

Prithvi Academic Journal

(A Peer-Reviewed, Open Access International Journal)

ISSN 2631-200X (Print); ISSN 2631-2352 (Online)

Volume 2; May 2019

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/paj.v2i0.31511>

Ethnic Harmony in BP Koirala's *Sumnima*

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ABSTRACT

Sumnima, a novel written by Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala (BP Koirala in short), has raised voice for social integration through harmonious relationship among the ethnic groups. But it is read as the presentation of binary between Aryan and Kirat cultures, highlighting differences in belief systems, rites, rituals, and day to day lifestyle that create misunderstanding, conflict, and problems among the people of different cultural groups. The main objective of studying the novel, in this article, is to find how the novelist offers an opportunity to the readers to realize the ideas and benefits of harmony among the divergent ethnic communities living in Nepal or elsewhere through understanding differences and celebrating the diversity. Theoretical insights of ethnicity have been used to analyze the primary text. The article argues, taking the reference of the novel, that ethnic misunderstandings and conflicts can be solved by understanding cultural norms and values of others. The article also examines and analyzes how the relations without understanding cannot prosper even within the same ethnic group but love and understanding makes the life beautiful no matter which tribe or ethnicity the people belong to. The implicit intention of the novelist in the novel is that in a culturally diverse society, mutual understanding, compromise, and respect of difference make the society a 'salad bowl' that works better than trying to make it a 'melting pot'.

KEYWORDS: Cultural diversity, ethnic harmony, ethnic identity, ethnicity

INTRODUCTION

Culture is the whole way of life or the way of life as a whole. It is behavior peculiar to human kinds, together with material objects used as an integral part of this behavior. Thus, culture includes language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, and ceremonies (Watson, 2002, p. 1) among other elements. The existence and use of culture depends upon an ability possessed by humans alone. People think and behave differently not because anything else but because of the ways they are brought up. Culture, as Avruch (1996) has defined, is the total life way of a group of people and an individual learns from his group (p. 264). People brought up in different ethnic communities have different ways of living with different rites and rituals with differences in practice. All the human beings are alike very much in the biological terms but even "a biological process", as Kluckhohn (1997) states, "is caught in a cultural web" (p. 266) as sexual taboos are different according to the culture of the group of people. Cultural difference creates ethnies, ethnic differences, and ethnic misunderstanding sometimes leading to a conflict.

BP Koirala has minutely discussed socio-cultural diversity and tension created by ethnic differences in Nepali society and suggested the people how they can change it into a harmonious relationship in the novel *Sumnima*, which has been criticized from various perspectives since its publication. Chalise (2069 BS) asserts that Koirala's novel is a vivid picture of eastern philosophy. He claims humanism as a prominent part of eastern philosophy. Analyzing the characters, Chalise claims that *Sumnima* is a mouthpiece of Koirala to speak his concept of humanism. He categorizes *Sumnima* and *Bijuwa* in the pole of humanism and *Somdatta* and *Puloma* in the opposite pole of religious rigidity (p. 65). In the novel the first pole triumphs over the second one. Chalise further opines that *Somdatta* has failed due to crude spiritualism and *Sumnima* is not completely happy by following crude materialism, either (p. 66).

In the novel, Koirala has created binary oppositions between Aryan and Kirati culture. *Somdatta* represents Aryan culture whereas *Sumnima* represents Kirati. The novelist has presented the Aryan ways of life in a complicated, artificial and formal way. To give lively presentation of the life of Aryans, he has depicted characters like *Somdatta*, his father *Suryadatta*, his mother, his wife *Puloma*, his son, and *Puloma*'s parents. Among them *Somdatta* is the representative character of Aryan society. Dhakal (2056 BS) comments,

In this novel the novelist has shown Kirati community as liberal, purified, natural and follower of the humanitarian concept. *Sumnima*, her father, mother, the *Bhilla* boy in memory and *Sumnima*'s daughter are the Kirati characters. They approve the bodily aspect of life and their feelings are concerned with human pains and sufferings. They find truth in physicality, objective reality, bodily existence and the world of perception. (p. 33)

The continuous conflict between these two contradictory ideals of two different cultures brings the theme of the novel. The writer presents his mediatory view that religious orthodoxy fragments people and obstructs to reach the state of humanism. Humanism and humanitarian society is only possible in cultural reconciliation. Dhakal (2056 BS) concludes by making the characters like *Somdatta* and *Sumnima* belonging to Aryan and Kiranti culture stand for the spiritualism and materialism respectively reconcile. Reconciliation between them shows his view of humanism.

Acharya (2053 BS) states that *Sumnima* is a presentation of the conflict between spiritual and material philosophies and the writer prefers material philosophy over the spiritual one in order to make life satisfactory (as cited in Chalise, p. 113). Similarly Prashrit (2053 BS) comments that the discussion in *Sumnima* has been divided between two philosophies in which the writer has presented that the one who follows spirituality is a creature of air and the one who follows material world is a creature that belongs to the earth (as cited in Chalise, p. 132).

Kandel (2014) regards *Sumnima* as the representation of ethnic consciousness. He has discussed the novel as a representation of two diverse ethnic groups through the characters of *Sumnima* and *Somdatta*. He asserts:

Sumnima is one of the best reservoirs of ethnic consciousness with tolerance among the people living in the same geographical territory. Bishweswar Prasad Koirala has implicitly and explicitly discussed the ethnic consciousness of the people through different characters in different circumstances. On the surface, the novel reads like a document that has meant to create ethnic conflict, domination and disharmony among the ethnic nationalities living at *Varahakshetra* but the main motif of the novel is that 'divided we stand'. (p. 30)

Thus, the novel can be taken an example of ethnic conflict and domination but it is more about the ethnic consciousness that has made Sumnima claim the beauty of living a spiritual life being close to earth, water and nature around us rather than only talking about great philosophies. The writer through this novel has advocated that differences are inevitable in a human society but people should try to create social harmony by loving others and showing respect to others' ways of life. Therefore, the novel is the writer's voice for social integration through ethnic harmony.

ETHNICITY AND DIVERSITY REPRESENTED IN LITERATURE

An ethnic group is the major social group with a common identity based on history, culture, language and sometimes religion. Not equivalent to a race, ethnic groups, for Brubaker (2004), are internally fairly homogenous and distinguished from other groups of the same kind- are not real (7). He furthers states that what is real is a shared sense of 'groupness', of group membership. Ethnicity is cognitive, a point of view of individuals, a way of seeing the world (p. 64). It is only the sense of 'groupness' that is real- "real, but illusory" (Jenkins, 2008. p. 11). They are real because they are observable, very real- even if modest groups whether they are families, peer groups or friendship circles.

Ethnicity has partly replaced the idea of 'race'. 'Ethnic groups' or 'ethnie' are defined now in the exchange of what once was called 'tribes'. There are different bases on which ethnicity is defined. Common descent that is ancestry or kinship is the core idea of ethnicity but the group sentiment is based on things that are different from the tale of blood, alone but it is based on occupations, social institutions and affiliation to them. As Morris (1968) defines:

An ethnic group is a distinct category of the population in the larger society whose culture is usually different from its own. The members of such group are, or feel themselves, or are thought to be, bound together by common ties of race or nationality or culture. . . . Members usually identify themselves with the group and give it a name. (p.168)

Ethnicity, therefore, is the constitution of cultural practices that are different from any other cultural groups, have a name to differ from others and feel a common bond.

The common descent, belief in common origin is, for Weber, a key element of ethnic identity; the second is the differences both cultural and physical, visible differences like dress, language and other differences of everyday behavior, even feeding habits (as cited in Elliot, 2007, p. 61). They are socially constructed and a product of circumstances. Ethnic attachments and identities are seen as 'belonging' to the realm of sentiment and 'belonging as a psychosocial realm'. Most of the times it happens that despite the gains to be made by acting in a non-ethnic way, people choose to act ethnically. As Shils (1957) observes, "It is held together by an infinity of personal attachments, moral obligations in concrete contexts, professional and creative pride, individual ambition, primordial affinities and a civil sense which is low in many, high in some and moderate in most persons" (p. 131), which means that people have different level of sense of personal dignity according to their position in the group.

In fact, in the context of small groups, quite intense feelings of loyalty and obligation are generated and executed. According to Geertz (1973) people's primary attachment is to others who are seen to belong to the same 'race', who are kinsmen and women, who speak the same language, or whose sense of collective past and future is based on shared experiences of people of a region, of the same religion or caste, or on a community of culture and customs (p. 97). These communities of kinship ties, customs, religion and region are the basis of people's sense of self. Therefore, according to Fenton

(2010) the strongest belongingness between/ among the people develops on the basis of family, custom, place of origin, religion and language (p. 79). Moreover, the ethnic identity or the sense of inclusion and exclusion has been one of the handiest tools for dominating the others.

Ethnicity is the identification of a group of people based on a perceived cultural distinctiveness. Fishman (1980) says that ethnicity is experienced as being 'bone of their bones, flesh of their flesh, and blood of their blood' that is ethnicity is felt to be in the blood, bones and flesh (p. 63). However, Barth (1994) argues that ethnicity represents the social organization of cultural difference, that ethnic groups are not groups formed on the basis of shared culture, but rather the formation of groups on the basis of differences of culture (p. 1). In other words, the cultural differences from other groups make an ethnic group and the contrast between "us" and "others" is what is embedded in the organization of ethnicity.

Society is a dynamic unit and there are so many people living in it who have different interests and they have, as Johnson (2004) states, "struggles for cultural power and shifts in belief systems, between dominant and subordinate social groups or forces" (p. 191). The struggle between or among the cultural groups of people needs to be articulated and as Greenblatt (1997) asserts, "Literature is an articulation of both the dominant beliefs of the age and the subversion of those beliefs in a complex play of meaning . . . subversiveness is the very product of that power and its further ends" (as cited in Hall, p. 197). Literary text is, in many instances, representation of dominant ideology, dominant beliefs and cultural beliefs and products are the ones that can circulate among the people easily. However, as Berube (2004) opines, "The scholars of cultural studies not only criticize the ideology of the dominant, but also endorse explicate works that themselves challenge that ideology" (p.19). Among other genres of literature fiction is closer to the reality of life because it narrates the activities that occur in one's life because as James Baldwin adduces that one writes from one's own experience (Scholes et. al. , 1991, p. 101). As Johnson (2004) affirms, ". . . fiction is used as a way into cultural formations of a particular time and place" (p. 187). Thus, for him, "Reading fiction is not only a route to the past but also a means of reflection on the present and future" (p. 187) because the present is the product of the past and it leads us to our future.

A very good deal of human behaviour can be predicted if we know the people's way of living. It is possible to acquire a good amount of knowledge through the study of literary products of a certain group because literature is the true mirror of a society as someone's individual behaviour is the mirror of one's bringing up. Literature represents the real life of the people of the time. Johnson (2004) states, "Literature creates dialogue, between the (apparently) intrinsic elements- its formal structure, characters, themes- and the (seemingly) extrinsic aspects of context, especially those concerning the social moment of production and the articulation of power relations" (p. 187) because there is power that plays important role in the society and cultural formation. There are so many changes introduced in a certain society, of the way of all human beings with time or due to certain special event. Since literature is a product of the experiences of the people living in the same society, as Williams (1977) observes, it "is a changing social practice, one that represented the shifting social and cultural values of a specific, often highly privileged, group of people (p. 114). It is easier to know the cultural formation of a certain society through the study of literature because the literary "texts effectively participate in the production of belief and ideas and also will bear traces of their historical moment of production" (Johnson, 2004, p. 187) and represent the society and social functions. In the same way, as Tyson (2008) observes, "Literary works often

reflect the ideological conflicts of their culture, whether or not it is their intention to do so, because, like the rest of us, authors are influenced by the ideological tenor of the times” (pp. 122) and the ideological conflict of Nepali society has been well documented by BP Koirala in his popular novel *Sumnima*.

ETHNIC DIFFERENCE

Sumnima and Somdatta, still quite young, are well informed about their ethnic belonging and their difference between each other even before they are introduced well to each other. The most interesting thing is that they have knowledge about the difference in fundamental philosophy of life between the Aryans and Kirats, as Koirala (2005) writes:

After a moment Somdatta asked, “Hey gold-bodied girl, who are you?”

The damsel innocently replied, “I am Sumnima, a Kirat daughter. By the way who are you yourself hey weak bodied boy?”

Somdatta said, “I am Somdatta, son of Suryadatta, a Brahmin belonging to Aryan stock.”

. . . but Somdatta! But why did you mention the name of your father while giving me your name?”

Somdatta replied, ‘A son receives his life as a gift from his father . . . we never commit a sin of neglecting this liberal relation of the gift of life. This is the way we express our gratitude.’

‘But even by your own words you are given birth by your mother and, therefore, you had to respect her, isn’t that so? It is for that reason we Kirats first get to know our mother and the man she shows becomes our father.’ (p. 7)

The Aryans believe that father is the source of one’s life because he is the one who sows the seed of life; the mother is only the field to receive the seed. So it is the father who gives us life but the Kirats believe that mother is the field and she makes the shoots come out from the land, the seed may be sown by anyone she knows, thus mother is the source of one’s life.

The Aryans think that the system of introducing oneself through mother is beastly. According to them, it should not be done due to the lack of virtue of chastity and fidelity in females. Only the ‘brutes’ introduce themselves through mothers, as Suryadatta says to his son Somdatta (Koirala, 2005, p. 8). When Somdatta calls the cow with the word *mata*, he thinks that he regards the cow as a mother and he boasts that they are the ones who speak divine language but Sumnima reacts, “Then, why don’t you speak in human language being a human yourself? . . . being human beings we should not follow god’s behavior (Koirala, 2005, p. 8).” She says that it is better to call mother a mother rather than *mata* because calling mother by *mata* distances one from her. BP Koirala wants human beings to be human beings; they should not try to be god-like creatures. He criticizes the way the Brahmins pretend to follow divine way of living.

There is a great difference in the way of thinking and understanding about the things between Sumnima and Somdatta. According to him Brahmins attain divinity through penance (Koirala, 2005, p. 8), but Sumnima feels that “it’s not good to try to become god being a human being. It’s not the duty of human being” (Koirala, 2005, p. 8). According to her when one starts speaking like a god, one does not remain a man and “your habits are corrupted” (Koirala, 2005, p. 8). Sumnima even does not like to cover one’s identity by putting “clothes on anything and cover their real identity . . . inside the coverings even your mother has the same things what all women have with them”

(Koirala, 2005, p. 9). She further adds, “No, I feel ashamed when I cover my body, it’s quite uncomfortable, yes really” (Koirala, 2005, p. 22) whereas Somdatta feels shy for anyone walking without putting clothes on. Somdatta wants to take flight to the sky like a bird in order to reach the heaven whereas Sumnima advocates that “Our relation, however, should be with the earth” (Koirala, 2005, p. 10). The Kirats slaughter cow in the service of their deity and eat beef whereas Brahmins worship gods with flowers and offering fire sacrifices and charity (Koirala, 2005, p. 18) and they worship the cow. Somdatta wants to make relation with spirit following the lifestyle prescribed by Vedas whereas Sumnima is for making love with earth by living it as the life is.

Sumnima and Somdatta have a great discussion and disagreement about what is violence and not. Somdatta believes and advocates that killing any life for any purpose is violence whereas Sumnima believes that there are so many lives that depend upon the other lives. When Somdatta saves a pigeon from the clutch of a hawk, he feels “emotionally overcharged and told Sumnima King Shivi’s story” but in Sumnima’s opinion “. . . the hawk needs food, if one snatches away its food it should be replaced” (Koirala, 2005, p. 20). She poses a question “Why do you want to destroy the arrangement of nature by bringing in incongruous arguments from religion uselessly” (Koirala, 2005, p. 20)? “A hawk doesn’t commit any violence, even the killing of cows by us is not violence” (Koirala, 2005, p. 21). Thus, there is fundamental difference between the Brahmins and Kirats in terms of the use of language, feeding habit, clothes, belief system, spirituality and the way of thinking.

SUMNIMA AND SOMDATTA: REPRESENTATIVES OF DIVERSE ETHNIES

Sumnima and Somdatta both grow up into young human beings with the passing of time. Sumnima grows sensuality with youthful glow in her body but Somdatta practices very hard discipline and control over his sensual organs especially related to sex. With the teaching of his father Suryadatta, he has learned that “. . . a great victory lay in being able to conquer our sexual urge” (Koirala, 2005, p. 23). He is taught to practice complete celibacy which makes him completely detached from the sexual urge, the sensual pleasure. For him the ultimate truth is “Spirit” (Koirala, 2005, p. 25). When Sumnima indirectly invites him to play for “load of pleasure” (Koirala, 2005, p. 27), Somdatta replies, “The objective of pleasure is a search beyond the physical body” (Koirala, 2005, p. 27). Sumnima asserts that body is primary but Somdatta says, “Your body is an obstacle to the development of my soul” (Koirala, 2005, p. 30). He thinks bodily pleasure is just “ephemeral” (Koirala, 2005, p. 30). When Sumnima tries to convince Somdatta that soul is eternal therefore it is not necessary to please it but as body is transitory, it should be taken more care and better pleased. They have a great disagreement between them in such matters as Koirala (2005) highlights:

‘The body is beautiful like a flower, which spreads sweet scent for a moment and drops down.’

‘The pleasure you get out of the body comes to an end. Therefore, the aim of life is the achievement of eternal pleasure.’

‘Therefore, the pleasure which soon comes to an end must be experienced when we have an opportunity.’

‘Only a stupid fellow runs after a momentary pleasure leaving aside the eternal pleasure.’ (p. 30)

Thus, the dialogue between Sumnima and Somdatta clarifies that there is a great difference between Kirat and Brahmin culture regarding one’s preference even in the case of pleasure. Finally Somdatta realizes that Sumnima can be a hindrance in his path of attaining eternal pleasure through soul, thinks that he has not been strong enough to

control his sensual feeling completely, he goes for further penance, visits several places exercising hardest possible forms of yoga and penance and returns back to the hermitage and declares, "Dad! I have come back by conquering the sense organs with penance. Yes, I have control over sensual pleasure now" (Koirala, 2005, p. 39). When he feels sure that he has brought his sensual organs under complete control, he becomes able to keep Sumnima out of his mind.

Suryadatta arranges his son's marriage with a well learned Brahmin girl who befits the level of Somdatta's knowledge, dedication and understanding of eternal pleasure and soul. In fact Somdatta agrees to get married only for a *dharma* (duty) that he has to perform by giving birth to a son to continue the lineage of his ancestry and make sure his ancestors' place in the heaven. Somdatta and Puloma, his wife, carry several types of fire sacrifices in order to please the God ignoring their body and its pleasure completely and expect to give birth to a 'son', the carrier of their lineage. He observes, ". . . our bodily union has presented itself 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" (Koirala, 2005, p. 44). Sex for them is just a religious duty performed in order to give birth to a son just like the fire sacrifice they perform every morning to please the God. Somdatta proudly declares, "The sexual union is just a religious ritual, a kind of sacrifice in the fire, the form of the Vedas are in the middle of the enflamed wood" (Koirala, 2005, p. 47). They have sex but only on certain prescribed day after the menstrual period (fourth day) of Puloma, under prescribed time and manner in prescribed posture devoid of any sense of feeling and sensuality as if it were fire sacrifice performed to please their Vedic gods. He even recites Vedic mantras before they involve in the ritual of sex. However, Puloma cannot conceive a baby despite several of their 'pious' attempts and sacrificial rituals. Somdatta loses interest in his learned wife and the same thing happens to Puloma. They begin to curse and blame each other for not being able to conceive a baby. They live separately, Puloma loses her interest in preparing herself for the morning rituals, nor do they carry out the fire sacrifices for the gods in the morning. They quit speaking to each other, "they were burnt in mental agony while their moral life continued" (Koirala, 2005, p. 51) and "All the fountains of her body were constricted due to hatred . . . intense desirelessness made her throw up and her body felt paralyzed" (Koirala, 2005, pp. 51-52). Somdatta feels complete failure in his duty to give birth to a son and Puloma begins to remember her girlhood days when a Bhilla boy used to come near her and wanted to make her a friend but Puloma was always made to keep distance from him.

ETHNIC HARMONY: MEETING OF DIVERSITY

Somdatta fails to give birth to a son for the pious job of continuing his ancestor's lineage through the ritualized sex with his wife Puloma , full of loaded with mantras and observances, "Only when he found 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 awakens in his mind ". . . he was reminded of Sumnima's father, who was a Bijuwa, a Kirat priest" (Koirala, 2005, p. 53). He goes up to the Kirat village where Sumnima and her family live, somehow he finds the Bijuwa's house, narrates his purpose of visiting him "Without children all the religious piety earned in this mortal world will be useless. That is what our religious scriptures prescribe" (Koirala, 2005, p. 55). When Somdatta narrates it all, they have an interesting dialogue:

'Didn't you even feel that while you were engaged in sexual union with a woman that your body was enjoying?'

'Not a bit.'

‘Then do you desire a son just for keeping the religious tradition?
And not for the pleasure of your body at all?’

Somdatta replied firmly, “No! Between pleasure and duty we have killed the desire for pleasure with penance. In our life our objective is only fulfilling the duty.’ (Koirala, 2005, p. 56)

Thus the Bijuwa understands that the Brahmin wants to have a baby boy only because he has to further perform the religious rites and rituals but the Bijuwa knows that giving birth to a baby due to the sense of obligation alone is not going to beget a baby.

What is necessary in a work is pleasure; a sexual union should give pleasure when it is done for begetting a baby. It should be like reading poetry that delights while the reader learns about life. Bijuwa explains Somdatta, “O Brahmin! The man in you is angry with you because you tried to kill it with penance. You must take a dip into the man’s pond” (Koirala, 2005, p. 56). Bijuwa further emphasizes:

‘Our body is not a machine, nor a medium, nor a means. It is itself a goal, an objective. You shouldn’t neglect and hate it. When the physical body of man is devoid of its juice, the desire of pleasure and feeling of enjoyment, it is like lifeless; and it cannot bear children. The body is not a lifeless emotionless tool only. A baby is the proof and result of copulation, do you understand, O Brahmin?’ (Koirala, 2005, p. 57)

Somdatta, the learned Brahmin needs to involve in the process of learning to love the body and learn the fact that if piety is the goal, body is its active means and it needs to be loved, cared and caressed. One should feel pleasure in sexual union in order to give birth to a baby and baby is the proof that your body has been pleased by the job you have done.

The Bijuwa then calls his daughter Sumnima and says, “The man within him has to be propitiated, there is no other way out” (Koirala, 2005, p. 58). He hands over certain materials to her, directs her to bring Somdatta to the lonely jungle in order to get him “bathed in the human pond and fully decorate you in front of the river goddess . . .” (Koirala, 2005, p. 60) and heal his ‘dried and emaciated body’ (p. 60), that means he should understand that body needs to be appeased for it to work properly. Accordingly, she brings him to the human pond as they call it “. . . at the centre of an open space within the bushes . . . surrounded by the grove” (Koirala, 2005, p. 60) that looks like “living cave of womb inside the body of a huge motherhood . . . the water of the pond here looks like the life fluid which nourishes a body inside the womb” (Koirala, 2005, p. 62). In it Koirala has created a scene that makes Somdatta ready for recreating his dried body and desire. Sumnima gives him good bath, gives massage by applying honey on his body thoroughly, offers him drink milk and honey and says, “By eating and making the body satisfied, and then the body will be pleased and gods will be pleased” (Koirala, 2005, p. 62), Sumnima’s Kirat philosophy of life. Sumnima acts there as she used to do in the Koshi River bank in her teenage in order to remind Somdatta of their youthful life full of sensual feelings while taking dip into the pond, naked. She arouses the inner man within Somdatta by her caress and food, and makes romance “. . . she tried to reach up to his neck, her body got stuck to Somdatta’s body” (Koirala, 2005, p. 66) while they take swim together in the human pond. “Somdatta felt a slight tremor within his heart . . . my body is feeling a pleasurable sensation” (Koirala, 2005, p. 67) that means his body has been pleased and sensuality aroused. Sumnima then paints him like a Bhilla with a string of cowries on his waist and says “. . . human spirit inside you feels happy if you take another form, you see! The spirit is like a child. It requires various kinds of praises. And when it’s pleased, it can please the spirit of another individual too” (Koirala, 2005, p. 67-8), that is one spirit needs to be pleased in order to please another spirit. Somdatta, who

used to give Sumnima a long philosophical speech about the divine spirit thinking that she was all ignorant of spiritual knowledge, has learned to please the inner human spirit from Suminma. He goes to the hermitage in the evening having his sprit pleased and sensuality aroused when he hears Suminma say, "Somdatta, I am waiting for you in the hermitage in order to be embraced by you as in a dream . . ." (Koirala, 2005, p. 71). Somdatta feels romantic for the first time in his life and imagines that he could embrace his beloved Sumnima within his arms in the hermitge.

Puloma, on the other hand, waits Somdatta till late afternoon for his return but in vain. As she dozes off, she happens to dream the Bhilla boy of her youth calling her from outside the window of her room, "The joy combined with idleness was giving her the test of hunger for luxury" (Koirala, 2005, p. 75) and thinks of Bhilla boy to come like "Indra, the husband of Sachi disguised as an ascetic who enjoyed sexual pleasure with Ahalya, whose husband was away from home" (Koirala, 2005, p. 77) that means body seeks for pleasure before one's spirit is appeased even if it is in imagination and a certain kind of disguise. When Puloma awaits Bhilla boy in her imagination, "The rays of the sun going to set shone the cowries and conch garlands in his waist and throat," when "Puloma shrieked once in a repulsive tone, "Bhilla young man!" Then the dark shadow covered the whole body of Puloma" (Koirala, 2005, p. 78) and Somdatta was calling with his heavy voice "Sumnima, Sumnima" (Koirala, 2005, p. 79). Somdatta feels pleasure when he imagines Sumnima in Puloma and Puloma gets her orgasm when she imagines a Bhilla boy in Somdatta. They understand that joy inside makes the world agile, both of them feel confused what is greater, senses or wisdom, body or mind as Puloma says that their relation was not of love but "Only of duty" (Koirala, 2005, p. 94) as a married woman due to which "The mutual moment of love they never found together. After every unsuccessful meeting they were further apart" (Koirala, 2005, p. 99). Copulation of this time succeeds finally, Puloma conceives and gives birth to a son about whom she observes "Bhilla is his mental father . . . A fatherless unfortunate boy!" (Koirala, 2005, p. 103) because she happens to conceive her baby only when she imagines the Bhilla boy in Somdatta.

Later Sumnima's daughter and Somdatta's son get in friendship in the same way Sumnima and Somdatta had been friends at the bank of Koshi River while he "sat down under the shadow of the *Shami* tree for some time to take rest. . ." (Koirala, 2005, p. 104). They call each other, "You are my yawa!" (Koirala, 2005, p. 104), a friend. Somdatta feels at the later part of his life that his life had been a "failure . . . he realized that all his life he ran after an illusion. All the counting of beads with sacred words, recitations, worships, penance and his efforts for the salvation went in vain." (Koirala, 2005, p. 107) because he understands that one needs to appease one's body in order to appease the spirit inside. Somdatta dies on Sumnima's lap whispering "Sumnima" for the last time. Somdatta's son wants to live with his 'yawa'. Sumnima brings Somdatta's son to her home when ". . . he went closer to Sumnima's daughter to cling to her" (Koirala, 2005, p. 109). The 'yawas' get very intimate friends. When Somdatta's son misses his parents and feels lonely, Sumnima's daughter consoles him saying, "Here everybody loves you. This house is yours. My mother is your mother too. Yes, it is true, I too am yours, you know" (Koirala, 2005, p. 111). This all is what brings harmony not only between two individuals but two different cultures as a whole. The 'yawas' grow young, Somdatta's son proposes "Yawa! I love you. . . . Their bodies had turned into one round ball due to love and their bodies were covered by the thick shadow of *Shami* tree" (Koirala, 2005, p. 113). Finally, they want to marry each other and "Sumnima came out from the room and placing her hands on both of their hands she said, "May you be happy"" (Koirala, 2005, p. 113) in marriage. Even though Sumnima knows that the blood

of Somdatta's son is different from that of her daughter's and she knows that Kirats are the children of soil and the Brahmins are the children of air, she advises the young couple "you must also try to compromise, being prepared to abandon some of your ways. . . . May your descendants be such to be able to find out the ways of compromise" (Koirala, 2005, p. 114). Thus, Sumnima's daughter and Somdatta's son become the pioneers of ethnic compromise, reconciliation and harmony. Thus as Barker (2000) has asserted, "It's both lived experience and a body of systematic ideas whose role is to organize and bind diverse social elements together" (p. 57) that the persons from two diverse ethnic stocks with completely different norms and values of life come together and live in harmony by understanding each other.

CONCLUSION

Koirala has made Sumnima's philosophy of life to be more valuable than that of Somdatta by establishing Sumnima's thought that body is as important as or even more important than mind for making a meaningful life. If mind is the objective or goal of living, body is its medium or tool and one cannot have one's mind act properly in the achievement of the salvation of soul without proper nourishment of body. One should love one's earth in order to belong to the land properly and remain happy. Thinking of air, sky, heaven alone makes one alienated from own self. The relation without understanding and love and marriage only for the purpose of performing certain prescribed duty or a ritual cannot make one happy. Even though physical pleasure is transitory and it might be inferior, one can never attain eternal pleasure until one makes one's body pleased at the moment. The most important point the writer has made in this novel by making Sumnima his spokesperson is that ethnic understanding and harmony is the best way of social integration and it is possible only when we understand others' way of life and respect the difference.

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