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Ambivalence in Female Characters in *Reply from Tibet* and *Letter from a Lhasa Merchant to His Wife*

Sujita Shrestha

Lecturer

Department of English, Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal
Email: sujita.shrestha633@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article analyses the themes of love, longing and fear of abandonment felt by the female characters Hisila in *Reply from Tibet* and unnamed wife of unnamed narrator in *Letter From A Lhasa Merchant to His Wife*. Torn between love and fear of abandonment/social ostracization or of non-fulfillment of love, both Hisila and the wife exhibit conflicting feelings of deep love alongside strong indifference or even scorn towards their lover Yami and husband respectively. This article studies these contrasting emotions under the critical framework of psychoanalytic concept of ambivalence which denotes prevalence of two polar emotions or attitudes towards a person, object or situation. The article concludes that Hisila's rejection of Yami's marriage proposal alongside urging him to become her brother, and the wife's converting into nun but saving her husband's letter until her death testifies the ambivalence in these characters.

Keywords: *ambivalence, Lhasa Newar merchants, psychoanalytic, abandonment*

Introduction

Important element among the life experiences of Lhasa merchants was suffering caused due to separation from their families. This suffering came in many forms, like the compulsion to live in Lhasa for long stretches of time separated from family and sudden deaths of family members while away. While in Tibet, many of these Lhasa Newars, who made arduous journey to Tibet with a dream to make fortunes, even married Tibetan women

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(Lewis, “Himalayan” 173) or entered in romantic relationships with them. Hence, their Tibetan families also suffered due to separation when the merchants returned to Nepal or travelled continuously for trade. Moreover, children born from the traders’ union with Tibetan women were discriminated against and deprived of share of their fathers’ property.

This backdrop of pains of longing, loss, alienation and fear of abandonment finds a compelling and realistic portrayal in *Reply from Tibet*, an epic poem by Dharma Ratna Yami and *Letter From A Lhasa Merchant to His Wife*, a novel by Chittadhar Hridaya. In particular, these literary works make notable depiction of the ambivalent feelings in female characters. Both Hisila and the wife of Newar merchant demonstrate feeling of love towards their lover and husband respectively in the beginning, but later this feeling of love transforms into that of intense indifference, or even scorn. Therefore, this article analyses the mixed or conflicting feelings of love and hatred expressed by the two female characters through psychoanalytic lens of ambivalence.

Robert JC Young, who borrows the concept of ambivalence in postcolonial studies, writes that ambivalence “is at first developed in psychoanalysis, which describes a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite (also ‘simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action’)” (qtd. in Yusroini 1). The psychological ambivalence is created due to fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite which eventually results in ambivalence.

Reply from Tibet, in a true sense, is a love story of a Lhasa Newar trader named Yami, who falls in love with a Tibetan girl Hisila. In fact, the epic itself is a reply from Hisila to Yami as she rejects his love proposal owing to fear of imminent social ostracization of their intercultural love relationship. Despite having feelings for Yami, Hisila turns down his love proposal, which is the projection of her ambivalent feelings towards him. Similarly, *Letter from a Lhasa Merchant to His Wife* is an epistolary novel about an unnamed Lhasa Newar merchant whose wife, also unnamed in the novel, becomes a nun. In this novel too, the wife displays ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, she keeps his letter written to her until her last breath, which shows her immense love towards him. On the other hand, she becomes a nun to protect herself from the pain of abandonment. Hence, their mixed feelings of love and (somewhat) hate or indifference make these female characters compelling cases to analyze through the psychoanalytic lens of ambivalence.

Where academic research is concerned, literary texts on Lhasa Newar merchants is largely an unexplored area and therefore offers fresh opportunity for researching various components of these texts. Meanwhile, non-literary books and journal articles based on the traders’ memoirs and letters to their families have recorded their as well as their families’ suffering. In addition, English translations of Newari folklores and hymns on Lhasa Newar merchants and their families also focus on the suffering of this community. More

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specifically, love, longing and loss among female family members of Lhasa traders is one of the important themes explored in these non-literary texts, and folklores and hymns. In this backdrop, investigating the theme of ambivalence in female characters in *Reply from Tibet* and *Letter From A Lhasa Merchant to His Wife* is a worthwhile research that delves into the nuances of the contradictory emotions of love and hate induced among wives and/or lovers of Lhasa merchants owing to years of separation.

After this introduction section, this paper presents plot summaries of the literary works. It then discusses the theoretical framework in which the literary works are analyzed. Following this, the article presents findings and critical response. Finally, the paper offers a conclusion and points questions for further possible academic research. The discussion and analysis of this paper significantly relies on findings from other academic works related to the research topic. This paper referred to available body of literature on the Lhasa Newar merchants and their families to collect various aspects of the lives of Lhasa merchants and their families in Kathmandu and Tibetan families in Lhasa as well as the history of their suffering. Books and scholarly articles with references to hymns and Newar folklores about Lhasa merchants as well as letters and diaries written by the merchants were referred to for this purpose. The historical background of the suffering of the Lhasa merchants and their families obtained from the secondary sources provided the backdrop to analyze the themes of the suffering of the wife and lover of Lhasa merchants presented in these literary works.

Plot Summaries

Reply from Tibet is translation of Yami's epic in Newari Sandeya Lisah first published in 1952. It was translated in Nepali by Durga Lal Shrestha in 2013 as Lhasa Bolchay, which was then translated into English by DB Gurung in 2017. *Letter From A Lhasa Merchant to His Wife* was first published in Newari as Mimanahpau in 1968. The English version was translated by Keshar Lall in 2002.

Reply from Tibet

Reply from Tibet, which is composed in four parts with thirty-two chapters, is about the speaker Yami's journey to Tibet where he meets Hisila and falls in love with her. But Hisila rejects his love request for she fears "the claustrophobic culture" (Yami 4; ch. 30. 23) of Newars and Tibetans that is discriminatory towards Tibetan women and their offspring born of union with Lhasa traders. She knows that the son born from such union would not only be rejected all his life as a Khachara— a derogatory name given to children born from union of Newar men and Tibetan women – but also be deprived of his father's property.

Hisila further laments that if they have a daughter, she would be a neglected subject of the Tibetan government. She knows that if she accepted Yami's love, she will be "given
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a status of an untouchable lower than that of a dog” (Yami 4; ch. 32.11). She depicts the suffering inflicted on Tibetan women in stronger terms when she alleges Newar traders of having “blood that lures Lhasa’s daughters into their love nets and abandoned them to suffer” (Yami 4; ch. 28.13). It is clear in the poem that Hisila too has feelings of love for Yami. However, she concludes that their union would suffer numerous sufferings and requests Yami to accept their relationship as brother and sister. So, although both have a deep, mutual longing of love, Hisila and Yami are compelled to stay apart.

Plot summary of *Letter from a Lhasa Merchant to His Wife*

Letter from a Lhasa Merchant to His Wife is about an unnamed narrator, a Lhasa trader who falls in love with Tibetan woman Yeshe Lhamo but is unable to forget his wife at home. As the title suggests, the novel is narrated in the form of a letter written by the narrator to his wife, expressing his love and fondly addressing her as his ‘Maim’. In the letter, he explains that although owing to unavoidable circumstances, he fell in love with a Tibetan woman, he is unable to forget her.

The narrator is twenty-five when he first leaves home to replace his father in Lhasa and stays there alone for ten years before returning home. He stays in home for two years, but again leaves for Lhasa reluctantly because of his wife’s indifference attitude towards him. In Lhasa, he lives alone for fifteen years. In the end, he loses everyone in his life including his wife who he remembers throughout his letter.

The letter is an evidence of the narrator’s suffering, depicted by his ultimate loneliness and alienation as his father dies from illness, mother from earthquake and Tibetan wife from fever. It is also evidence of the wife’s loneliness who turns towards spirituality and becomes a nun owing to her husband’s prolonged absence.

Theoretical Framework

Psychoanalytic theory as a means of literary theory or criticism develops from the theory of psychoanalysis propounded by Sigmund Freud and other later theorists. Psychoanalytical criticism thus studies “how the text is shaped by its representation of the psychological desires, needs, and conflicts of its characters” (Tyson 451). This study explores the psychological ambivalent experiences of the female characters of the two literary texts. Psychoanalytic theorization of ambivalence makes the theoretical framework of this study where ambivalence results from, in essence, the simultaneous existence of opposite feelings.

The term ambivalence was coined by Eugen Bleuler, a Swiss psychiatrist, in 1910, combining the Latin *ambi* (which means “two” or “both”) with the German term *valenz* denoting power or strength, and subsequently popularized by Freud (Miller 5). So,

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etymologically, ambivalent means to be pulled by two equally strong feelings. Ambivalence thus means to have mixed feelings of positive and negative towards the same person, object, or action, simultaneously drawing him or her in opposite directions. In other words, ambivalence means “to experience conflicting motivations simultaneously”, and its popularity meant that “literature began to reflect and even focus on characters’ inner turmoil from coexisting and conflicting motives” (Miller 5).

This paper examines psychological ambivalence in the female character Hisila in *Reply from Tibet* and the narrator’s wife in *Letter From A Lhasa Merchant to His Wife*. Despite having true feelings of love for Yami, Hisila rejects his love proposal fearing cultural and social ostracization. But even in rejection her feeling of love is explicitly evident as she urges him to remain in the relationship of brother and sister. Meanwhile, the narrator’s wife also possesses ambivalent feelings towards her husband. She truly loves him and misses being with him, but her longing becomes so prolonged and intense that she turns indifferent towards him. Her ambivalent emotions are evident in that she becomes a nun but still loves him to the extent that she preserves his letter until her death.

Ambivalence in *Reply from Tibet* and *Letter from a Lhasa Merchant to His Wife* Realism as a literary theory “is said to represent life as it really is” (Abrams 269).

Reply from Tibet and *Letter from a Lhasa Merchant to His Wife* make realistic portrayals of the ultimate suffering faced by the Lhasa Newar merchants and their families. Lhasa Newar merchants were compelled to leave their loved ones at home and adapt to new way of life in Lhasa in their prime youth. The consequences of extended separations were seen on the psyche of the merchants as well as their families in Kathmandu or the Tibetan women with whom they married and had children. This paper focuses on the psychological consequences of ambivalence on female characters Hisila and the narrator’s wife.

In *Reply from Tibet*, Yami, gradually develops feelings of love for Hisila after meeting her. He “enshrines Hisila in the temple of his heart” (Yami 3; ch. 17. 13) and worships her as if she were “a goddess and himself a priest” (Yami 3; ch. 17.15). His anxiety makes him “frail physically as well as mentally” (Yami 3; ch. 17. 29). Hisila also has feeling of love for Yami. Yami expresses mutual feelings of love in the following stanza:

In spite of that enormous yearning
And a desperate desire to call on her home, Fear became an intruding thing;
They frequently met – but both of them would go numb
To the bones, let alone breaking a conversation.... (Yami 3; ch. 18. 25)

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These aforementioned lines evidently suggest that both Yami and Hisila have developed feelings for each other. Despite having “enormous yearning” and “a desire to call on her home” Yami is stopped by piercing fear. Likewise, that they “frequently met” also suggests

their mutual attraction. And when they meet, like young, fresh lovers, both of them would go “numb/To the bones” to the extent that they cannot even “[break] a conversation”.

But right from the start, Yami anticipates that their love is set for doom. In the following stanza, he elucidates his fear of rejection:

Even having met together There’s scarce opportunity

To share the feelings in this claustrophobic culture, We are left here with nothing to experience but pains

Unrelenting- and to embrace futility. (Yami 4; ch. 30. 42)

In this stanza, Yami is clearer that their love will not materialize due to “claustrophobic culture” that prevents them from sharing feelings with each other. He, therefore, concludes that they have no option other than pain and hopelessness.

To some extent, Hisila is aware that Newar merchants come to Lhasa with the intention of making money and return home to Kathmandu leaving their Tibetan wives to suffer. It is because some of them are left with “some fortune” but some are “swindled” by their husbands. Knowing this, Hisila becomes contradictory about accepting Yami’s love despite having feeling for him. Therefore, she says:

Whoever you are, you come here to make fortunes, You will return home to Nepal eventually.

Even though some of you may settle down

..... And leave us to bleed in hell.

Some may care to leave some fortune behind,

While others swindle us instead – and abscond. (Yami 4; ch. 31. 45)

In the above stanza, Hisila tells that Yami has come to Tibet to “make fortune”, but will eventually leave her behind to “bleed in hell”. Here, “bleeding in hell” refers to the suffering Tibetan women undergo in Tibet after their Newar husbands leave them. She further explains that some Tibetan women may be left with fortune behind while others are swindled. Therefore, Hisila is captivated by anxiety that Yami would betray her as many Lhasa traders are known to “swindle [Tibetans] instead – and abscond”. This also reveals why she has conflicting feelings towards Yami.

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Ultimately, Hisila rejects Yami's love proposal. But she urges him to "convert those feelings" of love between them into brother-sister relationship. This reveals her conflicting emotions towards Yami. Such dilemma and divided feelings in Hisila is elucidated in the following stanza:

...It's not only that you love me,
I also share the very same sentiments. Our love is unassailable
But I beg you to convert those feelings Of love between you and me
Into a relationship of brother and sister only. (Yami 4; ch. 31. 44)

In these aforementioned lines, Hisila accepts that she also "share the very same sentiments" as Yami does but she suppresses her intense feeling of love because their "love is unassailable". She is indeed begging him to convert his love for her into that of brother and sister because she sees doing this as the last resort to salvage their relationship, albeit in any form. This strongly shows her ambivalent feelings towards Yami.

Hisila further explains her ambivalent feelings when she speaks about discriminations and unfavorable condition of Tibetan wives of Newar merchants and children born out of such union. She provides a glimpse of these discriminatory conditions in the following stanza:

... If he is a son, he tends to become a subject of Gorkha, No better than akhoma,
khoti,
Alas, if she turns out to be a daughter, She remains a subject of Tibet,
A destitute with nothing to claim of her own, Even if she is taken to Nepal, she will
earn A derogatory title 'Bhoteni',
Or a status of an untouchable lower than
That even of a dog. You see!... (Yami 4; ch. 32. 46)

In this stanza Hisila presents a real picture of the plight of Tibetan wives of Newar merchants and children born out of their union. She tells that son born out of such union would be "subject of Gorkha" with no property rights and, worse still, if a daughter is born, she will be a "subject of Tibet" and forced to live a life of deprivation like "a destitute" with nothing left in her entitlement. And if she comes to Nepal, she will be called 'Bhoteni' or will be categorized as "untouchable". So this stanza makes apparent that Hisila turns down Yami's love proposal because she has ambivalent feeling towards him. Everything would "end as a catastrophe in disaster" if she accepts his love.

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From the above discussion, it is apparent that Hisila has intense feelings for him, but is equally pulled by other strong feeling of hatred due to the plight of many Tibetan wives of Newar merchants and their children who are left behind with nothing. In other words, she experiences ambivalent feelings towards him. That she wants to retain their relationship as at least a brother and sister is a strong testimony to her ambivalent emotions towards Yami. It shows how she wants to continue relating with him even if she rejects his love proposal.

Hisila's feelings of ambivalence towards Yami are shared by the lead female character of *Letter From A Lhasa Merchant to His Wife*. After learning that the narrator is leaving for "Lhasa to replace [his] father, who had become quite old" (Hridaya 17), the narrator tells that his "heart broke to see the white socks stained with your [her] tears when I [he] put them on the next morning" (Hridaya 18). This reveals his wife's love and concerns towards him as he plans to leave for Lhasa. Similarly, the narrator further tells how his wife would become anxious when his letter is delayed and when she hears a crow, and she would "ferverently pray [ed]" for him and would make a prayer for him to "come to no harm and return soon" (Hridaya 29). Hearing a crow is considered as "a bearer of ill tidings" (Hridaya 136).

As the narration progresses, the narrator expresses his wife's indifferent attitude towards him. After his father's demise (Hridaya 59), he comes back to home, but is dejected by his wife's indifferent attitudes towards him. His heart is torn between his compulsion of going to Lhasa and his wish to stay back in Nepal and start a small business here so he can be with his wife. But he also adds that "there was [is] really nothing that could keep me [him] in Nepal" (Hridaya 69) which means that, as opposed to his expectation, his wife does not stop him from going to Lhasa. This shows how his wife, who had cried for him and prayed for him, now does not stop him from going to Lhasa.

His wife's indifference or rather, a loss of love towards him, becomes clearer in the following description:

... when I returned I found that your mind was elsewhere although you kept busy with household chores, looked after my needs and shared my bed. ... All you wanted to do then was to look after an old mother-in-law and spend the rest of your time in religious practices.... a husband's presence proved a great obstacle. (Hridaya 79- 80)

These lines depict that the narrator's wife has developed a feeling of detachment from her husband. This detachment is more evident in her engaging in religious practices and acting as if her "husband's presence proved a great obstacle" for her works.

Her indifference is in stark contrast towards expression of her love when she stopped him from going to Silu. In the lines below, the narrator describes his wish that his wife asks him to stay at home. But he realizes that his wife has stopped showing any kind of love towards him when he is physically present with her. This is why he confesses that he does not cry as he did for the very first time he left home. He says:

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If you had stopped me then, just as you had done when I wanted to go to Silu, most probably I would not have come to Lhasa again for it would not have hurt as much However, your lukewarm attitude and detachment prompted me to leave home. I did not shed tears along the way as I did the first time I left home.... I was not overwhelmed with emotion and recollection of home anymore. (Hridaya 80)

Furthermore, the wife's strongest expression of ambivalent attitude towards her husband is depicted through her decision "to become a nun" (Hridaya 85). Her decision also indicates the depth of pain of separation she feels. This decision does not mean that she does not love her husband; on the contrary, it is an expression of protecting herself from the pain of waiting for her husband.

Additionally, the narrator discloses how she feels embarrassed to see her friends accompanied by their husbands. She would rather accompany herself with widows or women whose husbands are also in Tibet. The narrator also infers that this might be the reason that she starts to be "devotional to the gods."

... whenever your companions met their husbands you felt a pinch in your heart. To avoid the embarrassment, you accompanied widows or other women whose husbands were also in Tibet...., you became obsessed in your devotions to the gods. (Hridaya 78-79)

These lines reveal the psychological state of the narrator's wife. Her decision of becoming devotional to the gods and the pain that is induced in her when she sees her friends with their husbands suggest that she is suppressing her love for her husband. As a way of soothing her own loss and longing, or protecting herself from the pain of separation, she finds company among the widows or other women whose husbands are in Tibet.

Perhaps, what most strongly shows the wife's feeling of love is that she has kept her husband's letter intact. The novel begins with the narration of an old woman's death and a letter found from her which "the fire had not touched" (Hridaya 11).

This fluctuation in feeling of wanting her husband and hating him by becoming nun shows contradictory feelings towards her husband. Despite becoming a nun, she keeps her husband's letter until her death which shows that she is pulled by two strong emotions – love and hate.

Therefore, the above discussion enables us to conclude that in both literary texts, the female characters have experienced conflicting feelings towards the male characters. Both characters possess deep feelings of ambivalence towards their lover and husband respectively. Despite strongly having feelings of love, Hisila chooses to turn down Yami's

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proposal, but then asks him to accept her as his sister. In the same way, the narrator's wife, who cries for her husband when he leaves for Lhasa in the beginning later becomes so indifferent towards him that she converts into a nun as a way of protecting herself from the pain of separation. But that she keeps her husband's letter until her death testifies to the battle of love and indifference towards her husband raging inside her heart.

Findings and Critical Response

In this section, I put into perspective the thematic analysis of *Reply from Tibet* and *Letter From A Lhasa Merchant to His Wife* into broader themes of literature on Lhasa merchant.

Amish Mulmi's *All Roads Lead North* presents some compelling cases of suffering of Lhasa merchants' wives. The book mentions about the documentary *Women, Wives and Daughters* that explains a case of a wife of a Lhasa merchant, who hides her husband's passport to prevent him from leaving for Lhasa. She recalls how the Lhasa merchants' wives had to sell their jewelry to educate their children when their husbands did not return. (227)

An article "Newar-Tibetan Trade and the Domestication of "Siṃhalasārthabāhu Avadāna"" reveals that many Newar merchants married Tibetan women in Lhasa to the sorrow of their wives in Kathmandu. For the wives, Newar merchants marrying in Tibet was the cause of real suffering, as it was "the source of suffering of heartache, jealousy, and competition" and put "affection and ultimately inheritance resources were at stake" (Lewis 155).

These themes of suffering are also subjects of many popular Newari songs. Scholar of Sanskrit and Newari language, Siegfried Lienhard in his book *Songs of Nepal: An Anthology of Newar Folksongs and Hymns* translates and summarizes the themes of these songs. Summary of one of these ballads is quoted below:

A man has withdrawn from secular life and proceeded to Tibet. Woefully disappointed, the young mistress he abandoned laments her fate and joyless youth. Her hopes are now all placed on the god Bhimasena, who finally hears her desperate prayers and one day sends the lover back to his mistress.... (Lienhard 51-52)

Likewise, summary of another similarly-themed ballad is quoted below:

A wife has been eagerly looking forward to the return of her husband who, a long time before, went to Tibet on business. One day she receives a message. This message, however, is not a sign of life from him, but the news of his death. (Lienhard 59)

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Finally, the summaries of the themes of the two ballads quoted above is similar to the summary of the theme of the ballad quoted below:

In spite of the entreaties of his wife, a young Nevar has left his home in order to find employment in Tibet. After some time his wife receives a message saying that he is dead and, out of love for her husband, commits sati....(Lienhard 84-86)

These three ballads significantly reveal important facets of suffering of Lhasa traders' wives at home. Firstly, their husbands leave them for Lhasa despite their strong wish and request against it. Secondly, they receive news of sudden deaths of their husbands – sometimes the news turns out to be false – which they believe and as a result, commit sati.

Meanwhile, Newar merchants' Tibetan wives and families also underwent suffering. In his article “Nepalese in Tibet: A Case Study of Nepalese Half-Breeds”, Mishra describes that Tibetan wives were left alone to suffer when their Newar husbands left for Kathmandu. Furthermore, female child born from the union of a Nepalese father and a Tibetan mother were considered Tibetan citizen while male offspring from such union were regarded as Nepalese subjects (2). *Khachara* were deprived of education, training and paternal property (6). Similarly, “childless Newar merchant in Tibet could not adopt his own *Khachara* son as *Khacharas* were debarred from entitlement of paternal property” (13).

Themes of Yami's and Hridaya's literary works show that these texts make realistic portrayal of real-life suffering of Lhasa traders' wives as well as Tibetan lovers or Tibetan wives. The narrator's wife in the novel and Hisila are representations of the experiences of love, longing and loss and fear of abandonment of merchants' wives and their Tibetan wives and lovers experienced for generations.

What these findings suggest is that these texts depict important elements of suffering faced by Lhasa traders' wives and their lovers or Tibetan wives. Specifically, these sufferings of wives and Tibetan lover or wives depicted in the texts is filled with ambivalence. In the novel, the wife clearly loves her husband. That she saved her husband's letter until her death testifies to her deep feelings. However, because she was continually torn between feelings of love and anxiety of never being with him, she ultimately decides to take a spiritual path by becoming a nun. Similarly, Hisila also has feelings for Yami. But she is also gripped by the fear of betrayal and of discrimination by his family and Tibetan society. Therefore, she suppresses her love and rejects Yami's proposal.

Conclusion

Every literary work in any form conveys meaning (s) and theme (s) for readers to interpret and these can be inferred by analyzing them through the lenses of various critical theories. *Reply from Tibet* and *Letter From A Lhasa Merchant to His Wife* offers important

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themes of the sufferings of Lhasa Newar merchants and their families, notably their wives and Tibetan wives and/or lovers.

Theory of psychoanalysis provides an appropriate lens to analyze the conflicting emotions of love, longing and loss expressed by the main female characters of these literary texts. The concept of ambivalence in psychoanalytic theory pertains to a continual fluctuation of conflicting emotions like love and hate.

While these texts do present common themes of suffering faced by Lhasa Newar merchants and their families, each provides notable voice to the females related to Lhasa Newar traders. *Reply from Tibet* conveys the suffering of Tibetan community by centering on or through the voice of Tibetan woman Hisila who, in spite of having feelings for Yami, has to turn down his love request. Meanwhile, *Letter from Lhasa Merchant to His Wife* presents suffering of Lhasa Newar community through the lens of a Lhasa trader. As Lhasa traders lived prolonged time separated from families in Nepal, this resulted in emotional conflicts in them and their family members as well as Tibetan wives or lovers and their children. Longing for love and fear of loss and abandonment ran deep in the community of Lhasa traders in Kathmandu as well as in Tibet. The analysis of the female characters Hisila and the narrator's wife in the two texts show that separation from their lover and husband respectively led them to develop strong feeling of indifference alongside the feeling of love. They are torn between love and hate. Their contradictory feelings are thus a realistic depiction of the psychological and emotional turmoil faced by families of Lhasa merchants and show the depth of strong emotions felt by them.

The discussions on the themes and findings of this paper suggest that literary texts *Reply from Tibet* and *Letter from a Lhasa Merchant to His Wife* focus on the suffering of the community of Lhasa Newar merchants, particularly dwelling on the contradictory emotions of love and longing alongside loathing experienced by the wives or lovers of Lhasa merchants. These intense suffering and emotions of female characters have various dimensions which require further academic and intellectual scrutiny through various theoretical lens.

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