

A Comparative Study of Representation of Nationalism and Ethnicity in Koirala's *Sumnima* and Pradhan's *In the Battle of Kirtipur*

Dr. Ramesh Prasad Adhikary

Assistant Professor (English) TU, M. M.. Campus, Nepalgunj, Nepal

Abstract— The present research paper makes a comparative study of representation of nationalism and ethnicity in Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima* and Hridaya Chandra Singh Pradhan's *In the Battle of Kirtipur*. These literary texts present the relationship of conflict between nationalism and ethnicity. The reason of conflict is either to preserve the prehistoric identities or to possess power. In construction and representation of nationalism and ethnicity, Koirala gives emphasis on their religious aspects while Pradhan focuses on historical and political aspects.

Keywords— Nationalism; Ethnicity; prehistoric identity; national identity; ethnic policy; formation of myth.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nepal is a country of diversity. It is very rich in socio-cultural diversity. Socio-cultural diversity is characterized by diversity in caste, ethnicity, language, religion and culture. The proverb 'Nepal is a garden of four Varnas and thirty-six castes' is not merely proverb. There are four Varnas: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. These are the social categories previous Nepalese rulers set them, on the basis of Hindu religion, in a hierarchical social ladder defining their different duties and responsibilities to the nation: Brahmin is kept at the topmost level of the ladder who, being the priest, has to preach others and regulate Hinduization. Kshatriya falls under second position whose duties and responsibilities are to rule the kingdom and fight for the nation. The third Varna, that is Vaishya, has to perform business, farming and trades so that the nation could be powerful economically. Shudra, the lowest Varna, has to serve all above mentioned groups. But later on such socially constructed hierarchical system was widely opposed by social reformers and ethnic groups, especially those who belong to the lower rank. Thus the social concept like touchable and untouchable castes was abolished legally. But it is not eradicated totally in practice. It is still evident in some communities, especially rural.

Regarding the issue of religion the census of 2001 has listed eight religions: Hindu, Buddhist, Islam, Christian, Jain, Sikh, Muslim and Kirat. Despite the existence of so many religions, Shah dynasty defined Nepal as 'True Hindu Kingdom' neglecting all others. Further more, the census report of 2001 has revealed that Hindu comprises 80.6 percent of total population of Nepal. But non-Hindu ethnic groups claimed the data to be false. They also raised voice for declaration of the secular nation.

Modern Nepal has experienced different kinds of ruling system from autocracy to the federal republic democracy. Before completion of the project of Gorkha expansion or unification of Nepal by King Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1769, it was divided into 22 and 24 principalities and other independent nation-states of ethnic groups. Then Nepal experienced autocratic Rana rule for 104 years from 1846 to 1950. After its fall, Nepalese people breathed democratic air for some years. But unfortunately king Mahendra dismissed the 18-month old parliament led by Prime Minister Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala. This system collapsed in 1990 due to people's movement. Thus, the democracy was again reintroduced in Nepal. After the royal massacre of June 2001, king Gyanendra ruled and his ambition for absolute rule began to flourish. The Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) had already initiated people's

war on February 13, 1996 against autocracy, corruption and social injustice. People's movement part –II , that extended for 19 days, buried the absolute monarchy system into its grave in May 28, 2008. Federal Democratic Republic as per Interim Constitution of Nepal is implemented in Nepal in the present.

During such a number of ruling systems, ethnic groups are also treated in different ways. Nation exploited ethnicity in the name of nationalism. For example, Prithvi Narayan Shah colonized many ethnic principalities including Kirtipur. Many Kirtipures' lives were taken; some of their nose were cut off and others were compelled to surrender in front of the Gorkhali. Similarly nation also declared ban on the cow slaughter giving no consideration to the ethnic groups, like Tamang and Bhote, who traditionally used to slaughter cow. Nation also brought the slogan like, as Krishna B. Bhattachan quotes, "one king, one country; one language, one dress" (21). Ethnic groups were compelled to speak Nepali language in the public places and official duties. All these were done in the name of unification and homogenization of Nepal.

Though the rulers were successful in imposing their power with gun and sword , they could not grasp ethnic writers' pen. It means ethnic writers and social reformers have recorded and reflected such issues – nationalism and ethnicity – through their powerful writings.

Thus, this present dissertation is an attempt to study the representation of ethnicity and nationalism along with their relationship in Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala's *Sumnima* and Hridaya Chandra Singh Pradhan's *In the Battle of Kirtipur*.

II. NATIONALISM AND ETHNICITY

Different scholars regard ethnicity as well as nationalism in a varied ways. Some of them take them as ideologies and others as discourses. Further there are some people who define them as cultural or historical product or even as imagined community or psychological construction. Again some of the scholars regard nationalism and ethnicity as opposing groups but others as supplementary or closely interrelated concepts. However, the reason behind such multiplicity in the way of defining them is the difference of glasses they wear while looking at them. Thus, it is better to discuss about the approaches to nationalism and ethnicity at first.

Theoretical Approaches to Nationalism and Ethnicity

There are three approaches to nationalism and ethnicity namely primordial, instrumentalist and constructionist. Primordialist assumes the durability, even permanence, of ethnic communities and ties, and argues that nations too are products of the primordial ties of race, ancestry, religion, language and territory. This approach emphasizes the emotional ties of individuals to ethnic groups. It also focuses on a presumed primordial need for shared identity that is fulfilled by culturally defined groupings. Identities of inhabitants are defined in cultural terms exclusively. The primordialist conception of nation postulates that nations are real, not imagined, entities. To primordialist, national identity is immutable. It cannot be created or altered through social construction or through purposeful manipulation. Craig Calhaun says, ethnic identities are "in some sense an ancient primordial, possibly even natural or at least prior to any particular political mobilization" (214). He takes it as a base of a modern set of categorical identities. To paraphrase his statement, these categorical identities also shape everyday life, offering both tools for grasping pre-existing homogeneity and difference and for constructing specific versions of such identities. Anthony D. Smith, the eminent sociologist and an exponent of primordialism, also points to the failed nation-building efforts of the communist elites as an example of cultural and primordial limitation on instrumentalist efforts to construct a new national referent.

The constructivist position, on the other hand, sees nothing that is fixed or predetermined in the concept of the nation. Hugh Seton-Watson writes "I am driven to the conclusion that no scientific definition of a nation can be devised. All that I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to be a nation" (5). This process of recognition occurs as a result of a complex labyrinth of social interactions. It shows that national identification can change if these social interactions change. Concept of nation is wholly subjective, dependent on psychology rather than on biology. It could be conceived almost as an affair of the heart, a spiritual communion born out of the complex web of social structures constituting people's interests, conceptions and identities. In this way, this approach emphasizes the socially created nature of nationality and of shared interest.

Concept and Definition of Nationalism and Ethnicity

As mentioned above, different analysts and sociologists perceive nationalism and ethnicity differently as they use different approaches to them. In the academic discourse, in anthropology and sociology, perspectives on

ethnicity have in recent years been increasingly problematic and open-ended. Ethnicity fades into race, nationalism, multiculturalism, and identity politics and as such for example, Jan Nederveen Pieterse finds many similarities between multiculturalism and ethnicity:

Multiculturalism, like ethnicity, is a moving target - an ongoing cultural flux and an institutional arrangement, a target of criticism or a reform platform. Ethnicity is a contemporary vocabulary for various notions of group boundaries; multiculturalism, likewise, is a discourse that negotiates group boundaries. Thus both ethnicity and multiculturalism address the underlying theme of the politics and discourse of groups boundaries.(27)

In this sense, longing for inclusion into any ethnic group necessarily has some politics of gaining advantages.

Ethnicity is highly relational and contextual. It does not have its existence in isolation but only in relation to others. Pieterse quotes Dwyer's lines that "Ethnicity is a product of contact, not of isolation" and argues "Since social ethnicity is relational it necessitates the scrutiny of relationship; and since social relationship change over the time this gives rise to different types of ethnicity"(32). He regards it as situation and comes to conclusion that "Ethnicity and multiculturalism [. . .] are two ways of describing the same situation" (36).

Taking primordial stand, J. Milton Yinger assumes ethnicity as a minority group. He regards race, ancestral homeland, language, myth and culture as defining elements of ethnic group and says:

I will define an ethnic group [. . .] as a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves and/ or others, to have a common origin and to share important segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients. Some mixture of language, religion, race and

ancestral homeland with its related culture is the defining element. (159)

In fact, communal feeling is necessary to form the concept of ethnic group, and that is what we call ethnicity. The elements that create feeling of oneness among dispersed people and bind them under a group can be from shared culture, language, religion, territory myth of origin and class to race and caste. In other words, all psychological, physical, cultural and even biological aspects are responsible in giving birth to the sense of solidarity that leads to the concept of ethnicity. Thus, Anthony D. Smith is right in arguing that every ethnic category has the following six categories: "a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity" (48).

Anthony D. Smith has tried to show that nationalism has stronger roots in pre-modern ethnicity. He acknowledges that nations cannot be seen as primordial or natural but they are rooted in relatively ancient histories and in perduring ethnic consciousness. Smith focuses on *ethnie* - communities with their myths and symbols-and shows that these exist in both modern and pre-modern times, and with substantial continuity through history.

Nations are created, nourished and sustained through the telling and retelling of their pasts. This process includes the myths, the heroism, the unsurpassed achievements; the many obstacles that are confronted and overcome; the flowing of literature and language; the self-inflicted wounds; the civil wars, massacres, and human atrocities. It is such a grand narratives, which are embodied in purposeful historical and literary representation, mold the imagined collective identity called nation.

Although Anderson is more interested in the imagined aspects of cultural identities than in detailed empirical accounts of communication system or narration, he also assumed that communicative processes create the cultural contexts in which nationalism can develop. Thus, he states, "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness but by the style in which they are imagined" (15). The imagining of nations may take any forms including the narratives of national novelists, the stories in national newspapers, the maps that students study at schools, and even the interactions between colonial government and their subject populations.

Homi Bhabha also emphasizes the importance of communication, language and writers in the construction

of nationalism. He also suggests that nationalist narratives are comparable to most other discourses. For Bhabha, the nation is a text, much as Anderson suggests in his discussion of 'Imagined Communities'.

To make it short, nationalism is a whole complex of ideas, attitudes, events, political movements, and force. It is both negative and positive. The negative aspects of nationalism define the separateness and exclusiveness of a group and stress antagonism to others. The positive aspects try to give meaning to the community of interests of a given group and to define the rights of membership in the group of all who belong to it. Nationalism is a belief held by a group of people that they ought to constitute a nation or that they already are one. It is a doctrine of social solidarity based on the characteristics and symbols of nationhood.

Relationship between Nationalism and Ethnicity

The relationship between nationalism and ethnicity is complex. Some scholars argue that they do have binary relation like minority/majority, while others as just the continuation. But while it is impossible to dissociated nationalism entirely from ethnicity, it is equally impossible to explain it simply as a continuation of ethnicity. Thomas Hylland Eriksen states:

Sometimes ethnicity becomes nationalism historically . . . ethnicity can, if sufficiently powerful, provide individuals with most of their social status, and their entire cultural identity can be touched in an ethnic idiom. . . By implication, nationalists and ethicists will, in a situation of conflict, stress cultural differences vis-à-vis their adversaries. The distinction between the two may therefore appear to be one of degree, not of kind—particularly since many political movements are commonly perceived as being both nationalist and ethnic in character. (264-265)

In this way, the conceptual differences between ethnicity and nationalism are not obvious to the naked eyes. Some of the scholars treat them interchangeably. For instance, Pieterse regards "ethnicity is minority nationalism. If nationalism takes the form of mono-cultural control it may be considered a form of ethnicity, or ethnocracy" (31-32). It indicates that these two concepts are just situational identities. Calhaun also says:

Nationalism, in particular, remains the preeminent rhetoric for attempts to demarcate political communities, claim rights of self-determination and legitimate rule by reference to "the people" of a country. Ethnic solidarities and identities are claimed most often where groups do not seek 'national' autonomy but rather recognition internal to or cross-cutting national or state boundaries. The possibility of a closer link to nationalism is seldom altogether absent from such ethnic claims, however, and the two sorts of categorical identities are often involved in similar ways. (235)

National identity is related to the culture and tradition of ethnic minorities. Where a group is large enough to dominate a given political unit, or may reasonably aspire to form its own, we have a nation. Where we are dealing with a minority, it is labeled as an ethnic group or community. Most nationalism builds on the ethnic identity of the majority while rejecting or containing minority identities. Nation always tries to homogenize the cultural differences and build a 'High culture'. But ethnic groups always seek their own individual distinct cultural traits and identity. In such a situation they have the relation of conflict otherwise relation of compromise.

Nationalism and Ethnicity in Nepal

Generally ethnic groups are considered to be minorities. But some sociologists apply the term to all distinctive groups, even majorities. By this later criterion the dominant Parbatiyas of Nepal - the Brahman, Thakuri, and Chhetri castes - and their associated low status castes - are also ethnic groups, though it is certain that they did not usually think of themselves as such. However, with the publication of the 1991 census, Parbatiyas have discovered themselves to be a minority in the country as a whole - 40% of the total population, about 30% if low castes are omitted. Since they are increasingly under attack from other groups, they have come to see themselves as ethnic group. It is recently evident that they have formed their association. What this illustrates is that ethnic feelings develop in very specific contexts of opposition and competition.

Ethnic politics of Nepal in the 1990s seems to have elements conforming to both the primordialists and the instrumentalists' models. In a democratic set-up the

ethnic groups of Nepal feel an urge to discover pride in their ethnic identity. At the same time, however, they are also conscious that they can take advantage of the democratic situation and bargain for a good share in the political and economic pie, which fits the instrumentalist model.

Religion as Key Factor for Nepali Nationalism

The cultural concomitant of this 'unification', as Nepali nationalists call it, was a gradual process of Hinduization: festival, the values; and many of the social practices of the Parbatiyas have been adopted along with the Nepali language by other Hill Nepalese. A key factor right from the start was the use of the Hinduism as source of legitimation.

The founder of the modern state of Nepal, Prithvi Narayan Shah, called his new kingdom as 'a garden of four *Varnas* and thirty-six *Jats*'. *Varna* refers to the four scripturally sanctioned status group of Hinduism: the *Brahmans* (priests), *Kshatriyas* (rulers or warrior), *Vaishyas* (traders or herdsman), and *Shudras* (servants). *Jat* means caste. Conventionally Prithvi Narayan's this phrase is taken as endorsing a policy of ethnic harmony and coexistence. Goal behind Prithvi Narayan's statement, as David N. Gellner says, ". . . was to keep Indians out of the country. To this end he wanted to prevent his kingdom from becoming a garden of 'every sort of people': only then it would remain 'a true (*asal*) Hindustan of the four *Varnas* and thirty-six *Jats*'" (24).

The National Legal Code, promulgated in 1884, imposed Hindu caste rules on various ethnic groups. The main significance of the *Muluki Ain* was its scope, the fact that it encompassed all people under the Gorkhals' rule. It also reflected the political dominance of three Parbatiya namely Brahman, Thakuri and Chhetri. State advocacy was the primary vehicle for the spread of Hinduism in Nepal since punishments prescribed in the *Muluki Ain* were according to the caste ranking. John Whelpton says:

A sense of community generated by religion can provide the basis for a distinct ethnic or national identity, and, even if religious faith diminishes, the explicit ideology of nationalism can offer the sense of continuity through history which religion formerly provided. The fuel may change, but the same flame remains. (70-72)

By consolidating their political and economic power, the dominant Hindu elites in the centre were

creating a specific ideological framework which linked prestige to high-caste Hindu status. Within the framework of the emerging Hindu-polity, ethnic population, notably ethnic elites responded with the adoption of specific cultural symbols of those in power.

The polity and society of Nepal was indeed devised in the image of Hindustan. The etymology of the place-name Gorkha itself was rationalized as *goraksha* (cow protection), symbolic of the sanctity of the cow for Hindus. As a preservation of Hinduism the ban on the cow slaughter was probably first enforced in the whole kingdom in 1805. Slaughtering yak was also banned. According to Alex Michaels:

The reason for the yak ban was, it seems, that the Bhotia people of the border areas needed to be brought within the moral kingdom of Nepal, at least symbolically, and thereby remarked as subjects of Gorkha, not of Tibet [. . .] The ban on cow and yak slaughter saved an integrative rather than a practical objective.(92)

III. REPRESENTATION OF ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM IN SUMNIMA AND IN THE BATTLE OF KIRTIPUR

Representation of Ethnicity

We find both - instrumentalist and primordialist ethnicity in both texts, *In the Battle of Kirtipur* by Hridaya Chandra Singh Pradhan and B.P. Koirala's *Sumnima*. But B.P. Koirala gives more emphasis on religious aspect whereas Pradhan focuses on politics. To state in other words, both Pradhan and Koirala attempt to reinterpret the ethnic identities in their texts *In the Battle of Kirtipur* and *Sumnima* respectively. But their field is different- former reinterprets the true political history, that is, unification of Modern Nepal especially war between Kirtipure and Gorkhali whereas the latter reinterprets the religious myth about Vishwamitra's great penance in new pattern. Aryan and other ethnic culture; relationship between them and influence on each other are also found in the novel.

In both texts, *Sumnima* and *In the Battle of Kirtipur*, authors have taken female characters - Sumnima and Kirti Laxmi respectively, as main representatives of ethnic groups. *Sumnima* represents Kirat ethnic group

whereas Kirti Laxmi stands for Kirtipures, possibly 'Newar' ethnic group.

Kirti Laxmi, in disguised form of Bhairav Singh, fights bravely for the dignity of her own community. But Sumnima is devoted to serve Somdatta, a Brahmin. Furthermore, Kirti Laxmi is imprisoned into a jail room whereas as Sumnima is in her full freedom. This means Pradhan sees ethnic group as being imprisoned within the limited boundary of the nation but Koirala doesn't. Pradhan has presented the Kirtipure ethnic group as truly more nationalistic than the Gorkhals as Kirti Laxmi is dressed in *Daura*, *Suruwal*, and a *Patuka* over it, *Bhattgaule Topi* on her head, *Palanchoke Jutta* on her feet. But no other Gorkhals have such Nepali dress. We also find bitter irony that only Kirti Laxmi has 'Khukuri', a symbol of Bir Gorkhals (Nepalese), but not with any Gorkhali soldiers.

Kirti Laxmi is presented as a bold person. Even in such imprisoned situation, she discusses with armed soldiers in a brave way. The bravery is, in her own words, "a saga, a eulogy for the Kirtipure Birs" (5).

Kirtipures have pride on their own dignity and freedom. They prefer to die to surrender. They despise enjoying worldly pleasure under other's domination. "Kirtipures are not only bereaved but also ashamed of having [been] forced to surrender" (6). Kirti Laxmi has penchant for death than surrender before the enemy. When she falls under Khadga Bir's grip, she plunges the weapon deep in her own chest wishing "Long Live *Kirtipure* [. . .]. *Jaya Kirtipure ! Long Live Kirtipure !*" (29) Her last word of such wish itself makes readers clear how much she loves her territory and community. Kirtipures do not like any interfere but want to keep their ethnicity pure long lasting as Kirti Laxmi argues, "You [Khadga Bir] can't assault the chastity of Kirti Laxmi" (26). They give priority to their communal unity than their lives. Thus, when Khadga Bir advises Kirti Laxmi to escape quietly and save her life, she is ready to defend enemies than to escape being scared of them. She says, "If all of my countrymen have been cut their noses, then I don't regard it an honour to save myself only. So, I look upon it as a humiliation to save my nose in assurance of some one's mercy and with illegitimacy [...]. I don't have any passion for living when I couldn't have my own [. . .] Kirtipur" (21).

Koirala presents ethnicity in such a way that it has its existence only in relation to another ethnic group. These ethnic groups are always in struggle for their existence. In the novel, we find specially two ethnic groups, namely Brahmin and Kirat, which are always in

struggle to pervade directly or indirectly their own cultural and religious traits on others. Somdatta, representative of Aryan or Brahmin, tries to continue Hinduization but Sumnima opposes it. Finally, Somdatta's pure Hinduism falls into crisis. Binary relationship between different ethnic groups changes into relation of compromise as Sumnima says Somdatta's son:

Today, you have made a Kirat's daughter your wife. [...], if u understand her ethnical tradition and see the way she is traversing, you can understand my daughter very well. The daughter, too, by understanding your ideas must be prepared to abandon her path somewhat. In the same way, you must also try to compromise, being prepared to abandon some of your ways. May you prosper! May your descendants be such to be able to find out the ways of compromise! (114)

Koirala reconciles these two ethnic groups and writes, "A Brahmin had mixed his blood also in the ethnic blood current of the Kirats" (115).

In this novel, ethnic groups have hierarchical relationship based on conventionally well known four categories: Brahmin as priest at topmost, Chhetriyas are rulers and others' role is to perform such activities which help above mentioned groups.

Kirat and Bhilla ethnic groups are treated as inferior groups by Somdatta. Brahmin is assumed to be civilized, educated, cultured and rational who possesses "wonderful power of memory" and is "Very intelligent" (3). Somdatta boasts that they (Brahmin) are able to acquire divine power through their cultural performance. They are also able to get freedom from human weaknesses. But the members of other ethnic groups, namely Kirat and Bhilla, are unknown about all these things. Somdatta says, "Sumnima you ignorant girl, we are Brahmins who can achieve divinity by the power of penance. All our fire sacrifices, religious activities are fused together for achieving salvage from human weaknesses" (8). Sumnima also accepts her ignorance: "I am not a well read and well informed person like you" (10). However, Kirats are presented as more nationalist than Brahmin, as Pradhan does to Kirtipures, since most of the Kirat women, gathered in front of the prince in his royal order, have "thrust bright red rhododendron flowers into their hair" (11).

Koirala also presents Aryans being more patriarchal in comparison to Mongol or Kirats. While Sumnima wants to know who he is, Somdatta introduces himself as 'Son of Suryadatta, a Brahmin belonging to the Aryan stock' (7). He further explains that "a son receives his life as a gift from his father and, therefore, we never commit a sin of neglecting this liberal relation of the gift of life. This is the way we express our gratitude [towards father]" (7). But when Somdatta gives emphasis on father's role and importance, Sumnima says, "You are given birth by your mother and, therefore you have to respect her, [. . .]. It is for this reason that we Kirats first get to know our mother and the man she shows becomes our father" (7). It means, father is secondary person and it can be any "male shown by mother" (7). As Sumnima gives priority on mother to father, he accuses Sumnima of being ignorant. He also brands Kirat as a wild community devoid of culture. To state his own words. "We are the descendants of the Aryans, we are well cultured. You are wild Kirats, a community devoid of any good culture. Therefore, your concepts are different from ours" (7). And he further adds that "Mother is field, you stupid girl. The master of the field is father. You are ignorant of this truth [and] the system of introducing oneself from mother is beastly" (7-8). Puloma, his life-partner, is also treated as if she is just a servant whose duty is to keep Somdatta satisfied at any cost. Even the innately personal matter like sexual intercourse is not consumed according to her will. Once, when he takes such physical relationship with her, she is suggested not to take and feel physical satisfaction but just to think that they are going to fulfill their religious duty. Similarly, next night, he comes in the disguised form of Bhilla and rapes her without her knowledge that he is her husband.

In this way Kirats are presented to be very primitive and uncultured who have not developed the culture of wearing clothes. But Somdatta, who claims himself to be well cultured, suggests Sumnima to use clothes and cover the natural body.

Brahmin regards any act of taking one's life as violence but Kirats gives emphasis on the reason behind it but not the act itself directly. One when Somdatta saves a pigeon from hawk's attack, he is satisfied and proud of it. But Sumnima is very worried about it as he violates the natural phenomenon - hawk, being carnivorous, is naturally compelled to prey small birds to survive. But if the hunting is just for enjoyment it's violence. So, she remarks, "A hawk doesn't commit any violence, even the killing of cows by us [Kirat] is not violence. But the hunting for sport by your princes is real violence" (21). In

response, Somdatta expresses his anger and dissatisfaction, "Hey, ignorant Kirat girl! This is the result of your lack of cultured upbringing that you don't have any knowledge of the difference between violence and non-violence [. . .] That's why you say the slaughter of cows is also acceptable" (21).

Sumnima gives focus on physical satisfaction and beauty whereas Somdatta regards 'spirit' as truth. Thus, when Somdatta sees Sumnima's naked body, he accuses Sumnima of being an obstacle in his penance. Your body is an obstacle to the development of my soul" (30). Even during the act of sexual intercourse, they avoid sense of physical pleasure and regard it just as an act of fulfilling religious duty. Somdatta says:

Only for fulfilling our religious duty the occasion for our bodily union has presented itself today just to get a son. According to our Vedic canons and religious scriptures we must perform the fire sacrifice and special ritual to fulfill that particular religious duty [. . .] the bodily union performed for getting a son doesn't have the physical element. If there is even a slight awareness of physical element and of physical pleasure the duty of the union vanishes, religion melts away.(44-47)

He also conforms Puloma that she didn't enjoy the physical pleasure and didn't become attracted to sensual passion during intercourse. Sumnima says her daughter, "They [Brahmin] are the creatures of air [. . .] they are even prepared to abandon luxurious physical pleasure and their body [. . .] and your blood is of different kind. We Kirats are creatures of soil, we love soil. We are fully absorbed in the enjoyment of the pleasures of life"(114). The rejection of natural phenomena is the reason behind failure of their Hinduization and they, ultimately, should live as refugees in Kirat's house. "The more they find their bodily conjugation's failure, the more they increase their religious activities and the fire sacrifice [. . .] But even then all their efforts failed" (49).

Brahmin and Kirat ethnic groups think the ways of making God happy in different ways. Thus they raise questions on others' way of worshiping God. Kirats offer piglets to appease God. But Somdatta argues, "God and goddess will be pleased if you perform fire sacrifice and other charity" (18).

A number of Hindu cultural and religious rituals are performed by Somdatta. From his childhood Somdatta is taken to hermitage for abstinence. Before starting penance "the sacred thread ceremony befitting the Brahmin tradition" (3) is performed. He is well educated

and recites Veda's verses before and during any activities like bathing, having meal, sleeping, and even having sexual intercourse. He follows his religious discipline of not uttering anything through his mouth before talking a bath in the river. Then he prays to "The sacred river Ganga and put[s] on three lines of Sandal paste on his forehead and smear[s] holy ashes all over his body and sit[s] down on his *kush* grass seat on the clean sandy bank of the river facing the east on the lotus pose in a calm manner to repeat the sacred words of *Gayatri* for a long time" (5). As soon as the sun rises he prays to the Sun God.

Aryan family also indicates that one must have a son to get salvation after death. The 'ghostly food' offered by female is not, according to Hindu religion, accepted by spirits. So daughter or female are not allowed to offer 'ghostly food' after one's death. It is the reason until and unless a couple doesn't have a son, its duty is said to be unfulfilled. That is why Somdatta calls the act of having son as their religious duty. Puloma also tells Somdatta, "You need a person to offer you your ghostly food after death, that I am going to give you that person" (100).

However, he is not able to success in giving birth to a son and goes to take help from the very Kirat whom he has previously branded as ignorant and uncultured. Only when he finds himself "exhausted, zealous and incapable after the efforts of getting the son through their regular monthly act of torture, the desire of appeasing the Kirat gods awaken[s] in his mind" (53). Finally, he is able to give birth to a son with the help of Kirat, mainly Sumnima and her father. As Sumnima's father suggested him, he goes with Sumnima and take a dip into the man's pond. She decorates Somdatta and changes into the form of Bhilla. Only then he is sexually motivated and is able to make his wife pregnant.

Ultimately such a very strict Aryan culture happens to face crisis. After Puloma's death, Somdatta is not able to prepare his food himself due to old age. Thus, he depends on food sent by Sumnima for survival. After the ritual of burning the dead body of Somdatta, Sumnima takes Somdatta's son to her village with her. She asks people to carry the pots and pans, clothing and all and even the cow of the hermitage is united and taken to mix with her cattle in her shed. The hermitage ruins and there is no fire sacrifice and the other religious rituals also are no more performed.

Aryan culture is no more regulated then. When Sumnima asks Somdatta's son whether he wants to keep the things like loin cloth, water jar, the string made of *Kusha* grass, straw scat, seat made of *Kush* grass as the

memory of his father, symbolically Aryan culture, he denies keeping any of them.

A Bhilla is of the opinion that they should not discard their customs and traditional manners of life they have been following. They should rather destroy the hermitage and drive the Brahmin family away. He says, "if the Kshatriya returned there to keep them (Brahmins) we must declare war, yes, we must fight back [. . .]. It is better to face extinction rather than sheepishly up with injustice" (15). In this way, Bhilla ethnic group is presented to be more radical than Kirat.

Representation of the Nationalism

Pradhan redraws the notion of a bravery through this text. Previously only people living in Gorkha were taken as very brave persons and the very notion was generalized to all over the Nepalese,. But in the text, *In the Battle of Kirtipur*, Kirtipures are presented as more brave people than Gorkhalis. In the play there is only one Kirtipure female imprisoned in a jail. But Gorkhali soldiers are found in full-armed condition as if they can't face her if they do not have arms. So, Kirti Laxmi herself ridicules their bravery, "What a bravery ! Menace of bullets for an unarmed imprisoned soldier of a surrendered country. . ." (10).

Gorkhalis are proud of their bravery and asks her whether she has experienced Gorkhali bravery. But she hints that Kirtipures are more brave than Gorkhalis because Gorkhali Birs like Kalu Pande is already killed and Sur Pratap Shah's one eye is plucked out by Kirtipure. Thus, in response to their question, she orders Bahadur Khatri and Sete Pande rather to "Go and ask with the soul of Gorkhali Bir Kalu Pande, and the left-eye of Sur Pratap Shah !" (2) how much they experienced Kirtipure bravery. However, notion of 'Nepali Bir' is not avoided since Kirtipures are also Nepalese. To write in other words, the text supports Nepali national identity that Nepal is the nation of brave people.

Nationwide famous statement, related to Gorkha, '*Nyaya Napaye Gorkha Janu*' (Go to Gorkha to have justice) is also challenged in the text with Kirti's statement: ". . . if anyone tries to kill justice, then Kirtipure will of course bereave" (5), indicating that Gorkhalis are violating justice.

However, besides some impurities, by the end of the play, Pradhan presents Gorkhali King as a just king who is ready to punish his own followers if one does wrong, and to respect any other ethnic group's member who is ready to die for his/her own ethnicity. That is

evident when Prithvi Shah respects Kirti Laxmi, an enemy to Gorkhalis, addressing as "Brave girl ! *Birangana* !" (30). He also upholds her bravery to the worldwide level" not only. . . a *Birangana* of Kirtipur or a comprehensive Nepal of my imagination but a *Birangana* who could light the whole world" (33). King Prithvi Narayan Shah orders Sur Pratap Shah to give Khadga Bir and a traitor death penalty and further king says, "This girl is not only an idol of *Kirtipur* but also of our 'Gorkha Government and of the comprehensive Nepal of my imagination [. . .] honor, bowing my head, to the bravery of *Kirtipur*" (41). He orders commander-in-chief Sur Pratap Shah to perform her funeral ceremony with royal honour and according to her racial rites and rituals.

Nation attempts to play the role of forming identity of ethnic groups and distorts it in such a way that it favors the nation's goal. Despite Kirti's disagreement to surrender in front of Gorkhalis, Bahadur Khatri says that he will convey King that she has regretted for her doings and she has said, "I will bow your legs but please don't cut my nose" (14). It means, though Kirti Laxmi is not coward, Bahadur Khatri, the representative of nation, wants to distort her real identity and to report his king that she is coward.

Inability of the nation to recognize real identity of any ethnic group is presented in an artistic way. In the play Sete Pande and Bahadur Khatri, Prithvi Narayan's soldiers, are not able to know Kirti Laxmi's real identity and they assume her as Bhairav Singh.

As a whole, Pradhan redraws the socio-political identity of Kirtipure and Gorkhali. Gorkhalis are not so brave as they were assumed to be in the past and Kirtipure, who were unknown in the field of bravery, is taken into foreground. Kirti Laxmi, representative of ethnic group, wins Gorkhali morally though not politically.

Koirala presents ethnicity and nationalism as historical product. He relates myth of Vishwamitra's penance and his reincarnation as boar and relates it with Somdatt's hard penance. He doesn't talk only about a generation- Sumnima and Somdatta - but from their parents to their grand children. It means, it includes four generations and changes that took place in the field of culture, territory and religion which construct one's identity.

The nation described in the novel is based on hierarchical caste system ranked on the basis of Hindu religion and finally it is blurred. Brahman is kept at the topmost step of the social ladder and his main responsibility is to give continuity to the Hindu religion or

Aryan culture, like cow protection, worshipping Hindu god and goddesses and performing different Hindu rituals. Somdatta complains Kirat of slaughtering cows, he cares very much and takes her to graze everyday. Somdatta and his wife address cow as 'Mother' ! They also use cow dung and cow urine to purify the place where they perform their rituals. The very cow is given to him by local Kirat and by the end of the novel, after Somdatta's death, she is taken by Sumnima. But how much Kirats care the cow is not mentioned.

Not only Kshatriyas but also other ethnic groups namely Kirat and Bhillas, representative of Mongol, are found to be engaged in helping Brahmin. Bijuwa of the Kirat says:

Since the time this Brahmin family came to this land of ours we have been extending protection and whatever help we could. We helped the family establish this hermitage. It was again we people who cleared the jungle and prepared the things required for the hermitage and constructed and erected all these cottages with our manpower. We offered them the black cow, which gave the largest amount of milk in the village [. . .]. And we have been providing whatever things this family needs all the time.(12)

Koirala, being himself a politician, also hints towards political issue as the element of nation-building but not only Hinduization or religion. We can feel it through prince's statement stated to other ethnic group: "Bhilla and Kirats present here, our ancestors have conquered the whole land extending up to the Himalayas and, therefore, it is under our protection" (12).

Koirala also fictionalizes the process of celebrating Chatara as religious place -a process of nation building. In response to the local ethnic groups' resentment against Hinduization, prince states:

All right if you specifically need the place for religious purposes of traditional worship, let that particular space remain yours. But do not butcher pigs there. The place will now on be called the Varahakshetra or the region of the boar-god [. . .] and it will be a pilgrimage site symbolizing the incarnation of Vishnu as Varaha as propounded in our religious texts. (13)

Brahmins were, and still are in some communities, regarded as a superior ethnics who should not eat the things touched by others and make them their companies. Koirala hasn't missed to bring such social tradition into the light. When Sumnima wants to offer him something to have, Somdatta replies that he doesn't feel the necessity of any food at all. So, Sumnima hints at social hierarchy set religiously, "Or is it that being a Brahmin you feel that you can not eat food items touched by a Kirat ?" (63) Similarly, Puloma's friend, a Bhilla boy, was scolded by Puloma's mother and was not allowed to play with Puloma even to call her and give any fruit to her. As a social reformer, Koirala blurs such social hierarchy and forms a single family.

IV. CONCLUSION

Both *Sumnima* by B. P. Koirala and *In the Battle of Kirtipur* by Hridaya Chandra Singh Pradhan reinterpret the ethnic as well as national identities. But the difference lies in the issues they give emphasis: Koirala gives emphasis on religious aspect and in contrast, Pradhan focuses on political aspect of nationalism and ethnicity. Pradhan dramatizes historical war that took place during the process of unification of this modern Nepal by King Prithvi Narayan Shah, between Kirtipur and Gorkha. He redraws the identities of Kirtipure ethnic group and Gorkhalis. In the play Gorkhalis are no more brave in front of the Kirtipures. Rather a single Kirtipure, Kirti Laxmi, is enough brave to tackle with a group of armed Gorkhalis.

Ethnic people have their emotional or spiritual unity and they assume their ethnic identities as more precious than their own lives. That's why Kirti Laxmi is determined to suicide herself than being raped by Gorkhali soldier, Bahadur Khatri. Kirti Laxmi also doesn't find any value of her life in the absence of other Kirtipures. Neither she is ready to escape from jail secretly being coward. Ethnic groups' rejection of false identity constructed by the nation and act of redefining it are also reflected through Kirti Laxmi's reaction to her ready-made identity constructed by Gorkhali that she has surrendered in front of them. But she presents herself as bold and brave person in front of the Gorkhalis.

In this way Pradhan presents such relation of conflict only between nation and ethnic group. But Koirala, in addition to it, presents the relationship among different ethnic groups, too, who have the relation of both compromise and conflict.

Giving focus on the religious aspect of the ethnicity and the nationalism, Koirala presents process of Hinduization and Sankritization, and other non-Hindu ethnic groups' resentments against such processes. Somdatta, a representative of Aryan, performs Hindu religious activities. As he is devoted to give continuity to his religion so does the Kirat ethnic group. However the relationship between them is not so problematic till now. It is the arrival of the prince, the representative of the nation-state, that creates problem in their relationship. As Somdatta blames Kirats for slaughtering cow, the prince declares ban on cow slaughter.

Ethnic groups' resentment against Hinduization and Sanskritization is also clearly reflected in the novel. It is evident in Sumnima's reaction against Somdatta's use of Sanskrit term '*mata*' instead of '*aama*' to mean mother. She accuses Somdatta of distancing the relationship with mother who gave him birth. Similarly, Kirats and Bhillas revolt against Hinduization slaughtering cow and having feast whole night on the very night of prince's declaration of the ban on cow slaughter.

Koirala also ironizes to the Brahmin culture. Somdatta claims himself to be well cultured, civilized, able to understand god's language and even to be able to be free from human weaknesses. He gives emphasis on the spiritual aspect to physical pleasure. He also regards Kirats to be inferior, ignorant and uncultured. But he is not able to give birth to a baby until and unless he obtains help from the Kirats.

Finally, as a social reformer, he tactfully merges these two different ethnic groups into a single family blurring all social hierarchy. Sumnima takes Somdatta's son and get him married with her daughter. All in all, both Koirala and Pradhan present the relationship, the relationship is that of conflict, between nation and ethnic group.

REFERENCES

- [1] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.
- [2] Bhabha, Homi K. "Introduction: Narrating the Nation." *Nation and Narration*. ed. Homi K. Bhabha. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- [3] Bhattachan, Krishna B. *Minorities and Indigenous People of Nepal*. Kathmandu: National Coalition Against Racial Discrimination, 2008.

-
- [4] Calhaun, Craig. *Nationalism and Ethnicity*. Annual Reviews, 1993. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2083387>>
- [5] David N. Gellner, Joanna Pfaffa-Czarnecka and John Whelpton. Kathmandu: Vajra Publication, 2008.
- [6] Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. *Ethnicity Versus Nationalism*. Sage Publications, Ltd, 1991. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/424407>>
- [7] Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1983.
- [8] Koirala, Bishweshwar Prasad. Sumnima. trns. Tara Nath Sharma. Kathmandu: Bagar Foundation Nepal, 2005.
- [9] Michaels, Alex. "The King and the Cow: On a Crucial Symbol of Hinduization in Nepal." *Nationalism and Ethnicity in Nepal*. eds. David N. Gellner, Joanna Pfaffa-Czarnecka and John Whelpton. Kathmandu: Vajra Publication, 2008.
- [10] Miller, Richard W. *Killing for the Homeland: Patriotism, Nationalism and Violence*.
- [11] Pfaff-Czarnecka, Joanna. "Vestiges and Visions: Cultural Change in the Process of Nation-Building in Nepal." *Nationalism and Ethnicity in Nepal*. eds. David N.
- [12] Gellner, Joanna Pfaffa-Czarnecka and John Whelpton. Kathmandu: Vajra Publication, 2008.
- [13] Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. "Ethnicities and Multiculturalism Politics of Boundaries." *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Minority rights*. eds.
- [14] Pradhan, Hridaya Chandra Singh. "In the Battle of Kirtipur." trans. Jayant Sharma. Kathmandu: Hridaya Chandra Smriti Pratisthan, 2008.
- [15] Seton-Watson, Hugh. *Nations and States: An Inquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*. Colorado: Westview Press, 1983.
- [16] Sharma, Prayag Raj. "Nation Building, Multi-Ethnicity, and the Hindu State." *Nationalism and Ethnicity in Nepal*. eds. David N. Gellner, Joanna Pfaffa-Czarnecka and John Whelpton. Kathmandu: Vajra Publication, 2008.
- [17] Smith, Anthony D. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. Stevens, David. *Nationalism as Religion*. Irish provinces of the Society of Jesus, 1997, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30091818>>
- [18] Whelpton, John. "Political Identity in Nepal: State, Nation, and Community in Nepal." *Nationalism and Ethnicity in Nepal*. eds.
- [19] Yinger, J. Milton. *Ethnicity*. Annual Reviews, 1985. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2083290>>