

Bagiswori Journal
Vol. 5, No.1, April, 2026, Pages : 139-156
ISSN: 2676-1076 (Print), ISSN: 3021-9582 (Online)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/bagisworij.v5i1.93469>

**Narayan Man Bijukchhen's *Letters from Jail*: A Study in Erikson's
Psychosocial Development**

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Received: 2026/1/16 Revised: 2026/3/15 and 2026/3/29 Accepted: 2026/4/21

Abstract

This research article studies Narayan Man Bijukchhen's *Letters from Jail* (2025) written to his wife Shova Pradhan from Nakkhu Jail between 1988 and 1989. These letters depict the scene of various aspects such as culture, family bond, politics, social activities, ethnic/ cultural traditions as well as the final years of the Panchayat System. The depictions from the author are visualized and studied through the lens of Eric Erikson's psychosocial development theory by adopting a qualitative theory-driven thematic analysis approach. This paper studies Bijukchhen's selected ten letters out of twenty one to examine how confinement intensifies psychosocial conflicts but also fosters adaptation, reflection, and meaning-making, thereby affirming the human capacity for growth in adversity. The letters disclose how imprisonment disrupts but does not terminate developmental processes, particularly in the stages of identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and integrity versus despair. The writer struggles with isolation yet seeks intimacy, resists stagnation through generative reflection, and pursues integrity by finding meaning in spirituality, culture, and nature. By situating personal suffering within broader societal critiques, the author through the letters portrays resilience in psychosocial development.

Keywords: prison letters, psychosocial theory, intimacy, generativity, integrity, resilience

1. Introduction

Narayan Man Bijukchhen's *Letters from Jail* (2025) depicts the scene of various aspects such as culture, family bond, politics, social activities, cultural traditions as well as the final years of the Panchayat System. Through the twenty-one collected letters the writer directly reflect Nepalese history, literature, culture, politics, education, health as well as guide his wife on the importance of political movement. He argues that politics should be focused on serving the people rather than self-interest. He addresses Marxist ideology, anti-imperialism, cultural preservation plus social issues. These issues kick the goal-post of the person's psychosocial ground.

Eric Erikson's psychosocial theory conceptualizes human development as a lifelong negotiation of conflicts that shape identity, relationships, and meanings (Erikson, 1963; 1982). While often studied in normative life contexts, extreme conditions such as imprisonment provide a unique lens through which to understand the resilience and fragility of psychosocial development. The prison letters written from Nakkhu Jail between 1988 and 1989, positioned in the tumultuous sociopolitical climate of Nepal, offer a striking case study. The texts offer glimpses into the author's intellectual and personal world, which can be interpreted as reflecting certain psychosocial concerns. And these personal writings reveal how detention disrupts intimacy, challenges generativity, and accelerates existential reflection, and also evoke resilience and meaning-making. In this background, this study attempt to answer the following question:

1. In what ways does imprisonment influence the negotiation of key psychosocial stages such as identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and integrity versus despair?

Based on the research question the specific objectives are designed as such:

1. To analyze the representation of psychosocial conflicts in the selected letters.
2. To identify the stages affecting psychosocial development during imprisonment.

This article studies the letters through Erikson's scaffold, emphasizing how they are visible for the tensions against intimacy to isolation, generativity goes in opposition to stagnation, and integrity blows against despair. The analysis demonstrates how

the writer resists emotional deficiency, sustains generative concern, and cultivates integrity despite universal constraints.

2. Literature Review

Letters are used in as an amendment, a curiosity, a document, a source of data towards a situation or fact. They highlight autobiographical and historical data, and are one of the richest data towards women's voices in the fields of literature, politics, and science (Richter, 2010). Letters link the private and public dimensions together with mobility. They had to cross borders and many other hardships to arrive at their destiny (Frankling, 2020). Letters are narratives, language in action, production of texts and contexts. Letters are recognized that these texts bring language in movement and give life to them (Curran, 2018). They are objects of love and hate (Gori, 2011), of possession, travels, perils and adventures, of good and bad news, letters constitute actions and produce effects, mobilize manifestations, declare war, or even inspire others. On top of all that, letters bring authors into ink and paper (Vinci- Booher et al., 2019). Letters and autobiographical writings from prisoners have been used in scholarship to elucidate the interplay of psychological struggle and adaptation. Haney (2002) clarifies that texts such as letters and autobiographical writings often reveal how confinement fosters both fragmentation and resilience, allowing prisoners to reframe suffering within broader moral, cultural, and existential frameworks.

The variety of ways in which epistolary communication gets contextualized derives from its diverse nature as social and discursive practice. The epistolary insights range from the linguistic to the historical and literary. The use of corpus-linguistic tools to investigate digital collections allow the reconstruction of language variation and change in the early modern period and the combined approaches of discourse analysis, historical sociolinguistics and pragmatics contribute to the conception of letter writing not just as individual but also as social and discursive practice. The study of real historical letters considers them primarily as context-sensitive social interaction rather than unique rhetorical pieces: the letter as activity rather than as product (Nevalainen and Tanskanen, 2007). While existing studies on prison literature often emphasize content-based outer aspects and the practices such as love, hate, travelling, history, historical documentation, political resistance, social practice, culture, there is a significant gap in understanding such texts through a psychosocial developmental lens. They lack to study inner aspects such as psychological driving motors of the writers and the readers, too. This paper aims to study psychosocial aspects of Narayan Man Bijukchhen's *Letters from Jail* (2025) through the lens of Erikson's theory. The application of the theory provides

a critical framework to examine how individuals negotiate identity, relationships, and meaning under extreme conditions like imprisonment. The Nakkhu letters, by linking intimate personal concerns to collective reflections on Nepalese society, extend this tradition of prison literature as a site of psychosocial negotiation.

Erikson is a psychosocial theorist who presents eight-fold stages of development, each defined by a central conflict that must be negotiated to foster psychological growth. According to Erikson, the psychosocial development framework consists of the eight stages:

1. Trust versus Mistrust (Infancy, 0–1 year): The crisis centers on the infant's ability to trust their caregivers and the world. Successful resolution leads to the virtue of hope.
2. Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt (Early Childhood, 1–3 years): Children learn to exert control over their bodies and environment. Successful resolution results in the virtue of will.
3. Initiative versus Guilt (Preschool, 3–6 years): Children begin to plan and initiate activities. Resolving this crisis successfully leads to the virtue of purpose.
4. Industry versus Inferiority (School Age, 6–12 years): The focus shifts to competence and achievement in school and social settings. Success leads to the virtue of competence.
5. Identity versus Role Confusion (Adolescence, 12–18 years): Adolescents explore their independence and develop a sense of self. A successful resolution leads to the virtue of fidelity.
6. Intimacy versus Isolation (Young Adulthood, 18–40 years): The main task is to form intimate relationships with others. The virtue of love emerges from a successful resolution.
7. Generativity versus Stagnation (Middle Adulthood, 40–65 years): The crisis involves contributing to society and raising the next generation. A successful resolution leads to the virtue of care.
8. Ego Integrity versus Despair (Maturity, 65+ years): Individuals reflect on their lives. A sense of satisfaction leads to wisdom, while regret leads to despair.

For Erikson, in adulthood, intimacy goes against isolation, generativity moves against stagnation, and integrity plays a role in the conflict against despair. Research suggests that environments of deprivation, such as prisons, intensify these conflicts, often producing alienation, stagnation, or despair (Maruna, 2001).

According to Frankl (1985), resilience studies highlight how individuals draw on culture, spirituality, and meaning-making to navigate adversity.

3. Methodology

This study employs the theoretical concepts by Erikson (1963). His concept of psychosocial development theory describes personality development throughout the lifespan, with each of the eight stages marked by a central psychosocial crisis. His psychosocial development stages are: 1. Trust versus Mistrust, 2. Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt, 3. Initiative versus Guilt, 4. Industry versus Inferiority, 5. Identity versus Role Confusion, 6. Intimacy versus Isolation, 7. Generativity versus Stagnation, 8. Ego Integrity versus Despair. The successful resolution of each crisis leads to the development of a specific ego virtue or strength. Failure to resolve a crisis can lead to challenges in later stages.

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive research design. The design is explorative and analytical in nature aiming to interpret literary texts/ the selected letters through a psychosocial theoretical lens.

The study employs a purposive sampling technique. This paper interprets only ten selected letters out of twenty one letters through the psychosocial development insights. The selected letters are those that significantly reflect richness in psychosocial content and relevance to the research objectives within internal conflicts, social relationships, and developmental transitions. The remaining letters are excluded due to comparatively limited representation of psychosocial themes required for in-depth analysis.

This study uses a theory-driven thematic analysis approach. The selected letters are interpreted through Erikson's psychosocial development theory with a focused emphasis on four key stages: the identity versus role confusion, the intimacy versus isolation, the generativity versus stagnation, and ego integrity versus despair. The stages are purposefully chosen to represent the psychosocial dynamics from youth to maturity and later life.

The research claims the originality as it is the first research to interpret the letters through the perspective of Erikson's psychosocial development theory.

4. Results and Discussion

The four-fold stages of Psychosocial analysis of the letters are as follows:

4.1 Identity versus Role Confusion

The author has read different books mainly based on philosophy of politics, economics, psychology, culture, social behavior, religion, and so on before and while in the jail. The books have influenced him so he has thoughtful reflections on his political and intellectual identity point to a search for a coherent sense of self. He is in jail, a setting that strips away much of one's external identity and forces him to confront who he is on a deeper level. He recalls his past reading lifestyle, such as studying Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism* and Howard Fast's *Spartacus*, as well as his interactions with other fellow intellectuals. His tête-à-tête with the Indian Muslim Marxist, Anwar, reveals a moment of re-evaluating his political beliefs, as he states, "My notion about Lenin has changed." This is a classic sign of the identity stage with quizzical and revising one's core beliefs and affiliations.

The author has engaged in historical texts like *Mudra Rakshyas* and *Himdesh*. These books are not merely for entertainment but for understanding himself and the world. He finds a sense of connection and purpose in these books, using them to form his own opinions on politics, society, and human nature. He expresses his inner conflict about politics and suggests an internal struggle, along with a provisional new resolution. The author clarifies and mentions:

On reading the history of conspiracies and deceptions, one can't help but feel a deep hatred towards politics. However, even though we stay away from politics, politics won't stay away from society; even though we don't suffer, others will suffer. The conversation between Arjun and Krishna in the *Geeta* has great relevance here. The main logic of Krishna's teachings to not run away from the battlefield lies in the fact that one should not run away from politics. (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 141)

The author discusses on translation of the books and gives his clarification on the translations of *Himdesh* and *The Old Man and the Sea* that reveals a concern for cultural genuineness and the loss of essence in translation. This reflects his struggle to define and maintain his own cultural identity as a Nepali while engaging with a global, translated world. The lack of cultural programs for other ethnic groups in the jail, while Nepali programs are performed, further highlights his search for belonging and recognition within his cultural context. The poem recited by a boy prisoner from Darjeeling "*My life! Imprisoned like a bird in the cage. How do I meet you?*" can be seen as a poignant expression of a lost and confused identity, unable to connect with the outside world. The outside world sees one thing, while the reality is another. To connect this thought, the author remarks:

... men who commit crimes or offences have feelings, too. When I asked the boy, who had just sung the song about his theft crime, he answered, 'Simple-living men from Darjeeling can't control their mind in Kathmandu's splendor. Necessities motivate men towards theft and other crimes.' After all, a prisoner is also a man. Situations and circumstances make a man a criminal. Nobody is born a criminal! (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 142)

The author emerges as a well-read individual with a strong sense of intellectual self. This is evident in his thorough discussions of Indian epics and scholars. His intellectual rigidity suggests a successful navigation of the identity in the confusing role-play stage, in which the individual seeks to form a coherent sense of self. He admires scholars like Sankalia, Prabha Dixit, and Nani Palkhivala, and his admiration is rooted in their intellectual competency and "authentic, accurate and polished" writings. This intellectual kinship becomes a form of identity formation; he defines himself by the minds he respects. This indicates a movement toward identity achievement where the individual forms a coherent identity after a period of exploration and doubt.

Erikson emphasizes that identity is formed through both internal reflection and social interaction. The author's interaction with Anwar, an Indian Muslim Marxist, serves as a dialogical space where competing ideologies are negotiated. This exchange contributes to the reconstruction of his identity. Similarly, his engagement with historical and cultural texts like *Mudra Rakshyas* and *Himdes* reflects his attempt to situate himself within a broader socio-cultural and historical framework. His reflection on politics moves its unavoidable role in society suggesting a gradual movement toward identity resolution rather than confusion. The concern with translation and cultural authenticity introduces another layer of identity struggle. The loss of essence in translated works discloses anxiety about preserving his cultural identity in a globalized intellectual environment. This reflects Erikson's idea that identity formation involves reconciling personal and cultural continuity.

4.2 Intimacy versus Isolation

A sense of *intimacy in opposition to isolation* also surfaces in the letters. The author writes as a remark, "The might of his pen is unparalleled. Unfortunately, I didn't have any opportunity to meet or be introduced to any of the three of them. I knew them only through their literature. We in Nepal, too, deserve to have such learned scholars... we must be jealous" (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 213). The lament of missed connection, even with admired intellectuals, points to a potential for intellectual

isolation. While he maintains a relationship with the recipient, Shova, the letter's content is heavily focused on intellectual matters and external figures rather than a deep exploration of the personal, emotional bond between them. This could be interpreted as a struggle to form deep, intimate connections—or perhaps as an outlet for a connection that is primarily intellectual in nature.

The writer agonizes for his wife's health and feels blameworthy for not asking about it earlier. His mixture of agony and intimacy both are expressed through the letters. On these matters, he mentions, "...some boys who were freed had told me after seeing you, 'Bhauju has become skinny. Is she sick, Daju?' Ashamed, I answered, 'Oh, I wasn't aware of that'" (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 182). This highlights his longing for intimacy despite being cut off from normal family life. Limited, controlled and formalized prison visitations create forced isolation, making it difficult for him to nurture affection and closeness. The author feels humiliation when others noticed his wife's sickness shows the damage on intimate bonds caused by captivity.

The writer's concern for his wife's deteriorating health and his guilt for failing to ask about it earlier reveal the fragility of intimacy under confinement. Prison visits, reduced to transactional exchanges, undermine emotional connection and intensify loneliness. In Erikson's terms, these conditions foster isolation. Yet the writer resists total alienation by expressing care and responsibility for his wife and children, sustaining intimacy despite structural barriers.

The author also describes his struggles with marriage and personal relationships. He recalls:

Local prominent social figures of good reputation at that time, like my father, Madhav Shankar Joshi, and Ashalal Sahu, had concluded that 'this boy should not be kept in the country like this' or 'this boy is likely to bring about social disorder in the country by instigating a peasant uprising.' Plans were being made to send me abroad on some scholarship or in embassy jobs, or to engage me in a government job or in some commercial business within the country. But I had already become 'an irremediable boy'—firm and resolute in my decision. (Bijukchhen, 2025, pp. 86–87)

As an "irremediable boy," he also recounts how his friends were told "not to get married to a Jyapu (peasant) girl" (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 85). He further explains that he had to find a different place to live in order to manage his life and escape the "excessive non-political pressure" from his father. This underscores the conflict of this stage, where a person seeks to form intimate, loving relationships. The

author seems to struggle with balancing his personal life and his political and professional aspirations, which often leads to a sense of isolation.

He also reveals tender reflections on love and marriage. At one point, tittle-tattle made Shova wonder if she was his second wife. He assures her she is his only one but eventually reveals a past marriage proposal. With great honesty, he explains the difficulty of balancing his personal life and political commitments:

Because of organizational and political reasons, there were many hurdles for political activists to get married to the girl of their choice. Those twists, turns, and obstructions were the only reason for my late marriage. You are neither a ‘Kanchhi’ nor do I have any other children. Forget about those lies and rumors! The truth is that my marriage couldn’t have been decided based on gold and silver, or house and land properties.... I didn’t have to hide any facts. My life is like an open book. I have no regrets, but pride. It is a truth that for some time, I was misjudged as a culprit in the eyes of the law, due to my attachments with my friends and the people. (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 94)

McAdams (2001) clarifies within Eriksonian terms that intimacy requires emotional closeness, care, and the capacity to sustain meaningful relationships, while isolation signifies disconnection and loneliness. The prison environment, with its rigid visitation rules, reduces interactions to the exchange of necessities such as money, kerosene, book, newspaper, cloths or food, thereby undermining intimacy and fostering alienation. The author resists complete isolation by continuously expressing love, guilt, and responsibility toward his wife and children. This tension highlights how the desire for intimacy remains a defining psychosocial need.

Erikson’s stage of intimacy versus isolation emerges in young adulthood and focuses on the individual’s capacity to form deep meaningful relationship while avoiding emotional detachment and loneliness. His lament about never meeting the intellectual figures suggests a sense of isolation where admiration replaces direct human bonding. However, his emotional concern for his wife reflects the yearning for natural intimacy. His guilt and shame upon learning about her deteriorating health reveal an internalized sense of responsibility and emotional attachment. His reflections on marriage and his reassurance to Shova reveal an effort to rebuild trust and emotional closeness. By presenting his life as ‘an open book’, he shows honesty and transparency as key components of intimacy in Eriksonian theory.

4.3 Generativity versus Stagnation

Bijukchhen's *Letter from Jail* (2025) can also be meaningfully interpreted through Erikson's psychosocial stage of generativity in opposition to stagnation. Regardless of personal confinement, the writer situates his reflections within broader concerns of cultural continuity and social responsibility. His talk of traditional Nepali architectural practices such as *Kausi* (terraces), *Tundal* (carved supports), and *Pakha* (eaves) underscores a generative impulse to preserve indigenous knowledge and transmit it to future generations. By differentiating these forms with the inadequacies of foreign interventions, such as German housing projects that neglected Nepal's climatic and cultural realities, the writer emphasizes the need for context-sensitive development that respects local heritage. He states:

The Germans built a 'model house' for four or five families. But for people accustomed to habits typical of their culture, that house was not suitable, and the 'model-house' was converted into a school... a big problem for our country to preserve our archeological objects. (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 74)

This agitation illustrates Erikson's view that adulthood is marked by the responsibility to guide and sustain cultural traditions rather than allowing them to decline or erode. Through the letters, the author acknowledges the socioeconomic tensions that compel many families to prioritize survival over heritage preservation, highlighting the psychosocial conflict between cultural responsibility and immediate necessity. He reflects psychosocial conflict linking with responsibility that:

'Camel-window' (Untejhyal) of Nepal was in an ancient house in Balakhu of Bhaktapur. During the partition of the house between two brothers, the Camel-window was cut into two. This was about 3–4 years ago. Rather than renovating that ancient house, one of the brothers, who had earned a lot of money, applied for approval from the Nagar Panchayat office to construct a new-style house in half of the old house. Because of serious misunderstandings, the other brother flatly refused to give up his half of the Camel-window... The Nagar Panchayat and many intellectuals tried their best to save that window, but in vain. The Camel-window was cut into two halves. The Department of Archaeology, the National Art Gallery, and the Department of Education all became powerless... lack of law and regulations to declare them as archaeological or historical monuments, and... lack of a comprehensive list of houses that need preservation. (Bijukchhen, 2025, pp. 74–75)

With these reflections the author exemplifies the dual struggle of generativity in opposition to stagnation: striving to nurture cultural identity while confronting the realities of poverty and modernization. By embedding his personal challenges such as lack of resources and restricted freedom within these broader reflections, the writer demonstrates resilience and a search for meaning analogous to Erikson's notion of ego integrity. He annotates:

That damaged 'Camel-window' had the image of a camel, sea, sea-waves, and clouds. Nepal doesn't have a desert, a sea, or camels; yet, how did the unknown Nepali artist carve the Camel-window? ...That suggests Nepal's link with Iran or Arab countries in the historical past... the image was carved on the basis of picture or description provided by Nepali messengers... visiting Arab nations. (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 78)

The remarks of the text reveals an adult preoccupied not only with personal survival but also with the intergenerational responsibility of sustaining cultural identity in the face of external and internal challenges.

The motive of generativist involves caring for others, contributing to society, and leaving a legacy. The writer expands his reflections from personal suffering to societal critique arguing that underdevelopment is not only economic but also tied to justice, culture, awareness, and education. He generates the meaning of development:

Holistic development means both physical as well as spiritual development. Industry, commerce, transport, science, and technology are related to physical or economic development. On the other hand, education, culture, religion, mentality, human behavior, goodwill, civic sense, manners are related to spiritual development as well as psychosocial development. (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 184)

His concern for the suffering of his family and children in association with mentally, physically, financially, socially, and culturally behaviors pictures parental generativity. On this matter, he states his concern:

We certainly don't want our son to become a manual laborer, which is not lacking in our country either. In order to become an intellectual laborer, good memory is very, very essential. That is related to parents' DNA and good nutrition. So, take care in the nutrition of Subeg and Bibek. Nevertheless, we must cultivate the habit of honoring physical labor, too. (Bijukchhen, 2025, pp. 192–193)

The author further states his inner feelings and consoles his wife:

You have the additional burden of having to manage for me here, too. Such conditions, in addition to the woes of separation, must have made you shed tears each night like the spouses of our comrades involved in this case. But those tears will be the seeds of change for a new age! Our sufferings and sacrifices will not go in vain! Those who framed us in this false case, and their bosses in higher positions, is today standing in front of the court of the nation facing interrogations... change of season reveals the concealed desires. (Bijukchhen, 2025, pp. 193–194)

The author is not only concerned about his own family but also aware of global parental responsibilities. He reflects his global-localize perception: “Conscious and responsible parents do think about their children’s future... we have to think not only about our own children’s future, but also about the future of all the children in society” (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 206).

There are many letters that consistently show the author’s concerns extending beyond him-self, which is a key feature of generativist. His manifestation on literature (Devkota’s poem) and spirituality indicate that he is trying to transform his suffering into intellectual and cultural contributions, resisting stagnation. He philosophically states:

I feel sad that our society or our country is over 400 years behind Britain in terms of physical and spiritual development... I am reminded of Laxmi Prasad Devkota’s poem, ‘God, turn me into a sheep, as I have suffered much for being knowledgeable.’ Yes, we are in such a condition. (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 184)

The author has read the book *Aadi Bidroh* and has shared it with the sons of a palace grammarian and this act as the subsequent intellectual conversation they held is another example of generativity. He is passing on knowledge and fostering intellectual growth in others, which brings him a sense of joy, as if he has been nominated as a member of the Nepal Academy or some other literary institution. This suggests that he has a desire to contribute to the next generation and feel that his life’s work is meaningful.

The author has kept his reflections on politics and the state of his country which show him lead to a strong sense of civic duty. On politics and civic duty, he states that politics won’t stay away from society; even though we don’t suffer, others will suffer, and his call to not run away from politics, indicate a concern for the well-

being of his community and society. He feels a personal responsibility to engage an expression of generativity.

The author's observations about the importance of translation, the affordability of books, and the success of translators like Devendraraj Upadhyaya show his investment in a larger cultural project. He wants literature and knowledge to be accessible and of high quality that aims to leave a lasting impact on his culture and language. This is a classic example of generativity in action: working for the benefit of a broader and ideal society.

Generativist entails contributing to the welfare of future generations. Despite his confinement, the prisoner's thoughts extend beyond his personal suffering to critique Nepal's underdevelopment in justice, education, culture, and awareness. By linking familial hardships to societal stagnation, the writer demonstrates a generative orientation, transforming confinement into reflective engagement. His invocation of poetry, literature, and cultural critique underscores his commitment to meaning-making and contribution, resisting stagnation and despair.

There is also a subtle trace of stagnation. The arguments he discusses have been ongoing since 1960, suggesting a venerable and perhaps unresolved conflict. The frequently recurring historical and intellectual points may indicate a certain intellectual stasis or difficulty in moving beyond established lines of thought. His call for a re-establishment of morality and civic senses is a grand and perhaps unattainable goal, which could lead to feelings of frustration and stagnation if not realized.

4.4 Integrity versus Despair

There is a hint of integrity in opposition to despair. The letter comes from *Letters from Jail*, implying a significant life event that has shaped the writer's current circumstances. Life in jail, for any reason, forces an individual to tackle past choices and the totality of their life. The intellectual and reflective nature of the letter, along with the personal note at the end suggests a man attempting to make sense of his life. The phrases "Always Remembering" and "Please send the things I have mentioned." (Bijukchhen 2025, p.213) hint at deep reflection on his past. This effort to find meaning and coherence in his life's narrative, including his present predicament, represents an attempt to achieve integrity. The alternative, despair, would be expressed through bitterness and hopelessness, which are largely absent from the text. Wilderman and Western (2010) highlight how captivity intensifies psychosocial conflicts and also fosters adaptation, reflection, and meaning-making, thereby affirming the human capacity for growth in adversity.

Imprisonment forces premature existential reflection. It means no need to be mature as elderly ones. With the notion the author compares Nepal with Britain, lamenting that society is “400 years behind” in physical and spiritual development. This demonstrates an effort to find meaning in suffering through historical and cultural analysis. The writer anticipates the stage of integrity in opposition to the despair by weighing Nepal’s trajectory against Britain’s, seeking coherence across both personal and national narratives. Rather than settling into bitterness, he organizes suffering through spirituality, the symbolism of the Himalayas, and poetic imagination and practices consistent with research on identity, coherence, and well-being under conditions of institutional constraint (Crewe, 2011; National Research Council, 2014).

The author appreciates the Himalayas and nature that reflects a search for integrity linking peace and coherence amid hardship rather than despair. On this issue he states:

Himalayas turn from golden red to silvery white casting own shadow on the western faces. During the days, they look clear, lovely and bright. In the evenings, the western faces look reddish as if sprinkled with red vermillion. Such are the majestic panorama views of Himalayas – sometimes, I even forget that I am a prisoner here. (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 185)

Maruna (2001) links the aspects of integrity against despair, a stage Erikson associating with later adulthood but one that confinement appears to accelerate. Similarly, Frankl (1985) shows that meaning-making and cultural imaginations are central to resilience under extreme adversity. In one of the letters, the writer compares Nepal’s trajectory to Britain’s, lamenting that the nation lags “400 years behind” in development (Bijukchhen, 2025, p. 185). Such reflections suggest a search for coherence, linking personal struggles to historical and cultural realities. Importantly, he resists despair by drawing strength from spiritual and natural imagery. Observing the Himalayas, he describes moments of transcendence in which he even forgets that he is a prisoner. Similarly, recalling the poetry of Laxmi Prasad Devkota allows him to transform anguish into cultural reflection, seeking integrity through intellectual and spiritual engagement.

In sum up, Bijukchhen cannot be definitively placed in a single Eriksonian stage, his letter offers a rich psychological landscape. It reveals an individual who has largely navigated the early stages successfully, demonstrating a strong sense of identity and a generative spirit. It also reflects on missed connections and his current situation pointing at the ongoing struggles of intimacy and the ultimate quest for integrity. He moves toward ego integrity through reflection, cultural

analysis, appreciation of nature, and intellectual engagement. While elements of despair appear, they are overshadowed by his resilience and his capacity to transform suffering into insight.

5. Conclusion

This analysis reveals how imprisonment intensifies life-stage conflicts through Bijukchhen's *Letters from Jail*. Using Erikson's psychosocial development theory, the selected letters have been analyzed in the four frames. It has been found that stage of identity versus role confusion is evident in his intellectual reflections and engagement with political, historical, and literary texts. Through these, he reevaluates earlier ideological commitments, critiques cultural translation, and situates himself within a broader intellectual lineage. The author does not lose himself in detention, but affirms identity through knowledge, cultural pride, and a sense of intellectual kinship. The finding suggests that the stage of intimacy versus isolation emerges in the tension between his affection for his wife and family and the structural barriers imposed by incarceration. Prison rules reduce family interactions to formal transactions, straining emotional closeness. Yet his expressions of guilt, care, and honesty reveal a persistent desire to sustain intimacy despite enforced separation. His struggles with gossip, late marriage, and political commitments underscore public life disrupting private bonds as well as leading to moments of isolation.

Moving into generativity versus stagnation, Bijukchhen's reflections extend beyond personal hardship to encompass cultural heritage, social justice, and future generations. His concerns about preserving Nepali architecture, making books affordable, and ensuring children's education reveal a generative orientation, where suffering becomes a source of cultural and intellectual contribution. His recognition of stagnation through unresolved debates and unfulfilled reforms exposes the fragility of this impulse under conditions of poverty, modernization, and confinement. Finally, glimpses of integrity versus despair surface as he weighs his life and Nepal's history against broader global trajectories. He does not sink into hopelessness, but seeks coherence through cultural imagination, spirituality, and the natural beauty of the Himalayas. He becomes able to transform pain into reflection that suggests a movement toward integrity, even in premature existential confrontation.

The study reveals that the letters as the tools to unveil a man navigating multiple psychosocial conflicts simultaneously. Bijukchhen emerges as a reflective prisoner-scholar who resists despair by grounding identity in intellectual pursuits, sustaining intimacy under strain, and extending his concerns to society and future generations.

The letters illustrate that imprisonment of the person can also provoke profound meaning-making, resilience, and generativity. This study adds a new dimension to Nepali prison writings within a psychosocial analytical framework rather than treating it solely as a political or autobiographical text. It broadens the scope of Nepali prison literature by integrating inner life, affect and developmental processes into its interpretation. Over all, this research bridges literature, psychology, and history by showing prison letters are not just records of suffering or resistance, but powerful documents of human development under constraint, offering new insights into both Nepali literary studies and global psychosocial theory.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no specific financial support and no known competing non-financial interests.

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