

## FEMALE SELF IN CONTEMPORARY NEPALI NOVELS

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### ABSTRACT

*Amar Neupane's Seto Dharti (2012) and Neelam Karki Niharika's Yogmaya (2018) build the two complementary versions of social reality of the then contemporary Nepali society. The novels depict how the patriarchal social system has become an obstacle in the path of women's progress. Both the novels portray the pain and suffering of the women in Nepali society, by exposing certain events from history and contemporary Nepali society. The suffering of female characters becomes the main subject matter in both the novels. The women confront the patriarchal structure, become the victims of it, resist it, and finally pose a challenge through spiritual means. Similarly, there are functional women who are means of the larger social-political structure. The women are forced to adopt the dominant patriarchal ideology. They appear as domestic workers and the machine to bear children. This study has employed feminism as frame of analysis for the novels to examine the condition of women. Key concepts of gender and marginality of women from Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, Judith Butler, and other relevant theorists are used to interpret the texts in both the novels. Contemporary Nepali women basically appear in three roles: social conformist, victims, and resisters. Those who pursue change in society take the form of rebel in both the texts. The study explores the role of rebels in the making of contemporary self of women in Nepali society.*

*Keywords: Discrimination, Social Conformism, Victims, Patriarchy, Gender, Rebel, Resistance.*

### Introduction

The study examines the ways of Amar Neupane's *Seto Dharti* (2012) and Neelam Karki Niharika's *Yogmaya* (2018) explore the condition of the women in the contemporary Nepali literary imagination. In both of the novels, the protagonists are female characters. This study explores the issues related to the experience of the protagonist and other characters' desire for freedom, emancipation of self-identity, autonomy and courage, and examines resistance of the women against the social oppression. They struggle from their parental home to society for equal rights and liberty, thereby challenging the patriarchal values. They go against discrimination between men and women, which exist through social norms and values in the society. The novels show how women are excluded and dominated by patriarchy and how they seek out their ways to rights and freedom in the existing social conditions.

## Readings of *Seto Dharti* and *Yogmaya*: A Review

Both the writers explore two complementary versions of social reality of the then Nepali society in their literary works *Seto Dharti* (2068) and *Yogmaya* (2074). They depict women's issues in which their characters are concerned with the patriarchal social norms, values, and their quest for a just society. They want to live their life as per their choice. The protagonists make attempts to raise the voices of widow and voice-less people. The protagonists go and speak against the men's domination, patriarchy, and social change for a better society for everyone to live in perfect harmony. The writers dedicate the fictions to these shadowed women who are also part of the subaltern class of people in Nepali society. This section reviews some of the available documents written on and about the texts under study. Since these texts are recent publication, serious critical studies have not been carried out so far. However, the review has used the online publication of reviews as well to bring together the discussion on the texts in online media as well.

Neupane looks at the issue of a child widow in *Seto Dharti*. According to the writer, the widow has described her own history in the text. The child who is married to the unknown person even does not see the face of her husband. Neha Sharma writes:

... the child widow describes her own history. She explores her events of life from a child widow to old age. She says that she has not seen the face of her husband and within two years of her married she becomes widow, and she has to live a widow life in his name till the end of her life, when she knows that she thinks that she is in the dream of her life.(6)

She examines the story about the child widow that exists in the earlier time of the Nepali society. And the pain of a child widow throughout her life. As Aayush argues;

Tara is a submissive character in the novel. Throughout the life she has been at the whim of forces that is beyond her control and these have guided her into marriage, then widowhood all of which she accepts suppressive without any hints of rebellious. She does not realize lacking as she is in shades and depth, resembling a vacant vessel of sorts, given to a weak and white cloth of perpetual sadness. (5)

*Seto Dharti* covers the story of the nineteenth century of the Nepali society that the girls have to face in the traditional Nepali society. Critics Dilip Poudyal points that the main story is circled in the life of Tara. When she was seven, she got married by deception. At that time, she is unaware about the marriage. At the age of nine years she became widow and is made to perform all the rites of her death husband. Her life was like a voyage without a rudder by disobeying the traditional rules. She headed towards Devghat at night, and performs own funeral rites to avoid the lineage (gotra) and it is against the norms, values of the patriarchal society and it shows the female resistance against the social construction of the society.

Similarly, Michael Hutt explains that Yogmaya is a female religious ascetic. She urged Rana government to establish a *dharmarajya*, a just state in the country. As the Rana government denied to give the just place, she drowned her into the Arun river along with her sixty-seven followers to challenge the Rana government. The novel is based on Yogmaya's life and it includes for the end of every kinds of discrimination prevalent in the contemporary Nepali society.

Ramji Timalina (2074B.S.) states that the novel has established Yogmaya as a campaigner of social reformation. It has also sidelined numerous scandals imposed on her for years and years, attributing all of them to as false social belief and perspective. Indira Mishra (2019) writes Yogmaya struggles for justice and equity in the society. She mainly focuses on the "factors contributing to Yogmaya's emergence as a rebel...her transformation from a helpless despised rural girl to a rebel feared by the rulers of the nation" (50). Mishra concludes her revolt to gender based violence associated with patriarchal and some other social and cultural institutions of the Hindu religion.

Reading *Yogmaya* from the perspective of new historicism, Mahesh Paudyal (2018) explains that the novel subverts the conventions' fact- fiction dichotomy by blurring their boundary. Paudyal presents: "Scripture are bunches of ideological fabrications, hegemony documents, constructed discourses and lies that benefit the rulers and hypnotize the ruled" (n.pag.). The present situation of Nepali society has been greatly affected by Mass Movement II of 2062-2063. The movement abolished the centuries-old monarchy and transformed the country into a democratic republican state handing over the sovereignty in the hands of people.

## Departure

Amar Neupane's *Seto Dharti* and Neelam Karki Niharika's *Yogmaya* explore the condition of the Nepali women at the then society. Both the novels are based on the real problems and events in Nepali history and society. They have focused the issues and problems faced by female in the patriarchy. Neupane and Niharika project the self of women in the contemporary context of Nepali society where the picture is greatly different from the present society. The questions arise now: How authentic self do they create in their text? What purpose does such construction of female serve in each case? How the female resists against the male domination? This study attempts to answer these key concerns.

The study focuses on gender issues, women resistance. It sees the impacts of women's resistance in patriarchal modes, structures, and ways. It examines the forms of protest and the impact the women have witnessed in the formation of their self. Also, it sees how the women's self is constructed to identify the course of action it has politically implied in the novels. Previous discussions have never taken

this path in the reading of the texts. In this sense, the construction of women hood in Nepali novel is a relatively new area of intellectual discussion in the text under scrutiny.

### **Research Methodology**

As a critical vocabulary, subaltern refers to the group that is excluded from society's established structure for political representation and therefore denied the means by which people have a voice in their society. In literally refers to any person or group of inferior rank whether because of race, class, gender, sexual orientation ethnicity or religion. In general terms subaltern refer to marginalized groups and the lower classes and a person rendered without agency by his or her social status in the society. Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak developed the idea of subaltern studies a step further emphasizing that the Western Marxist modes of social change that these historians employ does not do justice to the complex histories of subaltern insurgency and resistance which they seek to recover in India.

Spivak not only breaks the dichotomy of self and other but also uses the term 'subaltern' flexibly, accommodating social identities and struggle that do not fall under the reductive terms of strict class analysis. She argues that there is no space from which the sexed can speak. She emphasizes that the subaltern women cannot speak as their voices and agencies were completely silenced under the political, social and cultural hegemony of Hindu patriarchal codes of moral conduct and their representation as victims of a barbaric culture. In the male dominated culture, through these subaltern women attempted to voice their narrative, their voice was not recognized that led their silence in the dominant political system of representation.

### **Women's Self: Reading *Seto Dharti* and *Yogmaya***

Neupane's *Seto Dharti* presents the story of child widows Tara, Pabitra, and Yamuna and their miserable condition forced by patriarchy. Child marriage was common at that time and that marriage is done without the consent of them. They do not know the meaning of marriage. They are the puppet in the male dominated society. They have no any rights and freedom and they follow the path shown by the traditional values. There is no second chance of marriage for the child widow. Society is highly traditional as patriarchy which pre-supposes the natural superiority of male over female, shamelessly upholds women's dependence on and subordinate to man in all spheres of life. Consequently, all the people and authority within the family, society and the state remain entirely in the hands of men. Female roles are nothing in the male dominated society. So, Tara after the death of her husband she has to live being the true devotees of her dead husband and society as a watch dog observes her behavior. But when she became conscious of her rights

and freedom she leaves her father house and goes to Devghat and became an ascetic challenging the traditional rules of society.

Neupane and Niharika portray the story of the three types of women in the novel. They are conformist, victims and rebel women. Women have same problems in the Nepali society. Both are the real story in the novel. The protagonists suffer a lot by the male dominated society. Women are taken as passive, weak, inferior, docile, etc in the society. They are taken as the functional entity in the society. Patriarchy gaze's woman's as an object, a commodity or just a heap of flesh. It takes them either as subordinate to run family or object to fulfill men's carnal desire. The protagonists in both the novels struggle a lot against that rigid orthodox of the male dominated society and ultimately they gain freedom and emancipation. They challenge the traditional values and sow seeds against the patriarchy for the transformation of the society.

There are three types of women in both the novels. They are conformist, victims and rebel. The Women who adopt the patriarchal social, norms, values and tradition without any questions such types of female are termed as conformist women. Women often choose to conform the society traditional beliefs rather than to pursue personal desire as it is often easier to follow the path of the male dominated society that have already made rather than forging new one. Female character became conformist because of them bringing and schooling in patriarchal society. As the agent of male dominated society female characters have been completely hegemonies by the spell of the patriarchal ideology and they, as a moral guide, always guide, always tries to inflict the same ideology into female characters. In such hegemony of patriarchal ideology ultimately contributes to the helpless and the submissive status of women where they want to remain under the shadow of their father, husband as protection being unable to questions their position in the society is termed as suffering women. When the female became conscious of their rights and they go against such traditional values is known as rebel women.

The process of taking women as an object is termed as commodification. Women are compared as a good of the market. Men can use that good according to his wish. In the novel the main female characters are commodified by their parents and their marriage is done without their consent and they are unaware about their own marriage because as an object their decision is taken by their family. After the death of Tara husband, she is not allowed to marry and she has to remain widow throughout her life in the name of the dead husband but when Tara mother dies every society member encourage him to marry and finally he marries with the eleven years' girl whose age is smaller than his daughter (Tara) from previous wife. Women are traditionally treated and still considered commodities. When women

are seen as an object they are dehumanized by men. Almost all the female characters are dehumanized and force to follow the male dominated society rules as they are commodified at the time of their marriage. The mother-in-law looks to sister in law and she analyzes, "Granny who was making the thread for offering of light ready casually looked at mother. Before she could see sweats on the tired mother, she looked at the heavy load of grass at her back. And she was happy, seeing the huge load of grass. More than it, she was excited to see mother's growing belly"(3). Women treat women as commodities, things of multiple uses and laborers who continuously work to feed the family. Patriarchy as such seeks utility in women's body in different forms: laborer, domestic helper, cook, wife, child-bearer, etc. Tara scrutinizes that," I do not want to see the place, the place there and the people in the house. I do not have any curiosity to see them. For such desire, you require to develop certain sense of attachment with the place and people there. I do not have such attachment. I wonder why I did not want to see me even while I have fallen ill. What do they get seeing me? Will they be cured from their fatal disease seeing me?"(69). Women responsibility is only to run their life according to the will of men. Dobbins says "Ideology has been called meaning in the service of power, that is, the creation of rationalizing myths, ideas, and in today's lexicon," common sense" that pave the way for people to accept conditions they would otherwise protest against"(24). Tara totally ignores but she is forced to accept by her own family. Tara questions," I wonder why they force me to attend mourning for thirteen days. The front yard was fenced with two bamboos mats. They laid haystack on the floor. They gave me two blankets: one to lie on and the other to cover my body. I obeyed whatever they told me to do there. What would I do? My parents had instructed me to do whatever they said" (90). Patriarchy forces women to obey their existing norms and values, so she is compelling to accept all the consequences of her life. Tara notes," I had to stay hidden in a hut for a week. I stayed there. They said I must not see the sun and men for a week. After being widow, I had menses that were same-as red as the menses of married women. How surprising! I had my first menses seven years after my widowhood" (134). She is still in misconception and traditional belief that menstruation of girl brings ill-omen. She reviews that, "If we had those ornaments, it would have been more comfortable to my father. He has recently married now-half for his own desire and half for the pressure of the relatives. If father had those jewelries, he could give them to his new bride. Father must have thought that the child bride would be happy to put on those ornaments"(201). When Tara's mother passes after three years her father marries and in traditional system men can do everything but the women are not allowed.

And the female is compelled to rebel against the domination of the patriarchy. Pabitra goes to Banaras with a group of saint and involve in prostitution challenging

the patriarchal society. Michael Garnett terms, "To be an agent is to be, in some sense, an originator of action in your own right" (7). Likewise, Tara also leaves her home and goes to Devghat challenging the traditional values. Tara became the saint which is against the spiritual according to religion girls are not allowed to be saint. The theme of the novel is the women's consistent struggle with their subordinate position. The novel depicts the unavoidable struggle between the subaltern position of the women and the ruthless rule of the male upon the women. These sorts of struggle that takes place deeply within every family, society which is deeply rooted in the male dominated cultural values. So all most all the major female characters' protest socially and spiritually in the novel and they wish to live their life by their own choice. Neupane presents the idea in the following lines, "Moon lit night. There are two yaggyas in the courtyard. The yaggya have not been able to see each other. They are fenced with green leaves in the middle. Above it is hung a piece of cloth like bed sheet" (27). Girl is taken as a burden in the Nepali society. It is believed that if they get their daughter married early before menstruation, their soul reaches into heaven after death. Tara observes, "The parents worshipped the groom like the god. They made me worship him, too. I wondered if he was a real god. I said, "Mother, is he a god?" Mother just smiled at my query. Such smile has two meanings: both yes and no" (28). In the Nepali society, they treat their son-in-law as a god and give high honor and respect. They even worship him, assuming that he is reincarnation of lord Vishnu. Neupane describes, "Having observed the mourning, I did not want to stay there even for a minute. But they say I must there for a year. I couldn't accept it from my heart. They say I must not visit my parents place for a year-my heart always hovers at it. They say I must not see my father for a year; still, my father's face sticks to the eye of my mind" (95). She follows the rule of the male domination from inside actually she wants to go against such rules prevalent in the society. Self- satisfaction is required in everyone life so she raises the voice of protest and she rejects the patriarch bondage upon her soul. Neupane narrates the event, "The scripture had the provision of shaving the head and observing mourning ritual for one's own. I did it. The ritual required sixteen mass of barley and rice to offer at the end. I did it. I felt I was observing my own mourning ritual throughout my life" (295).

She was completely a mother now. She struggled to raise, educate and marry her daughter who is a professor in a university now. It is a huge achievement on her part" (334). She challenges the patriarchal society and gives birth to a child. She fulfills her responsibility and makes her self- dependent and to spend the rest of life she begins to hymns in the holy places. Tara says, "All the people had chosen Devghat as the final destination of their life" (350). To erase their sin at the end of their life they go to Devghat. Tara says, "The greatest thing in our life is our body. Love, pain, worship, good deeds, wealth, pleasure, suffering, tears, smile and

Devghat remain there as long as we have our body. After the body grows old, rugged and weak, even the god grows old, rugged and weak. Even the god lives as long as we have body” (352). When we have power in our physical body, everything is possible.

Identity refers to the ways in which an individual and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities. Identity can be defined as the qualities, beliefs, personality, looks, and expression that make a person known with the other. Female does not have their identity and their identity is related with the identity of their husband. In the novel *Seto Dharti*, the female characters do not have their own identity as Tara and Pabitra are the child widows and their identity is related with the name of their dead husband. So to avoid their husband's name from their name and to create own identity they leave home and became successful to live their life in their own ways and able to create their own identity. So, identity is the most important things in his or her life and people want to create their own identity and to be known with the others. To create the identity people, struggle throughout their life. Identity is the foremost things in one's life.

Consciousness is one of the very important functions of the mind. It can even be considered the supreme mental function because it makes aware about everything. According to the time, place, age, education, works, etc make people consciousness. In the novel *Seto Dharti* the female characters are dominated by their family members and they are forced to accept the decision made by their family members and force them to marry in very early years. When Tara husband dies she became widow and survive in the name of the dead husband but at last when she became conscious of her rights, she leaves the home and moves to Devghat to spend the remaining life with the full of freedom. Likewise, Pabitra goes to Banaras and involve in prostitute and when she became conscious and give birth to her daughter and leaves the brothel. At last the major character's life became change due to consciousness came in their mind and decided to live their life according to their own will. So to enjoy the life full of freedom, consciousness is necessary in everyone life.

Neupane's *Seto Dharti* explains mainly the three types of women. They are conformist women, victims of patriarchy and rebel women. In the beginning of the novel all the women including the main characters adopts the traditional rules of the male dominated society blindly without questioning. They think themselves as inferior and male as superior. Their mind is shaped in such a way that they cannot come out from the male ideology. As the women cannot go against the unnecessary domination done upon them as they became the victims of the patriarchy society. They think that to become the victim is their fate rather than the male ideology.



When the widow became maturity and conscious of their rights they begin to protest the patriarchal values. Resistance is a way to achieve the right and value of women. If there is excess domination they became conscious of their right and want to be self-dependent. So, the women resist for the justification of rights and want to change unjust rule which has snatched the right and freedom of the female. The women who have strong spirit cannot endure all the domination and do resist against the injustice. When women became conscious of their right, they rebel breaking the traditional norms and values of patriarchy. They want to change the mythical rules of patriarchy. Only with the power of resistance of female, women can get their right and freedom in their life.

Niharika's novel *Yogmaya* represents the traditional, sacrifice, victimized conditions of women in Nepali society. The female characters of the novel, Yogmaya, Ganga, Dukhana, Nainkala are the male dominated women. The status of women is very miserable. Female are treated as commodification as they are forced to adopt traditional norms, values of the male dominated society. *Yogmaya*, the main character is portrayed as a submissive woman. The leading character *Yogmaya* is also addressed by the name of Thulihajur in the novel. The female characters have been represented as the victims of the cultural and social inequalities prevalent in the society. Thus, the realistic depiction of the pathetic condition of the women in the novel reveals the oppression and objectification of women in the society.

Male ideology refers to the beliefs about the importance of men adhering to culturally defined standards for male behavior and the construct is operationalized by measures and attitude of male and that ideology is forced upon the female. The male ideology as which encourages women for the traditional roles as daughter, wife and mother as ideal ones. In the patriarchal civilization, women have been subjected to a specific kind of repression and their mental and physical development has been channeled in a specific direction. The male members in the community spend their whole time in outer doing the jobs and involving in different activities. They do not have boundary. But when women come out of the house everyone keeps an eye in their every step of works. Thus, the society has determined their role inside the four walls of the house which keeps women in the second position. Similarly, the way of looking between father and mother to their daughter is also different. The mother remembers her twice married daughter and the father says that she cannot be accepted because she brings them shame in the social arena. To maintain the status in the society, he denied to accept his daughter and showed the male hegemony in the society. Niharika writes:

Observing closely with the dim eyes, she said, "Did you come? If you had been able to come while your parents were alive, it would have been wonderful. But, Shrilal

did not change his mind. We tried to persuade him. He gave deaf ear to us. He did not listen to anybody. Your mother would weep every evening. Neupane would say, "The egg is broken to us. That's it. She passed away. That's the end." How heartless! Parents show really different heart. Even when angry, mothers can be persuaded. Your father's heart was broken and it was further broken to pieces. (62)

If girl marries twice, it is taken in a negative way. So, *Yogmaya* is not accepted by her father. She challenges the patriarchy and marriage thrice in the society. The mother shows her love towards her daughter either she is twice or thrice married but the father rejects the request of his wife and shows the male primary role in the Nepali society. According to Simone de Beauvoir argues that, "the male ideology makes women the second sex"(995). Whatever roles are given to women all are for men's comfort and benefits. It is male ideology which is in favor of man and treat woman oppositely. In the male dominated society, the man tries to implement his ideology in his family and orders his wife to accept the social norms and traditions prevalent in the society.

Gender refers to the characteristics of women and men that are socially constructed. Judith Butler says that, "the regulatory practices of gender formation and division constitute identity" (23). This includes norms, behaviors and roles that are associated with being a woman and man as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct gender varies from society to society and can change over time. Gender refers to their roles, behaviors, expressions and identities of male and female and the roles assigned in the society. Male is assigned to perform the out ward works and as a head of the family whereas female's role are limited with the domestic works and they should be under the control of male. Due to the gender difference she cannot control her stress. She challenges the social chore and she leaves home. Niharika describes:

Throwing the weeds from her hands, she said, "Who would just leave home simply because the father scolded them? He would hate as well. She was a teenager. She must have felt hurt. Who do you blame now? We could safely call that it was her destiny. There was no brightness on her face" (72).

Hatred creates some kinds of problems in everyone's life. Michael Garnett writes."Self government is a matter of being governed from within that is by motives internal to the self" (14), Same hatred to *Yogmaya* results in her leaving the house. People cannot stay at home even while being hated. If woman knows anything, her knowledge is not accepted in family and society. She should not talk more with men. Most of the women are guided by the traditional force and they became happy by following the traditional rules. They think that women are inferior and they have to follow the patriarchal rules. They are guided by the male ideology and they never try to come out from that ideology. They are emphasizing

male interest and objectives with the social organization determined by traditions. Women role and the status have been comprised to their detriment. Women have been considered as the objectives rather than human beings and they have been forced to occupy the subaltern position in the society. They have to remain dominated, invisible and secondary of the male authority throughout their life

The best thing happens if one leaves a positive impact in the society before dying. *Yogmaya* is a social reformer and a rebel from Nepal. She raised the several issues concerning the dominance of men over women, discrimination, inequality, oppression, exploitation, and negligence of women in the society. Niharika presents the idea in the following lines:

Prem Narayan wrote the name of the people willing to sacrifice themselves with her. He asked them to give him thumb print on the consent letter. Dukhana said that there were 209 people willing to sacrifice themselves. Then, Prem Narayan sat down to write letter as Thulihajur ordered him to. He wrote, "We waited to see Shree 3 Maharaja to carry out the words given to us. Since there was no progress towards your words, we are sacrificing ourselves without harming any property and wealth. If the promise is not fulfilled by the *Kartika Purnima*, we will sacrifice ourselves. We do not want the government interference in this. (420)

*Yogmaya* challenges the government not to interfere in their self-sacrifice. Since the social reform was never implemented, they do not want to live in the society where promises are never fulfilled. Dambar Bahadur Basnet reminds her spirit and narrates her view," To overcome the pain and suffering of people we do not have to hesitate for detention or even the death" (196). Therefore, *Yogmaya* and her followers decided to take jal-samadhi to threaten the then government and force it to take initiative to establish the '*dharmarajya*' in the country. Niharika pictures:

"We will now go for jal-Samadhi, not fire sacrifice. We won't have to prepare much for this. So, we can keep it secret from the eyes of the people." Thulihajur said it slowly. "We will have to think about who will sacrifice and who will stay behind. We need some strong pillars of '*dharmaraj*' behind here after us," she added. (494)

Autocratic rulers were happy at the people drowning in the river. After their death, there was no one to challenge their government. *Yogmaya* strategically keeps her devotees behind to safeguard her mission. After the night, the day necessarily comes. The light must follow the darkness. *Yogmaya* with her sixty-seven followers move to the Arun river for 'Jal-Samadhi'. Niharika pictures it thus: Sixty-five followers step forward. The procession of lights moves towards the tumultuous Arun. There is one voice: May the adharma vanish away! May the *dharmaraj* establish! "(516). Aziz is absolutely correct when she says, "Passive resistance was not her style, *Yogmaya* was the woman of immediacy"(87). She takes several actions

against injustice and demands for immediate result make her to be a remarkable leader and a social reformer. In the history of Nepal, the sixty-eight people demand for *dharmarajya*. They take jal-samadhi.

To establish the right of the people, we should be ready to sacrifice our life for the betterment of the society. We achieve our goal when there is the feeling of self-sacrifice as *Yogmaya* determines to end every kinds of discriminations prevalent in the then society. Her followers support her in the mission. Niharika explains:

When we went to request her, Thulihajur said, “You must not be afraid to fight for your rights. You could observe the mourning alone but it is to accept the exploitation and promote the same practice. We are at war with casteism and untouchability. If they do not allow you to participate in the mourning in the name of robbing away your caste, they promote casteism and discrimination based on it. Come fight against the exploitation. Fight. Go ahead. I am with you. There must be an end to casteism and untouchability.” (299)

We have to fight for every kind of discriminations until we get our rights. The society cannot establish the justice system without such struggle against the illogical system. Antonio Gramsci views, “All men are intellectual, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectual” (51). So, Thulihajur is very strong in her agenda and her role is not less than intellectuals in the society: even the prime minister offers her gold and diamond. She rejects it and answers that she never needs such things in her life.

Niharika novel *Yogmaya* scrutinizes the struggle of *Yogmaya*. She was a religious leader and women right activist of her time in the society. When she returned back from Assam to her birth place Majhubeshi, Bhojpur and she became an ascetic and begin to live in a hut with her followers. She begins to raise her voice against domination, inequality, discrimination and many other problems prevalent in the Nepali society. She advocates the voice of all the women and their rights to live their life as they wish and be happy. The then politics of Nepal was going through corruption. The land lords of villagers were taking the surplus values of the grannies they were selling to the poor. Nepali society at that time was passing through the huge discriminations upon the poor people and women in the society. These social problems had let *Yogmaya* not only be the spiritual leader but also rebel. The followers who supported her helped in her every decisions of a just society. But, she became the target of Rana rulers and was jailed and later had to take the decision of mass suicide against the discrimination of the contemporary Nepali society.

### **Construction of Female Self**

Neupane’s *Seto Dharti* and Niharika’s *Yogmaya* depict the real incident of the than Nepali society. The protagonists in both of the novel are female characters. Both the

novels explore the issue of women suffering, discrimination, exploitation, marginalization, etc. Women are compelled to live in the patriarchal mindset with the belief 'to be born a daughter is to have an ill fate'. And it becomes essential for patriarchal culture to define woman's role as submissive, inferior, immanent and dependent. In both the novels the protagonist speaks against the unjust practices of men over women. It tries to establish, freedom and welfare of women in the society. The authors have dealt with the three types of women in their literary works. They are conformists, suffering and rebel women. Conformist women adopt the male ideology blindly without questioning and they are like a puppet of the male dominated society. Such types of the women became happy by following the traditional rules of the society. Another type of the women is the suffering women. Patriarchy society gives pressure to follow the traditional roles of the society. Their rights and freedom is snatched by the patriarchy. They are supposed to accept the masculine hegemony and act as the effect of the social structure. They are surrounded by the repressive force of the patriarchy society. So, they became the victims of the male dominated society. And the next type of the women is rebel women. If there is excess domination upon the female by the traditional norms, value of the society they resist against such discrimination for the freedom of the women.

The modern women are striving to be free and self-reliant by establishing a fair society where both the sexes male and female will be treated equally. The 21<sup>st</sup> century women could not tolerate the male hegemony. At any effort they want equality in every sectors of the country. So, women pursue different methods and strategies while fighting against the traditional system of the patriarchy society. This suffering and alienation have become the causes of women protest in the modern society. The main leading characters' Tara and Yogmaya are the symbol of protest of whole women in Nepali society. The changes they want to bring in the society cannot be achieved easily. So, they struggle continuously against the male dominated society. The only way to get out of such society is to resist against the patriarchal values and to establish egalitarian society in the country.

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