

Chapter I

General Introduction

The cause and method of Lata's success in her life is the focus of study for Aditya Man Shrestha's *Mistress of Faith*. Lata, the protagonist of the novel is able to change herself from an ordinary woman to a social activist, from a blind follower of cultural practices to a critic of unquestioned religion and from nobody to everybody in cultural and social field. She is grown up in the Hindu culture. Religion, myths, culture, and society are the truth for her. They are her energy to live life until she faces moral difficulty.

After the difficulty, she changes the way of understanding and perceiving the cultural practices. She becomes critical toward the religion. She starts analyzing cultural practices and myths rather than blindly following them. She questions the pundits, the religious preachers who used to be unchallenging preachers. It was the same culture that had made her remain as a silent woman and again it is the same culture that gives her strength and success. She is transformed into a new person culturally, socially and morally. A drastic change appears in her without any external causes. She is able to make herself a very successful woman. The questions arise 'what is the reason and mystery of her success? How could she change herself? What is that which helps her change the angle of analysis?

This research is an inquiry into how Lata, the protagonist, achieves immense success in her life, how she changes herself to find out new truth from the same culture. The research will prove that inquiry into 'what we have' gives strength to achieve success in life. The research will also focus on proving that one's strength has to be expanded by changing the angle of the way of perceiving the truth, which offers new truths and success more than one's expectation.

1.1 Aditya Man Shrestha's works and his trend of writing

Aditya Man Shrestha was born on 15 March, 1937 in Kathmandu. He is well known senior journalist. He has a long experience in the field of journalism, which has enriched his quality to be an author. '*The Rising Nepal*', '*Nepal Jagaran*' and '*Arab News*' are some of the newspapers in which he worked as executive editor, associated editor and assistant editor. He has collected a large experience of policy making for journalism in Nepal during his service period as advisor and chairperson in various committees under Minister of Communication, Nepal Government. He is still a regular contributor to *the Kathmanu Post* and *The Himalayan Times*.

Mr. Shrestha, though mainly known as a journalist, is also famous as an author. He has published five books. His first book is *Bleeding Mountains of Nepal*, published in 1999 and reprinted in 2000 and 2002. It contains detail accounts of how the powers in Nepal bribes to get things done, misappropriated public money, abused their power and privileges, and how some politicians became unusually rich. Since the author is mainly a journalist, and had been attached with the government as an advisor and chairperson in various committees, he had access to lots of information about the corruption and briberies in the ministry and government offices of Nepal. He exposes the reality in the form of book, which has become famous in and outside the country.

Many national and international intellectuals have reviewed the book. The book cleanses and nourishes the soul as it exposed the 'culture of corruption' that has dominated many Asian countries today, including the Philippines. What the author has written about what's happening in Nepal could have been the very same thing happening in the Philippines. (*Business Times, Cebu, the Philippines*, March 16-30, 2000). The panic reality of corruption is common in almost all countries, mostly in

Asian countries. The author is able to depict the story of corruption that takes place behind the curtain. Naveen Rehan in *The News on Sunday*, June, 2000, Pakistan, writes: “The author paints a gloomy and often shocking picture of the waste and misuse of national resources, which seems sadly familiar to Pakistani eyes. . . . He records meticulously the misdeeds as he sees them, but he seems to be as helpless as his country in righting these wrongs. Reading the book is like taking an overdose of our own depressing newspapers.”

The Dreadful Night – Carnage at Nepalese Royal Palace was published in 2001 after the publication of *Bleeding Mountains of Nepal*. This is a very well produced book that tells the extraordinary story, a tragic one, of the murder of the king and royal family in Nepal. It contains many full color photographs. A very tragic event took place in Nepal in the year 2001. King Birendra and his family were murdered in the Royal Palace that shocked the Nepalese and the people in the world. Aditya Man Shrestha could not help writing the story of royal massacre and produce the book: “It is an alluring book with simple words, simple sentences, short chapters, historical facts interspersed with mythical stories. The book is written on the frightful murder at the Narayanhiti Royal Palace after 195 years of the massacre of Rana Bahadur Shaha is relay readable.” (*Deshantar*, Nepali Weekly, Kathmandu, Feb. 17, 2002). The book works as history with the view of the author over the decisions and actions taken. Peter Karthak in *the Himalayan Times* on Feb 24, 2002 writes:

The book is a result that entertains, titillates and informs readers. The book is replete with logic, magic, superstitions and fallacies. The book is a series of stories of and comments on the right roads not taken, correct decisions not followed up, rituals giving way to practical wisdom, proxies overtaking actual persons, logic losing to magic. (5)

The book shows the right track and decision that had to be taken for the betterment of the country.

His third book *Man from Nepal* was published in 2002. It is essentially an autobiography, a story of an atypical unconventional man's meeting with destiny. Throughout this volume the journalist-author deals with a diverse range of his personal triumphs and tragedies with, admittedly, an overdose of sexual adventures, which a reader may not be willing to swallow. But the interesting fact is that,

The descriptions are so vivid and frank, it will be impossible for any reader not to be impressed by the author's honesty and candor, and his ability to share what no Nepali dares do in public. The book provides good readership satisfaction and enrichment of the knowledge of a Himalyan society about which Rudyard Kipling would put it "facts are stranger than fiction. (iii)

Mr. Shrestha seems to be clever to expose the sexual reality of Nepalese society with the story of his own.

Wrong We Do, Right We Don't- a Hard Talk was published in 2005. Aditya Man Shrestha seems to be very much worried about the condition of the country in this work. He has X-rayed the country, government and politics of Nepal and has found out the loop holes that have pushed the country backward. Through this work, he has brought out the wrong deeds of the king, political parties, Nepal Government, civil society and common people. There are the options that should have done in the past to uplift the country to the level of self sustained. The book is a frank and hard talk, atypical, uncharacteristic and unusual to our secretive social psyche. It has touched on common grounds of our concern, immediate and long-term, but with an

uncommon and singular style and outlook. It opens up a new, challenging and revealing dimension of our traditionally held excitement and familiarity.

Mistress of Faith is a personal journey, mysterious and mythical, of a woman, Lata as she grows physically, sexually and spiritually. Metaphorically, it is also the story of Nepal's awakening into the twenty-first century. At last confronts tests and trials along the road to maturity, so does the kingdom of Nepal. Both wrestle with their own existential angst and, by extension, with the very cultural fabric of the country. The story is a fascinating exploration of Nepali culture, traditions and politics. The story of the novel is a journey of a Nepalese woman full of struggle for the success. It is also a new dimension to the Nepalese women through which they can convert themselves bold, progressive and reformers.

Aditya Man Shrestha, basically a journalist, is found critic even in his works. A journalist normally goes deep to the root of event to find out the causes. Then he digs out the stories and gives a form to it with the branches and leaves of criticism. He tries to explore wrongs and rights, happenings and should have been happened. In most of his works like *Wrong We do, Right We Don't*; *The Dreadful Night-Carnage at Nepalese Royal Palace*; and *Bleeding Mountains of Nepal*, Shrestha's journalist characteristics are present. But in other two works, he exposes himself. *Man from Nepal* is his own story whereas the culture and rituals followed by the protagonist in the *Mistress of Faith* is the rituals he and his family have been following at his own home.

Commonality is clear in his works. He is very much concerned to the Nepalese environment no matter whether it is politics or culture or behavior of common Nepali. He depicts the story from his own surrounding. He goes deep to them and explains them with the colour of critics. He seems to be a reformer rather than a mere critic. He

does not just dig up the problems of the society or politics or culture rather he points out what is wrong, what should have done, what should be done and what can be done. His works try to identify him as a social reformer who wants the overall betterment of the society and the country, which ultimately makes its dwellers happy and successful.

The present research is on Aditya Man Shrestha's novel, *Mistress of Faith*, published in 2003. *The Mistress of Faith* is a story of a simple and honest woman Lata. Since the environment and culture, in which she is grown up, is basically the Hindu religion, she builds up her faith over it. She never thinks of any (mis)interpretation of the religious epics and rituals. She is so convinced to the religious assumption that every situation turns to be good if and only if one can keep faith upon God. The religions, rituals and traditional social and cultural practices are her life giving forces. Her blind faith over these things is her inquiry for the betterment of her life. She blindly supports the religion and gets life force to make herself alive:

As a righteous but unsophisticated girl, Lata unquestioningly abided by the social norms and cultural practices. She did what her family had been doing without ever bothering to inquire what they meant in real life term...Rituals that looked bizarre did not bother her much as they had permeated into her system. They were a reality she had decided to live with. Hence, she had neither the desire nor the courage to question their efficacy. (10)

It makes clear about how Lata gets positive strength to live her life. She was taught to follow the cultural practices by her mother. Lata's mother, Goma tells Lata: "My bounden duty is to serve my husband. That is my dharma (spiritual calling)" (12).

After she gives birth to a son by Dr. Suresh, she feels guilty. Religiously, it is a sinful act and is against her belief: “Guilt started creeping and disturbing her from inside. . . . afraid of an unprovoked attack from known or unknown quarters” (83). The religion that was giving her life forces turns into a problem. Since she is sure that nobody will help her in this condition, she turns back into the same religion, rituals and social practices to find out new strength. She begins inquiring the religious epics, stories and practices from a different angle. Lata tells herself: “Just follow the cultural values and you are full in yourself She decided to find out what they actually meant in real life terms” (93).

She goes on analyzing her life giving forces critically and practically. She finds a lot of evidences from the same religious epics and stories, which could prove that giving birth to a son by a stranger is not a sinful act. Her inquiry into the same thing with a different angle gives her new strength along with a different insight. She starts questioning to the *Pundits*, the preachers “Is it not unfair on the part of god to punish Goma for no faults for hers? . . . Does the god have the right to punish the innocent” (137-8)? Her new way of inquiry gives her immense success in her life and establishes herself as a religious, social and female activist.

1.2 Literature Review

Since the publication of *Mistress of Faith* in 2003, various writers and critics have commented upon this novel from different perspectives like religious, feminist and so on. These approaches, no matter whether they are language oriented, author oriented or reader oriented have tried to interpret it with its meaning. The approach of the present research differs from those previous approaches in a sense that the present research will explore the cause of the female protagonist's positive change and will

prove how positive inquiry into the available resources can make one successful. The researcher will apply Appreciative Inquiry (AI) theory as a tool in the research.

Rachana Bhattarai, in *The Himalayan Times*, raises a question for open discussion: "Lata gradually begins to like Dr. Suresh, who provides her a good medical advice and more. She gives birth to a boy. But has Lata sinned? Does she need to perform penance" (7)? This review focuses on the social practice based on religion and culture. Lata's strength to analyze the religious practices and to bring change in the way of thinking is not touched in this review. Likewise critic Gunaraj Luintel simply supports the courage of Lata to make herself change, "She went through many difficulties to make her family happy. She went fast every week, worshipped *Pipal* tree in the midnight being naked. . . . She could challenge the traditional practice, misinterpretation of religion and could prove herself a brave woman" (kha). The review seems to be the product of surface reading. The root cause of Lata's change and her success is untouched in this review.

Bhojraj Raj Bhat, on his regular column 'Book Review' in the *Space Time Daily*, analyzes the novel from feministic point of view: " The novel portrays a clear picture of patriarchal society where male are dominant. . . . A woman goes for yoga regularly and goes to the temple everyday as per Hindu religion, is compelled to make stranger's bed warm with the hope of a son" (5). No doubt that the novel has challenged male dominant society, but it is yet to be researched in a different angle to explore the way of finding strength and method of seeing 'problem' as 'opportunity'.

Thus, the critics have interpreted this novel from different perspectives. Some critics have interpreted it as the weakness of the society which has been pushing an innocent into trouble. Some others have interpreted it from the feminist point of view and have proved that the religious and cultural practices are the product of male which

always dominate female. So the issue chosen by the present researcher deserves a research. This research will inquire and explore the cause of protagonist's success. It will also search out how a person finds new truth by changing the angle of inquiry. This research will introduce and apply Appreciative Inquiry theory that focuses on Positive Inquiry for success.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is the study and exploration of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best. This approach to personal change is based on the assumption that questions and dialogues about strengths, successes, values, hopes, and dreams are themselves transformational. AI believes that people individually and collectively have unique gifts, skills, and contributions to bring to life. It also believes that through human communication (Inquiry and dialogue) people can shift their attention and action away from problem analysis to lift up worthy ideals and productive possibilities for the future.

'Appreciative' means the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us, affirming past and present strength, success and potentials. It also means to perceive those things that give life to living systems. To increase in value is also appreciative. Similarly, 'inquire' means the act of exploration and discovery. It is to ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities.

The term 'appreciative' comes from the idea that when something increases in value, it 'appreciates.' Therefore, Appreciative Inquiry focuses on the generative and life-giving forces in the system, the things we want to increase. By 'inquiry' we mean the process of seeking to understand through asking questions. In this regard Diana and Amanda opine:

Appreciative Inquiry does not aim to change anything. It aims to uncover and bring forth existing strengths, hopes, and dreams; to identify and

amplify the positive core of the organization. In so doing, it transforms people and organizations. With Appreciative inquiry, the focus of attention is on positive potential – the best of what has been, what is, and what might be. It is a process of positive change. (Diana & Amanda, 2002).

AI mainly works with the strength one already has to achieve the dream. And, while doing so, people or the society transforms positively.

In connection to this theory, the present research will be focused on searching how the protagonist, in Aditya Man Shrestha's *Mistress of Faith*, gets success through the positive Inquiry. If the novel is read in surface, one can get the idea about Hindu culture, its myths, and rituals. But along the side of the description of rituals, Lata is moving ahead being driven by the culture. A blind supporter of the culture turns into its critic. A simple follower changes herself into a leader. In every condition, she depends upon religion. How can one get two different findings from the same thing? What is the mystery of success? How does one's internal change affect the external activities and his/her society? These are some of the questions arise after going through the novel. The critics have not touched this part of the novel though the novel is reviewed from various angles. The AI approach can be a right theory to deal the questions not answered yet. Therefore, this researcher will apply the AI theory to find out the root causes of the protagonist's success through her personal transformation.

The research will be divided into mainly four chapters. The first chapter is the general introduction in which the author's works and trend are analyzed. Besides, the literature review of the novel and AI theory are introduced in this chapter. The second chapter will cover the AI theory and its explanation. Textual analysis on the basis of AI theory will be in the third chapter and the fourth chapter will be the conclusion of the whole research.

Chapter II

Appreciative Inquiry

2.1. Meaning of Appreciative Inquiry

“There are only two ways to live your life – one is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle” (Quoted in *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook*). The great scientist Albert Einstein has opened a new angle of looking into the life, society and the world. This saying is asking a question – where is the fault: In the ‘sight’ or in the ‘creation’? It is said that there is fault in the sight not in the creation. It is one’s own vision, one’s own way of observing the world, and one’s own choice that determines the findings. If one thinks there is a problem, there is. If one thinks there is potentiality, there is. It is up to her/him what to choose.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) stands on the former part of Einstein’s saying. AI emphasizes the importance of cultural context of development by incorporating the local wisdom, cultural values, norms, and practices of present day. The AI itself is a human mental and physical management and empowerment approach and process. It deals with positive aspects of the community and appreciates them through increasing the positive values. The motive of AI is to yield positive change in individual, families, groups, communities, organizations, and the society as a whole. For its practical application AI perceives and understands the community, society and organizations are the living, creative and dynamic system. In the words of Cooperrider:

Appreciative Inquiry is about the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives life to a living system when it is most alive, most effective and most constructively capable in

economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. (9)

AI is a positive transformation and it starts and grows with positive logic. It starts with positive thinking and moves through positive inquiry, positive response, positive actions, positive conflict transformation and change. This interdependent logical sequence of thought, inquiry, response, action and change creates synergy to increase the life giving and nurturing forces. In this context, positive mind setting is very essential for positive societal transformation and change.

AI is a postmodern theory that is based on 'strength' rather than 'problem'. It is a change process which believes that both 'good' and 'bad' exist around us. By being positive and appreciating the existing world, we see something good and working. This is life giving force. This force is to be inquired, preserved and then expanded. This is the process of positive change. Thus, the key factor in the AI dialogue is that the underlying images held by a civilization or culture has an enormous influence on its fate.

2.2. Theoretical framework of Appreciative Inquiry

2.2.1. The basic foundation of Appreciative Inquiry

AI is grounded on three basic foundations. These are the theoretical and research foundations underlying in AI. The 'soil' on which AI is based is as follows:

1. Social constructionism
2. The 'new' science (quantum physics, chaos theory, complexity theory, and self-organizing systems); and
3. The power of image

The eight core principles and five generic processes of AI emerge on this foundation.

2.2.1.1 Social Constructionism

Appreciative Inquiry is grounded in the theory of social constructionism.

Watkins and Mohr (2001) write: “It answers the age old question: How do we know what we know? It calls all of our traditional answers into question” (26). Ken Gergen, whose work on social constructionism has a major formative impact on AI, describes the idea of language as creator of reality:

Social constructionist dialogues – of cutting edge significance within the social sciences and humanities-concern the processes by which humans generate meaning together. Our focus is on how social groups create and sustain beliefs in the real, the rational, and the good. We recognize that as people create meaning together, so do they sow the seeds of action.

Meaning and action are entwined. As we generate meaning together we create the future. (25)

Envisioned future is created through meaning which is made in collaboration.

AI is a postmodern theory. Post-modernism rejects the idea of an underlying structure and of an underlying truth rather it embraces the idea of multiple and contextually determined realities. Social constructionism is a formative theory of the post-modern era. Vivian Burr (1995) writes:

There is no single description which would be adequate for all the different kinds of writers whom I shall refer to as social constructionist. This is because, although different writers may share some characteristics with others, there is not rally anything that they all have in common. What links them all together is a kin or family resemblance. There is no one feature which could be said to identify a social constructionist position. (27)

Burr advocates that everyone is different from other with his/her unique characteristics. Resemblance is possible among many but not the exact the sameness in all.

Social constructionists argue that our world is shaped by the many dialogues and discourses that we have with one another-conversations in which we both selectively make sense of our past and present experience and history and create shared images of what we anticipate in the future. AI takes this one step further into an intervention process based on the power of dialogue generated by inquiry itself, that is, the power of the questions we ask.

At the crux of AI is the choice we make by the first questions we ask. AI acts on the theory that the very act of inquiry shifts the system in the direction of the inquiry by evoking anticipatory images created in the dialogue, positive inquiry leading to positive images. Cooperrider and Whitney write: “From a constructionist perspective, words do not mirror the world out there; they coordinate our actions. Professional languages function like tools” (22).

2.2.1.2 The ‘New’ Science

The common denominator of the new science is the search for a theory of wholeness. The language of new sciences has a major impact on how we think about human systems. The new science embraces the magnificent complexity of our world while assuring us that built into the very fabric of the universe are processes and potentials enough to help us and all of our organizations move toward our highest and most desired visions (ibid 2001:7). Wheatley writes:

In new science, the underlying currents are a movement toward holism, toward understanding the system as a system and giving primary value to the relationships that exist among seemingly discrete parts. ... When we

view systems from this perspective we enter an entirely new landscape of connections, of phenomena that cannot be reduced to simple cause and effect, and of the constant flux of dynamic processes. (Quoted in Watkins and Mohr).

New science mainly focuses on wholeness. It gives importance in ‘unit’ but lies on the ‘whole’ for the complete understanding.

There are four components compiled in this new science. They are: Quantum physics, chaos theory, self-organizing systems, and complexity theory.

Quantum physics describes the new properties that come from the combination or relationships of simple things. Quantum theory suggests that there is a wave/particle duality (a wavicle) and that these basic building blocks of the universe have the potential to behave as a wave or as a particle, depending on their surroundings. It describes the phenomena of the new properties that come from the combination or relationships of simple things. Possibility is the key. In quantum reality, all things move in harmony as some part of a larger, invisible whole. We might describe this as a quantum shift! From understanding the world as parts, each alone in space and time linked only through force, quantum physics presents us with a universe in which every part is linked to every other part. (Watkins and Mohr: 2001)

This view of the way the world works challenges any assumption about being able to isolate one thing from another, and it goes further to suggest that the observer cannot be separated from that which is observed. It challenges us to reexamine our assumptions about how organizations and society function as well.

Chaos theory presents another challenge to Newton’s clockwork universe with its predictable tides and planetary motion. In chaos theory, very simple patterns become complex and unpredictable, as demonstrated by fractals, weather patterns, and

the stock market. No level of accuracy is exact enough for long-term predictions. Such an idea rocks the very foundation of such organizational sacred cows as long-range planning, which in its most linear application requires a belief in a reasonable amount of predictability in the future.

Self-organizing systems behave in the reverse way. A complex and unpredictable situation develops into a larger, more ordered pattern like a whirlpool or a living organism. Although most organizations have, no doubt, experienced the sudden clarity that can come out of seeming chaotic situations, few have learned to embrace chaos, often short-circuiting times and situations that hold the potential for high levels of innovation and creativity.

Complexity theory is most often described as ‘order at the edge of chaos.’ It is also the study of complex systems that cannot be reduced to simple parts. Along with quantum and chaos theory, complexity theory focuses on the emergent whole that cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts. It involves unpredictability, nonlinear and discontinuous change-the phenomena that lead to surprising new forms (Marshall and Zohar, 1998, quoted in Ibid 2001:7).

2.2.1.3 The Power of Image

Appreciative inquiry is the art of helping systems create images of their most desired future. Based on the belief that a human system will show a heliotropic tendency to move toward positive images, AI is focused on the generative and creative images that can be held up, valued, and used as a basis for moving toward the future. Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros in ‘Appreciative Inquiry Handbook (2005)’ describe about the power of image:

1. The placebo effect: It is a process in which projected images, as reflected in positive belief, ignite a healing response that can be as powerful as conventional therapy.
2. Pygmalion effect: This advocates that cognitive capacities are cued and shaped by the images projected through another's expectations.
3. Positive effect and learned helpfulness: It says that while still in the formative stages, early results suggest that positive imagery evokes positive emotions and positive emotions move people toward a choice for positive actions.
4. The inner dialogue: The AI dialogue creates guiding images of the future from the collective whole of the group. It exists in a very observable, energizing and tangible way in the living dialogue that flows through every living system, expressing itself anew at every moment.
5. Positive image: The underlying images have enormous influence on its fate. As long as an individual's image is positive and flourishing, the dynamic culture is growing toward the positive images of the future. When there is a vision or a bright image of the future, the people flourish.

2.3 Assumption of Appreciative Inquiry

The organization, society and individual, moves in the direction of the most desired future. This is the core assumption of AI. Basically, AI operates from the assumptions that:

1. In every organization, group, or individual something works and can be valued.
2. What we focus on becomes the reality we create.

3. The language we use creates our reality and there are many realities around us.
4. The act of asking a question begins the change.
5. People have more confidence to journey to the future when they carry forward the best parts of the past.
6. It is important to recognize diversity.

AI assumes that every single unit has its own positive quality that is giving life to it and its whole. If the journey begins with the past success along with the present quality, the traveler gets strength which helps to create a new reality easily and fast. This is how one gets to success.

2.4 The Core Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

There are eight¹ core principles of AI. These principles are as unique and distinctive as the practices to which they have given birth. Derived from three generalized streams of thought – social constructionism, image theory, and grounded research – they suggest that human organizing and change is a positive, socially interactive process of discovering and crafting life-affirming, guiding images of the future. Briefly consider these three streams of thought and their implications for AI (Diana & Amanda: 2003). Widely accepted and practiced core principles of AI are as follows:

2.4.1 The constructionist principle: Words Create Worlds

This principle states that knowledge and destiny are interwoven. The constructionist principle places human communication and language at the center of human organizing and change. It posits that meaning is made in conversation, reality is created in communication, and knowledge is generated through social interaction.

¹ Originally, David L. Cooperrider has developed five core principles of AI. Later, Diana Whitney has developed and added 3 more principles of it in her work 'The Power of Appreciative Inquiry' (2003).

In essence, it states that knowledge is a subjective reality – a social artifact resulting from communication among groups of people. Further, the constructionist principle suggests that words, language, and metaphors are more than mere descriptions of reality. They are words that create worlds (Diana & Amanda: 2003)

2.4.2 The Simultaneity Principle: Inquiry Creates Change

This principle recognizes that inquiry and change are not truly separate moments; they can and should be simultaneous. Inquiry is intervention. The seeds of change are the things people think and talk about, the things people discover and inspire images of the future. They are implicit in the very first questions asked. One of the most impactful things a change agent does is to articulate questions. The questions set the stage for what is ‘found’ and what is ‘discovered’ (Cooperrider: 2005).

2.4.3 The Poetic Principle: We Can Choose What We Study

Diana and Amanda write in *the Power of Appreciative Inquiry* that the poetic principle suggests that organizations are like open books – endless sources of learning, inspiration, and interpretation. Like great works of literature, poetry, or sacred texts, organizations are stories that can be told and retold, interpreted and reinterpreted, through any frame of reference or topic of inquiry. The choice of what to study is ours and ours alone. ... The topics we choose to study are fateful. They not only determine what we discover and learn; they actually create it.

2.4.4 The Anticipatory Principle: Image Inspires Action

The Anticipatory Principle suggests that images of the future guide and inspire present-day actions and achievements. It says that organizations exist, in part, because people are drawn to and share images and projections of the future, which is full of inevitable and unpredictable surprise. Cybernetic scientists recognize this as uncertainty; complexity theorists describe it as chaos. The element of surprise and the

presence of the unknown have always and will always exist. Given this element of surprise, all we can possibly know about the future comes from what we hope, dream, and imagine. In short, we create images of where we believe we're going – and then we organize to those images (Ibid:2003).

2.4.5 The positive Principle: Positive Questions Lead to Positive Change

As Watkins & Mohr (2001) write in *Appreciative Inquiry*, momentum for change requires large amounts of both positive affect and social bonding – things like hope, inspiration, and sheer joy in creating with one another. Appreciative Inquiry demonstrates that the more positive the questions used to guide a group process or organization change effort, the more long – lasting and effective the change effort (Bushe & Coetzer, 1995 [quoted in *ibid*]). Human beings and organizations move in the direction of what they inquire about. Thus, inquiry into ‘empowerment’ or into ‘being the best organization in the field’ will have a completely different long-term, sustainable impact for positive action than will a study into ‘low morale’ or into ‘process breakdowns’ done with the idea that those conditions can be ‘cured’.

2.4.6 The Wholeness Principle: Wholeness Brings out the Best

The wholeness principle posits that the experience of wholeness brings out the best in people, communities, and organization. As quantum physicist David Bohm suggests, wholeness – the whole story, the whole system, and the whole person – is essential to a well-lived life. The experience of wholeness and healing emerges not in the discovery of commonalities, but rather in understanding, accepting, and enjoying differences. The sense of understanding the whole story – with all its differences and distinctions – brings with it a kind of contentment that does not require agreement. Thus, it creates a contest in which people can safely focus on issues of higher purpose and greater good for the whole (Ibid).

2.4.7 The Enactment Principle: Acting ‘As If’ is Self-Fulfilling

The enactment principle suggests that transformation occurs by living in the present what we most desire in the future. Put more simply, positive change comes about as images and visions of a more desired future are enacted in the present. Indian Leader Mahatma Gandhi’s assertion: “Be the change you want to see” is the generating factor of this idea (Ibid).

2.4.8 The Free Choice Principle: Free Choice Liberates Power

People and organizations thrive when people are free to choose the nature and extent of their contribution. It suggests that treating people as volunteers – with freedom to choose to contribute as they most desire – liberates both personal and organizational power. Free choice builds enthusiasm and commitment to the organization and fosters high performance. It is through the choices we make that we distinguish ourselves, contribute our gifts to the world, and leave our legacy. This principle teaches us to consistently create opportunities for create opportunities for choice, to give people options, and to encourage them to choose their work based on their intuitions, interests, strengths, and highest callings (Ibid).

Taken together, the eight principles of AI point to one simple message: AI is about conversations that matter. It also implies that AI conversations are about what matters most to people. At their best, conversations – inquiry, dialogue, discussion, and debate – make real and tangible the highest potentials of society and its people.

2.5. The ‘4-D’ Cycle

The ‘4-D’ cycle is none other than a practical change process and a tool that allows the user to follow a well-coordinated series of steps to help identify positive core and initiate the concrete operational steps to achieve goals. The ‘4-Ds’ are: discovery, dream, design and destiny.

2.5.1. Discovery

Discovery is the first step of AI change process. This is the phase in which people or organization or society engage into discovering and valuing those positive factors that give life to the organization or society or people. Looking into the past success and present strength, one digs out the life-giving forces. As part of the ‘discovery’ process, individuals engage in dialogue and meaning-making. This is simply the open sharing of discoveries and possibilities. Through dialogue, a consensus begins to emerge whereby individuals say, “Yes, this is an ideal vision we value and should aspire to.” Discovery is just like to have a flight into the sky looking upon the ground, i.e. the strength that giving life.

2.5.2. Dream

The ‘dream’ phase involves challenging the status quo by envisioning a preferred future and describing that future in a ‘macro’ provocative proposition. When the best of what is has been identified, the mind naturally begins to search further and to envision new possibilities. Valuing the best of what it leads to envisioning what might be. Envisioning involves passionate thinking, creating a positive image of a desired and preferred future. On the ground of ‘What we have’ stands the ‘Dream’. This is the dream seen in the day for better future, better life and what we call ‘success.’ It is just like to stand on the ground and to see the stars in the sky.

2.5.3. Design

The ‘Design’ phase includes the creation of the social architecture of the organization to achieve the ‘Dream’. This design is more than a vision. It is a provocative and inspiring statement of intention that is grounded in the realities of what has worked in the past. It enhances the organization by leveraging its own past successes and successes that have been experienced elsewhere with a ‘strategic

intent'. The process of 'Design' is just like to make a ladder to climb up to the stars that are seen standing on the ground. Whatever is envisioned, it is to achieve, and certain strategies have to be made to achieve the vision. That's what the 'Design' is.

2.5.4. Destiny/Delivery

The final phase creates ways to deliver on the new images of the future – both the overall visions of the dream phase and the more specific provocative propositions of the design phase. It is a time of continuous learning, adjustment, and improvisation. The momentum and potential for innovation is extremely high by this stage of inquiry. Because of the share positive images, everyone is included in co-creating the future. This phase, simply, is the phase of action plan. Under the strategies taken to achieve the envisioned future on the basis of positive strength, certain activities have to be accomplished. And, this is the part of 'Destiny.' These are the activities that actually take to the destination. This phase is just like to add the steps in the ladder, stepping on which one climbs up to the envisioned future.

Appreciative Inquiry is a practical philosophy of being in the world at a day-to-day level to build the world that they want to live in. As a practical philosophy, AI invites people to choose to seek out and inquire into that which are generative and life-enriching in their own lives and in the lives of others and to explore the attendant hopes and dreams for the future. As Watkins & Mohr say 'AI is the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen system's capacity in positive ways that enable the system to reconceptualize its purpose, principles, and design and that enhance its most generative forces (194).'

AI is different from traditional problem solving model. The problem solving involves understanding the current state, identifying problems and gaps, brainstorming solutions, selecting and testing a solution, and analyzing the results. It

focuses on what's wrong or broken. It has been proven that this approach lowers individual's energy and creativity. AI, as an alternative approach, has proven to shift organization and individual's perceptions and effectiveness by focusing on what's right, positive, or possible.

AI is a postmodern theory. As Madan Sarup says: "In a postmodern society, knowledge becomes functional. You learn things, not to know them, but to use that knowledge" (3). He further points out, "The opposite of 'knowledge' is not 'ignorance', but rather 'noise'. Anything that does not qualify as a kind of knowledge is 'noise,' something that is not recognizable as anything within this system" (3). AI focuses on knowledge through 'inquiry' which is to apply in finding out the best in the future. In postmodernism 'there are only signifiers.' From a post-modernist perspective, narrative is not necessarily right or wrong -it is just a perspective.

Since we think ourselves and communicate to others through language, language plays a central role in social construction. Social organization is open to infinite possibilities constrained only by the human imagination and collective will. Rather than attempting to measure and manage change levers, appreciative inquiry seeks to evoke new ideas that will compel self-organizing change (Bushe & Kassam).

Since AI is grounded on 'New' science, AI gives importance to each individual, age, gender, culture, village, hamlet, and so on (Nepal Appreciative Inquiry National Network, Banepa Declaration: 2004). Each unit of a whole is full of energy that has to be accumulated to change into synergy. That is why, AI focuses on inquiring into energy i.e. the force to make life live. Rather than focusing on 'what is not working' it suggests to focus on 'What is working'. With this positive attitude, if analyzed the available sources, one can find tremendous possibilities of success: we find what we look for.

Chapter III

Assertion of the Strength of Appreciative Inquiry

Mistress of Faith, a novel by Aditya Man Shretha, presents forty years of Nepali political scenario. The novel is also an anthology of Hindu rituals. Due to the cultural diversity in Nepal, the rituals of the same religion are performed in different ways in different parts of the country. But the novel is mainly concerned with the festivals, rituals and culture, practiced in the Kathmandu valley.

The novel is written in omniscient point of view. The narrator tells the story, which revolves round the protagonist, Lata, throughout the novel. The author has created very few characters in the novel: Lata, the protagonist; Suraj, a doctor; Dambar, Lata's husband; Rekha, Lata's daughter, and Samir, Lata's son are the only characters named in the novel. Besides, Lata's mother, brother, her mother and father – in – laws, and Pundits have got very few roles in the novel. Dr. Suresh has played a very significance role in the novel after Lata. The development of Lata from a simple girl to a successful woman, her inner struggle and Dr. Suresh's supportive role in the novel are major components of the novel. The protagonist's development and transformation towards success is something different that creates curiosity and increases interest to the readers.

Lata is presented as a mysterious character among the members of Nepalese women for she changes from a very simple girl to a daring, bold, courageous and successful woman. The present research will analyze her development from the angle of Appreciative Inquiry and will try to trace out the route of her success. Besides, the research will also study her success from psychological and postmodern point of view.

From the very beginning, the novel accepts multiple realities in regards to the place, character and environment. The novel is set in the Kathmandu valley. The understanding about Kathmandu valley is diverse to the different people. Even within the same understanding, the cause behind it is different:

To the natives Kathmandu looked extraordinary because they found it a couple of steps ahead of the rest of the country. To the visitors it appeared equally extraordinary because for them it was couple of steps behind their countries. The natives had seen it grow from a tiny, manageable living place to an overcrowded unmanageable city. But the outsiders still considered it too small in size and shape. (9)

This is the way how we explain the world we live in. The world is created as we know it. Diana & Amanda in *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry* (2003) write, “The terms by which we understand our world and our ‘self’ are neither required nor demanded by 'what there is' ” (56). The explanation of our world depends upon what we know. It means 'what we know' decides 'how we explain'. The level of understanding is as high as the level of knowing.

In this regard, the reality of a person varies in different place, time and environment. Lata, the protagonist of the novel, in the beginning, is very simple girl in the sense of her physical development and of her knowing. The time of the story is about half a century ago when the life of Kathmandu was very simple. Lata was born in a Hindu family in Kathmandu. Neither Lata was taught to be critical nor could she herself be analytical: “As a righteous but unsophisticated girl, Lata unquestioningly abided by the social norms and cultural practices. She did what her family had been doing without ever bothering to inquire what they meant in real life term” (10). Level of her understanding changes in due course of her life. The author mentions this in the

beginning of the novel: “Lata’s transformation from an ordinary girl to an extraordinary woman, one might say, was due to her simplicity and honesty” (10). As she knows the life and society in a different way, her reality also changes accordingly.

The foundation of Lata’s reality is her culture that is being practiced at her home and society. “They were reality she had decided to live with. Hence, she had neither the desire nor the courage to question their efficacy” (10). The existing culture and rituals have shaped her mind. So,

She thought the Nepalese had only two big events in life. One when they were born and another when they were dead. Whatever happened in between was ordinary and insignificant. . . . The living had no meaningful presence as it was linked to and influenced by the past or the unknown future, not the future they would witness and experience but the fate after death they would perhaps never be able to know. (11)

The culture has influenced her so much that she could never think out of it. Her belief is built upon it. She believes that the present is the outcome of past as William Shakespeare says “Child is the father of a man.” For her, future is the spot where death lies. She couldn’t understand that the present is constructively influenced and affected by the ‘desired positive future.’ She is destined to believe in ‘as it appears.’

She is deprived of knowing life by herself. She lives with the vested truth by her parents. She is to live with the reality put in front of her:

The hard reality was there for her to live with. Her life was perceived, as that of a human obliged to behave like a good girl, a good wife, and a good mother. It was not she who decided how she should live her life. It was her family-old and new-that decided how she should. That too was based on scriptures documented thousands of years back. (12)

Her creativity and curiosity is blocked by the family and scriptures. The process of seeking to understand through asking question is far from her. She has known to believe only what her parents have taught her to be and what the scriptures have said.

This is why she never dares to ask questions about the relevance of cultural practices in her life and society. She could never think of inquiring ‘what is good’ in what she believes. She even does not know that one can bring changes in life through seeking out the strength of life and expanding them. But, how could she know another reality about life since she has never got the opportunity to experience from the other side?

Lata’s reality about life is cultural practices, religious teachings, myths and her parents’ lessons. These facts have shaped her realization to accept that one does live in the world for oneself: “Lata realized she was not living a life of her own, nor was she living it for herself. She felt she had no hold over own being. Someone else was in control of her soul” (13).

Her childhood passes listening to the parents' teaching about how she should behave after her marriage. Whenever she happened to listen to the myths, she concerned and focused to those stories that would help her in the future when she would be at her husband’s home. Before her marriage, she was taught that she has to marry and should give birth to “a son, a gate opener to the heaven, besides being the perpetuator of family gene” (13). The myths had also warned that it is one of the holiest of duties ever to be performed by a man or a woman. Without a son Lata would be destined for hell and suffer untold miseries.

These sorts of teachings have been filled in her mind. Every society has its own culture and the members of the society are supposed to follow its norms. The norms, values and traditions are to be taught to its new members. But, along with the

teaching, the society has to keep rooms to its members: to think over the teachings, to ask questions for their clarification to find a new way for the success of themselves, and for the improvement of these norms. The only way to do this is to teach in a positive way. But, Lata, in the novel, is taught in a negative way. She is told about her duty that she has to fulfil at her husband's home. She is threatened that she would be punished if she fails to perform so. This has made her passive towards life.

Hopes, rewards, and benefits are some of the things that encourage human being to live for the future. The myths have nowhere mentioned about the reward, a mother gets if she gives birth to a son. A female has to perform the task, but the credit and prize go to others; a mother has to go under hard practices, but the happiness is for someone else. A mother gives a son but credit goes to her family. In the contrary, if she fails to perform such duties, she would be punished but not others. What an injustice!

Lata, therefore, seems to be passive towards life. She is afraid of the punishment she could bear if she fails to give birth to a son. It is the very first 'fear' that enters into her mind. "The very thought produced shivers in her body" (13).

Belief system in human being is something very strange to some extent. Anthony Robbins in his *Unlimited Power* writes "If you think you can, you can; if you think you don't, you don't" (97). The same thing happens in Lata's life also. She is shown the negative side of the failure performance i.e. if she fails to give birth to a son, she will be pushed into the hell. This fear enters into her mind. Unknowingly, this is guiding her belief system towards inability of giving birth to a son.

On the other hand, she never knew that determination of the sex of a fetus does not depend on mother but on father. Including herself, all her family members and the whole society have the same belief that it is a mother who determines the sex of a

child. It is as though a mother decides from her mind whether to be a mother of a daughter or a son! Due to the lack of awareness and knowledge, Lata falls into the metal tension without any fault from her side.

Unlike everyone's hope, she becomes the mother of a daughter. Nobody is delighted at home though arrival of a new member is considered as a "joyous stirring" (14). Her fear is accelerated more and duty of giving birth to a son is yet to be performed. But on the other hand, the sex of the baby does not affect her to feel a sense of deep satisfaction, of motherhood and self fulfillment. The sense of accomplishment of creating and fondling a new life matters her more. After all, she is a complete and successful mother.

Happiness is rooted in inner satisfaction. Though it is momentary, she has got a chance to feel a sense of motherhood for the first time in her life, for which she might have been waiting for a long time. At the very moment of breast-feeding, "her heart pounded with unprecedented joy" (14). She doesn't care about the outer world but she is lost in her own inner world of satisfaction. She could experience the taste of happiness in life. The feeling could teach her a lesson that the subjective reality is as important as the objective reality is.

Knowingly or unknowingly, whenever there is not any support from outsider in a difficult condition, one finds the way out from the available sources. Lata is in the same condition. She feels a sense of fear that she should bear a son at any rate. Nobody is supporting her 'how', but forcing her to give a son 'anyhow': "Medical advice was not available and nor there was anybody with whom she could openly seek advice regarding conception and childbirth" (15). Even her husband was not cooperative in this regard. She finds herself as a single alive warrior in the battle field to achieve victory. So she decides to take the help of her belief- the belief in her

religion, culture and ritual practices. “Where there was no known device to achieve it, Lata thought it wise to invoke the unknown forces that may bless her with a son” (16).

Though unknowingly, she moves on the way of Appreciative Inquiry. She has heard a lot of stories from the myths in which many characters have been rescued by Gods/Goddesses in such situation. Nothing, nobody and no means are ready to help her and that’s why she determines to rely on unknown forces, the supernatural forces.

In order to materialize her belief, she does not leave any *brata*, religious fasting, *puja*, worship and any other religious occasions and rituals untouched. Almost every day she worships Gods/Goddesses praying for a son. Her faith upon Gods/Goddesses is blind faith though. Her mission of life is to bear a son no matter how hard practices she should go underway.

Not only Lata but her mother-in-law also tries from her side to get a grandson from Lata. For this, she consults Ajima, a woman endowed with power to heal and forecast the future. Ajima makes a positive remark: “Lata would be blessed with a son after a few years but there might be a problem” (21). The remark makes the mother-in-law very happy. She is one of the first characters in the novel to move on the path of AI. The expansion of positive strength and belief narrows the negative side of life. The mother-in-law is eager to hear that she would be a grandmother of a male baby and that’s what she heard from Ajima. She does not care about the word ‘problem’ that Ajima has said. “What she wanted to hear, she heard. She left the Ajima’s abode immensely assured and relieved” (22).

This is an appreciative way of living life. A person first needs inner determination, confidence and readiness to achieve the success. The positive aspect of anything provides such prerequisites to get a desired future. Once one move with such strength, the ‘obstacles’ and ‘problems’ come across the path, can be solved with

courage. The mother-in-law is exactly following the same philosophy. Even when delivering the Ajima's remarks to her family members, she doesn't speak out the word 'problem'. "The 'problem' was not mentioned. In fact, the old lady herself did not know what it was. She conveniently pushed it aside in the back of her mind" (22).

Both Lata and her mother-in-law have a strong faith upon Gods/Goddesses. Lata is developing her faith more and more because she is convinced that the unconditional deep faith upon God turns into good. So she is ready to do anything to make the almighty happy. Her mother-in-law assists Lata to perform rituals, *pujas* and many other religious activities. For the both, the truth and reality is the 'grace of God.' They are convinced that only the mercy of almighty gives a son in the family. They have not seen the other part of the reality. They are no more on the way of holistic approach. It is because they have not inquired into their belief. Their blind belief makes Lata go under such an undigested practice which a woman of Nepalese culture can't even think over.

One of such rituals Lata performs is the worship of *pipal* tree in the midnight being naked. She is compelled to do so, as they believe, for the grace of a son and for shielding Lata from possible widowhood: "She immediately rejected the idea. How could she do a thing that she had not done even in bed" (24)? But she finds herself weak in front of her mother-in-law's insistence. Within the compulsion, she builds up her determination to perform any activities if this pays happiness. So she follows everything what the pundit, the priest, tell her to do.

The determination leads to success wiping out her 'fear'. While going towards the *pipal* tree, the darkness adds fear in her mind, and the fear of being naked in front of a holy tree rises up. The rustling leaves, due to breeze, add to her extra fear. But the strong determination encourages her to complete the task. Lata performs *puja* alone in

the midnight. As soon as she completes the *puja*, her feeling changes into a feeling of victory: “She discovered that determination drives the fear away. If so, why not resolve to do something spectacular in life? She looked up the pipal tree and thought the leaves were clapping in approbation” (25).

Here, for the first time in her life, Lata’s mind is opened to see the life from another angle. The new thought of "resolve to do something spectacular in life" (25) enters into her mind due to the success she could get, which she was thinking impossible. She is delighted from the success of worshipping *pipal* naked. The success inspires her to perceive the world in a different way. She felt that the leaves of *pipal* were frightening before her success. But, as soon as she gets success, she feels as if the leaves are ‘clapping.’ How can the same condition have two different meanings almost in the same time? It is only because of the change in the way of perceiving the world. If one is afraid, even one's breathing frightens her/him; but if one is happy, she/he finds the whole world is smiling. AI encourages finding out the success which is ‘strength.’ One small success gives one extra energy to find a big success. This is why, Lata thinks of doing something impressive in life immediately after she can erase ‘im’ from ‘impossible.’ This is a right way to move towards the success in life in an AI approach.

Lata is devoted to God and Goddesses by her heart, mind, body and soul. She is more confined with rituals, *pujas*, *bratas* and religious activities. Her mission is to get a male baby and for her, the only way to achieve her goal is to acquire blessing of God. As the Hindu religion believes, a true devotee is fortunate to get Lord’s blessing. Since Lata is not much attracted to her husband due to his behavior, she is always around the images of Gods and Goddesses.

As a routine, everyday she worships *tulsi*, *ocimum sanctum*, one of the most revered plants in Nepal; worships Lord Shiva on *Teej*, a women's festival; goes fasting; performs the rites of *Rishi Panchami*, the day of the seven sages, and many other rituals and customs that befall according to religious calendar. Although she was told that the present life is already set in heaven according to the 'karma', deeds of the previous life, she doesn't care about it.

Lata wouldn't know what happened in her previous life or in heaven but she knew what was happening to her in this life right on this earth. . . . Instead of finding fault with the situation she was in, Lata diverted her mind and energy to religious pursuits that, in any case, were an integral part of the Nepalese households. (28-29)

Slowly but gradually, Lata is on the right track of thinking about future on the base of present strength. Before her marriage, she was listening to the myths and performing all sorts of rituals just for listening and performing as a machine work. She even didn't know the value of doing so. But now, she has set a goal of giving birth to a son. Therefore, she is trying to get meaning of the rituals she has been performing.

She worships *tulsi* every day and finds out the scientific importance of it is that *tulsi* is also a medicinal herb. Although she is not much aware about the scientific importance of the rituals, she is attracted more to the *tulsi* when she knows extra benefit of this herb. And, finally comes in conclusion that "worship is nothing but the other form of recognition, she concluded" (29).

This is how she begins to understand the meaning of appreciation. Appreciation is recognition. Everything and everyone in this world has something good. AI encourages to inquire this 'goodness' of others and to appreciate it. Though there are various forms of appreciation, one can appreciate in any way one thinks right. Here,

Lata recognizes the importance of *tulsi* and she appreciates the herb by offering worship. When she knew nothing about it, she used to worship without any meaning. But now she knows *tulsi* with a different meaning. She worships to value the strength of *tulsi*. So, “Lata began worshipping tulsi not only out of blind faith but also out of her admiration for its intrinsic medicinal value” (30).

This is how Lata is moving on the way of finding new truths. The more she involves into rituals with a distinctive objective, the more she is analytical and critical towards such activities. On the day of *Teej*, the women’s festival, she goes to *Pashupatinath* temple, the temple of Lord Shiva. On this day, unmarried girls worship Lord Shiva for getting husbands of their choice, and married women worship him for a long and happy conjugal life.

But Lata doubts its reality. She examines herself and finds that it is wrong. When she was a girl, she had paid her homage to the Lord many times wishing for a good and loving husband. But she is deceived and has got a man who never shows any sign of love toward her. She is not satisfied with him because “Dambar behaved with his bride just the way he did with other girls before marriage. His relationship with women verged on barbarism” (31). So she wishes to get freedom from her husband. “Lata wished for something else, freedom from Dambar. She prayed, ‘Oh, God, liberate me from this man’” (34). She doesn’t find any meaning of performing the rituals on *Teej* and visiting the temple of Lord Shiva. She, then, asks herself “Why, then, should I observe an occasion that has had no meaning in my life” (35)?

She starts inquiring in her faith, and in the rituals she has been following. She starts comparing and analyzing the fact. This sort of process is slowly turning her into the other direction of life which will certainly give her a new reality and new meaning of life.

As she is growing with a new meaning, her thinking broadens. Whenever she is hopeful to be a mother of a son, she is delighted and thinks more than herself. Her thinking is not a mere day dream but comes into reality in the future:

She, of course, had an inner desire to see something positive done which she thought she could not do by herself. There she aspired a role for herself in the society and making her presence felt she wanted to do something for the people's welfare. That was the motivating force behind her leaning toward political activities. She also thought that what she could not do herself could be done through her son. To her own surprise though, she later took up this responsibility onto herself more on cultural reformation than anything else. (39)

Although she is still not sure whether she could be a son's mother, she is able to sow a seed of positive deed in her mind i.e. a dream of a successful person doing something good for the society. She envisions herself as a woman of her own identity through the welfare activities in the society. This is a sign of getting success in life. The vision acts as a driving force that inspires, motivates and encourages one to move on the way to achieve it. Lata now, is moving towards the path of Appreciative Inquiry.

But before being a successful woman, she has to give birth to a son. In addition to the devotion to the Gods, she tries to follow the timetable of having sexual intercourse as prescribed in the ancient book of Manusmriti. But she does not find her husband cooperative in this course. When she fails to find a perfect way to get a son, she goes fasting more frequently than before, which causes her acute acidity.

As a result, she is fainted and her family call a doctor. The doctor is Suresh who is a young and amiable physician. His body structure attracts Lata. After checking her up, he suggests her to visit him in hospital for further investigation. She continues

fasting and due to it she feels illness. So she frequently goes to hospital to see Dr. Suresh.

Meeting with Dr. Suresh is a remarkable turning point in her life. He not only prescribes medicine to her but also listens to her belief and suggests her to do this and that for her physical betterment. Lata entertains having conversation with him freely. However, she doesn't know why she feels relief to be with him. She even talks with him about her wish to be a mother of a son. Suresh, on the other hand, pays special attention to her and listens to her more attentively and interestingly.

The closeness between two is due to conversation. Cooperrider is right to say 'words create worlds.' Conversation creates world we want. Language is the most powerful tool that breaks down the walls of restriction and makes the ground plain. In the case of Lata with Dr. Suresh, the conversation between them is able to break the barriers of social taboos. There is nobody at home to listen to Lata, with whom she can share her feelings, desires and wishes. Mother and father –in-laws play their authoritarian role, whereas her husband is just a bed partner. A kind of suffocation has been attacking her. But Dr. Suresh shows his interest to discuss with her in any subject matter: politics, religion, life and so on. Lata expresses openly in front of him. The open dialogue opens the door of closeness between the two: "She found the conversation with him more comforting than his prescription. She feels the social walls were breaking down as she started to share her well guarded secrets with him" (44).

The power of conversation adds her extra strength. The attitude towards life changes and feeling of entertainment in life resurrects in her. She finds the same boring and monotonous world filled with the resources of entertainment. The open

conversation with Dr. Suresh converts her towards emotional feeling with males. So she starts entertaining even in the visit of temples:

Temple visits made her happier as she enjoyed the admiring attention of the boys in crowd. She did not even mind rubbing shoulders with them. Even an inadvertent touch of the young bodies gave her the sensation. The delight was entirely hers. With maturity dawning on her, she began to welcome the festival also as an indication of womanpower being resurrected. (48)

The closeness with Dr. Suresh gives her a new but natural feeling of attraction towards opposite sex.

Relationship with the doctor helps her analyze and understand the festivals differently. This also helps her to understand the power of women. She is able to find a new meaning of Dashain festival, celebrated throughout Nepal as a national festival. She has been celebrating the festivals since she was a child. But she is able to find the importance of the festival only now. She draws the meaning that people celebrate Dashain festival as the victory over demon by Goddess Durga. Durga, a female, is worshipped during the festival: “Lata was happy to see a girl being worshipped because the practice represented and acknowledgement of the superior power of women” (51). The purpose, she thinks, “was to demonstrate the power of woman that had for whatever reason remained dormant” (52).

She is able to inquire the importance and reason behind the religious festivals and rituals. When she analyzes in this way, she feels energized. She is able to see the strength of a woman and herself. This sort of analysis could fill her energy to act accordingly in the society: “The inspiration derived from the divine notion of power

of woman prompted Lata to work as a political worker. . . . It was precisely this faith-inspired force that Lata wanted to mobilize in her socio-political campaign” (52).

It seems that Lata is able to receive positive image. As per AI theory, positive image gives positive transformation and it starts and grows with positive logic. It starts with positive thinking and moves through positive inquiry, positive response, positive actions, and positive change. This interdependent logical sequence creates synergy to increase the life giving and nurturing forces. The positive image of women power inspires her to be a social leader.

As the relationship with doctor helps her to open her eyes to see a different energy, she becomes closer to him more and more:

The conversation she had with him was relatively frank compared to the one she had with other men. Mutual frankness bared her mind and heart and it was slowly creeping into her physical being. Her thirst for physical proximity and pleasure grew just the way her pursuit of spiritual attainment had grown within herself. (55)

The desire to have physical relationship with Dr. Suresh increases in Lata day by day. Same is the case in Suresh as well. They both are mentally ready for the relationship but social barrier for Lata and medical ethics for Suresh appear as obstacles.

However, the ‘inner desire’ rises as a strong strength in both of them.

When one strongly determines to accomplish something, nothing can block him/her. Will power is the strongest of all power. In the case of Lata and Suresh, this power breaks all sorts of relationship because it is true that “When a man and a woman know what they want from each other, they always find a way to get it” (58). Both have the same kind of burning desire. They know what they want and so both

find a way to come together physically. Ultimately, they keep sexual relationship, going beyond the medical and social ethics.

Lata is a devotee of God but commits such a ‘sin’ of keeping sexual relationship with an outsider, as the religion defines. But she does not feel hesitation rather “she truly rejoiced at it. She found a new meaning to her life. . . . She felt as if she was refueled with a new drive and the willingness to live” (59). Subjective world is something important in her life as it is common to others. She has never got a chance to be happy with a man in her life and therefore, her inner desire was looking for a man like Dr.Suresh. The appropriate environment is the cause to raise her desire to play with a man like him. Had Dambar provided her such an environment, she could never have been indulged with the doctor. She has never complaint over objective satisfaction from her family but she has never been filled with adequate subjective satisfaction from her husband. This is a proof that human being needs both the subjective and objective satisfaction to have a complete satisfaction.

The religious faith of her mother-in-law and herself, and the scientific truth with Dr.Suresh helps Lata to be a mother of a son. She is happy and so are her family members. Lata feels relieve that she has no more to bear tension and also feels happy for she has given a male, the key to open the door of heaven. No matter what the causes behind this achievement are, Lata believes on her strong desire and dream: “As for Lata, she could for now and ever believe that dreams could indeed come true” (65). If one envisions the future clearly on the base of present strength, she/he materializes the dream. The will power draws all impossible possibilities nearer and makes everything possible. Lata’s dream of getting a son is fulfilled due to her will power.

After all, she is happy for being a complete mother physically and culturally. Although the son is from an outsider, she does not feel to be worried about adultery. She has her husband living. There is no chance for the society to point a finger towards her for her 'sinful act'. This is why people find various resemblances of Dambar, in the new child:

Most of them took a keen interest in the baby's features, some saying he had the eyes and chin of his mother (Lata) and nose and cheek of his father (meaning Dambar). . . .It was only she who knew from whom exactly the baby had drawn these features. She thought the baby's nose and eyebrows resembled those of Dr. Suresh. (68)

Meaning and reality differs from people to people because they see only the parts of 'whole' from their own angles. For the other people, the reality is that the new baby's father is Dambar. But for Lata, the truth is different and she knows that Dr. Suresh is the baby's father. It is true to say 'father is belief and mother is truth.'

In the same way the reality has been changing for Lata in her life. Before marriage, the truth for her was to marry with a man chosen by her parents and be honest to her husband. But now, the reality is different. She has given birth to a son by an outsider. The meaning and importance of culture, rituals and festivals are also changed for her. She has been able to analyze the relevance of these things. Whereas in the past they were, for her, just to follow blindly. Moreover, she is able to see her own strength, and time and again she is dreaming of being a famous woman through some activities of social welfare. The cause behind these changes is the capability to see the world from different angle.

It is right to say that a full stop is not only the end of a sentence but also the beginning of another new one. As soon as Lata takes a deep sigh after accomplishing

a stressful job of giving birth to a son, a new sense of 'fear' alarms into her mind. It is the fear that the family members or the people in the society may trace out her secret: "They might read out her mind and find out the truth. The revelation of that sort, that the baby was actually an illegitimate one, would bring the world crashing down right in front of her eyes. . . . It consistently popped up in her mind as an anti-climax to her joyful disposition" (68).

The new fear pushes her into new tension. As before, she doesn't have anybody to help her pull out of this ditch, "she fell back on the divinity and wished that by virtue of her devotion she would receive courage and fortitude to face the odds" (69). She should have tried finding any other ways of taking relief from such tension, but to some extent, she is right to depend on 'what she has.' If the same belief has given her a son and has relieved from the tension, it may work again; she might have thought so.

As her fear, she is questioned on her extramarital relationship with Dr. Suresh. She knows having sexual relationship with anybody else other than own husband is a serious social and religious crime. The society can punish her by boycotting her from the society. The society can label her as a characterless woman. But what can she do? Her own brother becomes the first to point a finger in her character. Her brother is not a single person to do this but he is the representative of the whole society. She is much afraid of thinking over the scene when everybody spits on her face for her 'dirty' game.

Now, she realizes that the space of freedom for women in Nepalese society is so narrow and she wishes for widened. She inquires whether there is such space provided in the tradition. As a result of her search, she is astonished to know the importance of *Bel Bibaha* , a tradition of marriage with a wood apple. As this tradition, a girl is

never considered as a widow until and unless the *Bel* is not broken. The marriage with a human is her second marriage: “She was all the more amused to be told that she was free to keep on changing her ‘human’ husbands without any sense of guilt because she had in the *Bel* fruit and immortal husband. Her life with Dambar was just like a marriage of convenience” (79).

Yet another new reality appears out form the custom she has already performed. She analyses over this new findings and comes in conclusion that males have narrowed the freedom for women on one hand, and on the other hand women themselves have not enjoyed the available facility: “She thought a woman of today was not taking advantage of this leverage while choosing a ‘human’ husband, while discarding him at her sweet will and accepting whomever she loved” (79).

The new ‘fear’ of social stigma on her character takes her in a new dimension. This worry is unlike the worry of bearing a son. If she were not able to be a son’s mother, only her family could hate her, not the society. This would not be a crime. But anybody in the society can reveal the secrete of physical relationship with Dr. Suresh. She is almost sure that only the devotion to Gods and following rituals cannot stop the explosion. So she tries to find yet another way, i.e. to explore the positive aspects of her culture that support her. She starts having inner dialogue by questioning herself. In this way she is on the path of transforming herself by inquiring ‘whether she is wrong or not’: “Did she really commit a sin? Would she be penalized in the next world or right here in this world? Was god watching her from above, monitoring her and preparing an inventory of her actions for the final judgment on her” (87)?

When she does not find the right answers of the questions while observing herself as a third person, she is in much tension. She almost determines to find the answers of these questions which can prove her that she is not wrong for what she has

done. She remembers what her guru had once told her: “Rolling and rolling in sensual pleasures, we keep tying the knots; observing, observing and observing we untie all the knots” (88). The guru is right here for her. She decides to go on observing the culture until she unties the ‘knot’ of tension.

On the process of inquiry and observation, she prepares herself bold to perform the rituals that are not permitted to a female. ‘*Satbijchharne*’ is a special day when seven varieties of grains are sprinkled over the hill in *Sleshmantak*, a place near the Pashupatinath temple, with the belief that the spirits of dead parents are fed. As a custom, only males are permitted to perform this duty. Lata does it in total disregard of all traditions: “She indeed had made news in the liberal press and earned words of praise for her boldness and for reasserting womanpower” (91). She does it not to be publicized but “wanted to prove that what a boy could do, a girl could as well. In that context, she believed she was perfectly justified in offering fire to her father’s pyre at the cremation *ghat*” (91).

This is an initiation towards a reformer. She is the same Lata who was totally covered with the shawl of culture and once again, she is the same, but is peeping out through the same shawl. Not only this, she is trying to tear some parts of this shawl if she can’t see outside clearly. Her extraordinary deed, she could do for the first time, works as powerful fuel. It makes her bolder and makes her ready to continue such deeds in the society: “Just follow the cultural values and you are full in yourself? She told herself. Since then Lata made it a point to learn as much about and closely follow the nitty-gritty of Nepalese customs. Not only that, she decided to find out what they actually meant in real life term” (93).

In this way, she shifts herself from a blind follower of the culture to a critic and reformer of it. In a true sense, she searches out in the religion, rituals, customs, myths

and festivals to find out the ‘goodness’ in them. Actually she is on the process of finding out the supports that prove her hypothesis that having sexual intercourse with outsider is not a sinful act religiously. In order to find the answer, she has to turn over each, inspect them, analyze them and come out with a conclusion. But while doing so, she becomes critical as well. The more she inquires into the scriptures, the more new ideas she finds.

As such, she finds no role of humanity in the culture, only the roles of gods and demons. But later, she explores that “the devil-divine divide was nothing but a representative manifestation of man himself. Man is divine and devilish too” (95). A new insight and knowing adds her energy to move on the path to success. She further more acquires a new knowledge after rereading the culture: “She concluded that good deeds brought good luck and happiness, whereas bad deeds led to bad luck and unhappiness” (96).

This is exactly what AI says. A positive thinking leads to positive action and positive action brings positive result which again inspires to have a positive thinking. This is a chain that goes on and on. Lata’s new findings are supporting her to inquire more and deeply.

As she moves on, her interest tilts towards female: “She had a keen interest in public affairs especially those concerning women” (101). What she has found by inquiring the cultural and social practices is that women are depressed and dominated. She thinks of raising voices in favor of them. The idea of doing so might have come up due to her own condition. She herself is unheard and more than that, the social stigma spotted upon her characteristic is only because of being a woman. If she starts advocacy for women’s upliftment, there can be more freedom for women and it can help erase her stigma forever:

Lata naturally was very sensitive to political, social and economic suppression of women in the society. The denial of the right to choose a life partner and the right to parental property and unequal access to education and justice are too obvious in the Nepalese society. (101)

She is now able to see the women of Nepalese society through herself. She rereads herself and sees the outer world. She finds similar condition both in herself and in other women. So she thinks of doing something good for the whole Nepalese women by getting success in her.

Lata's critical thinking towards culture and society mounts high. She is now at the point where she doesn't accept the general definition of *Dharma*, the religion: "Dharma meant performing one's religious duty that secured a place in the after world. Lata did not entirely believe as others did in the concept of having dharma banked for future" (105). She is radical here for she goes against the traditional definition of the religion.

Lata was a member of communist party when she was in school. The learning from being a party cadre had been hibernated for a long time in her. It was because she had never tried to find out good and bad. Now, the condition is different. She is rereading the society to find out 'what good there is' and 'what good can be done.' When she finds new ideas, her past success and strengths resurrect. She gets power to move in a progressive way from the past strength. This is what the result of inquiring appreciatively. When one starts finding out good, s/he is energized by the past success and present strength. This helps achieve desired better future.

Another practice and belief in AI society is that positive societal transformation is possible only when there is egalitarian society. Lata is moving on the path of AI

and so she believes that hierarchy in the society does not let women get progress.

That's why she is in favor of classless society:

She felt her mission was to help establish an egalitarian society under a proletariat regime. She sensed exploitation everywhere at home, in the neighborhood, in the community, and in the society and the world at large. As a conscious follower of the communist philosophy, she was familiar with terminology such as colonialism, imperialism, class struggle, dialectical materialism, and what not. (108)

Lata was taught about it in her political party but she is able to understand its meaning now. The credit of such understanding goes to her inquiry for positive strength, critical and analytical mind, and the dream of being a successful person in the society.

All these changes in her mind and action are the result of her study of the culture and society from a new angle. Had she kept quiet and accepted all social and cultural injustice, she would not have been able to think over the reformation of culture and would not have got strength to be ready to face the questions regarding her characteristics. Above all, she has set a dream to be a different: "She instinctively wanted to be different from others. She was driven by the desire to be herself, both in thought and act" (115). She has come up to the level of understanding that without being a winner, nobody hears her. She wants to rise up to that height onto which everybody can see and listen to her. This is her inner desire raised and fixed after finding new ideas through the inquiry.

Now, Lata is on the process of materialize her dream. For this she opens her eyes and mind wider to see the distance minutely. She involves herself in social activities as well. Once she attends an inaugural function of the renovated monument in her society. She knows that the monument was renovated with the foreign aid.

Feeling of identity shakes her and thinks that such awoke can be completed with local contributions in cash or kind and voluntary labor. She does not feel good to use foreign money in erecting Nepalese identity. Lata has understood the meaning and importance of self identity.

Although she is more active in reading the world in a different way, she still has a thin layer of fear in her mind. She has to care and look after her two children, Rekha and Samir. Because she is a mother, she loves her children more than herself. The myths are still threatening her with the stories of women who have committed a sin of adultery. According to myths, the children of such women would be punished in this way or that. But she doesn't want befall misfortune upon her children:

Lata was convinced that she had committed a sin of adultery, from which she could not escape. In that sense she was honest and emotionally ready to face the consequences in the other world. What really disturbing to her was the provisions that her children especially her son might have to pay for her mistakes. (123)

She worries about her children but is ready to face the trouble as the cost of her mistake. The courage to be ready to face trouble is once again the result of her new findings. She is getting strength more and more. But, still she is a mother and a mother is naturally weak towards her children. It is not a woman's weakness but an extra quality the nature has granted only to her.

For the first time, not for her, but for her children she arranges *Satyanarayan puja*, worship offered to Lord Vishnu. She has attended the *puja* in the past many times, but this time the story of *Satyanarayan puja* is quite convincing to her. As the scripture says anybody can perform the *puja* anytime and anywhere with a very small cost. Since she is thinking of reforming and modifying the rituals that suits the present

context, she finds it appropriate. In order to convince herself about the protection of her children, the *satyanarayan puja* is something important. When she is sure that her children are protected, she can continue her journey of struggle.

As Lata's agitation within gets intensified, worries that her wrongdoing might harm her eventually become all the more pronounced. She tries to delve into the truth and accept the inevitable. But she does not find anybody who will enlighten her on the matter. Nor does she feel assured of security and peace in the family from any quarter. In a fit of frustration:

She critically viewed the scriptures that, she thought, were responsible for pushing her into this malady and despair. Although she could not bring herself to abandon her habitual religious chores, she reread the texts, analyzed them and tried to find out the truth so that she could get rid of inner fear devouring her for her presumed sin. (130)

She was mentally ready and slightly working on this way. But now she is actively ready to research the texts. This determination is none other than her design to get the desired future 'permanent peace in mind and a woman with own high identity in the society'.

In this course, the first text, she works on is '*swasthani*', a collection of mythical stories. Goma, one of the major characters of the story, is cursed by Lord Shiva for a simple mistake of not attending to a saint who had come abegging at her door. Goma had to undergo a long suffering for this mistake. Lata finds the truth that Goma was not suffered because of her mistake but it was Lord Shiva's mastermind. Knowing this truth, "Lata's inner soul revolted against the injustice" (133). The *swasthani* story has given new insights about why and how women are made speechless:

Lata was aware that these mythical stories had a strong bearing on the emotion and mindset of the Nepalese women. Naturally, therefore, women like her, consciously or unconsciously, tended to act in accordance with the message in those stories in their day-to-day life. The result was obvious. They never dared speak or act against these texts that have legitimized male chauvinism in society. Lata blamed these religious commandments for women's perpetual miseries in the Nepalese society. She concluded that until the myths were smashed and their impact banished from the mainstream psyche, her mind would not be liberated from social oppression and discriminatory practices. (134)

Lata immediately becomes radical towards the scriptures and the myths. She is also able to find out the reason why women are keeping quiet.

Lata becomes a critic in a true sense. After reading the text to find new meanings, she finds more and is able to raise questions as well:

Why should only women be subjected to discipline and strictures and men fold kept free of any such demands? She suspected that the whole scripture had been put together for the sole purpose of enslaving women. She wanted to find out the truth and vowed that she would call a spade a spade, if it came to that. (135)

Lata feels more energized to find the hidden truth in the scriptures. Each finding works as a positive force for her to find other new ones: "On critical examination, she found that the instances were just too many. Streaks of courage that germinated within her, encouraged her to challenge the merits of certain episodes" (137).

She goes through many stories of the myths and finds lots of examples where women are subdued. As mentioned in the stories, Lord Shiva Goma, satidevi and

parwati; Lord Vishnu victimizes Brinda and so on. Lata can't keep all these realities of injustice in her mind. She determines to expose them in the mass to the pundits, the preachers. By doing so, she thinks the other common people know the hidden reality of the text. Moreover, with the intention of reforming, rewriting and retelling such stories from the egalitarian perspective, she is emotionally, mentally and physically ready to challenge the pundits.

In order to make this happen, on an occasion of religious storytelling, she stands up and fires challenging questions to the pundit in front of a big mass:

Is it not unfair on the part of the god to punish Goma for no fault of hers? . . . Does the god have the right to punish the innocent? . . . Is it not obnoxious that Satidevi's own wishes were never sought as to whom she wanted to be married with? What is not a clear case of deception that Satidevi came to wed Lord Vishnu but, instead, she got married to Lord Shiva? How can gods treat women like consumer commodities? Was not Satidevi denied the right of choice? . . . Is this not a clear case of misuse of divine power on the part of Lord Vishnu to have disguised himself as Jalandhar for the dubious purpose of undermining Brinda's fidelity and integrity? If you truly appreciated women's faithfulness and trust its power, how can you justify violating it if they have done no wrong? Can you justify the fraud Lord Vishnu perpetrated on Brinda? Was it not an instance of abuse against women? (137 -40)

Lata downpours questions after questions to the pundit. The questions she raises are genius. The power of asking such brilliant questions proves that Lata is able to find new meaning, a new way of observing and knowing the world. This is why she is able to make the priest speechless:

What Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu chose to do with women represented the unbridled freedom and authority of man over woman. Is this the kind of relationships you want to establish in our society? as the supreme power in the universe, are the gods free to do what they want vis-à-vis women? If this is the kind of freedom you are granting to men in our society, you better stop this hypocritical business of storytelling. How can you preach something that you cannot properly and logically explain? (141)

A speechless woman, in the past, due to the pundits and their storytelling, is able to make the pundit speechless. Lata is now an analytical critic. She rereads the text from various angles and is able to find out these new truths.

Thus, Lata is able to raise the voice against discrimination in the culture. Her voice raises her position up in the society. Worshipping Gods/Goddesses for a long time, the women in the society have been following the rituals with the bundles of questions of doubt and rage in their minds. And, Lata's voice represents the voices of all those women. They feel as if they are expressing their doomed voices through Lata.

Therefore, Lata's challenge against established cultural values creates stir in the orthodox circle. It is not used to entertaining even a grain of doubt the authenticity of the scriptures. She is now able to attract the attention of the general public through the local newspaper. Her courageous deed was not preplanned but a sort of 'spontaneous overflow' of so many questions she had been stewing in her mind for a long time. She does not really mean to challenge the orthodox but what she has done is the expression of her inquiry done over the culture.

She was initially frightened with her deeds but the fare is faded as she gets social respect: "Hers was an enquiry, not a statement. As time went by, her fright

disappeared. She enjoyed getting invited to seminars and interactions on social issues. . . . Sometimes she even got paid for her contribution, which she took as a welcome incentive” (144).

This is not the end of her mission. She is clear in her dream of being a successful social activist. She is also clear that before the society raises questions, she has to prove herself that she was not wrong to have illegitimate relationship with Dr. Suresh. In order to achieve the goal, she thinks of utilizing the success she has recently achieved. For this, she uses the talk shows in which she attends. And in these occasions, she puts her findings, views, evidences and logics forward to support her mission.

In this process, she starts recalling the myths about the illegitimate contacts of highly respected female characters of myths. As the myths say, Pandu was cursed for death if he ever had sex with his wife. But, during the no-sex period, his wives Kunti gave birth to three sons from three different males and Madri gave birth to two sons from another person. Draupadi is another character in the same epic Mahabharat, who is a common wife of five brothers. Similarly Sita, Mandodari, Ahilya and many other female characters from another epic, Ramayan, have got the same plight. Drawing the conclusion from the evidences, Lata puts her view in the mass:

If Kunti could be respected for what she did, why not other women, who uphold the epic as the fountain of moral code of conduct? . . . Does not this illustrate the freedom of premarital sex? If it is not that, how come Kunti is held so high as a virgin? . . . When we look back at our own old civilization we find innumerable instances of grater liberty enjoyed by women in their day. It is a great pity that we have been blinded by the glitz and glamour of the alien societies, completely disregarding our own

traditional cultural traits that are more liberal, more compassionate and more generous towards the weaker sex. (146-48)

Lata has almost proved with the evidences from the scriptures that bearing children from outsider is not a sinful act. Her logic does not have any loopholes. This is why no one raises an accusing finger at her while advocating for the birth of illegitimate children.

Lata is in offensive mood. She gets special seats in public programs, especially in the religious ceremonies. Mostly women beyond middle age take special note of her presence. Pundits fear and tell the stories either modifying the irrelevant ones or skipping them from the sequence: “She was emerging as a celebrity of sorts in the religiously inclined community of Kathmandu. In a way she enjoyed the status and tried to build it further” (149).

She is able to transform herself from an unknown girl to known women in the society. Her voice has been heard and has got the authentic position. This success gives her satisfaction mentally and physically. She has no more fear in her mind: “No more sense of guilt for adultery, no more guilt for bearing a bastard, no more fear of gods and goddesses penalizing her. She felt liberated from the constraining thoughts of having committed a sin. She had only done what the celebrated women had done” (150). Her inquiry has made her able to find new truths, which help her to speak in the mass with powerful logics that ultimately has raised her position almost as high as the religious celebrities.

Newly developed strengths have helped Lata analyze the scriptures and culture in a systematic and logical way: “If they were not persecuted for committing what would otherwise be considered a sinful act, she too could be above retribution. All those famous men and women of yore were adulterous, promiscuous, lecherous and,

after all, polyandry practitioners and were actually rewarded and held in high esteem” (150). She has got the solution of her tension she has been conceiving in her mind after the birth of her son. She has found what she was looking for.

The new findings have provided her new truths. From examining herself, she realizes that the people generally fear those who think, talk and act in a simple and forthright manner. Having found herself courageous, respected, and heard, “She started advocating remarriage of widows not only because modern rationality demanded it but also because Holy Scriptures encouraged it. Similarly, she raised a strong voice against rape. Rehabilitation of rape victims, she said, was everybody’s business” (155). She is doing advocacy and social activities side by side. She also starts working for the rescue and resettlement of Nepalese girls who had been forced into prostitution. She even helps some of them get married.

New life, new experience and new findings change the way of perceiving the truth in Lata’s life. She is able to find the underlying meanings of these scriptures, rituals and culture: “Lata endorsed the contrasting views of heaven and hell as a motivating factor for good human conduct and righteous behavior on earth” (161). She used to be afraid of ‘hell’ in the past and used to wish for ‘heaven’. But now, she is convinced with the real meaning of these terms.

A big turning point began in Lata’s life when she entered into analyzing the scriptures from a different angle, different from the status-quo angle. The faith she had developed from the culture pushed into a big mental tension – a fear of adultery. Just to discover if she could find any support, she inquires the scriptures and finds immense evidences as well as success. Now she is relaxing:

No more did she fear the divine punishment for her extramarital sex. Logic was her best defense. Haven’t the holy characters themselves set the

precedent? She asked. Even the gods had indulged in sexual dalliances.

The sword of Damocles dangling over her head since the birth of her son had vanished, thanks to the revelations in the holy books. She was elated by the change in her outlook. (163)

She is more convinced herself after she could discover new truths. Nobody, but herself is able to heal her. Her own determination, diligence and power of positive thinking have uplifted her knowing and her social status.

At the time she is totally peaceful, the family situations are also in her favor. Rekha and Samir are doing their best in study. There are not any obstructions from her husband. Father and mother-in-laws have passed away. The relationship with Dr. Suresh is still continuing but no more physical relationship. Reputed social status also has fueled her to be relaxed. With a free and peaceful mind she moves her legs forward:

When she moved forward on the road, she felt she was headed toward a new destination, uncharted and unknown. Familiar as she was with the conditions of the road she was confident of her steps in the right direction. All sights before were the same but her inner eyes were seeing a new meaning and purpose in them. She, a mortal, could feel the magic of inner eyes; she thought she had no reason to doubt the vision of Lord Shiva's Third Eye. (173)

Lata, now, is transformed into a conscious woman with new meaning. She has found a different truth out of the truth she had before. She is also able to think herself as a woman with extra sense, the sixth sense as Lord Shiva's Third Eye.

Dr. Suresh is still her closest man with whom she can share her ideas. He has been assisting her in her family affairs as well. He is instrumental in having her son

admitted to an American college. He is also the person who can understand her better than anyone else. She also talks about the social frustration with him. After getting a prestigious position in the society, Lata feels her responsibility to reform the other components of the society like education, economy, politics, and so on.

Lata's motive behind the discussion of all these matters with Dr. Suresh is none other than her feeling of responsibility as a social activist. She is the winner of the war of cultural reformation and now the turn is to do the same in the other social sectors. This is another proof that Lata is not only a successful in religious reformation but also in social development.

However, she feels guilty of bearing a child from an outsider. As a religious faith, this sort of activity is considered as a 'sinful act'. Lata is afraid if the society raises the fingers on her characters. Culturally, she is doomed and her misdeed can harm her children. She is in trouble once again. To find the solution, she studies the culture, rituals, religions, and the scriptures with a different mind. Here, again she utilizes the sources she has. She starts inquiry into her culture.

The way of Appreciative Inquiry begins from the very word 'inquiry.' Inquiry is itself a question. It is the process of seeking to understand through asking question. The very first question decides our fate. Changing process begins from the point we start asking questions. So, Lata starts questioning on the scriptures. It is the real beginning of her change process.

By analyzing the mythology, culture, rituals and religion critically, Lata discovers a lot of new truths. In the process of inquiring the text, she frequently dives into discourse herself. She doesn't have any body to talk and discuss about her new findings. But, she is lost in her 'inner dialogue.' Whenever she finds a new insight, she starts analyzing herself comparing and contrasting with the world around her. In

this way, she goes on finding new world, new truths and new knowing. She is able to create a new world of new findings. It is correct that the idea of language is the creator of reality, as AI believes.

The facts that the religious celebrities had committed 'sin' as hers long ago open her eyes. And she was pleading to 'the sinners' for erasing her 'sin'. Her understanding is widened. She is also able to understand the power of women. Her deep respect towards the societal rules, cultural values and religious faiths are smashed. Instead of the ultimate 'truth', new truths emerge. In place of a 'set' structure, multiple structures appear. The 'center' of her faith is collapsed. A postmodernism enters into her knowing and understanding.

Lata inquires 'the whole' not only a part. AI believes in wholeness. A part of whole can't describe its whole in complete. In this way, Lata rereads the texts not a text. She herself is not convinced with a single proof she finds in the text rather she goes on turning the pages of scriptures, goes on evaluating and analyzing all the rituals, and goes on examining the roles of all supreme Gods and Goddesses. In this way, she studies the whole and comes in the conclusion that the truth and faith that she had in her mind before is nothing but a misinterpretation.

The assumption she had before are reexamined that has given her new meaning. As she finds new meaning, she feels bold and courageous. She even challenges the pundits who are supposed to be with the authentic personality to give the final verdict on the scriptures. But Lata's findings are far stronger to defeat them than their status-quo explanation. She is able to challenge the *pudit* because of her 'power of image.' As she finds new truth, she imagines herself as a 'religious reformer.' A reformer has to be bold enough to challenge the set rules with alternatives. Also s/he has to aware

the mass. The positive image of ‘a reformer’ in the society helps her to break down the ‘old ideas and practices’ to set up new ones.

Lata uncovers the reality of the scriptures by fixing her focus on them. It means she has focused her inquiry into finding out the supporting evidences that can give her clean cheat. Her study of the text has been fixed and this has helped her to reach into destination easily. AI says that the society and organizations are as open book. A book has several meanings. It is an individual to decide what to study in the society, the open book. In the same way, culture is also an open book. One can find multiple meanings form the same culture. Lata, as a reader, had determined what to study. So she is success to go to the society with the ‘new truth’ form the culture. Had she studied the text with a different purpose, she might not have seen the present facts.

When she is able to find new facts, she desires to explore it in the society. Along with this she had been a hovering a dream of being a social activist. The image of a successful woman and a religious reformer inspires her to act ‘as if’. This is why she is able to challenge the social norms.

This is how, Lata, passes through the path of Appreciative Inquiry to the ‘winning spot’ of a ‘successful woman’. If her life is observed closely, it is clearly seen the 180⁰ change in her thinking, understanding, knowing, and acting. She gets this change not randomly but through a systematic process. The process of her change can be seen from the ‘4 D’ cycle of AI.

The first process is ‘discovery.’ It is the discovery of finding the strength. Discovery is also an inquiry. In the beginning, she had her religion she got strength from. Later, when she finds herself alone to fight for her trouble, she finds the same culture to dig out the solution. A real inquiry begins form here.

The second phase is the ‘dream.’ It is normally in sequence that the dream comes after discovery. The discovery phase gives her immense strength to fight against wrong belief on religion, wrong practices of rituals and misinterpretation of scriptures. On the base of these discoveries, she makes a dream of herself as ‘a successful woman in the society with her own identity who mainly works in social and religious reformation.’

‘Design’ is the third step in this process. It is to prepare strategic planning to materialize the dream. As her design, she rereads the text critically. Analysis of the texts, rituals and the meaning of the myths are also her part of design. The new findings are tested comparing and contrasting with her own past, with the present practices and beliefs in the society and so on. She also interacts with Dr. Suresh on this matter. She prepares herself to raise questions in the mass to the pundits. Along with this, she makes herself ready to pay attention on the social activities. All these preparations, study and interactions are the design.

Lastly, the ‘destiny/delivery’ phase is the time of action in the field. Lata begins delivering the action by challenging the pundits in an occasion of religious storytelling in a mass. The first delivery of her whole plan gives her positive feedback. It encourages her to perform more. She starts attending herself in public gathering, taking seats as a key note speaker on religion, involving in the rehabilitation programs for women, taking part in election as a cadre of her political party. This is her destiny part and the final phase of accomplishing her entire process. This phase is directly attached with the result. It is clear that the novel ends with a high position of Lata in the society and with a transformation from an ‘unknown woman with self humiliation’ to a ‘well-known human being with dignity.’

Chapter IV

Conclusion

Aditya Mas Shrestha's *Mistress of Faith* demonstrates a new art of living. It is the art of living by inquiring positive aspects appreciatively. Obstacles, difficulties and tensions are common in life. But the art of managing them in an easy way is challenging. Lata, the protagonist, is tactful to manage them well. She is also able to transform the difficulties into opportunities. In the process of moving forward, she chooses the positive path that gives her an immense success in life.

There are only two ways to live life: problem solving and inquiring into strength. Problem solving way of living life brings more tension, scarcity, impossibility and difficulty. It is an inquiry into 'what is not.' If one moves to find out 'what is wrong,' s/he can never get to the 'right' side. Lata does not choose this path. The other part is the inquiry into strength. This is a positive way of living life. Inquiry into 'what is' leads to 'what is right.' The finding of such inquiry gives possibility, hope, inspiration, courage, and strength. Lata is right to choose the path of positive i.e. the Appreciative Inquiry.

When Lata is at her mother's home, she finds the strength from the culture she is following. Though blindly supporting, she gets feeling of support from the Almighty. This helps her to increase hope in life. Even after her marriage, her culture and belief give her energy to live. If she had not faith upon God, she might not have continued her life because there was no body to support her. When she is under the pressure of giving birth to a son, she is alone to face the tension. She builds her faith upon God in a positive manner. She always listens to the myths in which females are helped. She strongly performs rituals so that she gets blessing. This is an appreciative way of living life.

Inquiry into 'what is' begins in her life, in true sense, after giving birth to a son by Dr. Suresh. She is afraid of the social and religious punishment for having illegitimate relationship with Dr. Suresh. Lata is not frustrated with the fear of punishment rather she determines to search into the same culture to find out the evidences. The search for strength is again grounded on 'what we have' and the search is to find out 'what is.' She uses her past success and present strength to find the truth.

She was involved in political activities in her school life. She had acquired the skill of analysis from the political trainings. This was her past success. And as the present strength, she is well known about the rituals, culture and their meanings. By utilizing the two strengths, she goes on and on reading, reading and analyzing the scriptures. Ultimately, she is successful to find out what she is looking for. She finds many evidences that can purify her 'sin.' Not only this, the new positive findings help her to have her own identity.

The AI does not prepare one to be simply a positive. It makes one to be able to find new meanings, new truths. In this sense, Lata is an ideal AI character. The deeper she dives into the scriptures, the more and newer truths she unearths. She is able to give a new shape to the world of faith. She is able to dig out these new truths with the power of question. The new findings benefit her in two ways: one by reliving from the fear of 'sin' and the other by providing a prestigious social, religious and the position of female activist. In this way, AI is also a tool that always provides satisfaction and success.

Lata's life and her achievement have smashed the concept of 'center' and 'ultimate truth.' Gods, Goddesses, rituals, scriptures, customs, and myths were the ultimate truth for her before she entered into inquiring these texts. But later, the

inquiry, questions and critical analysis change her reality. She finds the religious figures, who have been worshipped for a long time, are no more ideal. They are made ideal through misinterpretation. As soon as she is clear about it, her center of faith is smashed. She now thinks and acts herself as important as them. She comes in the conclusion that the so called heaven and hell do exist no more. They are just the metaphors to explain the life in the present world.

Likewise, as AI strongly believes, Lata's life also denounces the concept of sequential ordered life. Lata does not have any extra ordinary life. She is simple as others. The ups and downs in her life are common in others as well. But, if her life is observed closely, sequence is found only at the edge of chaos. The fear she had before her marriage, was if she could be a mother. Chaos continues until she gives birth to her daughter. She enjoys satisfaction for being a mother. It is a momentary sequence at the edge of long chaos. Right after that, another chaos and complexity begins with the tension and stress. She is under the pressure of bearing a son. For a long time she wanders here and there to get a son. She might have been thinking of bearing a son from her own husband, Dambar. But the sequence is broken. She becomes pregnant from Dr. Suresh, an outsider. No matter who is the father, she gives birth to a son. It is another momentary sequence. Immediately after being satisfied with a son, another chaos arises, the fear of religious punishment. She struggles hard to reach to the sequence. Thus, Lata's life moves through chaos and complexity with a short sequence at the end.

One of the most important components of AI that has given success to Lata is the power of imagination. From the very beginning, Lata has had an image of a courageous and bold woman with a different identity. The imagination of herself as a woman of unique characteristics has been encouraging her to move on the way to get

it. The imagination is none other than her desired future. The positive imagination is so powerful to her that, in order to be a different in the society, she accumulates power to challenge the orthodox society. She performs the rituals that are forbidden to female. Her foundation is not rebellious, her society is not so bold to go against the set rules but she raises herself with a total different characteristics. She is a very weak woman physically and mentally until she gives birth to a son. But after that, drastic changes appear in her body, mind and soul. Her attitude is changed, her behavior is changed, and her thinking is changed. As a result, she challenges the pundits and the scriptures. She questions to the patriarchy. Where did she get such courage to challenge every set rules, values and norms? Even males had never dared to do so. It is her power of imagination of being different that made everything possible. The positive image is so powerful that it clears every barrier of obstacles to achieve the dream. Lata is successful because of her power of imagination.

Last but not least is the change in attitude. A change process begins only after changing the attitude. The attitude of a person determines what to find. The negative attitude diverts our focus towards uncertainty and failure whereas the positive attitude of inquiry leads towards the success. Lata inquires the texts with a positive attitude. The discovery of the positive inquiry has not only given her a wished world but also has helped the society to be benefited with new truths. She also has a positive attitude towards Dr. Suresh from whom she gets lots of support.

Hence, *Mistress of Faith*, proves that the source of success is not anywhere but within. Lata, the protagonist of the novel, changes herself drastically just by changing her own attitude. The inner transformation gives her an immense success. Instead of finding out 'what is not working,' she focuses on discovering 'what is working' She raises herself a step upward from status-quo with such queries. The curiosity to search

out positive 'what' generates new truths. She analyzes fresh truths critically. This provides her to see the world and life with holistic approach. And, ultimately, she enters into a new world of knowing.

The knowing assists her to materialize the dream of a successful woman in the society. The close observation of Lata's life, thus, proves that she has applied AI as an art of living. It is Lata's art of living, the Appreciative Inquiry that not only opens her eyes to see the world with a positive angle but also gives her huge success. AI is so powerful in Lata's life that it gives her the success, which she had thought impossible in the past.

Therefore, Lata, in Aditya Man Shrestha's *Mistress of Faith*, transforms herself into a culturally, socially and morally new human being with self respect because of the strength of AI. Lata, now, is no more an orthodox, status-quo, blind follower, dominated, uncared, and just a woman. But, she is changed with new meaning, and is transformed into a well known personality.

Lata's transformation in the novel opens the door to discuss on the women's position in Nepal from appreciative perspective. It is true that women are dominated in Nepalese society. But if they inquire the positive aspects of society, culture, and social practices, they can discover their special characteristics, contribution and strength in the family and in the society. This will certainly energize them to do more. This sort of inquiry and analysis help them recognize their own strength. The female protagonist of the novel has recommended to change the attitude towards positive, find the best from what we have, envision the future and expand the strength to achieve the dreamed future. If the Nepalese women start doing so, their status can be uplifted faster. The research has also opened the doors of potentiality to exercise AI in works of arts that can contribute for positive societal transformation.

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