries, weeps and makes gesture of compassion for other. But if bad luck falls others, even though he shows compassion on the outside, he smiles in his heart and experiences a kind of joy. In fact, Sahilo should have supported Dhane because he is also poor. But all poor people including Dhane and Sahilo are dominated by the very ideology. They believe to have been subordinated to the riches and to speak against exploitation of the riches is like a crime. So, Dhane and other poor never dare speak for justice. They never utter a single word in favor of poor people wading through a troubled-water. This, Chhetri writes:

Up to this time of debate, Sahilo had sitting cross-legged, listening. Hearing the Baidar's words, he sat up in a squat and looking towards Dhane's sad face,

said, ‘the Baidar’s words are true! How can we let his property be taken without payment? Even if Dhane can’t pay the loan, he ought to pay the interest. If a debtor is allowed to do this, how can the rest of us ask the Baidar for loan, if we need to? If one defaults the others will be unable to get loans from him. (43)

Hearing Sahilo’s words, Dhane is angry, but understanding his own situation, he speaks in a soft voice. He can not remain aloof from the ideology. He has to bow down before whatever these powerful villagers decide. Then, he utters; “if you consider what might happen to you in future, you would not insult me like this, Sahilo Dai. But then, a deer on a steep slope is pursued by a calf” (43). And the council decides in favor of Baidar and gives permission to take Dhane’s plow-oxen and buffalo. Baidar calls on the village council to confiscate the oxen and the buffalo. Chhetri writes:

The council unanimously decided in favour of Baidar, who was given permission to take Dhane’s plow-oxen and the buffalo. It was already being spread throughout the village that Dhane was unable to pay his debt and that Baidar had called on the village council to confiscate the oxen and the buffalo. The people came from above and below; they came to see the spectacle of Dhane being stripped of his property. From the looks on their faces it would be said that they had deep compassion for Dhane but all hearts were filled with excitement and anyone was wondering when Dhane’s animals after being repossessed would be taken away. Probably, if the confiscation had been put off, they would have been disappointed; they would have felt deprived had they not been able to witness this sight. (43)

As for Eagleton, ideology is a rigid set of beliefs that gives legitimacy to a dominant political class and motivates it to rule over its people. The key point of his understanding of

ideology is that such a rigid framework of beliefs would not be always true or convincing for each and every section of society. If a particular section of society holds a kind of ideology true, it does not imply that every one must necessarily view it with the same perspective. Other people may differ on it. Eagleton has conspicuously focused on the term 'rigid' by which he means that ideology tends to cleave the society into two or more sections. He says that all proponents of a particular ideology think that the way they view the society is flexible than whatsoever political philosophy other people adhere to. At the same point, those who have been accused of retaining an inflexible political philosophy, too, find others' ideology rigid. In short, all people see their own ideology moderate and scientific whereas they find others' extreme, unscientific and inflexible. As he argues, the power was held by the powerful village money-lenders who have enough money to influence the entire villagers. Ideology was the instrument of the riches.

The powerful money-lenders ideologically isolate Dhane and they make him helpless. All poor farmers like Dhane are influenced by their ideology. It was their belief that what the riches order them; they ought to do. That's why Dhane does not get support even from poor people. Rather, they torture him mentally as well as physically. They render him speechless and confiscate his pair of oxen and buffalos.

He is not only tortured by the riches, but also by poor people. Sane Gharti, money-lender Nande's plowman, upsets Dhane while he is tilling the field for the following day's rice crops planting. Dhane reproaches and punches him because it was his turn. Nevertheless, Sane Gharti does not let him irrigate the field. And he does not give a dam to Dhane because he was ordered by money-lender's son. Both of them are poor, but they quarrel with each other. Sane says:

I may be dependant on him, but I haven't taken your earning. Who do you think I am to follow your orders? Nande's son sent me here to water the

ground. If you don't call a sponger what would you call him? Let's see how young Nande's son is going to collect the rent if there is no water for the field. Until you had some land, you held your head down and wagged your tails meekly like a dog in front of Nande. He gave you a field, bought oxen for you and now you curse his own son! He'll snatch away the field just like that so don't be so smart. (56)

It is his turn to fill water, if he does not fill the water in his turn; he'll have to wait a week for it. So, he is serious in working. But Sane Gharti annoys him, and he extremely gets angry. Dhane hits Sane:

When he felt Dhane's hard fist, he began to cry. I'm small, so you're treating me like this! You'll see-when Nande's son takes care of this, you'll know. You got this field by bowing down to Nande's feet- and now you're a big man! I am not my father's son if I'm not able to snatch this field away from you tomorrow. (57)

Plowman Sane is used by money-lender's son. He goes to water their field, which is not necessary at all. And he is watering in Dhane's turn. Then Dhane scolds and beats him. But he goes towards his hut, muttering to himself; 'Dhane Basnet insulted and beat me so terribly. Such a name he called you and your father. He dammed up the channel leading to our field, so the water stopped and he took all the water to his own fields'. Sane's words infuriate Nande's son. Grinding teeth in anger, Nande's son calls Sane and orders 'tomorrow just at day break, take the buffalo into his seed-bed and leave it there. Then we'll see how the fool plants the rice-crop!'

Dhane has already suffered misfortune. He has lost a pair of oxen and buffalo; he finds no way to till his land and takes loan from another money-lender mortgaging his house. Then, Dhane was really enthusiastic; he started working with enthusiasm. However, he can

not do as his plan because the very money-lender Nande's son, by using Sane Gharti, shatters his plans and dreams. Nande's son orders Sane to leave buffalo in his seed-bed. Buffalo damages his seed-bed and he can not plant his rice crop. Chhetri writes:

He was thinking that in the first rays of the sun before the women come from home to do planting, he will prepare the four or five terraces, too small for the oxen and himself.. When he reaches the upper edge of the field, his joy, enthusiasm and eagerness to work are replaced by discouragement and depression. He sees the seed-bed in the field where the money-lender's buffalo was happily grazing on the six inch sprouts and Sane Gharti was sitting nearby enjoying the show. Anger and exasperation almost drive him insane. He is stunned that the wheel of fate has put him into so many difficulties. He desires something and something else happens! He has framed a beautiful future in his mind relying on the very field. With such joy, he has worked on this field. (60)

But it was an intolerable moment for Dhane. He can not see such a harmful event. Therefore, he raises the hoe and turns its blade upward and jumps on to the buffalo. Dhane beats buffalo in a pitch of fury. He kills the money-lender's pregnant buffalo after seeing her grazing on his seedbed.

He couldn't contain himself further and like a madman he raised the hoe, turned the blade upward and jumped on the buffalo. the field was a little marshy, so that the buffalo's feet were stuck in the mud and she was unable to run away. Bounding to the buffalo's side, Dhane struck it six or seven times with the back of his hoe. Possessed by pain and anger, Dhane completely forgot his own love for animal. (60)

But after a few moments, he realizes his mistake that he has struck buffalo uselessly, it was not animal's fault and feels remorse. The buffalo staggers to the opposite edge of the

field next to the hillside and lies down. He feels frightened and thinks if the buffalo dies, his place is nowhere in village, then he prays with god. Which, Chhetri writes:

Dhane's anger and excitement calmed down, but then he felt frightened. If that buffalo somehow dies, my place in this village will be wiped out. In a short time the news of this will reach the ears of the money-lender, and in some way or other this field –which I got with great effort will be taken from me. Oh lord! What will be my plight now? Thinking of this future calamity, he went down to the lower field. Trembling he went to the buffalo's side and tried to make her stand up. But the buffalo was severely wounded and she could not move her by herself. In despair, he went to the hut. In his heart he called out to the god: oh Lord! Let nothing happen to the buffalo; deliver me from this calamity! Out of ignorance! Destroyed her – forgive me! (61)

Then, the next day, Nande calls an assembly, with the headman, the government official, the Baidar. The discussion begins and they ask him many questions. The council deliberates and decides that Dhane was guilty. There was no one on Dhane's side but the headman, so as to show that the scales of justice were balanced, said, "To be fair, we must look at both sides. Now, Nande's buffalo has eaten Dhane's seedlings. He must repay the damage in rice. Dhane must repay the price of the buffalo, is not that so?" (64). But one of the councilmen does not agree the headman and says, "Only paying for the buffalo is not enough! It would set a bad precedent; Dhane must pay the complete fine for killing a buffalo with a calf. He should not be let so easily!" (64).

No one stands in Dhane's side. They accuse him and suppress a lot. All villagers see Dhane's fault. Nobody see the fault of money-lender's son. At the same time, one tries to speak in small voice in his favor. If they could identify who spoke the voice, it was unsafe to him. Luckily, they could not identify the voice. The voice was, "There should be a fine for

allowing a buffalo to roam free and get in someone's seedbed right at planting time. The buffalo was not a branded bull, left to roam free" (64).

But landowner Nande immediately looks at him and threatens, Chhetri writes:

It's doubtful whether or not the five councilmen heard the voice immediately Nande turned his red eyes to the place the voice was coming from. Hey, you fool, be quit! Don't be so smart. Who permitted you to open your mouth in the middle of a meeting? (64)

Since the rich warn the poor, the voice does not speak again. This statement shows that how much poor people are suppressed by the rich. They do not let them utter a word against them. They use the power and hold Dhane guilty. They make an unfair judgment. They do not see the fault of the money-lender's son. They do not punish him, who destroyed Dhane's life. Rather, they accuse Dhane for killing buffalo and they fine him. Moreover, they threaten to banish him from the village if he kills any more livestock this way. Along with this decision, Nande makes an announcement in front of the council, that not to give his field to Dhane.

The decision was announced. Dhane would have to pay a fine of 150 rupees for the buffalo herself and 75 rupees for killing a pregnant buffalo. and they threatened to banish him from the village if he killed anymore livestock in this way. As for the money-lender he would have to give Dhane 120 pounds of unhusked rice for the damage to the seedlings. [...] with 225 rupees fine added to the principle and interest of the loan for buying the oxen and providing for household expenses, it was determined that Dhane owed Nande a total of 575 rupees. (65)

He can not pay the money as the council's decision. So, Dhane asks for a time payment and gets time to pay the money. He agrees to pay in two and half months the total

sum, along with interest. It was written in agreement if he can not hand over the money in two and half months, the money-lender can raise the money from Dhane's house, land and livestock.

Meantime, Jhuma is seduced by a little known soldier and gets pregnant, which outrages the villagers. She curses herself for mistake. She is about to jump off the cliff, Mote Karki saves her and learns about her. He learns about Jhuma's mistake. Though, he is ready to accept her and sacrifice his life for Jhuma. Moreover, he expresses that Jhuma did not commit a crime, and he promises to adopt the child Jhuma gives birth to.

When Dhane learns about Jhuma, he gets shocked and thinks; she added another great problem. He thinks, she committed a great crime, but after a moment he realizes that the fault was his own but not his sister's. Had he had money for her marriage, he could have celebrated his sister's wedding ceremony and he would not have suffered such shameful situation but he fails to do so. Chhetri writes:

One question arose in his mind. Whose fault is it? is it Jhuma's? of course it is! But he could not really accept this. After a moment, he thought. No, the fault was mine. All this had happened because I could not get her married in time. if I had had the money for her marriage, or id it weren't necessary to have money for marriage, and if it weren't necessary to fill up the stomach of all the village with a wedding feast, we wouldn't have had to see this day. The fault is mine, my poverty, my helplessness. The fault created by my poverty and my bad luck, written by the Creator. (86)

At the same time, the villagers declare that they do not drink water in Dhane's defiled household. However, he can not do anything; he is speechless and helpless. He does not really mind of it, he continues on, in spite of it all.

The money-lenders torture him again and again. Had the money-lenders not exploited and tortured him, he could have managed money for her marriage and he would not have to face such a shameful situation. But the money-lenders make him moneyless, landless and finally homeless.

As Gramsci defines, social hegemony is the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group i.e. the ruling class. Gramsci defines hegemony as the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their consents are the interests of all, that a social class achieves a predominant influence and power, not by direct and overt means, but by succeeding in making its ideological view of society so pervasive that the subordinate classes unwillingly accept and participate in their own oppression. Hegemony consists of socio-political power that flows from enabling the spontaneous consent of the populace through intellectual and moral leadership or authority as employed by the subalterns of the State. The ruling class of Dhane's society was the rich or feudal money-lenders and land owners. They rule the civil society. As their rule over the poor, they made the agreement. Chheti writes:

He agreed to pay money in 2 and half months the total sum, along with interest. If he couldn't hand over the money in 2 and half months, the moneylender could raise the money from Dhane's house, land and livestock. The detail was written in a new agreement, and after Dhane signed the meeting was ended. (65)

According to the agreement, the day of payment coming near, he looks for a loan everywhere, he begs the money-lenders but his supplications are as far effective as those of a baby who wants to catch a falling star in his hand. In the end, there was no ways to avoid having to leave his house and land. Hence he decides to leave the home village and move for Muglan. Then he goes to Nande's house and asks to fix his property. Dhane says, "Yes, I

thought I would pay it back seven days in advance. Please sir, call the headman and fix a price for my property; I'm handing over my house and land. And if there are a few paisa left over, I'll have some money for myself' (98)

It shows that how he is dominated by the ideology. He is mentally prepared to hand over his property to money-lender. He and his family are going to leave the village. But, he does not know, where are they heading for? When will they end up? Where will they find a real dwelling place? The pitiless money-lenders are displacing poor Dhane. They do not outpour love and sympathy to him, as if they do not have human attribute. Rather, they want to acquire his land and house as well. The headman of the village and other villagers gather in Nande's yard to make decision on Dhane's fate. They fix a price for Dhane's property and announce, after money-lender's cut, there remains 75 rupees over for Dhane. But since Nande wants to show generosity towards Dhane who is leaving the village forever, he does not take two month's interest and he puts 86 rupees in Dhane's hand. Which, Chhetri writes:

[...] the important men from the village were gathered in Nande's yard to make a decision on Dhane's fate. Dhane with a long face was sitting in a corner. He was troubled over one thing: how much will the property fetch? When the money-lender settles the accounts, will there be something for journey left over or will I lose I loose that too. A price was set for the house and yard, and all the cooking implements cattle and other things. An agreement was prepared. After the money-lender cut there were 75 rupees left over for Dhane. But since Nande wanted to show generosity towards a person who leaving the village forever, he didn't take two months' interest and he put 86 rupees in his hand. (99)

At that moment, landowner Nande shows generosity to Dhane and gives two month's interest. It is only his showing behavior. If he was really generous, he should have given his

field to Dhane. He should have punished his son and given justice to Dhane. But the feudal lords captured all properties of the poor. He finds no way to survive in the village because his society is dominated by wealthy ones where poor peasants really have no place to go for justice and decides to move for Muglan in pursuit of a better life.

He has lost everything; his stay in the village is over. But he is still not free from debt. So, he is leaving the village by paying all debts. Being homeless, he has only 86 rupees in his hand in the name of the property. He is going to pay off 5 rupees out of 86 rupees for the money-lender Terse Lamichhane. Dhane says, “Here brother, I borrowed this a few days ago, also last year I had some meat and didn’t pay for it. What can I do? All my property has been taken and tomorrow or the next day, I’ll probably be going” (99).

By the time, Terse shows empathy to Dhane and refuses to take money. Even though, Dhane stubbornly insists but also Terse does not take money. Terse says, “I don’t need it. We’re going to be in the same situation ourselves soon; how long does it take to lose all our property? If I had three or four hundred rupees, I could help you and you would not have to leave place of your grandfather, but what can be done?” (99).

Obviously, he should pay the money, which he takes from money-lenders. And he is prepared to pay off it, but he should have been clear, whether he is right pay or not and is he getting exploited by those so called money-lenders or not. But he is much dominated by the ideology. He was right but he is accused of killing buffalo but also he can not speak in his favor. As a result, he became homeless.

When he becomes homeless and compelled to leave village, some villagers show generosity toward him. But it does not matter in his destroyed life. The villagers devastate the integrity of his family with which he lives a bitter life. He is mentally wrecked and isolated in society.

This is how; Dhane's society was determined by power of money. Really, it has a material existence. The power was held by those who have enough money. They mould ideology from their own point of view because they have money to influence all villagers. Those who have no money to influence the decision makers can not speak for their rights. Hence Lil Bahadur Chhetri in *Basain* shows the suppression of the riches upon poor farmers and a pathetic and sorrowful end of an unfortunate person in village.

4. Conclusion

In *Basain*, Lil Bahadur Chhetri has realistically depicted the village lives in the eastern hills of Nepal. Not only does he illustrate the happiness and difficulty of the dwellers of these villages but also deals with their upheavals that take place among them. In addition, he also exposes the dominance of the riches over poor people, and sorrowful ending of poor farmers. He writes; '*Basain* may not seem entertaining to some readers but entertainment is not really its goal'.

The novel is based on struggle for survival of a poor farmer, Dhane, and his family. Dhane, the central character of *Basain*, is oppressed by the riches. The ideology of the powerful villagers plays a vital role to destroy his life. He extremely suffers penury. Yet, it is not the driving force behind his migration, nor is it his misfortune. Indeed, it is the unjustness of society that renders him hapless. Dhane falls prey to a bunch of malicious money lenders and an unjust social system set up by none other than themselves. Hence, he can not utter even a single word for justice because he is subordinated by their ideology and also he has no money to influence the decision makers. He gets mentally and physically tortured and isolated in society.

The local money lenders oppressed him by their ideology. They suppressed him mentally and physically. He buys buffalo in credit, hoping to uplift his financial condition but fails to do due to the high rate of interest. As a result, not only does he tolerate verbal abuses and threats by money lenders but also loses his buffalos and oxen, quite essential for cultivation. Fellow villagers accuse him of his buffalo's damaging their rice crops. They compel him to pay three rupees for damages. He beats the pregnant buffalo because he sees her grazing on his seed-bed at a time when he is all set to start off the planting crops. The money lender's callous son deliberately lets his buffalo enter Dhane's seedbed because he finds him standing against his unjust rule. However, the assembly, which is supposed to

deliver justice in free and fair manner, does not hold the money lender's son guilty for his callous intention. The truth is that actually Dhane was innocent and right in his place but the malicious money lenders accuse and exploit him. They make ideology and decision for their own benefit. Indeed, the money lender's son was guilty and he should have been punished because he destroyed Dhane's life. Unfortunately, the power was in the hand of the rich then they did not see the fault of their own. They made decision from their own viewpoint. That's why, how is it justice? Those who shelter themselves with dishonesty and corruption oppressed the honest and truthful poor; they enjoy themselves in gold palaces while the poor, even if they work themselves to the limit, can not earn enough to live hand to mouth. The feudal lords became rich by exploiting and torturing the poor, confiscating their properties, providing the loan with high rate of interest whereas the poor could not join their hand to mouth.

The rich confiscate all his properties and the poor Dhane can not get his sister married off. So, she is seduced by a soldier. It rages the villagers. It is none other than the rich. They destroy his life. Had they not exploited and tortured him, he could have managed money for his sister's marriage and he could have established his dignity in society but they render him helpless and his heart wrenching departure from the village.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th Ed. New Delhi: Harcourt, 2000.
- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus." *Mapping Ideology*. Ed. Slavoj Zizek. London: Verso, 1999: 100-140.
- Chhetri, Lil Bahadur. *Towards Unknown Horizon*. Gangtok: Impression Press, 1989.
- Dixit, Kunda. "Not Lost in Translation." *Nepali Times* 383 (2008): 13.
- Eagleton, Terry. "What is Ideology?" *Ideology*. London: Verso, 1991: 1-31.
- - -. "Ideological Strategies." 33-61.
- Foucault, Michel. "Truth and Power." *Critical Theory since Plato*. Ed. Hazard Adams. Fort Worth: Harcourt HBJCP, (1992): 1133-1145.
- Gramsci, Antonio. "Problem of History and Culture." *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994: 3-23.
- - -. "Notes on Politics." 44-120.
- Hunkins, Ann. "Bookself." *South Asian Newsletters* 68 (2008): 5.
- Kindseth, Tim. "Peaks and Troughs." *Time* 171 (2008): 50.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror-phase as Formative of the Function of the I." *Mapping Ideology*. Ed. Slavoj Zizek. London: Verso, 1999: 93-99.
- Richie, Donald. "Social Realism Enhanced by the Pastoral." *The Japan Times* 86 (2008): 11.
- Thapa, Manhushree. "Bookself." *South Asian Newsletters* 68 (2008):5.