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### DISEMPOWERMENT OF THE NEPALESE FEMALES IN KHANAL'S GOLDEN DREAMS AND THE NARROW LANE

*Bimal Kishore Shrivastwa*

Tribhuvan University, Nepal

E.mail: [bimalksrivastav@gmail.com](mailto:bimalksrivastav@gmail.com)

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This research paper seeks to explore the disempowerment and victimization of the Nepalese females owing to the patriarchal system in the major stories of Hari Har Khanal's anthology of stories, Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane. It chiefly studies four stories in the anthology, namely, "A Story of Love and Bitter Truth", "Moon Behind the Black Cloud", "Bygone Days and Expectations", and "Fetter" to identify the factors that are responsible for the unemployment and exploitation of the innocent village girls and women in the anthology. The paper takes the theoretical framework of radical feminism to analyze how Nepali girls and women have become the victim in the patriarchal Nepalese society. The key finding of the paper is that the female characters of Khanal's stories endure perpetual physical, psychological subjugation and male domination because of the patriarchal norms still prevalent in Nepali society. It is expected that researchers aspiring to study Khanal's stories from other perspectives can take the paper as a reference.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Adhering to the patriarchal norms is a deep-rooted phenomenon in Nepal and this has been the chief motive for exploiting innocent women for centuries (Bista, 2019; Mishra, 2021). Parijat, Nilam Karki Niharika, Hari Har Khanal and many other writers of Nepal have advocated against sexual division between men and women in the Nepalese society through their literature. Feminism, in the Nepalese context, is a movement which seeks freedom of women from patriarchal control demanding their equal rights of education and status with men (Uprety, 2016). This study has been conducted to explore the motives behind the suffering of the female characters in Khanal's story-book, Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane, from radical feminist perspective. Even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, the people of the Nepalese society have been treating

people in terms of the gender and sex issues (Atam & Baral, 1999). Radical feminists keep their spirit high to uplift of legal and economic status in the women in society (Tyson, 2006). Gender stereotype creates hindrances the struggle of women to convince that one's capability does not associate with one's gender (Ruth, 1990). Radical feminists also believe that women become victims of violence just because of gender stereotype (Abrams, 2008). Hari Har Khanal is a radical feminist because he has exposed the problems of Nepali women living in the patriarchal society and advocated about women's right through his stories. The research is concerned to analyzing how the male characters of *Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane* use women's bodies to dominate them. Further, this research work will help the readers to perceive the reality of the victimized female living in patriarchal societies like Nepal.

*Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane*, published in 2017, is an anthology of twenty-five short stories. Almost all stories are touching as they depict the Nepalese society where people struggle for identity and survival (Paudyal, 2020). The anthology portrays such issues as domestic violence, sexual abuse, male domination and social evils prevalent in Nepalese society. The book, *Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane*, depicts exploitation, ill-treatment faced by women in the male dominated Nepali society. For instance, Kanchhi, a young girl, in the story, "Moon Behind the Black Cloud", is forced to sell her precious youth due to her cunning mother. Ultimately, she is made a whore. Tara, in "Fetter", is demoralized to do jobs by her husband because of the patriarchal society. Janaki becomes the victim of sexual abuse in virginity was looted by the selfish male in the story, "Bygone Days and Expectations". The anthology contains various stories about the innocent people victimized by exploitation, domestic violence and atrocities exercised in the patriarchal Nepalese society. To find it out and excavate such inhuman behavior and its consequences, this research work deals with the following research questions: What factors are responsible for the victimization of female characters in Khanal's *Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane*? Why are Kanchhi, Tara, and Janaki sexually harassed by the male members of their society? How does patriarchy affect their lifestyle? The male characters have the stereotypical belief that female are inferior to men because of their biology and they use their body to dominate them. Women are the victims of sexual violence, physical and mental abuse, and other types of ill-treatments just because of their anatomy. These are the major enquiries that this research work is intending to decipher. This study assumes that female characters are dominated by the male characters just because of their body.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The researcher has used radical feminism as a theoretical tool to survey how Nepali women in in Khanal's anthology, *Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane*, are marginalized, exploited, sexually abused, and discriminated in patriarchal society. This research is based on a qualitative approach for the study. The primary data of the research was the anthology, *Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane*, by Hari Har Khanal. Apart from the intensive study of the primary text, the related materials from the secondary resources such as reviews and articles made on the text published in websites, journals, and

magazines were analyzed to discuss the impact of marginalizing women in the patriarchal Nepalese society.

### ***Radical Feminism as a Research Tool***

Radical feminism is a perspective within feminism that seeks to reorder the society in order to eliminate the male supremacy. This movement emerged in 1970s to resist against the patriarchal grounds which oppress, marginalize, and discriminate against women (Tyson, 2006). Radical feminists challenge the assumptions of such liberal political thinkers as Aristotle John Locke, Jean-Jacques Roseau, and John Rawls that women are inferior, dull, and submissive (Abrams, 2008). A radical feminist, Atkinson (1969), wrote:

The first dichotomous division of this mass [mankind] is said to have been on the grounds of sex: male and female ... it was because half the human race bears the burden of the reproductive process and because man, the 'rational' animal, had the wit to take advantage of that, that the child-bearers, or the 'beasts of burden,' were corralled into a political class: equivocating the biologically contingent burden into a political (or necessary) penalty, thereby modifying these individuals' definition from the human to the functional, or animal. (p. 85)

Ruth (1990) criticized "the gender politics" (p. 122) that uplifts the power structure relations whereby the females are controlled by males. Beauvoir (1983) believed that femininity is not inherent in human beings but "a social construct developed through the process of socialization" (p. 11). Beauvoir (1974) criticized the way women are categorized as the "second sex" (p. 10) and subjugated by men. A woman is "the privileged Other" (Beauvoir, 1974, p. 262), that Other is elaborated in the "way the One chooses to posit himself" (Beauvoir, 1974, p. 262). Beauvoir (1974) further writes, "The absence or insignificance of the female element in a body of work is symptomatic... It loses importance in a period like ours in which each individual's particular problems are of secondary import" (p. 264). Feminists have long objected the way "women have been brutalized, exploited, and manipulated at the hands of male dominated religious institutions" (Ruth, 1990, p. 24). Daly (1978), also a radical feminist, rejected the androgyny constructed by patriarchy. Only through such rejection can women embrace their pre-patriarchal female power and beauty. Beauvoir denounced patriarchy thinking that "patriarchy, throughout history, has sought to oppress women" (p. 11). Delphy (1984) believed, "Within the paradigm of patriarchy, marriage is portrayed as a trap to protect patriarchy" (p. 28). Patriarchal systems cause women to completely lose their identity and rights in that of their life. Ruth (1990) criticized the way male assume themselves as bourgeois to exploit female categorized as proletariat. Modern females speak against the phenomenon that a woman seen as an object and a man as subject (Beauvoir, 1983). The radical feminists have the insight that patriarchy is the primary form of male domination that leads to sexual harassment, pornography, and working as unpaid labors in the workplace. They raise their voice against such trends of marginalizing women.

The representative radical feminists discussed here are chief theoretical tools used to analyze major stories from Khanal's anthology, *Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane*, to mark the marginalization of women by the patriarchal norms in Nepalese society.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This segment of the paper is further divided into two parts to note what studies have been conducted in the feminist issues of Nepal, and to observe the critical reviews made on *Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane* by various critics. Both dimensions help the researcher to mark the research gap and fulfill the gap through the analytical research.

The feminist movement began in Nepal in 1970s revolting against discrimination of women as the incompetent sex to fight for equity and equality of opportunity for both sexes (Tamang, 2009). It is said that both males and females are the two wheels of a cart, but it can hardly be traced out in the practical life of women in Nepal. Women are dominated by male members in religious, cultural, social, economic and political aspects (Subedi, 2007). Because Nepali society has been highly patriarchal, innocent women are deprived of obtaining the equal economic, social, and educational rights (Mishra, 2021). Women have been deprived of such fundamental rights as education, jobs and employment opportunities from the very beginning of Nepali civilization. The status of Nepalese women has been quite lower than that of men. The strong desire for sons in the country signifies how daughters are discriminated against from birth. The obstacles that hinder the empowerment of women lie in the system of Nepalese society (Bista, 2019). The deep-rooted patriarchal norms and values of Nepali society assist men to subordinate women. Even in the religious books read by the Nepali people, women are presented only as the means of pleasure for the male protagonists, or as submissive persons who need to be protected by males (Upreti, 2016). But the feminist movement of Nepal has given some positive results. Some women have found special administrative places in the country. Bidhya Devi Bhandari became the first female President of the Republic Nepal, and Susila Karki became the first female Chief Justice of Supreme Court in Nepal on 11 July, 2016 (Mishra, 2021). The constitution has declared thirty-three percent reservations for females in the Parliament and in government jobs. However, girls and women are still segregated in everyday life in Nepal.

Many scholars and critics have reviewed this anthology of short stories, *Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane* by Hari Har Khanal. The critics have mainly judged on the content and themes of the stories. The book, *Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane*, includes the English translation of 25 of well-known Nepali short stories ("Dual book launch for Khanal", 2017, par. 3). Paudyal (2020) opined that Khanal's stories encompass many other issues and problem: conflict between corrupt officials and civilians, bragging of immoral and unethical politicians. Dhital (2017) noted that Khanal invites the reader to share his experience with great energy and enthusiasm not only to interpret the existing world but to participate equally with a daring courage to change the rotten traditions and values or the preservations of humanity. Joshi (2017) appreciated Khanal's work for its simplicity of expression. The stories

presented in the collection are well-written and the subject matters range from exploitation to feudal atrocities, poverty, and prostitution adopted for surviving, indomitable struggles gone (Paudyal, 2020). Khanal masterfully depicts the plight of exploited and excessive monopolization of exploiters (Pokharel, 2022). His stories vividly describe social and political suppression during the Panchayat regime. In all of them, Khanal speaks in favor of the people. Khanal lends voice to the poor, helpless and those who are cheated and discarded by feudal and corrupts (Dhital, 2017). In this way, the critics of Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane believe that the anthology depicts the real picture of the present day Nepalese society in terms of male domination.

The critics have marked the problems of innocent Nepali people because of the superstitions exercised in everyday lives. Although, many writers and critics have analyzed, evaluated and presented the anthology from different perspectives, they lack the profound analysis of the subject matter from the perspective of radical feminism. Thus, this research explores different aspects that make characters of the anthology drifting in particular or individual phenomenon of feminism.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The girls and women or the female characters of Khanal's anthology, Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane, have been subordinated, victimized and abused in all aspects by the male-dominated Nepalese society. The research paper chiefly analyzes the marginalization of women in four short-stories from the anthology, "Bygone Days and Expectations", "Fetter", "Moon Behind the Black Cloud", and "A Story of Love and Bitter Truth". The stories demonstrate how the males suppose themselves as superior to oppress the so-called weak, demure and tolerant Nepali women. The marginalization of the female characters in these stories indicates what has been practiced in Nepalese society for years. Interpreting these stories from the conceptual framework of such radical feminists as Simone de Beauvoir and so forth, the research paper not only displays the pathetic conditions of Nepali females made by the male chauvinists but also hints at the concern of Nepali feminists as well as the writer, against poverty and unemployment of women, girls trafficking, and domestic violence targeted at women. Radical feminists have problems with the fundamentally patriarchal societies where the men oppress women. The leading female characters of the story-collection suffer from the oppression of the male members in the Nepalese society. Radical feminists endeavour to abolish the patriarchy by battling against the existing social norms so that women get liberated from the unjust treatment of men. The struggle of the female characters in Khanal's anthology, Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane, includes objecting the commodification of women, building public awareness about such issues as domestic violence, adultery, and true gender roles.

### ***Victimization of Women in "Bygone Days and Expectations"***

Hari Har Khanal's story, "Bygone Days and Expectations", attached in the anthology, Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane, displays how Nepali girls and women are exploited physically and culturally. The story recollects the

tragic and painful narrative of the protagonist, Janaki who is sexually abused when she was at her teen age. Janaki's virginity was looted by her tuition teacher, Besant. Men attempt to consume women's flesh, by making them the pray to their desire (Atkinson, 1969; Beauvoir, 1983). Janaki's destiny is unfortunately determined by her tuition teacher. Janaki herself narrates the pathetic incident in these words:

The gentle and good-looking Besant had disappeared from there and a violent and aggressive cruel creature-like Besant was in front of me. I got home late at night with my virginity looted and mind covered with cuts and wounds. Seeing my faded face in the light, my mother guessed that something bad had happened to me. ("Bygone Days and Expectations", pp.79-80)

Janaki belongs to a middle class village girl with Newari culture. Besant, her tuition teacher who looked like a gentleman, had a hidden evil thought and devil in the flesh.

The problem that lies with masculinity is that they ravage the closed ones (Butler, 1990). Even after Janaki becomes pregnant, Besant denies accepting, adopting her. Rather he accuses Janaki of making a fake story. Janaki reports this tragedy in these words: "There were those people too who took advantage of our predicament. The pressure of the villagers made me reveals everything in front of all of them, but Besant denied everything" ("Bygone Days and Expectations", p. 81). Besant is a type of Nepali chauvinists who consider women as submissive and treat them as toys. Ruth (1995) disliked the patriarchal mentality groomed in male that considers women not as humane but as slaves. Besant is the product of the Nepalese patriarchal society where women are treated as commodities.

Janaki is victimized by the patriarchal norms. In the context of Nepali society, female become victim and the male victimizer because society has defined the female in terms motherhood, docile, demure, and tolerant, and male as leader and courageous (Mishra, 2021; Tamang, 2009). As a result, both male and female perform in a presupposed gendered way. Besant, belonging to an upper caste Hindu, Brahman culture, doesn't like someone involving his name with a girl who belonged to a so-called lower caste with a lost virginity. Though the court of the village decides to send Janaki to Besant, he gets disappeared from the place. Basant "being a Brahmin" ("Bygone Days and Expectations", p. 81) does not intend to marry a girl from Newar family because such families are considered as "low caste" ("Bygone Days and Expectations", p. 81). Casteism has been the key cause of generating antagonism in Nepal (Subedi, 2011). Innocent girls like Janaki are victimized in the Nepalese society because of the caste discrimination adhered to strictly.

Male can enjoy making extra-marital relationships, committing adultery in Nepalese society, but they are left unpunished. This is manifest in these words of Janaki: "He already had a young wife. The court of the village decided to send me to Besant and I was taken to his room but he disappeared from the village and did not return for a long time" ("Bygone Days and Expectations", p. 81). From such incidents we can surmise that it is quite challenging to live a

life of liberty and obtain justice for a lower caste women like Janaki in the even in the contemporary Nepali society. To obtain liberty, females need to transcend the gender barriers raised before them (Butler, 1990; Peterson, 2003). Despite being a victim of sexual abuse, Janaki does not get any kind of sympathy from the village people. Humiliated Janaki decides to leave the village and move on with her infant child without a name of her father.

Janaki reacts against her exploitation by the male chauvinists. When women's oppression reaches its climax, the so-called meek women are bound to protest hegemonic masculinity (Peterson, 2003). Janaki makes a strong resistance against the sexism by refusing to marry Manbir, a man of her own caste chosen for her by her parents. Instead, Janaki decides to leave her parental home for independence and give birth to her baby as a single mother. The paternal Nepalese society does not respect a single mother in any social and cultural activities (Mishra, 2021). The ironical norms of the Nepalese society can be perceived when Janaki says, "When I went to admit Sarita in school for the first time, I had terrible feelings of humiliation in writing her father's name in the register" ("Bygone Days and Expectations", p. 90). Even Nepali constitution gives preference to admit a child in a school with a father's name (Acharya, 2017). The males always attempt to expose their power as the head of the family in the patriarchal Nepali society (Mishra, 2021). We can notice the sense of insecurity of a woman like Janaki living in the paternal Nepalese society.

Despite the hurdles confronted by Janaki living in the male-led Nepalese society, Janaki starts working as a teacher with a principal ambition of educating her daughter, Sarita. Women have not only the strength of refuting the paternal norms but also performing all outdoor works once assumed to be belonging to the males only (Atkinson, 1969; Connell, 2005; Woolf, 1992). She educates her girl child, Sarita, until she becomes "a university teacher" ("Bygone Days and Expectations", p. 80). By the time Janaki has established an image of a successful woman, Beasant meets her by coincidence. This was the person who had denied accepting her after robbing her virginity. But now he proposes her for negotiation. Janaki relates,

Today, when Besant came to my house suddenly, his behavior appeared to me as if he wanted to show him as the head of the family. How did he change him this way? I was surprised now how it happened at once. Is humankind such a selfish being? Does not Besant have any evil intentions to come to me now? ("Bygone Days and Expectations", p. 90)

The possessive drive of patriarchy still lurks in Beasant. Delphy (1984) stated, "Women have been taken as domestic worker, who neither gets paid nor gets recognized by the society" (p. 27). Beasant might have the intention to exploit Janaki as a domestic labour. But Janaki proudly denies his selfish proposal. Gender categories are a social construct and need to be challenged (Peterson, 2003). Janaki's decision of refuting Beasant's proposal challenges the patriarchal proposition that women are born feminine, and men are born masculine.

Thus, Khanal's story, "Bygone Days and Expectations", delineates the Nepalese patriarchal trend where men attempt to monopolize the economic, political, and social power so that women are made powerless and deprived off the educational, social, economic and political rights. Women are sexually abused and raped, but the constitution leaves the male rapist without severe punishment in Nepali society. Despite the difficulties, Nepali women like Janaki in the story, are venturing to demonstrate their fighting spirit for independence.

### ***Fettering of Women by Patriarchy in "Fetter"***

Readers of Khanal's story, "Fetters", compiled in the anthology, Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane can notice the presence of typical Nepali culture grounded on patriarchy that segregates women in terms of gender differences. Beauvoir (1983) contended that it was not women inferiority that rendered women as historically insignificant rather it is the insignificant history that doomed women to an inferior state "Fetter" exquisitely shows that women are fettered to domesticity and made victims of men's hypocrisy. The setting of the story takes place in a small house where Praveen and Tara, the husband and wife, live. It is a story that narrates how men do not allow women access to workplace to give a chance of independence in the name of women's physical tenderness which renders them incapable of facing the cruelty of the outside world. Tara is only the representative of such Nepali women who are forced to comply with the male's will.

Praveen, the husband of Tara, in "Fetters" is a typical character of patriarchal Nepalese society who does not like his wife doing outdoor work like men. Beauvoir (1983) criticized the patriarchal civilization for degrading females as cheap creatures described as feminine. The following excerpts from the text, "Fetter", display the patriarchal mind-set that uses the female bodies as a site of male domination:

'There is no need for you to work, Tara. Our patriarchal property is enough for our life. In addition, there is my income as well. We are living well till now, aren't we?' wiping his hands and face with the apron Praveen said, 'Again look! My darling, our ancestral tradition does not allow you to work!' ("Fetters", p. 64).

Tara is an educated girl and intends to do some job but her husband, Praveen, prevents her from doing so. Praveen attempts to fetter Tara believing that women are born to be satisfied with household activities. Patriarchal society treats women as inferior and very weak beings (Daly, 1978; Millet, 1977). Praveen says to Tara, "Come on darling, sit beside me. You should not go out. You are weak and tender. All the women are weak. You are not able to fly in the wide sky darling" ("Fetter", p. 60). Like Praveen, Nepali men take women as submissive, dependent, emotional, passive and subordinate beings. A radical feminist, Friedan (1963) denounces the masculine belief system that requires women to find their identity and meaning by looking after their husband and children. Nepali men think that it is the duty of women to look after husband and children because men are there to do all outdoor jobs.



Though Praveen is an intellectual person and comes from a wealthy family, he treats women as an unpaid labour employed in the house to perform the kitchen works. Atkinson (1969) condemned men for taking marriage as a labor contract for women, and taking women the unpaid labor even in the modern era. Praveen in "Fetter" assumes himself as a capitalist and treats his wife as an unpaid labor. This mentality of Praveen is manifest in the following lines addressed to Tara: "Millions of years old tradition and culture has been trading you and your sex, and your wings of freedom have been caged. They need a long practice to be able to fly darling! You need to do it by heart! You cannot do it" ("Fetter", p. 66). Like the capitalist, Praveen reminds Tara to focus on household work at present because one day she will be able to fly out as a male. As long as women are exploited in terms of class and ethnicity, society will never flourish in Nepal (Subedi, 2011). Delphy (1984) demanded that the tendency to treat women as unpaid labour should be abolished. Praveen reminds Tara of the Nepalese history where women have been serving men by giving birth to their child and looking after the house. Tara's thoughts match with the ideologies of the radical and Marxist feminist. Educated Tara insists on doing a job to dismantle the tradition of fettering women into the domestic world by the male chauvinists of Nepal.

Praveen seems to justify that that women's inferiority is the product of male's creation in the story, "Fetter". Beauvoir (1983) observed that the patriarchal society takes women as other, secondary, and soulless objects. Tara feels as if she is imprisoned because of her husband's hypocrisy. Her depression caused by the patriarchal society, and she says, "I don't like this worn-out arrogance" ("Fetter", p. 65) because her husband, Praveen is an embodiment of "hypocrisy, justice, barbarism, tyranny" ("Fetter", p. 65). Millett (1977) decried patriarchy because it is the primary form of women oppression. Patriarchal domination in Nepalese society is maintained principally through ideological control (Mishra, 2021). The hypocrisy, barbarism and tyrannical nature of Praveen despairs Tara's spirit of living an independent and prestigious life. In the dogmatic and patriarchal Nepalese society, women are not expected to raise their voice against the commands of male (Bista, 2019; Mishra, 2021). Praveen is an archetype of a male chauvinist in Nepal who opines that women should obey each and every word of a male.

Tara is an adamant woman of modern Nepal who resists against the sexism exercised on her by her husband. Woolf (1992) advocated women to be adamant to fight for their identity and space. This resistance of Tara is expressed in these lines: "'Don't touch me', she cried out in an uproar. 'You selfish! I don't like your pseudo-appearance and manner'" ("Fetter", p. 65). Tara is one of the radical feminists emerging in Nepal. She dares to criticize the selfish nature of her snobbish husband. Tara displays the courage to rebuke her hypocritical husband again: "I spit on your selfish pride. I am the mother who gave birth to Marx and Lenin, Lincoln and Gandhi, Mao and Chao, Gangalal and Bhagat Singh. I challenge your old rotten culture and tradition. I hate your conspiracy" ("Fetter", pp. 65-66). Tara compares herself with the mother who gave birth to great personalities and freedom fighters. She dares to spit on the selfish pride of her husband. In the past, Nepali writers depicted

female characters as submissive adhering to the unfair norms of gender (Upreti, 2016). But Tara is a modern Nepali woman who does not want to spend her life with Praveen and live under his selfish pride. Tara even challenges the old rotten culture and tradition where women are treated inferior than men.

Tara is the representative of modern Nepali woman, an emerging militant feminist. Tara fights against the superficial patriarchal norms adhered to Nepal by the conservative Hindu people. In patriarchal Nepalese society, women are socialized to be dependent on men, to be submissive and quiet. They are also instructed to be good house maker. Due to society's preference for boy children, the bodies of women are considered as a tool or a machine to produce male offspring. Tara decides to reject the domination of her husband. Her actions signify the truth that modern Nepali women have been daring to resist the tendency of confining women in narrow domestic walls by the patriarchal society.

***Exploitation of Women in "Moon Behind the Black Cloud" and "A Story of Love and Bitter Truth"***

"Moon Behind the Black Cloud" and "A Story of Love and Bitter Truth" are other stories compiled in Khanal's anthology, *Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane*, where readers can notice the marginalization of women because of the patriarchal society. The moon in the title of the story, "Moon Behind the Black Cloud" is referred to girls of Nepalese society who are expected to be as pure and beautiful as the moon. Patriarchy is a form of male-domination that focuses on the female body and leads to sexual harassment, pornography (Atkinson, 1969; Friedan, 1963). In the patriarchal Nepalese society, the beautiful girls are expected to entertain men/husbands (Bista, 2019). This reference to the female as the moon symbolizes how Nepali men act like hunters and look at the body of poor women.

The Nepali culture, not only males but also females, takes women as objects, commodities or the products of entertainment. Kanchhi, the leading female character of the story, "Moon Behind the Black Cloud", is forced to lose her virginity by her own mother. She later unwillingly becomes a whore of an inn due to her poor economic condition status. Kanchhi's poverty pulls her to accept the oppression and sexism. Kanchhi confesses, "Our only means of livelihood was the hotel. We were living hand-to-mouth. When our business could not support, I had to sell my youth for livelihood. Thus, I was forcefully violated" ("Moon Behind the Black Cloud", p. 11). Because of the economic problems of Kanchhi's family, she had to sell her virginity. Her mother let her do so in order to earn money and run their business, because there was no one to earn money in her family. Ruth (1995) doesn't favor the patriarchal society that takes man as the essential and woman as incidental and the inessential. Only girls like Kanchhi of the Nepalese culture have to bear the punishment if the family suffers from economic problem.

Kanchhi is not a passive bearer of the atrocities imposed on her by the patriarchal society. Women need to strip themselves of femininity in order to

eradicate oppression (Daly, 1978). Kanchhi also dares to strip her femininity of by react against her victimization. At the same time the realization of the failure impels her to take her own life. She muses, "I often wanted to kill my cunning mother and sometimes I thought of committing suicide by drowning into the surging Gandaki River. But... I was really afraid of death ("Moon Behind the Black Cloud", p. 11). We can mark the frustration of Kanchhi in the expression. She even thinks of committing suicide, but then decides to survive. Feminists view sexual abuse as the product of a gender system maintained by a dominant, normative form of masculinity (Tyson, 2006). If Kanchhi is made a victim of sexual abuse, it is because of the Nepalese culture maintained by a dominant, normative form of masculinity.

Kanchhi in "Moon Behind the Black Cloud" keeps on negotiating through the discrimination directed towards her. She also has a wish of marrying and settling her life with a good man but she cannot do so because of her involvement in prostitution unwillingly. Connell (2005) also posits that gender-based inequalities and discrimination are maintained and negotiated through interrelations among differently gendered (and therefore differently privileged) subjects within a larger gender system. Kanchhi expresses: "I tried to transmit a lively youth all over my weary body. However, I was not as fresh as before. I once dreamed about my marriage but it was impossible. I had already lost my virginity many years ago" ("Moon Behind the Black Cloud", p. 12). Kanchhi is beautiful and her mind may be pretty as the moon. But she is a bad woman in the eye of Nepalese society and no one will accept a whore like her.

Kanchhi attempts to resume living a beautiful life after the death of her mother but can't because she is oppressed by the physical appropriation of masculine-led trend of the Nepalese society. The oppression of women leads to their direct physical appropriation by men (Guillaumin, 1996; Moi, 2002). But the patriarchal society does not rehabilitate her. Kanchhi narrates: "I could not find any business other than of a harlot to survive and there was nobody to accept me as his wife. Therefore, I could not be anything, but a whore of an inn" ("Moon Behind the Black Cloud", p. 12)

It is ironical that the male chauvinist in the Nepalese society relishes in sleeping with a girl who is forced to adopt the profession of prostitution. Tamang (2009) denounces the ontological, social, and psychological context that subordinates women subordination to the species in terms of reproduction. But the male chauvinists of the Nepalese society do not give room for the poor girls like Kanchhi who victimized to sell their body for rehabilitation.

The story, "A Story of Love and Bitter Truth" by Khanal, reveals how treacherous and revengeful can men like Kajiman become in the paternal Nepalese society if their lust remains unfulfilled. Phulmaya, a character in "A Story of Love and Bitter Truth" becomes a widow after the death of her husband, Thule. Kajiman attempts to take advantage of the "body of the widow, Phulmaya" ("A Story of Love and Bitter Truth", p. 103). But when it fails, he displays his anger towards her family. Kajiman takes Chameli, Thule's daughter, and sells her to a person whom Kajiman identifies as

Chameli's maternal uncle. Mishra (2021) opines that problems of widow, domestic violence, polygamy, and child marriage have been persisting in Nepal because of patriarchy. Phulmaya is tortured by the male because of her widow state.

Kajiman registers a complaint in the police station that Shyam Babu (Thule's friend) and Phulmaya killed Chamali. Androgyny is a gender politics that promotes the power structure relations whereby the females are controlled by males (Atkinson, 1969; Millet, 1977). The misuse of patriarchal power can be grasped in these lines: "After reaching the police station, Shyam Babu came to know that Kajiman had registered a complaint there. In the complaint, he had claimed that Shyam Babu and Phulmaya might have killed Chameli" ("A Story of Love and Bitter Truth", p. 104). Shyam Babu, Phulmaya and Chameli belong to the lower class Nepali people who are tortured by the upper class person, Thule.

Rich men, like Kajiman can go to any extent to fulfill their desires. Female like Chameli who comes from a low class without her father becomes victim through the higher class male like Kajiman. Delphy (1984) is critical to the capitalist society because men exploit poor people and women as cheap objects. The poor fellow, Shyam Babu "tried to prove defend that he had not done these evil deeds but no one listened to him. He was severely tortured that night. With his wounded body and bleeding face, he suffered a lot in custody ("A Story of Love and Bitter Truth", p. 104). Innocent women like Phulmaya and Chameli have to suffer because of the unjust patriarchal norms.

The stories, "Moon Behind the Black Cloud" and "A Story of Love and Bitter Truth" make the readers clear that many innocent Nepali girls have to lose their chastity not only because of their poor economic condition but also because of their patriarchal society. What is shocking is that even a woman has internalized the patriarchal norms and forces her daughter to be engaged in the flesh trade to make money for survival. Kanchhi in "Moon Behind the Black Cloud" tries to protest against the superficial patriarchal cult but is suppressed by her own mother's blind adherence to such cults. Female characters are employed here to identify their suffering in male-dominated society. The writer, Khanal intends to give a message that modern Nepali women are reacting against the physical oppression of girls and women.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, Khanal is successful to exhibit through the major stories in the anthology, *Golden Dreams and the Narrow Lane* that men in the Nepalese patriarchal societies have been tricky, treacherous and cruel while women have been venturing to refute the patriarchal cult to protect their kind from the exploitation and marginalization. The stories present various types of female characters in Nepal who have to face challenges and hardships due to patriarchy and gender discrimination. Most of the female characters in the anthology are victimized by male domination, sexual abuse and domestic violence because they are treated as inferior sex. Through this anthology, the author has been able to explore the suffering of women in Nepali society. Characters have been portrayed in such a way that patriarchy plays a vital role

in the social system. For males, the patriarchal teachings create a ground for their exploitation and abuse. Khanal has an agenda of amending the existing gender hierarchy in Nepal where males are demonstrated as the dominant and women as the dominated. Khanal has a mission of creating a just society where women should be honored as powerful and intelligent as men in terms of awareness, education, vocation and social thinking. The obstacles confronted by Nepali women can be erased if women dare to challenge androgyny.

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