

## **Diasporic Characters in Rajab's Short Stories**

Ramji Timalisina, PhD

Lecturer

Department of English, Mahendra Multiple Campus Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Email: ramjikoshi@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/dristikon.v10i1.34599>

### **Abstract**

This article has attempted to find how the short stories in Rajab's collection entitled *Paai [Pie]* have depicted the realities in the diaspora through the presentation of characters. Three stories have been selected from the collection. These short fictions are studied in the light of the theory of characterization in short stories. The analysis concentrates on the diasporic identity related cultural, emotional and existential conditions of the characters.

The study has found that all the diasporic characters have undergone different types of problems as per their diverse life situations. Generally, all diasporans have identity crisis related to culture. This crisis is connected with their emotion and existence, too. I have also found that there are three types of main characters: general diasporans, senior citizens and young couples. The general diasporans have been used to show the existential conditions of any diasporan in the host land. The depiction of the senior citizens shows how a new land cannot be a good place for them: Most of them are emotionally shocked and unsettled. Even the young couples who reach the USA using all possible means finally feel frustrated and disoriented. Almost all the characters in these stories are unhappy diasporans. It is hoped that this article will encourage researchers to study other diasporic fictions from the point of view of characterization.

*Keywords:* character, characterization, diasporic fiction, identity crisis

### **Introduction**

The new Nepali Diaspora is active and profuse in terms of its literary creations. Poetry and fiction are the major genres in this regard. Among the writers of the Nepali Diaspora, Rajab writes regularly and with a certain level of quality. He is an established writer in Nepali literature both back home in Nepal and in the American Nepali Diaspora. His diasporic writings include mainly the novels and short stories. The novels are *Atlantic Street* (2065BS), *Motel America* (2067BS), *Bekaareemaa Upanyaas [Novel in Unemployment]* (2069BS), and *Sotit* (2072BS). Similarly, his collections of short stories include *Capital Hill* (2065BS), *Comrade Driver* (2069BS) and *Pie* (2075BS/2018).

Critics have found Rajab's diasporic writings noteworthy for the creation and use of characters to reflect the immediate psycho-social realities in the host land. His latest collection of short stories entitled *Paai* has been reviewed with enthusiasm in this regard. Subedi (2018)

argued that the focus of all his stories was the life, thought, behaviour, feelings and experience of the characters (para. 17). Similarly, B. C. (2018) claimed that Rajab was able to enter into the experiences of American Nepalis (para. 1). In the same vein Gurung (2018) found the characters isolated and segregated (para. 2). Fifteen out of twenty short stories collected in this anthology have many characters as migrants to the USA from South Asia, primarily from Nepal. They have reached there with certain reasons and aspirations. At the same time, they belong to different age groups, with different realities and emotions. Most of them think of the land and its society that they have left back and want to return there; but they cannot do so. Such subject matters and characters made me thoughtful of the South Asian migrants' diasporicity in the USA. Thus, I have conducted this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The stories collected in this anthology are built around the migrant characters. They belong to different nationalities, ethnicities, age groups, professions and mentalities. Most of them are the people of the Nepali origin and have settled in the USA; and they are somehow connected with Nepal, their homeland. Many of them want to return to Nepal, but cannot manage it. They are compelled to adjust in the USA in whatever condition they are in. So, the main problematic of this study is how these characters reflect the life of the American Nepali Diaspora. The following research questions have been used in the study:

- What types of characters are used in the selected stories?
- How and why are they given the diasporic qualities?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are:

- To find out the types of characters used in the selected stories
- To analyse the method and reasons for giving them diasporic qualities

### **Review of Literature**

Critics have evaluated Rajab's *Pie* as a collection of diasporic stories. Subedi (2018), B.C. (2018) and Gurung (2018) reviewed this book. They highlighted Rajab's place in the tradition of Nepali short story writing, thematic focus, variation of the stories, portrayal of the characters, and arts of storytelling.

Subedi (2018) started his review highlighting the incongruences between the expectations and realities of the Nepali migrants in the Americas. Many characters had no connection between what they did in the USA and what they dreamt of as per their education and career goals in life (para. 4). Similarly, many characters in the stories were aged people who had followed their children to live in the America. In the beginning, their faces were

bright; but slowly that brightness waned away. Whether they lived there or returned Nepal, their single fear was that of insecure old age in the absence of their children around them (para. 7). Subedi discussed these realities with examples from some stories.

Subedi also found that the cyclone of the American Dream presented in the stories of this collection was very powerful. He believed that these twenty beautiful stories in the collection gradually made their readers get serious throughout the readings. They helped them understand themselves; evaluate themselves; and see their society, social psychology and the problems of existence. He argued that the stories showed diverse colours of humanity (para. 13). Subedi also highlighted upon the art of storytelling. He stressed on the fact that Rajab could enter the psychology of his characters and could reveal their thoughts and feelings as if they were his own experiences (para. 14). Subedi further observed that Rajab's minute understanding and presentation of the details made the atmosphere alluring for the readers (para. 15). These all have resulted into the visualization of everything he presented in the readers' mind establishing him as a better short story writer than a novelist or a dramatist (para. 16). This review showed Rajab's success as a short story writer.

Subedi further discussed characters and characterization in the stories of this collection. Most of the characters were the Nepali people who migrated to the America. The stories revealed their pains and pleasures, diminishing human sensibility, generation gap and objectification of human beings during their search for prosperity in the capitalist metropolises (para. 17). He claimed that many characters found the place being equal to hell for them; but there was no alternative to rely on. Subedi also found that some of the characters in this book were the victims of racism (para. 20). He concluded that by the time someone got their desired prosperity, they just remained a cog in the big machine of capitalism (para. 22). Thus, Rajab's stories, in total, presented the negative aspects of the life of the Nepali migrants in the America.

B. C. (2018) also found almost similar themes and characters in the stories. Through the portrayal of the characters, he skillfully presented the American Nepali's social activities (para. 1). The characters did not like their life there because they realized that material prosperity was not enough for happiness: Emotional attachment was equally necessary in life (para. 3). This was connected with the characters' worry about the loss of Nepali culture in the new land (para. 5). This discussion showed the fate of Nepali migrants in the America. B. C. also discussed how some of the stories focused on the life of non-Nepali American people and their activities. The effects of wars and racial discrimination have sensitively and vividly been presented. The Pakistani migrants have been compelled to hide their identity (para. 8-11). This discussion has shown the difficulty of all migrants in the USA.

B. C. also evaluated the use of language, point of view, narrator and other skills used in the stories. Almost all dialogues have been in English written in Nepali spellings. The use of first person narrative 'I' in many stories has made the narrations lively (para. 12). B. C.

criticized the story writer for only using the negative aspects of the American society. He claimed that all the Nepali Americans were not in the same bad condition and mentality (para. 13). He concluded that this collection of stories was enough to find out that even the author himself was not happy to live in the America (para. 14). For this purpose, BC found the stories were appropriate to reveal the story writer's mentality.

The next reviewer Gurung (2018) also found that Rajab's *Pie* presented bitter aspects of the America, the so called heaven for many Nepali people. The characters have been thrown onto the island of isolation and alienation because of hurry, helplessness and mechanization of life. They have been compelled to search for their identity in the same island. Gurung further found that the story writer attacked not only the negative aspects of life there but also the symbol of America itself that represented a special system and ideology (para 2). He has seen the stories in different plain.

Gurung claimed that these stories presented the diasporic sensibilities of the American Nepalis. They read like the documents of different types of struggles of the Nepali diasporans in the USA. The effects of the characters' mentality divided between their homeland and host land has also been reflected through small scenes and a few incidents (para. 3). He praised Rajab for his continuity of favouring the marginalized people in the society that he had been doing before he migrated to the USA. But Gurung also criticized him for not making any experiment in the art of storytelling. Even then, he argued, the stories were successful in showing the depletion of characters' thought, break in language use and game of minute nostalgic experiences. Human affinity has been diffused in the American Nepali society (para. 4). The young generation was shown to be in the machine of consumerism; and the senior citizens jailed in isolation and pain; but the new or newly growing generation was in horripilation and enjoyment (para 5). All in all, Gurung found the portrayal of American Nepali society in the stories.

The reviewers have discussed different aspects of the stories in the collection. All of them have mentioned that the stories focus on the life of the characters: their thought, their actions, their pains, their pleasures, their dreams, their nostalgia and many other aspects of their identity and existence. The stories really have this focus. So, it is necessary to have an extensive study on the characters and show how these characters really exhibit the qualities of diasporic people, and especially the South Asian diasporans in the Americas.

## **Methodology**

### **Characterization as a Method**

Characterization is one of the important devices in the making of a work of fiction. Morley (2007) claimed that "character is story" (p. 166). He supported this idea with John Gardener's opinion that character is the heart and mind of a story; and it is the character that makes a story alive. This is a valid claim because the characters work as the central element in

the making of fiction. A story “can provide insights on plot, and can help the [readers] comprehend complex texts” making them follow a character” (Roser, Martinez, Fuhrken, & McDonnold, 2007, p. 548). Similarly, a story has an idea to transfer an action to unfold. For this, they need agents “to carry out and register actions.” It is accepted in practice that “these agents could only be human beings.” Thus, the creation of the memorable characters is expected to be “unique to, and characteristic of” the work of fiction (Baym, 1984, p. 82). Thus, characterization unfolds the making of a work of fiction.

Writers use characters even for the portrayal of meaning by implication. For that, “a given character in fiction is to be taken as representative of a certain class of human being” (Hospers, 1980, p. 5). While doing so, characters are seen to be “an extended personification or *prosopeia*, a sign endowed with human attributes” (Schwarz, 1989, p. 90). It makes character “the most metaphoric ingredient of fiction” that represents “larger patterns of behaviour” (p. 92). With this role, characters signify the “metaphorical relation [of a work of fiction] to a world outside a text” (p. 99). At the same time, characters “function to bring out thematic points” of the writing (p. 101). For all these reasons, writers carefully create “particular kind of people to fully help [them] clarify [their] theme and has them [characters] do and say certain kinds of things” (Rush, 2005, p. 68). It is how the study of the character unfolds the intent of a fictional work.

The value of characterization is higher in the fiction that is “the story of character” (Hudson, 1979, p. 343) in which a writer “may take character and choose incidents and situation to develop it” (p. 342). Nepali diasporic story writer Rajab writes this type of stories. The blurb in *Paai [Pie]*, his latest collection of diasporic stories, indicates this trend in his stories. The blurb mentions that the stories of this collection have minutely presented the image of present American Nepali society portraying its thoughts, difficulties, struggles and absurdities. All these realities indicate the debilitating human sensitivity and the consequent pains in the life of the people who have these qualities and undergo these experiences. The blurb claims that through the effective use of characters Rajab has been able to present the realities of the American Nepali diaspora.

The method of characterization in the tradition of diasporic fiction has some differences from other general works of fiction. In diasporic writings even the name given to a character is “an identity symbol” because “[e]thnic names can be a source of tension and discrimination in multiethnic societies.” It is connected with the “right of every person to maintain his or her ethnic identity” (Gooptar, 2013, pp. 164, 176). So, even the choice of the name of a character has meaning in diasporic texts. It primarily “coincides with the choice of theme”; and “formation and sustenance of identity is the main thrust of all the characters used” in diasporic literature (Timalsina, 2017, p. 261). Mishra (2007) found, in his research on Indian Diaspora, that the diaspora “struggles to ‘produce’ self-respect [and recognition] in every sense

of the word” (p. 142). In diasporic writings, the physical, social and psychological conditions of a character represent these realities of the concerned diasporic society.

The Nepali diasporans are also in the process of making their recognizable identity in the host lands. The speakers and characters in Nepali diasporic literature give expression to their mentalities and activities. They are “worried about their identity and consequent satisfaction they have got in their life in the diaspora.” In this process, Nepali diasporic literary creations show the social mentalities that are “related to their condition of the creation and sustenance of their identity in the new land” (Timalsina, 2017, p. 261). For this, the diasporic characters use the liminality or threshold to stand and speak from. Such a threshold “signifies a rite of passage, a betwixt phase in which a subject is separated from a known social structure or category of ordinary social life, and enters the broader domain of the communities whose bonds are anti-structural” (Soto, 2007, p. 79). Thus, the study of diasporic characters indicates the condition of the diasporic society they have been picked up from.

### **Study Procedure**

The primary data of this research has been the selected stories from the collection *Paai [Pie]*. It is a purposive sampling. Three stories that exhibit three types of diasporic character i.e. general diasporans, senior diasporic citizens and young diasporic couples have been selected for the study. These stories present the diasporic people as their main characters. The ideas of characterization discussed by David Morley, Daniel Schwarz, John Hospers and R. J. Rees have been used as the theoretical bases of characterization. The diasporic orientation of the characters has been based on the ideas of Samuel A. Floyd, J. U. Jacobs and Maria Rubins. The selected stories have been analyzed in terms of their characterization. For this, the role-based functional aspects of characterization have been highlighted.

This discussion on characters has highlighted the identity, action and their symbolic representation. It means the roles of the characters in highlighting the theme of the stories have been analyzed. As the study has been connected with the diasporicity of characterization, their diasporic qualities have been foregrounded throughout the discussion. Each character’s diasporicity has been evaluated in terms of their roles in the presentation of diasporic themes and styles. Their diasporic sensibility, transitionality or liminality of the self, hybridity, cultural identity, cultural transplantation, dualities, tensions, and internal and external conflicts have been connected with the thematic aspects of the story.

### **Discussion**

This section deals with the analysis of diasporic characters in the selected stories. Three types of characters in these stories i.e. general diasporans, senior diasporic characters and young diasporic couple’s diasporicity is discussed. The major thematic concerns these

characters deal with are: discriminations against the diasporans, emotional conditions and existential crisis.

### **Discriminations Against the Diasporans**

Some characters in the stories exhibit the qualities of general diasporans. One of such stories that present general diasporans as the main character is the title story “Paai” of the anthology. The word ‘paai’ itself has multiple meanings. In the first place, it is a food that is popularly liked in the USA. The second meaning has connotative reference that indicates easy, widely available and delicious like the American life seen from the distance. And the third meaning of the word is Pakistani Islam, where ‘pa’ refers to Pakistani and ‘i’ refers to ‘Islam’. The focus of the story is on the third meaning.

The story is about the fate of the Pakistani Islamic people living in the USA. The narrator ‘I’ himself is the main character in the story. In the beginning, his identity is not revealed. But by the end of the story, he is found to be a man named ‘Ahamad’ who is originally from Pakistan and has been living in Upstate New York with his family. He has a house with two bed rooms; and he has already taken the American citizenship. It was six years ago when he became the naturalized citizen of the USA. The location where he has his house is full of the White Americans who gently behave with him. They exchange greetings and well wishes whenever they meet. It shows they have cordial relation in that locality.

He seems to be well assimilated in the White majoritarian location. He is well accepted there; and so is happy. His wife is also happy to have good relation with the neighbours. She offers him an apple pie that their neighbor Martha has given them. The pie is delicious like their relation and life in that part of the USA. At the same time, Ahamad is a man of reading. In the beginning of the story, he lists the poems about air travel, airport and flight that he likes. It shows his adaptation with the culture of reading in the America. These details show that he is a well-established Pakistani diasporan in the America.

The beginning of the story also shows that he is a happy man and has been enjoying his life in the host land. The story starts with his flight schedule that is at 7:00AM on a particular day. Later, it is revealed that he is taking his flight from Los Angeles to New York. He is a time conscious man; and so he has reached the airport before 5:00AM. This shows the preparedness of the diasporans. At the same time, the image of flight, the location of airport and the action of travel indicate the life in the transition and movement. It is the quality of a diasporic life, and the dream they cherish at first, then work to achieve it. They work happily to get their desire. Even the atmosphere of the story in the beginning parallels with this expectation of the diasporans. It is a fresh morning. His mind is also fresh without any visible tension. He expects the flight to be entertaining. He enjoys the sitting facing the flight area of the airport. His pleasure is added with his sip of Starbucks coffee. This description of the time before a flight

shows the atmosphere of enthusiasm and expectation of the diasporans before they face the complex reality of the diaspora.

The description that follows shows his minority status in the plane. It symbolically shows the minority status of the Pakistani Islamic people in the USA. The plane was mostly inhabited by the White Americans. He finds a little number of Asian, Latino and African in the plane. We find his negative attitude towards them when we read his comment on a White woman who happens to be sitting on his side: "*jyaastai motee amerikan goree mahilaa thachariekee thiee* [A very fat American White woman was slumped into the chair]" (p. 29). From this point, the racial tension of the story starts. He does not try to talk to her; neither does she. Like other passengers in the plane, they also busy themselves in readings. Very few people are involved in talks. It shows a poor human relation in the host land, here the USA.

The tension reaches to the climax when a White woman shrieks. She exclaims: "Oh, no, no!" The sound was terrible. All the passengers and the airhostesses focused their attention towards her. She is a middle-aged White woman of American origin. It means she represents the mainstream American society: its views, behaviours and attitudes towards the diasporans. She is full of wrath: her blue eyes and white face displays it. She indicates to a passenger next to her seat and shouts: "I can't sit with this guy. Oh, no, no, no!" Her lips tremble with wrath. Her fatty red cheeks get redder. And, finally, she reveals the reason for her shock: "I can't sit with this Muslim guy; he is from Pakistan, Jesus Christ!" (p. 30). She repeats it innumerable times. And finally, the flight attendants manage the man sit at the back of the plane nearby the toilet.

This man is the next important character in the story. He has to bear this public insult just because he was from Pakistan. His identity of being a South Asian and moreover being a Muslim caused all this. When he is going to his newly arranged seat at the back, all White eyes slantingly look at him as if in suspicion. He is so fearful that he is not able to see anybody. His black face is full of sweats. He is very nervous. So, he accepts whatever arrangement is made for him. It is a racial and religio-cultural insult of a punishable type. But the insulter is not punished; instead, she is rewarded with bringing a White man on her side. This shows the nature of the society in the diaspora. The USA in the story is just an example.

The main focus of the story is the effect of this incident on the main character. This incident, which in reality is a human accident, makes the main character impatient. The woman on the side seat begins to look angrily at him. Her eyes evaluate his facial colour, hair colour, clothes and beards. In relation to it, and to avoid any talk to the woman, he closes his eyes. This shows the difficulty of the racially different diasporans in the host land. They have to avoid human connection because of the differences. The real climax of the story is the newly made psychology of the main character. He prepares himself to avert the possible danger and consequent insult upon him like that of the next Pakistani. He is sure to get the same fate if the



woman asks his identity and if he reveals the truth. So, he prepares his fake identity: an Indian with a name Rampukar. To say it would be to avoid his nation and his religion. These two are the basics of his identity: Pakistani and Muslim. Once both of them are hidden, his identity is hidden. But to live a life, the Pakistani Muslims are compelled to bear such a serious situation. It is what we call identity crisis in the Diaspora.

Many diasporans have to do it throughout their life, not only for a short period like the main character in this story. This character cannot use his pleasant time in the plane for other purposes. He simply has to go on repeating his newly created fake nationality, fake religion and fake name: India, India, India, and Rampukar, Rampukar, Rampukar. It shows how the diasporan's creativity of life is blunted with the existential cum identity crisis. This is presented through the characterization of the main character and other important characters.

### **Senior Citizen's Emotional Condition**

The next group of diasporic characters in *Paai* is that of senior citizens. Five stories in the collection present aged Nepali diasporans as their main characters. Four out of five such characters have been invited to the USA by their children who have well settled there. Out of them, the story entitled "Marmaahat Mudra" ["Bereaved Gesture"] has been analysed here.

The main character Professor Bishalnath Sharma, in this story, is a self-made man. He entered the USA to teach as a contract teacher in a university at Boston. Within twenty-eight years, he has made a noticeable progress there. Now, he is seventy years old and lives alone at home. His wife has passed away; his children live with their families in other states. The house where he lives is made in about five acre area in a location full of greenery. His neighbours seem to be rich people like him. The narrator thinks that his home and the location look like a dream spot. It has a wide lawn, a kitchen garden where his wife used to plant all necessary Nepali vegetables for the family use. All outer and inner decorations of his house are rich and attractive. It proves his well-established life in material terms.

The narrator describes his sitting room full of grandeur. There are shining and attractive furniture and fixtures that look very expensive. In the showcases there are many expensive show pieces and antique-looking statues. The floor is full of imported carpets. A large bookshelf contains more than two thousand books. His home is managed by an Indian housekeeper and at the age of seventy he manages himself. He used to be so busy in his life to manage all these things that he had no time to visit Nepal at any important family and social occasions. Even when his parents, relatives and brothers died, he did not go there. The dead ones wanted to see his face once before their final breath; but he did not buzz. His society and relatives in Nepal fiercely criticized him for this behaviour. He did all these to get established in the America.

Now, he feels guilty of his past behaviours. He says: “*galti gariyo* [I made a mistake]” (99). This small sentence is full of his remorse directed at himself. He is unable to speak it with ease. The narrator reports that it is an expression of deep pain and repentance for his disregard of family and society back in Nepal. In a reply to the narrator’s question why he did not visit Nepal, he says: Primarily it is busy life, and . . . (98). He wants to say many other things about it, but cannot. Now, he remembers what he has done; and done really bad. He is nostalgic of the time his wife used to grow Nepali vegetables in their American kitchen garden. She was compelled to ask her friends who visited Nepal or those who used to visit the America to bring their seed to her. He is not happy with what he has done.

His present is terrible; both in physical and mental terms. Physically, he is whiter in colour and weightier than what he used to be in Nepal. Because of one brain stroke, his right hand and right leg have become feeble. So, he cannot walk straight. After his wife passed away three years ago, it is in this day when he meets the narrator, his old friend, only he has come out to the lawn. He is emotionally shattered. Every time he remembers his wife and children, he cannot speak properly. He cannot speak a lot to his close friend, the narrator here. He chooses the words very carefully every time he says something. This indicates his deep seated psychological wound, probably to the level of trauma. He thinks it was not time for his wife to die: she was four year his junior; even then she won. It shows his desire for death. To die is to get victory in the competition of life. He adds: If she was there, he needed not to weep. Finally, he says “*Yastai ho* [Life is so]” (98). This shows his present emotional state.

Now, he is nostalgic. So, they talk of their time back in Kathmandu about three decades back. They talk about the places that have transformed a lot there; about the friends some of them who have already left this world. He is emotional just to remember them. Even the narrator cannot ask many questions as he thinks they may deepen his pain. But Prof. Sharma himself understands the questions looking at the narrator’s eyes; and so he describes his present life. About his lonely life he reports: After the wife passed away, he lives alone in his home; nobody else is there; all of them live away with their wives. He has used the word ‘*swaasnee*’ [wife] to indicate the wives of his sons. ‘*Swaasnee*’ does not have positive connotation in Nepali. And he explains that he has three sons: two medical doctors and one the CEO in a bio-company. The first one lives in Texas, the second in Michigan, and the youngest one in New York. The narrator finds a terrible vacuum in the psyche when Prof. Sharma describes this all. He finally says: They phone me sometimes (101). Such grandeur in the house; and such a vacuum in life! This is the pain of the old aged Nepali diasporans in the America.

### **Young Couple’s Existential Crisis**

The next representative group of characters used in this collection of stories is that of young Nepali couples who have migrated to the USA and have turned to be diasporans. “*Threading*” and “*Lagbhag*” [“Nearby”] are two stories that present such characters. In both of

them, the husbands first migrate to the USA, and the wives follow them later. The focus of both husbands is to earn as much money as possible; but the wives think that money and material luxury is not everything in life. So, the husbands want to stick to the host land at any cost; whereas the wives revolt to end their stay in the land consequently putting an end to their conjugal relations.

One of these two stories is “Threading”. It deals with a Nepali youth’s dream of reaching to the USA, getting established there, their struggle for existence in the land and the resultant effects. Arjun and Subhadra are couple who have been well-established in the USA. Both of them have good jobs and earn about six thousand dollars per month. After her five year long stay there, Subhadra is tired of such a mechanical life lived just for money; and so she wants to return to Nepal. But her husband does not want even to listen to such opinion. The story revolves around the same conflict between the husband and the wife. The story writer has developed their characters to match it from the very beginning of their life in Nepal.

Arjun struggled hard to settle in the America. He dealt with a broker who convinced him to be taken to America following an illegal track: Katmandu, Delhi, Mexico, and finally the America. On the fifteenth day, they reached the US-Mexico border and entered the US. His entry to US began his bad days in the beginning. At first, he was captured by the American border protection squad police. He had to spend eighteen days at detention centre. On the nineteenth day, he was submitted to the emigration office. It was the final point to enter into the American society. He was left in a legal order to be present in front of the court at any day he would be summoned. His fear was that of deportation back to Nepal. So, he made up all possible fake stories about him and got such documents from Nepal for his support. When the American police officers and judges enquired him, he explained that it was not possible for him to return Nepal. He was neither a political activist nor a believer in democracy back in Nepal. But he said that he had been an organized member of Nepali Congress for the last five years; he was an activist against so called Maoists; and so his life was under threat. He convinced the judge that he needed political asylum in the USA, the nation where democrats have good security that is not possible in any of the South Asian nations. He pleaded that he wanted to save his ideology and life and so wanted to stay in the USA (42-47). Finally, he got the asylum, and became an American.

Arjun’s story of reaching to the USA reflects the condition of many Nepali youths migrating out of the nation. They are ready to make up any fake story to live in the USA. It took full one year for Arjun to complete this process. He was very happy to get his green card, the next step after this. He babbled with excitement: “I got it with so much struggle and trouble” (48). He kissed the green card in the same way an Olympian winner kisses his/her gold medal. The writer compares these two because Arjun’s entry into the USA was the result of his struggle that normally is not imagined. So, he was proud of this achievement. His next

achievement was Subhadra's green card. And finally, she also reached the USA. It is how they were settled there. Now, they have their personal cars, personal jobs and good bank balance there.

Arjun went on changing his jobs in the USA. In the beginning, he worked in a restaurant: at first as a bouncer and later as a waiter. The owner had assured him to make him a manager if he had worked a few years more. When Subhadra reached the America, Arjun changed his job for the first time. He got a driving license and got a job of a driver. He drove the car of diamond vendor. This job was far easier than the first one. He had to drive about five to six hours a day and he used to get five hundred dollar a week. It was higher amount than the earning at the restaurant, where he had to work for twelve hours a day and get four hundred and fifty dollars a week. But the job of driving was risky. Madho Parikh, his master, used to carry the pieces of diamond and large amount of dollar to purchase them. It was illegal to carry such a large amount in notes and dangerous, too. At any time, they could be attacked by thugs and might be murdered. Madho Parikh did not teach him the skill of evaluating the types of diamond as he promised to do. So, he left that job, too. And finally, he started the job at a front desk of Hotel Comfort; it was a twelve hour long work each day, from the noon to the midnight. He earned five hundred and fifty dollars a week (48-54). It shows the instability of jobs in the USA and how the migrants suffer from it.

Subhadra had a stable job. She started the job of a threader in a parlour after she learnt the skill. Arjun had arranged this all. Before she reached the USA, he had requested the owner of the parlour to provide the chance to his wife. And, accordingly, she got a chance first to learn and then to work in Luna Sharma's parlour. It was a good job in terms of earning: about five hundred dollar a week and the tips in nearly the same amount. Many Nepali migrant women have a dream of learning this job, working in other's parlour, and finally start their own parlour. Despite this chance and enough earning, Subhadra was not happy with her job.

She was a teacher and was about to get a job in a bank back in Nepal. Both of them were respectable jobs there despite low earnings. But the job of threading was a dirty one though it gave good money. She was not able to find other jobs better than this. Threading was the job of removing unwanted hair from women's face, eyes and thighs. A threader had to catch a thread loop with their teeth, put the unwanted single hair in the next end loop of the thread and pull it softly with the teeth. The odour of dirty mouth and that of the area around thigh was so bad that the threader felt vomiting. They term it "*bhutle kaam* [hairy job]" (57). Sometimes, they happened to swallow the hairs, too. So, Subhadra was not happy with the car, the comfort, the apartment and the American life in total. She was not satisfied there. Her dream of happy life in the USA was shattered.

She thought it would be good to return Nepal. She even thought that with the money they have earned there, they could go back to Nepal, start a good business and have a car. But

Arjun did not want to hear it. She thought that they had reached America not to return to Nepal, but to live there. He reminded her, time and again, that America was his hard earned achievement. But Subhadra thought that they could get nothing other than trouble in the America. Because of the work of treading too, she was desirous to leave the USA and go back to Nepal. This conflict slowly increased day by day. She was getting tense all the time. But Arjun warned her not to think of going back to Nepal. Her nights began to pass without a sleep, just turning the sides. Because of twelve hour long job, Arjun used to be tired and used to have a sound sleep. His tiredness and work worried her. The conflict was increasing.

So, one morning, before moving to her job of threading, she said: “*Pharkau, bho paisa* [Let’s return, let’s leave money, it’s too much]” (33). Arjun was very angry to listen to this. With the command of a patriarchal husband, he bullied her with a question: “*talaaee yahaa lognesanga basna man laagen?* [“Do you not want to stay here with the husband?”]” (34). It was a question on her morality related to sexuality. Arjun used it to silence her. But it shocked her the most in her life. At the moment, she decided to return to Nepal, though alone. And that evening, when she reached home after work, she decided not to be dominated by him as usual and reported him about her decision. She angrily retorted him at every statement he made. Finally, she asked him whether he would accept his wife threading the hairs of young boys, too. This question shocked him a lot. Subhadra entered the bathroom to spit. It is how this story presents the characters whose conjugal life is threatened because of the work cultures for common every day existence in the American Nepali Diaspora. The land of dream turns into the land of contempt for some of them.

### **Conclusion**

The selected stories exhibit the conditions of South Asian diasporans in the USA. These conditions are primarily connected with the characters’ identity crisis related to cultural, emotional and existential difficulties. The major types of characters to represent these realities are general diasporans, senior citizens and young couples. The general diasporans undergo such existential conditions that represent the realities of any diasporan in the host land. The senior citizens, as characters, exhibit how the host land cannot be emotionally fulfilling in that age: They are shocked and unsettled. The young couples in the stories represent the aspiring generation, in the diaspora, who believe that they can get everything they want in life in this land; but finally they are frustrated and disoriented. The stories show that almost all the diasporic characters are unhappy and unfulfilled. This study further shows how the diasporans are entangled in the multisided abyss between homeland and host land. Their life is always in transition; they never reach to their desired destinations. Stylistically, the atmosphere where the characters are presented and the tone they use symbolize their life patterns. Other studies are necessary to explore such abyss reflected in Nepali diasporic literature.

### References

- Atom, N. (Ed.). (2014). *Nepaalee daayasporaakaa naaree kathaakaara ra katha* [Women short story writers and short stories from Nepali diaspora]. Nepal Academy.
- Baym, N. (1984). Character. *Novels, readers, and reviewers: Responses to fiction in antebellum America*. Cornell UP, 82-107. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt2204nx9.8>
- B.C., G. (2015, Shrawan 5). Amerikee bhogaai kathaamaa [American experiences in stories]. *Koseli, Kantipur*. <https://www.kantipurdaily.com/.../21/153214476045575768.html>
- Floyd, S. A. (1998). Toward a theory of diaspora aesthetics. *Lenox Avenue: A Journal of Interarts Inquiry*, 4, 25-67. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4177068>
- Gooptar, P. (2013). What is an Indian diaspora name?: The Caribbean context. In K. Mahabir (Ed.), *Caribbean Issues in the Indian Diaspora* (pp.163-179). Serials Publications.
- Gurung, S. (2018, August 2). Raajaabako Amerikaa [Rajab's America]. *Nepal*. <http://nepal.ekantipur.com/n.../2018-08-02/20180802133723.html>
- Hospers, J. (1980, July). Truth and fictional characters. *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 14(3), 5-17. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3332659>
- Hudson, W. H. (1979). *An introduction to the study of literature* (9th ed.). Kalyani Publishers.
- Mishra, V. (2007). *The literature of the Indian diaspora: Theorizing the diasporic imaginary*. Routledge.
- Morley, D. (2007). *The Cambridge introduction to creative writing*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nikolajeva, M. (2001, Fall). The changing aesthetics of character in children's fiction. *Style*, 35(3), 430-453. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/style.35.3.430>
- Rajab. (2018). *Paai [Pie]*. Sangrila Books.
- Roser, N., Martinez, M., Fuhrken, C., & McDonnold, K. (2007, March). Characters as guides to meaning. *The Reading Teacher*, 60(6), 548-559. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20204502>
- Rush, D. (2005). *A student guide to play analysis*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Schwarz, D. (1989, Winter). Character and characterization: An inquiry. *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 19(1), 85-105. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30225237>
- Soto, I. (2007, Spring). Storytelling in the diaspora: Maxine Clair's "Rattlebone". *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, 4(3), 79-84. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40986211>
- Subedi, J. (2018, June 14). Samriddhi khojdai hindadaa. [Moving in Search of Prosperity]. *Naya Patrika*. <http://archive.nayapatrikadaily.com/2018/06/14/61300/>
- Subedi, M. (2012). *Amerikee-Nepaalee daayasporik upanyaas [American Nepali Diasporic Novel]*. International Nepalese Literary Society.
- Timalsina, R. (2017). *Exploration into the Use of Rasa in Nepalese Diasporic Poetry* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Nepal Sanskrit University.