

Structural Drives and Common Sense: Building Conflict in Select Stories from B. P. Koirala and Guru Prasad Mainali

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Abstract

Background: Social structures shape the human self by developing a set of codes called common sense. Society founds certain types of knowledge over the other possible types that challenge the existing mores of the community. In the meantime, it produces a set of generally accepted codes that also promote inevitable inequality in society. In literary writings, the authors courageously challenge existing common sense, while other authors take the existing mores of the community as the ultimate grammar of social life.

Methods: This study applies Michel Foucault's new historicist lens of reading to Antonio Gramsci's idea of common sense to analyze and understand its political function in the short fiction of modern Nepali writers B. P. Koirala (1914-1982) and Guru Prasad Mainali (1900-1971).

Conclusion: In modern Nepali short stories, Koirala and Mainali represent two such distinct camps of writing: Koirala explores the political functions of common sense, but Mainali presents himself as the social conformist with a moral tone in each social affair. In Koirala's world, people attempt to find a new way of satisfying their bodies and society. The psychological reality also reasserts the political quest for a new societal order. On the other hand, Mainali's world is entirely peopled with subjects who have lost their size to social drives. He writes the stories of reconciliation.

Novelty: Short fiction serves as the field of data to explore the ideological base of society when it is interpreted in historical contexts. This study analyzes and presents the ideologies embedded in the fictional worlds of Koirala and Mainali, Koirala's *Dosi Chasma* [Faulty Glasses] (1949) and Mainali's *Naso* [The Ward] (1969), as both collections depict the same period in Nepali society. Koirala's psychological rendering of society explores people's inner drive, while Mainali presents social reality and promotes existing morality.

Keywords: Self, Agency, Structure, Power, Knowledge, Common Sense

Introduction

As modern Nepali storytellers, Bishweshwor Prasad Koirala (1914-1982) and Guru Prasad Mainali (1900-1971) represent two distinct modes of approaching social reality in their literary writings. Koirala has written *Doshi Chasma* [Faulty Glasses] (1949) and *Sweta Bhairavi* (1983) as his collections of short stories. Similarly, Guru Prasad Mainali has published eleven stories in a single collection titled *Naso* [The Ward] (1969). Since Koirala's *Doshi Chasma* and Mainali's *Naso* share a similar context from which both the authors derive their resources to write the stories, the present study has selected the two collections to analyze their approach to the people and the world. The liberal attitude helps Koirala see the world as an open phenomenon where people and circumstances constantly interact, each shaping the ways of the other.

On the contrary, Mainali's idealist world places the solutions to all the problems at the top: people either reconcile or escape from the world as common sense informs them. Koirala's characters make a forceful presence in the world and create their reality. In contrast, Mainali's characters conform to the choices derived from the hegemony established by the social drives.

Contemporary Reading of Koirala and Mainali

Contemporary scholars have approached B. P. Koirala and Guru Prasad Mainali from various standpoints. The following brief survey of the readings of Koirala's *Doshi Chasma* and Mainali's *Naso* presents the directions of contemporary readings of the collections of stories. Koirala and Mainali began writing short stories at the same time. [Pradhan \(1984\)](#) writes:

In 1938, *Katha Kusum*, the first anthology of Nepali short stories, was brought out by Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, Darjeeling, under the editorship of Suryavikram Jnawali, who, in his editorial, besides outlining the theory of modern short story, gave a critical appreciation of the stories which were included in it. It was a collection of stories of Balkrishna Sam, Pushkar Samser, Guru Prasad Mainali and Bishweswar Prasad Koirala. (p. 147)

As the herald of modern short fiction, Koirala and Mainali showcase their work in *Katha Kusum* and mark their remarkable presence in Nepali short stories. However, they explore their distinct ways of writing stories and sketching the mind and soul of the character. The quest and goal of the characters also distinctly emerge in both authors.

B. P. Koirala's *Doshi Chasma* has been approached from different angles. For instance, [Khanal \(2014\)](#) conducted a comparative study of Chekhov and Koirala. His brief comparative analysis of Chekhov's "The Death of a Clerk" and B.P. Koirala's "Doshi Chasma" concludes that the feudal order of Russia and Nepal had similar ways of behaving with the lower class people. The treatment of the characters and theme are identical in both stories because the social structures are similar (p.101). Reading text in its context, [Khanal \(2014\)](#) explores how each text responds to its circumstances.

Critics find it interesting to read Koirala's texts psychoanalytically as they get to read the tensions in his narratives arising from psychological differences and instincts. [Gyawali \(2014\)](#), [Bhattarai \(2021\)](#), and [Hutt \(1991\)](#) follow the line of interpretation as they approach the

text. For instance, [Gyawali \(2014\)](#) also explores psychological elements in Koirala's stories and declares that Koirala has made a remarkable contribution to modern Nepali short stories by making use of cultural and social materials in writing the narratives to depict the inner psychological space of his characters (p. 124). Moving a step further in his reading, [Bhattarai \(2021\)](#) applies Freudian psychoanalytical reading in "Doshi Chasma" [Faulty Glasses] and declares that Koirala goes into present the inner emotional responses arising in Keshav Raj's mind in the story (p. 116). [Gyawali \(2014\)](#) and [Bhattarai \(2021\)](#) examine the nature of tension in Koirala's stories as located in the psychological space; however, Gyawali attempts to see external forces like culture as instrumental factors in shaping the course of the story. Similarly, [Hutt \(1991\)](#) finds Freud's theory appropriate for approaching Koirala's texts. As Hutt writes,

The earliest examples of such innovative works are stories such as Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala's "The Colonel's Horse" (*Karnelko Ghoda*), published in the late 1930s, in which a young woman who is married to an elderly colonel sublimates her sexual frustration in an infatuation with the colonel's stallion ... [\(1991, p. 177\)](#)

Psychoanalytical readings foreground the tensions in the text resulting from the unrealized wishes for pleasure in the characters.

One of the fundamental ways of reading a literary text is to see the unified effects among the various elements and examine how such features produce a harmonious effect in the texts. [Kafle's \(2007\)](#) reading of Koirala's "The Soldier" and [Paudel's \(2010\)](#) interpretation of Guru Prasad Mainali's "A Blaze in the Straw" share a similar approach to literature. For instance, [Kafle \(2007\)](#) examines the aesthetics of Koirala's stories to see how all aspects lead to a single effect in his texts. In one of the studies, he scrutinizes the aesthetic elements in Koirala's "The Soldier," also from the collection *Doshi Chasma*. Kafle argues that all the aspects of the story lead to a single effect, thereby helping the story stand as a work of art [\(2007, p. 274\)](#). Similarly, [Paudel \(2010\)](#) reads Mainali's "A Blaze in the Straw" and sees how it stands as a work of art. Also, he explores the realistic tenets of the story in his analysis as his study concludes: "Very clearly, the writer can express the pathetic aspect of rural life and expose the problematic social situations implied in them with compact and economy of language in an organized linear pattern" [\(2010, p.148\)](#). Like Paudel, [Dhakal \(2020\)](#) also reads Mainali's story from the point of view of the structure of the narrative. He concludes that the narratives have a chronological structure, presenting the message briefly [\(2020, p. 179\)](#). Although both [Kafle \(2007\)](#) and [Paudel \(2010\)](#) follow a similar mode of interpreting the texts, Paudel also chooses to read the text politically and bring the cultural and social forces to make meaning in the text.

In the 1930s, Mainali started writing short stories by depicting social reality as it appears to the observer. He was a keen observer who believed in the ideal type of society. Analyzing the pattern of Mainali's writings, [Hutt \(1991\)](#) argues:

The primary tradition of social realism can be traced back to Mainali: his stories owe much to the influence of the great Hindi/Urdu writer "Premchand" (real name Dhanpat Rai, 1880-1936) and exhibit the same idealism and concern for the poor. Social realities

were presented with an idealistic sheen, and few such stories lacked a moral or an improving message. (pp.174-5)

Mainali's idealism and social realism certainly add a new flavor to the tradition of Nepali short stories in the 1930s. [Pradhan \(1984\)](#) goes into the discussion of some of the stories as he states:

Around the minor quarrel of a peasant couple, Mainali has woven his story 'Paralko Ago' like a master craftsman, subtle in psychological characterization. As a critic says, it has charm and will never get extinguished like a hay fire; instead, it will always shine like a star. 'Sahid' is a touching story about the martyr who lays down his life for the sake of freedom from oppression. It was published in *Prabhat* from Calcutta immediately after the fall of the Rana regime in Nepal. Among his other stories 'Sabbhand Baliyo' (The Most Powerful) is a humorous story of his confrontation with a mosquito. His 'Pratyagaman' (The Return), along with 'Naso' and 'Paralko Ago,' shows him to be an adept at the depiction of domestic life. All his stories are collected in *Naso* (1969). (p. 148)

Even the minute social issues find their place in the making of the plots of his stories through which he views the world and projects his idealistic vision for it. Both Hutt (1991) and Pradhan (1984) textually delve into the world and think that Mainali finds himself amid the short stories.

More contemporary readings of Mainali's short stories seek the themes of gender, power relations, and caste and ethnicity. [Marahatta's \(2022\)](#) study explores the massive domination of patriarchy as the social force in Mainali's *Naso*, as the stories depict the social reality in which women suffer from the exploitations of patriarchy as the instrument of power (p. 169). Sadananda Paudyal joins the discussion as she argues that Mainali employs literature to encode abstract culture. In other words, the intangible heritage of the society gets into Mainali's writings, informing the last generation of the knowledge and practices of the preceding generations. As she critically observes,

Guru Prasad Mainali is the story writer who acknowledges the truth by being influenced by the impact of the traditional culture. He has used the abstract culture that the society was continually practicing in two ways in his stories: satisfaction of the divine and the satisfaction of the self. [\(2022, p. 127\)](#)

Like the issues of gender and power, caste and ethnicity have also emerged as the primary themes in Mainali's writings. [Budhathoki \(2022\)](#) sees the presence of all sorts of people in Mainali's stories: the author brings people from various caste groups and ethnic backgrounds into the stories (p. 69). Mainali presents a world that he had observed and synthesized in the 1930s and 1940s through *Naso*, which has been read, interpreted, and responded to from various points of view at present.

Departure

The significant studies on Koirala and Mainali focus on psychoanalysis and social realism, respectively. Though some studies also examine social structures like patriarchy or feudalism as the major themes in modern Nepali short fiction, the ideological structures and the knowledge they have promoted in society have not been dealt with in such fiction readings.

This study fundamentally differs from the earlier studies in that it examines the formation of common sense in the backdrop of social drives: larger social structures naturalize specific rules as accurate; they promote them as the governing ethos of the time and regulate the ways people behave in society; and when the knowledge about the world and the subjects is shared in the community of the people, they treat it as the theory of life in general. The study's key concern is examining the acceptance and/or rejection of common sense in the quest for happiness in life. The present study attempts to answer the question: How do people struggle with short fiction in Koirala and Mainali? What do they attempt to achieve at the end? How do they challenge the shared knowledge that has turned into an institution by gaining the absolute base as such?

Common Sense and Hegemony

Great Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci (1881-1937) developed the theory of common sense and hegemony in his *Prison Notebooks*, a series of essays he wrote between 1929 and 1935. Gramsci states that society is comprised of two societies: civil society and political society. For instance, [Bates \(1975\)](#) states that Gramsci views modern society as a bifurcated world with civil and political societies. An intellectual plays a vital role in contemporary society as he goes into it as a salesman to "secure free consent of the people" ([1975, p. 353](#)), affirming and asserting societal hegemony. The intellectuals become a function in the exercise of coercion of the state as they prepare the people with certain ideologies as the most natural things. Common sense comprises the general knowledge about the world and its people and helps people behave regularly. It enables the smooth functioning of society in the interest of the ruling elite. [Kranenberg \(1986\)](#) notes: "... Gramsci examines again his concept of spontaneous philosophy and finds in it common-sense truths which are indispensable for the concerns of life, despite their fragmentary, incoherent and, at times, inconsequential components of popular knowledge and wisdom" (p. 147). Common sense does not allow people to become self-critical of themselves; instead, it drives them to behave in a way that best serves the ruling class's interest in society. In other words, common sense refers to a set of heterogeneous beliefs, rules, or knowledge of ordinary people who take it as self-evident truth.

Gramsci argues that hegemony incorporates domination from the ruling elite and acceptance from the ruled ones. The ruling elite naturalizes certain dictums in the form of common sense in society to maintain the position of the rulers. Common sense helps regulate the social functioning in favor of the elite and persist in the domain of domination of the ruled. Common sense does not allow the dominated to rise as the resisting agent; instead, it prepares them as docile subjects serving the interest of the rulers. As [Crehan \(2016\)](#) argues, "Gramsci takes common sense so seriously precisely because he discerns within its confusion the embryonic beginnings of new political narratives, narratives with the potential to challenge the existing hegemony in ways that go beyond mere defensive resistance" (p. 49). Once the dominated, subaltern people realize the political goal of common sense or the prevailing wisdom in the society, they awaken themselves to challenge the existing mores of the society. Gramsci wants people to question authority by discerning the formation of common sense and

challenging the absolute nature of such knowledge to uphold the agency that ordinary people have in themselves. Gramsci also argues that only the subversion of existing hegemony rewards the dominated with equality and "common sense is necessarily a key site of struggle" ([Crehan, 2016, p. 119](#)) in that the dominated people should be able to understand the nature of common sense as the social construct at the hand of the influential people to be able to realize their agency as such. This study has used Gramsci's theoretical position on hegemony, common sense, and the nature of domination in the form of structural drive in the life of the ordinary in Koirala and Mainali.

Rebel vs. Social Conformist: Analyzing Koirala and Mainali's Approaches to Self

Both B. P. Koirala and Guru Prasad Mainali work on a similar type of cultural landscape of Nepal from the 1920s onwards in their short stories. The social structures construct specific varieties of self-evident truths and popular wisdom for everyone, maintaining the hegemony of specific social structures like feudalism, patriarchy, and family structures. The storytellers build up the conflict by deriving the resources from common sense. The practical quest for life and liberal attitude of Koirala leads to the formation of certain types of rebels. At the same time, the puppets emerge in his stories to show the overpowering impact of the oppressive social and political institutions. Besides, Koirala's characters do not easily give in: their defeat/assimilation justifies dismantling the oppressive social institution and order. On the other hand, Mainali's idealistic vision of society inspires him to explore the grounds for reconciliation. He helps people withdraw from life and run away in search of alternative modes of living. Mainali believes that people should fit into the larger body of the functioning machine of society like a cog.

Koirala brings in both sides of the same persona through different stories. The feudal order has turned so oppressive that people undergo torture without any of their faults. In "Doshi Chasma," Keshav Raj pleads that he misses greeting the Rana General because of the flaws of the glasses. He could not recognize the person. In other words, it can mean a great disaster in his life. Keshav Raj cannot sleep the whole night. He accepts that he has committed a crime. He says to his wife, "I have committed a crime. It appears as though I didn't take notice of a big person. Now, what can I do? It will cause great harm if he gets angry" ([Doshi Chasma, 2076 B.S., p. 3](#)). Similarly, Haridatta is financially supported by his sister, who physically serves a wealthy man. He cannot fit in the more extensive social setup though he is not a rebel ([2076, p. 19](#)). As a lover, he can never confess his true feelings to Parbati; as a student, he cannot succeed in his studies; and as a businessman, he does not know the right path to success. The confusion of the changing time manifests through him. "[Baulaha](#)" presents a mad prisoner who challenges the teaching of the Geeta until he is associated with the world. In a sense, he appears to conform to the rules of society as he meekly accepts the teachings from the Pundit after he learns that his wife is dead ([Baulaha, 2076 B. S., p. 80](#)).

Koirala places the soldier and the student from two diverse backgrounds in "[Sipahee](#)" together in the same story. The soldier appears cruel as he derives his values from the common sense of the barracks of the colonial masters. He is vulgar to the people on the way ([Sipahee](#),

[2076, B.S., p. 98](#)). The student feels that the soldier is offensive. Both the soldier and the students do not rebel against anything; relatively, they just fit themselves in the larger order of society. Koirala does critique the existing colonial order, which turns humans into machines in the story. On the other hand, "[Riksa Tanne](#)" shows Dhanbir's pathetic condition: he is rejected in love, beaten down by society, and lives a neglected life. Dhanmaya does not accept the food he offers her ([Riska, 2076 B.S., p. 82](#)) because she thinks it is other people's leftovers. Also, she hurts him by going with another man in front of him. He works very hard, pulling a rickshaw for the wealthy man in the town. He loses his life to tuberculosis, and he has his friend, the dog, in his last moment.

Keshav Raj, Haridatta, the madman, and Dhanbir represent the fate of the hollow men who lead an erroneous life. Koirala implicitly poses a question: How are they responsible for the suffering they have to undergo in their life? Why can they not rebel against society or assimilate into the existing order? He subtly exposes the flaws in the underlying structures of the society. The feudal, capitalistic order requires complete dismantling in that innocent people like Keshav Raj or Dhanbir find no choice but to address their psychological, social, and political safety from the order. Haridatta cannot explore any way to succeed because the order confuses him. Koirala's madman conforms to the prevailing wisdom after completely detaining from life. He accepts the Geeta's teaching only when he learns about his wife's death.

Guru Prasad Mainali writes his stories with conformist personas who find solace by fitting themselves in the existing order as per the demands of common sense. "Paralko Aago," "Kartabya," and "Chhimeki" conclude in the reconciliation of the conflicting parties: the author brings together the opposing ends to show that all the elements fit into their respective place for society to function well. In other words, Mainali's idealistic world aspires to explore the golden means for all the conflicting parties. The conjugal misunderstanding arises between Chame and Gauthali as/when Chame kicks her in "Paralko Aago." Chame's punishment comes through a series of ordeals that he undergoes in the absence of Gauthali for a short time. In the end, he realizes that he needs her to spend meaningful time at home, to fill the stomach of his buffalo, and to conduct the domestic chores. He sees Juthe Damai and his wife leading a happy life together ([Paralko, 2076 B.S., p. 58](#)). The social perception shapes the individual sense. Common sense grows from the patriarchal order to educate him on the lessons of life. He goes to his in-law's house and claims Gauthali for himself again. Similarly, "Kartabya" and "Chhimeki" picture brothers and neighbors in conflict. Muralidhar never forgets his duty even though his younger brother refuses to share their father's plot of land in "Kartabya." Gumane turns down Aasharam Sahu's offer to earn money when Dhanjite and his wife suffer from cholera next door. Guided by righteousness, Gumane says: "Life is just like this. Why would we fight if I, too, had tolerated the things? If you share the same pillow, our feet do touch each other. Should we abandon the path of righteousness because we have fought with each other?" ([Chhimeki, 2076 B.S., p. 15](#)). Chame and Gauthali, Muralidhar and Shreedhar, and Gumane and Dhanjite conform to the rules of an idealist society. They fit in the larger structure as envisioned in common sense.

As Koirala and Mainali search for the issues to weave a narrative around from contemporary society, both of them pick marriage as one of the themes in their writing. They explore the inner dynamics and complexities associated with the formation of the family. Koirala's "Biha," "Karnelko Ghoda," and "Pabitra" explore the intricacies arising from marriage. Similarly, Mainali deals with the same issue in "Naso," "Abhagi," and "Pratyagaman." However, they fundamentally disagree with each other in their approaches: the former adds vigor by modeling his characters after rebellious self or utter failure, while the latter again makes his best attempts to fit the people in the prevailing order. In other words, Mainali's characters conform to the expectations and roles common sense assigns them. The prototype images rule more powerfully in Mainali's idealistic world, which his people do not challenge. Koirala's characters emerge with liveliness and vigor to rewrite the dictations of common sense as their fate. By rejecting the assigned roles, they reject the traditional worldview about themselves and the world, thereby challenging the world to reorganize itself.

Koirala's "Biha" completely shatters the narrator's perceptions about marriage. After the narrator sees Subba Katak Bahadur and his fourteen-year-old bride, Harimati, as husband and wife, he realizes a bitter fact about uneven marriage. When his first wife passes away, he ties the nuptial knot with the young girl ([Biha, 2076 B.S., p. 9](#)). However, the narrator is disillusioned from the relationship as Katak Bahadur begins to raise his wife like his own daughter ([Biha, 2076 B.S., p. 12](#)). As he starts to educate her, the narrator quits attending any marriage ceremonies after the marriage. The author's reflection on uneven marriage emerges more poignantly in "Karnelko Ghoda" when a forty-five-year-old colonel marries a nineteen-year-old girl. He cannot satisfy her in any way: she is never happy about the colonel's love or gifts. She stays in her room and sheds tears in silence ([Karnelko, 2076 B.S., p. 29](#)). Koirala openly allows her to review her past: a youth from her neighborhood had proposed to her before her marriage. Now, the girl recalls the events in despair. She feels like a prisoner among the things that "are brought to make her happy" ([Karnelko, 2076 B.S., p. 30](#)). In rebellion, she grows intimacy with the horse and offends her husband. The horse accepts the sexually charged girl on its back and throws off the colonel. Koirala shows the rebel woman in an uneven marriage in the story. Though Pabitra cannot match the intensity of the colonel's wife, "Pabitra" also presents the ugly girl's fantasy about Keshav Dev as her man. The maid with goiter at her neck forgets what she is for in Keshav Dev's house. She revolts against the family when she asks for her salary ([Pabitra, 2076, p. 39](#)). The inner tension in Pabitra does not resolve until she convinces herself that she has grown old. The narrator in "Biha," the colonel's young wife, and Pabitra rebel against the prevailing practices, rejecting to fit in the structure defined by the existing wisdom of the time. They pose a challenge for society to redefine their experience of life.

Mainali's men and women appear as the social function who reassert common sense and lose their individuality. Though wealthy, Devi Raman and Subhadra have no children in "Naso." A conservation man, he believes that without children, wealth makes no sense at all ([Naso, 2076 B.S., p. 1](#)). He seeks help from all the possible traditional resources to resolve the

problem and consults an astrologer ([Naso, 2076 B.S., p.1](#)). Finally, he concludes that he requires a child to 'open the gate of heaven' for his salvation. As Mainali writes, "Hinduism preaches that the way to the heaven is blocked without children and I have followed it" ([Naso, 2076, B.S., p. 2](#)). On Subhadra's consent, he finds Laxmi as his second wife. The fundamental conflict does not emerge from the interaction of Subhadra and Laxmi. Subhadra loves Sushil like her own child. When Subhadra feels hurt, she leaves her house to stay with her aunt at Gaurighat in Kathmandu. The kind-hearted woman forgives her husband and returns home to support him as she knows about her ailing co-wife. She heartily receives Sushil in her care when Laxmi silently passes away. The meek self of the characters in "Naso" does not challenge society's existing configuration. Idealist Mainali pictures Subhadra as larger than the existing stepmother, who adopts Sushil as her son.

Like "Naso," "Pratyagaman" revisits the image of a selfless stepmother. Shobha helps Nirmal raise his half-brother, Ramu. By extension, Shobha occupies the position of stepmother in the story; however, the intimacy between Ramu and Shobha surpasses the mother-child relationship. The most loving sister and successful brother-in-law are distanced after Ramu marries a higher-class girl ([Pratyagaman, 2076 B.S., p. 101](#)). Though Ramu goes to stay in his in-law's house at Juddhasadak, he returns home again to bring happiness to his brother and sister-in-law. The narrative of social conformism continues in Mainali's "Abhagi" as well. Pundit Madhav Prasad marries Karuna as his first wife passes away. He is busy performing rituals outside the home as his son, Krishna, misbehaves at his stepmother's hand ([Mainali, Abhagi, 2076 B.S., p. 69](#)). He cannot tolerate the torture: disillusioned from life, Krishna leaves home with an ascetic who had come to Kathmandu for Shivaratri. Mainali's characters either seek integration into society or escape it. They do not fight against and challenge it to break off, paving the road for a new reality. In this sense, both Ramu and Krishna accept the dictation of common sense.

Mainali imagines a world filled with stoics who welcome death and then choose to rewrite the authority of society. All three girls in "Prayaschit," "Bida," and "Chitako Jwala" celebrate death to life. In "Prayaschit," Gauri cannot answer even when she carries Govinda's child in her womb ([Prayaschit, 2076 B.S., p. 22](#)). Society and her relations see her love as lust. She attempts to rewrite herself as a wife, though she is a child widow. However, the society does not allow this position to her. Trapped in her circumstances, she drowns herself in Ranipokhar. "Bida" presents Prabha as completely withdrawn from her life after she learns that Narendra has married another girl. She goes to stay in Hardwar until she returns his son ([Bida, 2076 B.S., p. 52](#)). She drowns herself in the Ganga as her way to salvation. Shashi cannot decide in her life in "Chitako Jwala." She burns in the flames of the wrong decision of her life as her characterless man inflicts violence on her. Though Hari arrives to see her, she does not have many days. Hari's friend Binod is the doctor who looks after Shashi. He thus diagnoses the case: "Serious. She has almost no blood. The heartbeat is very faint. Our books say this condition arises when the patient undergoes serious trauma. Now, you understand that she will remain for about a month or one and a half months" ([Chitako Jwala, 2076 B.S., p.124](#)). Gauri,

Prabha, and Shashi choose to quit the world rather than struggle in it to give a specific direction to it.

Koirala's characters choose to enjoy the world because they see personal gratification as more than anything else. "Katha," "Prem," and "Hod" directly oppose the stoic vision of the world. The penancing sage quits his spiritual quest as one of the fairest women arrives in his life. He enjoys the bliss of social life more than the one he enjoyed during his spiritual awakening ([Koirala, Katha, 2076 B.S., p. 52](#)). Ramnath feels irritated by his wife's absence in "Prem." His wife had gone to stay with her parents for a brief period. The telegram that announces her return heals him completely: he sets to clean his place and rearrange the furniture. His wife stays away from him for ten days, and his tuning with the world gets disturbed, leaving him behind in a world without any meaning ([Koirala, Schoolmaster, 2076 B.S., p. 24](#)). The prospects of psychological and physical gratification excite him, and a new meaning unfolds in his life. However, another story tells about Padam and Padma trying to understand the moral standards of women. Padma demands proof of the accusation made against the women: Padam proposes to seduce the widow in two weeks to convince that women have feeble moral standards ([Koirala, Hod, 2076 B.S., p. 43](#)). However, Padma is ready to accept her defeat in order to stop Padam from seducing Hari Krishna's widow ([Koirala, Hod, 2076 B.S., p. 48](#)). Though common sense functions as the most potent instrument in "Hod," the story presents an uncommon experiment in which the spouse agrees on execution in two weeks. Jealousy and anger are duly treated along with personal gratification in Koirala's short fiction.

The unrealized love functions as the vantage point for Koirala to critique the ways of the world in "Sakhee," "Sweater," and "Madheshtira." When the youth goes to her bedroom to get a packet of cigarettes, Chandra Kumari could have chosen to consummate her love ([Koirala, Sakhee, 2076 B.S., p. 66](#)). She refrains from kissing him, though he insists on it. Later, she confesses that she craves for him after he leaves the house. She cannot rebel against society. In "Sweater," Maiya's sweater turns out to be ugly –she gives it to Rame, her servant ([Koirala, Sweater, 2076 B. S., p. 73](#)). Society begins to doubt her intentions as they do not understand what has gone wrong with it. However, she neither rebels against the dictations of common sense nor asserts them in the story. In "Madheshtira," the widow challenges the common sense of society. She knows she can give herself a second chance to set up a family at thirty. She has money and some jewelry with her. She knows the plains have the opportunities for the people to rewrite their lives. Everybody greatly respects the widow when she gives them food at Benighat. Koirala thus narrates:

Suddenly there was light in their eyes and there was huge respect for the widow in their heart. Giving some beaten rice from her portion, she said to Gore, "You are young. You may go hungry more quickly than others." She looked at all of them and said, "I am off to the Mahesh. I don't have a husband. My in-laws couldn't bear to see me there. My brother-in-law was rude but he loved me. As I didn't have a husband, I couldn't stay in the house." ([Koirala, Madheshtira, 2076 B.S., p. 92](#))

The widow is a bold woman who revolts against society's expectations. She takes up the challenge to rewrite her fate instead of accepting everything that occurs in her life. Unlike Prabha, Gauri, or Shashi, the widow can imagine herself as a family woman enjoying the bliss of life, far away from her previous society.

Mainali also writes the narrative of social change in his short fiction. For instance, "[Papko Parinam](#)" depicts the struggle between the recently freed slaves in 1924 and the local feudal lords like Kanta Padhya. However, the political machines failed to address the issues of the Ghartis: they were fined and imprisoned at the Court in Chautara. Idealistically, Mainali searches for justice in the court of god, where sin replaces crime. The Ghartis are forced to scatter from their settlement in Simalchaur after they lose the case in court. Now, Kanta Padhya finds his punishment after his wife and two sons die in the cholera outbreak. The story of social change still maintains the spirit of common sense in Mainali's world. He depicts Bir Bahadur as a very good person who stands morally sound and committed to sacrificing himself at the command of Devata Babu. Bir Bahadur serves humanity but does not revolt against the world. Mainali never shows Devata Babu, who acts as a revolutionary in the story. The idealist depiction of Bir Bahadur and his willing participation in the revolution of 1950 in Nepal implies that he is not an agent of change, even in the narrative of social change.

Both Koirala and Mainali weave the narrative in the same context in Nepal. However, Koirala's liberal attitude tends to shape the rebellious self in the people in his short stories. They also suffer the torture of life, guilt, and insult in society. In such circumstances, he aims to explore the justificatory ground from which to critique the prevailing structure and uphold a voice against its oppression. Koirala's characters see life in a new light, use the bliss or repent at the absence of such joy, and rewrite themselves in quest of new order. They generally pose a challenge to the common sense of society. On the other hand, Mainali's people stand as ideal ones who choose to reconcile after specific disagreements for some time. Husband and wife, brothers, and neighbors sort out all the issues between them. The complexities of the marriage do not lead to any unpredictable circumstances. Things unfold as expected. The youths who cannot realize their love choose to escape from life in death. On the whole, Koirala's liberal values add more energy and vigor to his character than Mainali's idealism, which forces them to assert the dictations of common sense.

Rewriting Hegemony through Resistance

Modern Nepali short story writers have developed their ways of writing the people and the world in their texts. The liberal attitude allows the author to explore and view reality in the unfolding process. At the same time, the people make the best of their attempts to rewrite their choices in the configuration of society. However, the authors can also present the overwhelming existence of the social structures that require complete rewriting for society to advance. Such writings promote resistance in the quest to rewrite the rules of hegemony. The pursuit of society changes over specific periods in history: the society sets new goals and devises new aspirations for its members. However, common sense becomes absolute knowledge to view and interpret the social reality lying before the people. The idealist vision

of the society itself refers to the closed-ended perception of the world that does not allow people to assume the role of harbinger of change in society. Such people submit themselves to general knowledge to view themselves and the world.

Koirala's *Doshi Chasma* writes the stories of the people who challenge hegemony through two fundamental ways: firstly, the stories uphold the agents who resist the existing knowledge about the world; secondly, the stories depict the social reality that utterly baffles the people about themselves and the world. For one thing, the challenge forces society to rethink the need to rewrite and/or revisit the dominant ideology; for the other, the depiction of the cruelty of the social order, like feudalism, patriarchy, casteism, or class, exemplifies the decay of the power hierarchy in society. Koirala's world allows freedom to the characters who choose to interact with the unfolding circumstances in their life. On the other hand, Mainali resides in a closed-ended, idealistic world. His characters seek solutions in the existing order, which fundamentally centers on conserving, maintaining, and promoting the cause of dominant ideology. The characters do not and cannot contribute any novelty for society to explore in its quest ahead. If they succeed, they find their reconciliation in society. Conversely, when they cannot solve their problems, they seek refuge in seclusion from life. Some of the characters choose to lead the life of ascetics. Mainali employs death as the ultimate escape for his characters.

As hegemony refers to the bifurcated process of domination of the ruling elite and the continued acceptance of the dominated, idealist literature promotes social conformism as an effective strategy for writing about the people. The open-ended literature sets its goal in the outcome of the interaction between the people and the unfolding social circumstances. Such literature believes in rewriting the social realities through personal attempts, even though people have to pay a high price for their aspirations to change the course of society. Koirala's characters directly threaten the existing order as they realize the inadequacies of the dominant ideology to serve the people outside the ruling position. Such characters project their reality and continuously strive to materialize it. On the contrary, Mainali's characters treat society as a self-sufficient, organic whole which regulates itself. They submit to its ways and attempt to redefine themselves according to its practices. Koirala and Mainali approach reality in two different ways, the former challenging the hegemony of the ruling elite through resistance. At the same time, the latter upholds common sense and the dictation of the social drives to reassert the ethos of social conformism for his characters.

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