

From Surrender to Protest Against Patriarchy in Pandey's *Jiyara**

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Abstract

The anthology of stories Jiyara by Nayan Raj Pandey unveils the violence against women in Madhes. The anthology explores the plights of Madhesi women who are victimized by patriarchal agents, but the stories also depict the women who courageously fight against the impostors. So, the article investigates the problems faced by the Madhesi women in the society that is driven by patriarchy, in the stories "Jiyara" and "Laila O Laila". It navigates the causes of the oppression, abuse, and violence against women in Madhesi community. The article analyzes the ways that are deployed by the Madhesi women to react against the patriarchy. To address these objectives, feminist theory, mainly theory of radical feminist Kate Millet has been used. Kate Millet brings up the idea that men create and maintain patriarchy because they own resources. Likewise, patriarchy helps them to enslave women. So, in order to fight for sexist exploitation and oppression, women need to reject the subordinated position set for them by patriarchal society. The significance of this study is to contribute to a different perspective for the reader to see the anthology Jiyara because in this text, Pandey highlights the problems faced by Madhesi women due to the socio-cultural practices that endorse males' domination. The paper concludes that in "Jiyara", major female characters get victimized by patriarchal social system, whereas the female characters of "Laila O Laila" stand starkly against the violence and suppression done to them by their male counterparts, when it transcends their tolerance.

Keywords: Feminism, Madhesi community, patriarchy, subjugation, violence.

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Feminist Consciousness in Nepali Novels

Feminism appears in 1960 as a political movement with advocacy for the rights of women. Feminist movement concentrates on establishing the female's position firmly in the society. While raising their voice for the equal treatment of women in every sector of life, feminists go through several hurdles and difficulties. Pointing out the difficult journey of the feminists, Rosemarie Tong reveals that being feminist is a long process that arises from variety of pain and bitterness, and bitterness over the inequality which took place in the social arrangements, both of which take place in the public, even in the domestic realm, and personal realm (73). However, feminists continue their journey towards the emancipation of women till the present date. Mainly, radical feminists strive to dismantle the system, particularly patriarchal system, that place women in the inferior position than that of men. As feminists such as Sylvia Walby view that patriarchy is the system of social structure and practice in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (3). Likewise, regarding patriarchy a main source of women's suffering, they criticize the patriarchal imposition of women as a mere object of sexual desire. Likewise, contemporary Nepali novelists consider patriarchy as a main reason of women's suffering. Gyanu Pandey points out that the contemporary novels expose the domination of male characters to female members of their family (32). In Pandey's perception, the contemporary novels not only unfold the pains of women caused by males' domination, it also condemns patriarchal practices prevailed in Nepali society.

Contemporary Nepali novelists reflect the consciousness about the rights and equality of women that appear among the Nepali people after socio-political movements of the nation. The Nepali novelists show their concern for the upliftment and empowerment of female through literary creation, by writing the female centric novels and providing them agency, several decades ago (Baral 398). However, after the revolution of 2062/63 B.S., the Nepali authors portray the struggle of females against the male hegemony and their charismatic success on it. Hrishiraj Baral points out that influenced by the political changes in the nation that brought significant transformation in the peoples' consciousness regarding females' right, feminist novelists of Nepal bestowed a voice of protest to their female characters against the male's domination and abuse (87). Likewise, Rajani Dhakal notices that contemporary Nepali novelists

invoke people's reaction against stereotyped gender identities in their literary narratives (92). In her observation, the novelists Krishna Dharabasi, Sarada Sharma, Padhmawati Singh, Nayanraj Pandey, Neelam Karki Niharika, Manisha Gauchan, Sheeba Shah, and others have portrayed the miserable condition of women caused by patriarchy in their literary narratives. In the anthology of stories *Jiyara*, Nayan Raj Pandey has focused his writing on the sexual oppression and violence against women resulted by male's domination and supremacy.

Saguna Shah praises *Jiyara* for depicting the condition of Madhesi women of western terai region of Nepal. She observes that: "In *Jiyara*, women and their plight occupy a very pivotal status in most of the stories" (13:08: 13:13). She views that in the backdrop of the anthology, Pandey urges to the government, state, and the policy makers to acknowledge the sense of belongingness of Madhesi women so that they do not get victim of double marginalization. Similarly, Krishna Kandel apprises Pandey's effort for portraying realistic condition of the subalterns of Madhes, a neglected part of the country, in the anthology *Jiyara*. The anthology speaks the tearful history of non-citizens who never enable to become citizen." (*Sabdapath*). Similarly, Eknarayan Paudyal writes: "Adopting the style of magical realism, an anthology of stories *Jiyara* has raised thoughtful subject" (par. 1). In Paudyal's view, the anthology has highlighted the complicated problems of Madhes. Furthermore, *Jiyara* has presented the idea of rewriting the history.

In the same way, Renuka GC points out that *Jiyara* has been written in the background of *Ulaar* and *Loo*. In her perception, it seems that Pandey has written these stories in his comfort zone; however, the anthology has densely explored the status of Madhes after People's Movement II (par. 8). According to the editor of Fine Print, Pandey has dismantled his previous style in *Jiyara*. He has introduced his different and pragmatic style and skill to the reader. Besides, he has not limited his characters to the people who tell their painful sagas; rather, the writer has provided agency to the characters. Moreover, he has filled a sense of revolt on them (par. 6). The critics have meticulously studied the themes and styles used in the stories. However, they have left the scope for the researcher to analyze it from the perspective of feminist theory. Therefore, the article aims to discuss the condition of female characters and their reaction against patriarchy in the following section of this paper.

Journey of Female Characters from Domination to Consciousness in *Jiyara*

Setting the stories “*Jiyara*” and “*Laila O Laila*” in the Madhes, Pandey reflects the prevailing social practice of the Madhesi community that keeps Madhesi women under an oppression, discrimination, and in the state of lower hierarchy both in the family and the society. He also reveals that the secondary status of women is common and lasting in the Madhesi community. The selected stories portray the lifestyle of the villages Gudia Gaun and Bakawali, where women are objectified. Madhesi people are the main inhabitants in these villages. The village dwellers have their own attire, language and rituals that completely differ with the mainstream culture. In fact, in this society, the female members such as Reshma, Parvati, Siri, Sakuntala, Laila and Anarkali are treated as puppets. The string of their life is regulated by the males. In these patriarchal societies, the males not only take the ownership of female family members but also punish them brutally if they fail to follow the instruction because the patriarchal society “encourages the young male to develop aggressive impulses, and the female to thwart her own / or turn them inward” (Millet 43). Pandey exposes that condition since people of these villages are deprived of the basic necessities such as communication, education and the like, and so they cannot make themselves free from the patriarchal belief. Consequently, the males of these villages do not treat their female family members as their equal. Additionally, females suppress their desire of equality.

The story collection has presented novice style and subject matter as in the stories “*Jiyara*” and “*Laila O Laila*”. There are several plots that are adjoined to the main plot. However, the total effect is of a cohesive one as both of the stories consist of the story of women’s lives, their fears, glitches and aspirations. In “*Jiyara*” Pandey presents the plights of women symbolically. In the Gudia village, women are produced as puppets and owned by the males. So, the females of this village create an identity of a puppet for themselves and surrender themselves to the males. They let the males to regulate their life. Pandey depict the pitiful as well as frightening condition of the women of this village. Women of Gudia village are pretty sure about their untimely death that often occurs after their marriage in their husband’s home. Not only the girls but their parents are also sure that after marriage, their daughters will be murdered by their husbands or in laws when the bride’s parents cannot fulfil the limitless/endless

demand of dowry from the groom's side. The narrator reports the pathetic condition of the women of Gudia village:

. . . yahan hareka mahilaale aaphnaa laagi eutaa khaasa gudiya banaauchhan. Tyo gudiya uniharule aaphno bihepachhi khasamako ghara jaandaa maaitiko jimma lagaaudai bhanchhan, "yasamaa mero aatmaa baseko chha...yo gudiyaalaai maayaa garera raakhnu hai" (Here, every female makes a doll for herself. At the time of leaving their natal home and heading towards their husband's house, they hand over the doll to their parents and say 'my soul resides inside this doll...keep this doll pouring love'; Pandey 217, my trans.)

In this village, no matter how fatal as well as frightening marriage is for a girl, the girl cannot escape from marriage. Therefore, since the girls are already sure about their death, they make dolls that resemble them and put life on those dolls. When, the daughters are murdered after marriage, the parents arrange the marriage of the doll.

Pandey reveals that marriage is a major cause of the females' exploitation and abuse. As Simon de Beauvoir also regards marriage as a main oppressive force of the society; by using this social institution, men rule over the women forever. Condemning this institution, Beauvoir views: "Marriage is an oppressive and exploitative economic arrangement, which reinforces sexual inequality" (321). In "Jiyara", Pandey unfolds the deeply rooted belief in marriage system of the residents of Gudia village. They consider marriage as a reliable means of constraining male and female to the socially prescribed roles. Moreover, the villagers regard woman an inferior being who is always in a need of male's protection. Reshma's father also is guided by the patriarchal mind set; therefore, he rebukes Reshma when she discloses that she is in love with a poor man who even does not have citizenship. Since Reshma's lover does not have chance to get the citizenship, her father makes her break the relation with him. This is because he knows that the man who is unable to get even a citizenship can never take Reshma's responsibility, which is an essential quality to own a wife in the Madhesi community.

The males of the Gudia village treat the females as their property. Moreover, they keep hold of complete authority over the female family members. As Millet rightly points out the patriarchal thought of the males: "the image of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs" (65). Therefore, Reshma's father arranges her marriage forcefully to a man who had Nepali citizenship. Reshma's

father wants to secure his daughter's future by marrying her to a man who owns citizenship because he is guided by the belief that she is a weak person who always needs security and support from the males. He believes that women are objects which should be handled with special care. So, a father takes the responsibility of his daughter/s till her marriage. Then the responsibility is handed over to the husband. In Millet's perception, "the male has already set himself as the human norm, the subject and referent to which the female is "other" or alien... male's sexual antipathy is to provide a means of control over a subordinate group and a rationale which justifies the inferior station of those in a lower order, "explaining" the oppression of their lives (65). Therefore, though Reshma is reluctant to marry a man chosen by her father, her father appears indifferent towards her wish. Rather, claiming his authority over her, he firmly sticks in his decision. Through Reshma, Pandey portrays the practice of female's suppression in the Gudia village.

The story "Jiyara" portrays the anguish, distresses and frustrations of women when their aspirations, wishes, and happiness are suppressed by the male family members. Pandey depicts the life of the female members of the Gudia village, whose status is that of a mere puppet in the hand of their husband. In the story Reshma cannot spend a happy and peaceful moments in her husband's house. Reshma discloses that she has been brutally beaten by her husband. Besides, her in-laws even threaten her that they would burn her alive if her parents fail to give them motorbike in the dowry (221). She has to tolerate this because "half of the populace which is female is controlled by that half which is male, the principles of patriarchy appear to be twofold: male shall dominate female" (Millet 34). The patriarchal society of the Gudia village allows a husband to take ownership of his wife.

Since patriarchal system is prevalent in the Gudia village, husband is free to exercise his power over his wife. The male's oppression to the female counterparts confirm that that patriarchy is the main source of female oppression. Condemning patriarchy, Millet claims that through patriarchal system, "a most ingenious form of "interior colonization" has been achieved. It is one which tends moreover to be sturdier than any form of segregation, and more rigorous than class stratification, more uniform, certainly more enduring" (33). In that social milieu, females are segregated as second-class citizen. In that village while controlling over his wife, the male is free to abuse,

torture, and assault her. In fact, to face their husband's cruelty has become a ritual to the female of that village. Pandey reports their grieved condition: "*Yahaankaa gudiyaaharu aaphno virahavyathaa pokhchhan ra runchhan. Haanso ta gudiyaaharuko niyatibaata pani gaayaba chha*" ("the dolls of this place express their pains and sufferings and weep. Smile is absent from their fate"; 217, my trans.). Therefore, when Reshma cannot fulfil her husband's demand of dowry, he burns her to death. The deeds of Reshma's husband confirm that "every avenue of power within the society is entirely in male's hands" (Millet 34). Therefore, Reshma's husband acts as a master/God of his wife who can easily decide the life and death of hers. So, when Reshma fails to fulfil her husband's demand, he gives her death penalty.

"Jiyara" exposes that social structure prevalent among women in economic, cultural, ideological, knowledge, ideas, and other fields are in an unequal position with men. The women of the Gudia village are in a position of inequality with men, both in a private sphere of family and in the public place. Moreover, they often become a victim of physical violence. As Reshma reports the abusive condition of the married daughters of Gudia Gaun:

Baatomaa usale kuwaamaa paani lina gairahekaa Reshmakai umerakaa gaaunle didiharu dekhi. Ti sabai maaiti aaekaa thie. Kasaiko anuhaara pani ujyaalo thiena...sabaiko anuhaara ra sariramaa chotkaa daagaharu thie. (On the way she saw the village girls who were going towards the well to fill water in their pitchers, they were the contemporary of Reshma. None of their face was bright...the girls' body and face were covered with wounds. (Pandey 227, my trans.)

When Parvati asks them about their wound, they lie to her that they get wounded because they slipped while walking in the slippery roads of their husbands' village. Engulf under the patriarchal belief that it is a wife's duty to save her husband's reputation, they tolerate every kind of injustice mutely confirming that "Negative expectation based upon gender" affects people on an individual level: where people expect little for themselves and "live up to that expectation" (Martin 28). Since in patriarchal society, women are expected in the role of a mute tolerant, these women hide their husband's brutality. They conceal that they get wounded by their husband's beating. Ultimately, they get murdered by their husband. As the narrator discloses that

only this year, eight daughters of this village were burnt to death by their husband (221). Depicting the dreadful condition of women of Gudia village, Pandey exposes as well as condemns the darkest side of patriarchal mindset of the people that promote as well as endorse violence against women.

In “Jiyara”, Pandey not only divulges the consequences caused by patriarchy to the females of Gudipur, he also raised dissenting voice against patriarchal thought of people through the sub-plot. While presenting the story of the Gudia village to the critic, the author parallelly tells the tale about the critic, who is completely engulfed by the patriarchal thought. In the story, the critic’s wife dares to speak in a world that still undervalues the voice of women as she expresses the protest against her husband’s oppression:

Samaalochaka jiu, aba ma tapaaailaai patiparmeswara maanera tapaaiko paaumaa pasaarina tyo gharama pharkera aaudina. Tyo ghara meraa laagi ghara hoina, mero rahara, sapanaa ra aashaaharuko chihaana ho. Malaai chihaanamaa basnu chhaina. Sahanu chhaina atyaachaara ra balaatkaara. Malaai baachnu chha. Malaai swatantra hunu chha. Malaai gudiyaa banera jalnu chhaina. (Mr. critic, from today, I will not return to your house to bow down on to your feet, regarding you as God. That house is not a home for me, but it is a tomb of my desire, dream, and hope. I do not want to stay in a grave. I want to live. I want to become free. I do not want to be burnt as a doll; Pandey 230, my trans.)

The critic’s wife is fully aware of the wrongs inflicted on women by the man who turns the life of his female counter parts hellish. Therefore, by breaking the relationship with such a toxic man, she strongly protests against those who try to exploit and victimize women variously such as with rape, beating, humiliating, suppressing, and depriving them of even the basic human rights.

The primary goal of radical feminists is to free women from the imposition of so-called male values, and to create an alternative culture based on female values. Ellen Willis observes that radical feminists strive to “end male supremacy in all areas of social and economic life” (91). Moreover, they reject the whole idea of opposing male and female natures and values as a sexist idea, a basic part of what they are fighting for.

Following the same line of arguments, in the story “Laila O Laila”, Pandey’s female characters fight for their freedom and equality. Either it is Siri or Sakuntala they are efficient in making the dolls. Their skill leads them to independence as they can earn their livelihood and they do not need to depend on their husband.

In the story “Laila O Laila”, Pandey depicts the condition of Madhesi women of patriarchally guided village named Bakawali. The women of this village suffer due to the patriarchal mindset of the inhabitants, mainly males. In this village, females are not born. They are constructed as doll and are converted to a female as per the necessity. The same females become someone else’s daughter, wife and do all the activities following the instructions of males. Their work, duty, and fate are pre-decided. Even their laughter, their tears, their sighs are pre-determined because they are just a puppet. Therefore, the females of Bakawali village are chained in the centuries old, man-made rules (252). Such depiction of Bakawali village confirms that “[s]exual segregation is so prevalent in patriarchy that one encounters evidence of it everywhere” (Millet 67). The scenario of Bakawali village highlights the frightful condition of women caused by patriarchy.

While highlighting the condition of women, in the story, Pandey presents several plots that unfolds the saga of numerous women who are assassinated by their husbands and fathers for following their free will. “Laila O Laila” exposes that in patriarchal society, male controls the life of women completely. As Henry Maine points out that in the patriarchal family "the group consists of animate and inanimate property, of wife, children, slaves, land and goods, all held together by subjection to the despotic authority of the male” (310-11). As the narrator reveals that from the history to the present females have been exploited, oppressed, and even killed by males. Either it is Anarkali, a historical character, or Siri of Bakawali village, women get victimized.

In the story, Pandey exposes that the major problems of females are caused due to the patriarchal oppression. In Bakawali village, where father kills his daughter unhesitatingly, if she denies to stay within the confinement set by her father or husband. Siri’s father imprisons her inside the four walls and murders her when she involves in socially restricted activities by choosing a female as her life partner. Likewise, the king kills his wife Siri when he cannot satisfy his carnal desire from her. De Beauvoir highlights the practices of patriarchal society that regards woman as an erotic object. In

her view, patriarchy always focuses on enslaving the women because the purpose of the patriarchal mind-set is: “Not to reveal her as an independent individual, but rather to offer her as prey to male desires” (Beauvoir 506). Through the story, Pandey unmasks the dreadful practices of patriarchal society that provides females’ ownership to the males. Moreover, the males crush that object/female if she fails to meet his expectation or fulfil his demand.

The story reveals that patriarchal system exists not only in villages but also in the cities. Therefore, the exploitation, violence and abuse against women prevail everywhere. As Millet claims: “patriarchy granted the husband nearly total ownership over wife or wives and children, including the powers of physical abuse and often even those of murder and sale (48). So, in “Laila O Laila”, when Jagdish cannot get success in his craft work of making dolls, in which work Sakuntala proves to be a par-excellent creator, his male’s ego gets hurt. Consequently, he rapes her. The narrator reports his brutality: “*ma purusha hun. Aaija masita sambhoga gar...Sakuntalaale aaphulaai samhaalnuaghi nai Jagdishle Sakuntalakaalugaa chyaatidiera baagha jhai jhamtiera unako sarira gijolna thaale*” (“I am a male. Come here, I fuck you . . . Jagdish tore her dress before Sakuntala became aware of his deeds and he started to molest her”; Pandey 268, my trans.). Being a member of a patriarchal society, Jagdish is guided by the belief that male is and should be superior to women. So, when Sakuntala’s excellence and work efficiency gets proved in the market, he takes it as his insult; particularly, when his dolls get rejected in the market. Apart from that, Sakuntala has not accepted his marriage proposal yet. Therefore, he decides to acclaim his male supremacy by conquering her body. Jagdish’s deeds confirm that “domestic violence against women is worse and most common in most developing countries where primordial culture of patriarchal ideology holds sway” (Baghbidi 87). Through Sakuntala, Pandey exposes that in the patriarchal society, women are not safe even inside their home as they get victimized of marital rape.

The story discloses that though due to patriarchal system, the women of both cities and villages get raped, beaten, and tortured by their male family members, they strongly oppose the restrictions set for them by patriarchy. Laila does not allow her husband Jaggu to touch her body as she cannot accept him as her husband. Not only that, she brings her beloved/girlfriend Siri to her husband’s house and spends loving

moments with her. Later, she leaves his home forever and brings an end to her marriage. Likewise, Sakuntala rejects Jagdish's marriage proposal. She denies to keep sexual relation with him. Moreover, when he rapes her, she still denies to be possessed by him declaring that; "*Sambhoga ta timile maatra garyau ma yasamaa saamela thiina...ma purusha bhitra luki basne kunai baadshaahako adhinamaa chhaina. Aaphno dehako prayogamaa ma swatantra chhu*" ("Only you involved in fucking because I was not taking part in it . . . I am not under restriction of any emperor that hides within a male in a form of an ego. I am free to use my body in whatever way I like"; Pandey 270, my trans.). Sakuntala denies to be won by Jagdish. In fact, she wants to make radical changes in society by eliminating all forms of male supremacy in a social context. Her denial is a straight protest of patriarchy that positions the male at the supreme position of social and familial hierarchy.

Most of the female characters in "Laila O Laila" put their effort to abolish patriarchy by opposing norms and prevailing social institutions. Therefore, they do not accept the nuptial tie imposed on them by the society. Pandey exhibits the changed status and attitudes of modern women in a symbolic manner. Though in Bakawali village, women are treated as doll, Jaggu admits that "*Pahila kathaputali boldainathe, haami bolthyau. Haamro isaaraamaa naachthe gudiyaaharu. Tara aajakaala jamaanaa kharaaba bhaisakyo. Aba tiniharu mero aulaako esaaraa maandainan*" ("Previously, the puppets did not talk. The dolls used to dance following our instructions. But these days they do not obey my order" Pandey 254; my trans.). The women of Bakawali village do stark protest against ages old practices that make them dance following the direction of their male counterpart. They deny the role of a puppet. Through their actions, these women confirm that like radical feminists, they "are against traditional gender roles, against women's sexual objectification" (Willis 117). In fact, appearing as rebellion, these women save public awareness on issues such as rape and violence against women.

The selected stories exhibit that patriarchy promotes sexual domination. Consequently, sexual dominion appears as the most pervasive ideology of Madhesi culture, as Madhesi community is guided by patriarchal ideology, that makes women's life infernal. "Jiyara" exposes the negative influence on Madhesi males that instigates them to suppress the free will of their daughters. Therefore, Reshma is not allowed to

marry to her beloved. Moreover, she has to tolerate assault done to her by her husband. In the same way, in “Laila O Laila”, the male members regard the females as their puppet and they try to regulate their life as well as activities. Sakuntala reads in a history book that mentions the cruelty of the king Akbar towards Anarkali, a dancer of the palace. The king considers her as his property. So, when Anarkali disobeys the king’s order, he seals Anarkali into the four walls and leaves her there to die. Equally, Siri’s father murders her in the same manner for failing to prove an obedient daughter. The stories convey the idea that patriarchy associates the fundamental concept of power to the male domination to female. Therefore, women need to fight hard to free themselves from the grip of their male oppressor.

Conclusion

The stories “Jiyara” and “Laila O Laila” portray the sufferings of women caused by patriarchal mind set of Madhesi males of the villages Gudia Gaun and Bakawali. In these villages, women are oppressed by the male family members. In these villages to follow their free will is prohibited for the female. In this patriarchal society, since males are privileged to rule over the female family members, they take decision of their wife’s/daughter’s/sister’s life. Thus, the girls are not allowed even to choose their life partner as their father/brother impose the nuptial tie to them with an undesired person. In “Jiyara”, though Reshma is in love with Jagatlal, her father arranges her marriage to another man. Also, in “Laila O Laila” the body of Sakuntala, Laila, Anarkali are tried to be possessed by the males. While trying to own their body, their husbands abuse, torture, and assault them. Furthermore, in this society the males transcend every limitation of cruelty while curbing the desire and activities of the female. Injected by the belief of male’s supremacy over female, Sakuntala’s husband rapes her. Similarly, Akbar seals Anarkali into the four walls and leave her there to die. Likewise, Siri’s father murders her in the same manner. Pandey exposes that since patriarchy has fogged the mind of the males of all regions as well as every generation, not only the women of Madhes but the women of the capital city Kathmandu are also influenced by the tradition of male’s domination. However, the fire of revolution has already started to ignite. So, the female characters strongly protest against the oppression and boldly take stand for their rights and freedom.

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