
Disability, Gender and Class: Complex Interactions in Ghimire's *Jeevan Kada Ki Phool*

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Abstract

This article aims at exploring the complex intersection of gender, disability, and class in Jhamak Ghimire's *Jeevan Kada Ki Phool*, an autobiographical work originally written in the Nepali language. Based on the theoretical framework of intersectionality developed by black feminist Kimberly Crenshaw, the study examines how these overlapping identities contribute to a unique and intensified experience of oppression. I use free transliteration and translation while citing from the work. The analysis reveals that Ghimire's marginalization does not occur due to these factors operating in isolation, but rather the simultaneous effects of her gender, physical disability, lower economic status, and societal expectations that operate together. By examining the interconnection of these forms of oppression, the article focuses on the multifaceted challenges that Ghimire coped with, and the deep impact they had in various ways on her life. The study also reveals the resilience that she displays to combat such deep-rooted systems of marginalization.

Keywords: intersectionality, structural oppression, marginalization, rebellion, resilience

Introduction

Published in 2067 BS *Jeevan Kada Ki Phool*, an autobiographical work by Jhamak Ghimire and honored with the prestigious Madan Purasakar award, intimately expresses her first-hand experience of multiple oppressions. These oppressions related to disability, gender, class and many other socio-cultural constraints and restrictions do not impact her separately but intersect each other that results in a cumulative effect. At the beginning of the book, she candidly Ghimire articulates her creative vision:

Ma afna vyktigat jivanaka patahrulai pathaksamu rakhera unihruko samyaya anawashyak rupama lina chaannathe. ma manchhelai pida hoina, utsah , umnga dina chahanthe, kalam, akshar,shbda sirjana marfat. [I did not want to waste the reader's valuable time with my story of my suffering. Rather, I wanted to instill in their mind vigour, vibrancy and vivacity through the tip of my pen, letters and creation] (v).

Although she emphasizes on sharing the creative aspect of her life through this work, the barriers and hurdles she underwent on the way to her journey of self-expression and liberation can never be ignored. Rather, one needs to unravel them to understand how she managed to tackle them with her strong will, inner power and determination.

Ghimire, a prolific writer now, was born with cerebral palsy that has made it difficult for her to move body parts and do many other activities including speaking, sitting up, using her limbs and walking. She does not have a good eye sight, either. She needs a pair of thick glasses to see things clearly. The only thing she can do is hear and move her feet. These are the only abilities that allow her to unlock the hidden potential lying dormant in her. Besides the severe physical disability, socio- economic factors,

prevailing norms and expectations, and dogmatic beliefs ingrained in the psyche of individuals also shape her experience and identity. As a female child, she grows into adulthood under the care and support of a small-income rural household with traditional beliefs and values. Having no social atmosphere conducive to formal education, and learning at home, Ghimire experiences untold misery and suffering that does not get her a vent until she finally learns to express through writing. She gradually learns that she is literally a burden on her parents' family. She even thinks she was cursed by God due to the crime one is believed to have committed in the previous birth! While vividly describing discrimination, injustice and oppression of her life, she highlights her indomitable spirit to combat several artificial boundaries created by social hierarchy. She fiercely challenges societal norms restricting her, and also seeks to feel life in full spectrum. Her story of struggle and resilience depicts overlapping injustices and the perpetual battle she fights.

The theory of intersectionality, introduced by Kimberly Crenshaw, provides a strong theoretical basis that allows us to understand and analyze how various dimensions of an individual's identity such as gender, class and ability intersect and create unique experiences of oppression and privilege. This is a suitable framework to examine Ghimire's narrative which demonstrates multiple forms of discrimination and their cumulative effect on a small disabled female child living in the rural household. Attempting to understand the social inequalities and injustices separately from a single paradigm cannot accurately depict the multi layers of intertwined discrimination. By applying an intersectional approach, we can, however, unveil the ways in which societal structures and cultural attitudes operate together to affect and aggravate her daily life. Using this theoretical lens, the study mainly seeks to unravel how gender, disability, class, culture and religion intersect in *Jeevan Kada Ki Phool*, and how these intersections contribute to the unique challenges faced by Ghimire herself. Her

experiences of marginalization are best understood by examining the interplay of such social categorizations which collectively shape her social standing, identity and personal agency.

Review of Literature

Understanding the intersections of social positions is pivotal as it allows us to know how human experience is shaped by multiple identities related to such social constructs as gender, class, and ability. Our social positions, and identities cannot be adequately understood by examining them in isolation the way Feminism, Marxism, Race Theories, and Disability Studies do by focusing on one in exclusion to the other. Only by discussing the blended effect of oppression, we can reach the core of one's experience. Audre Lord, a black feminist, states "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives" (290). What she emphasizes is that one's experiences and identities are complex and interconnected. In *Jeevan Kada Ki Phool*, the intersection of various social issues can be clearly seen. Reading the text from this perspective provides the reader a fresh insight on the compounded oppressions faced by an individual. Crenshaw explores how overlapping identities shape individuals' experiences of oppression. As Crenshaw in her article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" notes, "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (140). Although Crenshaw particularly emphasizes black women's situation, she provides a useful insight to study women of any caste and colour along with other components that intersect their lives. This framework has been useful in analyzing characters in diverse literary works that reveal the complexities of their social positions.

Patricia Hill Collins, an American social theorist, also emphasizes the importance of understanding the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class. Collins argues that these intersecting systems of power shape the lived experiences of marginalized individuals in unique ways. She stresses that "oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice" (18). She highlights multiple oppressions intertwine and affect an individual in a complex way.

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson a prominent scholar in disability studies further argues:

...feminist theories all too often do not recognize disability in their litanies of identities that inflect the category of woman. Repeatedly, feminist issues that are intricately entangled with disability—such as reproductive technology, the place of bodily differences, the particularities of oppression, the ethics of care, the construction of the subject—are discussed without any reference to disability. Like disability studies practitioners who are unaware of feminism, feminist scholars are often simply unacquainted with disability studies' perspectives. The most sophisticated and nuanced analyses of disability, in my view, come from scholars conversant with feminist theory. And the most compelling and complex analyses of gender intersectionality take into consideration what I call the ability/disability systems- along with race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class. (2)

Emphasizing the intersection of disability and feminist theory, Garland-Thomson criticizes feminist theories for often overlooking disability as a crucial identity factor influencing woman. This omission neglects the ways disability intersects with feminist issues, such as reproductive technology, bodily differences, oppression, and ethics of care. She points out that both feminist scholars and disability studies

practitioners can be unaware of each other's perspectives, leading to incomplete analyses. She argues that the most insightful examinations of disability are produced by those who are knowledgeable about feminist theory. Similarly, she contends that the most profound discussions of gender intersectionality are those that include the "ability/disability system" alongside other identity categories like race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class. By integrating these perspectives, scholars can develop more sophisticated and comprehensive understandings of both disability and gender. All these ideas and insights prepare a strong theoretical ground to study Ghimire's intersectional experience of oppression, though located in a different culture and geography.

Discussing Ghimire's plight, Mahendra Kumar Budathoki in his research article argues, "She is a double subaltern human; she is first a female and a disabled one" (13). Although he discusses the double disadvantages and their combined effects on her, he virtually ignores other intersectional identities like class, societal norms and expectations attached with culture and religion that also affect her simultaneously. He mainly focuses on her lived experience of oppression from disability aspect.

The above studies do not comprehensibly address the combined intersections of gender, disability, and class. Existing studies often focus on one or two aspects only in isolation, avoiding the holistic view. By addressing this gap, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the compounded oppressions faced by marginalized individuals.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative content approach to explore the intersections of gender, disability, and class in Ghimire's *Jeevan Kada Ki Phool*. By means of

qualitative approach, I will examine in depth the lived experiences and identities that affect and mold Ghimire's life. The text that abounds in details of her life as a woman with cerebral palsy provides the primary data for analysis. Reading and re-reading the text thoroughly allows us to identify passages that reveal the intimate details of her struggles and victory in the face of vulnerability. The theoretical framework of intersectionality, as outlined by scholars such as Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins supports to examine how different axes of identity intersect to create unique experiences of marginalization and empowerment. Meanwhile, disability studies and feminism also provide insights to study the protagonist's oppression although they focus on a single axis only.

Understanding Ghimire's Intertwined Experience

Jeevan Kada Ki Phool encapsulates multidimensional identities and experiences of the narrator which are largely shaped by different factors like sex, gender, class, age, ability and socio-cultural entities. Such social hierarchies make one feel either privileged or underprivileged, having wider or narrower access to opportunities and relationships. Ghimire's autobiography portrays characters with varying experiences. The narrator does not feel the same as her sister although both of them share the same gender experience. Again, they do not feel the same as their mother and grandmother despite having gender resemblance. This illustrates the idea that a one axis does not solely determine what one experiences. Many things other than a single factor play a part in shaping our identity. Ghimire herself. Her mother, sister and grandmother are deprived of the male privileges. They share many of the deprivations and disadvantages that include gender discrimination, financial dependence, fragile physique and many cultural taboos and restrictions. Nevertheless, the inferior positions of these female characters cannot be placed inside the same basket and drawn a single conclusion. Each of them rather has a unique position, identity and experience caused by varying degrees

of disparities befalling them. Ghimire feels most oppressed as she also undergoes the experience of being a disabled child. No others have this experience. The female family members also share her identity in many ways but minus disability. Now, her unique experience also shapes her agency and identity that cannot be equated to that of other female characters, let alone the male characters. The following section analyzes in greater detail how various factors contribute to her intertwined experiences.

Factors Affecting Identity and Agency

Identity and agency are interconnected concepts. Identity refers to the way an individual perceives themselves in relation to others and how they are perceived as well. Agency, likewise, refers to the individual power of making choices and taking decisions to act or react. A variety of factors plays a role in shaping individual identity and agency. As it is an ever-evolving process, it is shaped and reshaped. Race, gender, sexuality, class, disability, cultural and social norms, family dynamics and parenting styles, personal experiences and relationships, social interactions and community ties, political and economic environment and many other and institutions and entities jointly play a part in forming one's identity. In this autobiography, we can trace many such elements affecting Ghimire's lived experiences. Among them I will mainly discuss the role of (dis)ability, gender, class, age, culture and religion besides making some passing comments of other categories forming her intersectional experience.

Disability

Ghimire was physically born the same as other children. She was different in that she could not use her body parts normally and also had a problem in speech. She was medically defined as impaired. The physical impairment from the time of her birth caused by cerebral palsy obstructs her in numerous ways to live like normal people. But the real problem she feels is not the physical discomfort, but the crux of the problem lies in how society views her bodily difficulty. Her identity of an impaired child

intersects with her 'disability,' a socially constructed identity attached with her that further relegates her to an inferior and useless person, literally a burden in the family. The societal attitude combined with cultural assumptions exacerbates her identity and opportunity. Ghimire in the following words reveals how her family and society treated her:

Sabaika akahama ma deutabata shrapit manchhe thie, kinabhane purwajanmako papko phal yas janmma paeko thie. Tysaile sabaiko akhama ma bijhaune kado thie. [In the eyes of everyone, I was cursed by God. I was destined to suffer as a result of the sin I am believed to have committed in my previous birth. I was nothing but a thorn that pricks everyone] (2).

In the passage above, Ghimire illustrates the immense burden of stigma that society imposes upon her for a for a perceived sin from a past life. The phrase "cursed by God" makes it evident that she is viewed not as an individual but as a victim of cosmic punishment for a crime one is supposed to have committed in a past life. This reflects a harsh, fatalistic worldview where she is seen as inherently flawed, and thus, destined to suffer. Likewise, the comparison to a "thorn" that pricks everyone shows how Ghimire perceives herself as a source of annoyance to those around her. Nothing she hears about her in the family inspires her to modify the trajectory of life for the better. All the negative remarks and comments passed upon her intensify her plight, making it impossible for her to forget that her from

She is often called 'sape', one who crawls like a serpent. She is defined and redefined in a pejorative way that virtually ignores her biological definition that she is a human. The life she lived was not fundamentally different from that of a domestic

animal tethered to a pole. She also laments that her desire to speak was a shattered dream.

Disability is probably the biggest barrier to Ghimire's struggle in her pursuit to freedom, dignity of life, self-respect, economic independence, individual excellence and career development. If her physical impairment were viewed merely as a medical condition without any stain linked with it, she would not face the same degree of exclusion. It is the cultural interpretation and understanding of her impairment that intensifies her struggles. This makes it more difficult for her to fit into the normative standard and combat the challenges facing her way. In this regard, Garland-Thomson states "Disability is a representation, a cultural interpretation of physical transformation or, configuration, and comparison of bodies that structures social relations and institutions." (6). This statement asserts the idea that disability is not just a medical or biological condition but is also constructed and understood through cultural narratives and representations that affects how individuals with disabilities are perceived and treated. She adds physical differences of individuals are the markers of categorizing who is disabled and who is not. Disability is understood in relation to what is considered a normal body. Subverting the binary between able-bodied and disabled, Ghimire further argues physical incapacity alone does not fall under disability. She contrasts herself with Homer, the great poet of Greece, born sightless, and Helen Keller, a distinguished British writer born with cerebral palsy, who are never considered disabled simply because they were born in a different geography and culture (3-4). She attributes this discrimination to the cultural interpretations of disability that blocks the way she interacts with others and gets integrated into social networks. But she was literally alone at home all day although she also wanted to go to school with her little sister and be a part of the learning community. The representation of disability as a deviation from the norm reinforces the deep rooted hierarchy, institutional

practices, superstitious beliefs that often forbid a so-called disabled child to participate in public activities.

Ghimire's physical incapacity was often viewed as a problem to be fixed. This perspective aligns with the medical model of disability, which, as Susan Wendell articulates, "The medical model of disability locates disability within the individual and regards the remedy for disability-related problems as aimed at the individual. The focus is on 'correcting' or 'curing' the individual's impairment, rather than addressing the social and environmental factors that contribute to the experience of disability" (96). She vividly remembers the nightmare when she was taken to a 'Dhami'/ 'Jhakri', who performed strange rituals, chanting inaudibly and beating 'Dhyangro', a traditional drum-like instrument used for driving ghosts and evil spirits away. This culture reflects the societal inclination to perceive her situation as something curable through traditional healing, rather than trying to provide something necessary to facilitate her for better accommodation, and address the social and cultural factors that humiliate her. Instead, she was always understood in terms of her disability which was racialized, far worse than the way the so-called low caste is treated. Her new race/caste was 'Lati', one who cannot speak although she enjoyed the caste privilege. She was first identified as dumb, and woman. Both these identities compound her experience of marginalization. However, she does not stay mute. She rather counters dominant narratives that often patronize and delimit her on the grounds of gender and disability. She would think differently from what the majority of people thought. She boldly rejects the prevalent social perception of disability and asserts her inner strength and implicit faith in her ability with the following words:

Sharir apanga hudaima vichar, vivek Bhawana apanga thiena. Junkura
manchheharule bujhenan. Uniharule aphoolai matra sabai arthama poorna

thane...malai nirbal ra niriha dekhe. Ma uniharule dekhe sochejati nirbal, niriha bhane thiina. [Though I was physically impaired, I was not disabled in my ideas and thoughts. People did not understand this. They only thought that they were perfect. I was fragile and helpless in their eyes, but I was not so as they thought I was] (131).

This again illustrates that Ghimire while acknowledging her physical impairment strongly asserts her intellect, thoughts and emotional capacity. She decries society's misjudgment that often equates physical disability with overall incapacity. People failed to recognize her abilities and instead projected their biases, assuming they were flawless and superior while viewing her as weak and helpless. She was compelled to think and behave that she was disabled, and often restricted from doing activities like normal children. It is relevant to quote Alice Hall who contests, "Society 'disables' individuals by excluding or discriminating against them and creating affective, sensory, cognitive or architectural barriers" (21).

Hall's assertion that society disables individuals through exclusion and discrimination, and it can be seen in Ghimire's life story. Growing up in a conservative society, Ghimire faced significant social exclusion due to her physical disability. She was often kept isolated and denied the opportunities and interactions that other children enjoyed. This societal exclusion intensified her challenges and reinforced her marginalized status. Ghimire's narrative also reveals how societal attitudes and stigma towards her disability created profound emotional and psychological distress. The lack of empathy from her community, including her own family, contributed to feelings of worthlessness and isolation. These affective barriers were as disabling as her physical impairment. The societal lack of support and accommodation for her unique needs created an environment where her sensory and cognitive experiences were ignored. The

absence of appropriate educational resources and learning aids that could have accommodated her disability further exacerbated her exclusion from intellectual and developmental growth. Architectural barriers, such as inaccessible buildings and infrastructure, also play a crucial role in the disabling process. Ghimire's physical environment was not equipped to support her mobility and access needs, making everyday activities and accessing public spaces extremely challenging. This lack of physical accessibility compounded her isolation and dependency on others.

Ghimire's experiences exemplify the social model of disability as described by Hall. The societal barriers she faced were not just physical but were deeply embedded in cultural attitudes and systemic structures. For instance, traditional healing practices like taking her to Dhami/Jhakri to "cure" her disability reflect societal efforts to fix her physical condition rather than addressing the social and environmental factors that hindered her full participation in society.

Ghimire dismisses the dominant ideology about disability through her words and actions as well. She proves it wrong that she will not be able to learn anything. With her left foot she learns to write rubbing and bleeding her toes on the yard. It was amazing that she later started to write in a sheet of paper. Still, there were many people who would suggest her to learn the art of sewing and bakery so as to make a living. She persistently continued writing poems and articles for local papers before she was finally allowed a space in the national dailies published from the capital city. Even after she was recognized as an established author awarded with several prizes, people would comment that she got advantage of her disability. Her works were no so worthy (132). In the face of such humiliation and scathing criticism, she keeps striving to fight restrictions of every kind that ultimately enables her to transform from a disabled woman into a She highlight the need to reconsider societal attitudes towards disability

and formulate a more inclusive approach that recognizes and accommodates diverse abilities of people.

The narrative vividly illustrates the social model of disability, as articulated by scholars like Alice Hall and Susan Wendell. Ghimire's life experiences underscore that her challenges extend far beyond her physical impairment; they are deeply rooted in societal attitudes, cultural norms, and structural barriers. As Hall asserts, "society 'disables' individuals by excluding or discriminating against them and creating affective, sensory, cognitive or architectural barriers" (Hall 21). Ghimire's story demonstrates how societal exclusion, emotional and psychological distress, lack of accessible infrastructure, and limited educational opportunities compound her physical challenges, ultimately shaping her identity and experiences.

Understanding Ghimire's disability through this lens allows us to see how the intersection of various societal barriers contributes to her marginalization. By recognizing these barriers, we can better appreciate the complexity of her lived experience. With this understanding of how disability impacts Ghimire's life, the study now turns its attention to another critical aspect of her identity, i.e., her gender.

Gender

Jeevan Kada Ki Phool depicts gender biases that oppress the protagonist at political, economic, social and psychological level. She becomes a multiple victim of this oppression as she is physically impaired as well. Patriarchy which is deeply rooted in Hindu culture has a pervasive role in this work. This allows men to hold primary power, dominating roles in family, political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property while relegating women to subsidiary position in almost every sphere of life. Patriarchal ideology guides and dictates both men and

women who are programmed by it, and beyond which they cannot even think of going. Indoctrinated by the patriarchal ideology, Ghimire's grandmother turned so cruel that she could not accept in the family the birth of another granddaughter, sister to the protagonist, who, she believed, would not keep the family legacy, perpetuate the posterity and the glory of ancestry to be maintained by the birth of a male child. She depicts her grandmother and mother as true agents of patriarchy that had robbed their free will and independent thoughts associated with being woman. Only when her brother was born, there came real joy in the family (7). Prioritizing the birth of a male child was considered and is still considered for parents in a traditional family as gateway to heaven in the afterlife. This belief pervades the cultural and religious importance placed on male children in her society. Female children, in contrast, are often seen as less valuable, both in terms of spiritual beliefs and economic contributions. Ghimire's experiences reflect this devaluation, as she describes feeling like a "useless dumb female child." Even when she is awarded for her works, she hears even from the educated people that she was not deserving enough for the award. Such a criticism aligns with what Simon de Beauvoir says, "Her wings are cut, and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly" (664). Beauvoir's words accurately describe Ghimire's condition. In her journey into the world of reading and writing, she faces innumerable obstacles caused by her physical impairment blended with the socio-economic circumstances. Furthermore, she is often humiliated, discouraged and demoralized to pursue her passion of reading and writing. Her potential was stifled by societal constraints, and she was unfairly judged based on the limitations imposed on her by society. Had she been encouraged and supported widely, the work she has produced would have gained even wider reputation. Rewards encourage her but people's hesitation to recognize her honour embitters her. Although the creation of *Jeevan Kada Ki Phool* is remarkable in itself, the social attitudes are entirely prejudiced

against a woman. Not only her own, her sister's success story also remains unrecognized. She narrates the event of her sister's success in completing her intermediate degree from university. It was a moment of joy and glory for a village girl to pass her exam in the face of so many obstacles. But her mother's indifference to and apathy in the exam result illustrates the discrimination her sister also goes through, like herself, for no other reason than simply being a female which was her biological failure to become a male!

Ghimire witnesses her sister's oppression silently while recounting her own. This aggravates her own identity of being not only female, but disabled as well. The cultural preference for males over females have had profound effects on the self-worth and self-perception of female children, leading to internalized oppression and a sense of inferiority. Ghimire's disability further exacerbates her marginalization. In a patriarchal society that values the male over the female, a disabled female child faces a double discrimination and neglect. The joy brought by her brother's birth, juxtaposed with her own experiences of devaluation, highlights the complex dynamics within her family. Her disability and gender intersect to place her in a particularly disadvantaged position.

Ghimire's narrative abounds in rebellion and resilience in the face of deeply ingrained patriarchal norms. She challenges these norms through her writing, asserting her worth and capabilities. She redefines what it means to be valuable and worthy, not through adherence to patriarchal expectations but through her own achievements and self-assertion.

Ghimire has a bitter experience of being conformed to social expectations. There were innumerable dos and don'ts. She was not even free to laugh. She shares her predicament of being a dumb female in the following words:

"...hamrosamajlechhorimanchehaseko man paraudaina. ma ta tyasmathibekammalaticchori. merohasomalatopanmisiekohunthyo. [Our society does not like girls laughing. Moreover, I was a useless dumb female child. In my laughter, there was dumbness"] (23-24). This agony can provide deep insights into the societal and cultural constraints imposed on her and the additional burden of disability. The statement again reveals societal values that dishearten women to express joy through laughter which is often seen as a form of liberation and self-expression. But patriarchal societies often suppress such a form of expression in women to maintain control.

The narrative reflects the gender norms that dictate how women should behave—quiet, reserved, and submissive. Laughter, a spontaneous expression of happiness, is viewed as a threat to these norms. Her use of the term “useless dumb female child” reveals the internalized oppression and negative self-perception that results from constantly being undervalued and belittled by society. This internalization is a direct consequence of living in an environment where patriarchal attitudes prevail. The phrase “in my laughter, there was dumbness” suggests that even her moments of joy were overshadowed by societal judgments. She perceived her laughter as lacking value or intelligence because that is how society viewed her entire being. Ghimire’s statement encapsulates the intersectional nature of her oppression. As a female child, she faced gender-based restrictions. As a child with a disability, she faced additional devaluation. Her laughter, a universal human expression, was seen as “dumb” because of these intersecting identities. Despite these harsh judgments, her laughter can also be seen as an act of revolt. It represents her resilience and ability to find joy and express herself.

Ghimire interrogates strongly the societal expectations imposed on her as a woman. The intersection of disability and gender highlights the complex challenges she

faces. This offers further insight into a series of discrimination and resilience that defines her story. So, it is crucial to understand how societal norms and expectations shape her experiences as a disabled woman. This next section will deal with the specific ways in which gender intersects with the class she belongs to.

Class

Ghimire not only narrates the journey of her life through the lens of disability and gender but also highlights the pervasive influence of class on her life experience. Class is a powerful force that either equips or deprives people with and of an access to resources, opportunities and prospects of promotion. Born into a rural, economically disadvantaged family, her class position directly affects her identity as an impaired female child. This economic deprivation shapes her daily experiences and the perception of others towards her. Ghimire, right at the beginning of the autobiography, portrays the poor finance of her family. "yahaasamma bihan belukako chhak tarna pani nikai garho. Babu aama ta katichhaka samma bhokai basthe re. [We could hardly feed. Parents went hungry for several days]" (3). They were living in destitute. There was no diaper, no blanket for her, but the old tattered clothes that gave warmth to her. There was not enough food to eat. If she ate more, leaving nothing for two of her siblings, she would have a shower of whips from her mother, who would have to spend her day working hard collecting grass and fodder for the cattle. Father had a small job at the post office. There was no baby sitter to wash and clean her. Mother would mostly do the cleaning. In her absence, she did herself. Her tender mind keenly observes the disparity between haves and have nots. She hardly had more than a pair of dresses. She would have to put on the dress that was patched several times. Mostly she would put the old dress of her father that was worn to rags. Wearing old and worn-out clothes affected Ghimire's self-esteem and how she was perceived by others. Even at Dashain, a great Nepali festival, she does not share her experience of being dressed in new

clothes. She is rather cursed by her own father for being a burden. Despite the economic hardships, Ghimire's narrative is also one of resilience. She finds dignity and strength in her circumstances, using her experiences to fuel her determination to educate herself and become a writer.

Economic constraints also hindered Ghimire's access to formal education. Her family's inability to afford school fees or necessary learning materials deprived her of the educational opportunities that could have empowered her and opened doors to better prospects. "...economic forces have been manipulated by patriarchal law and custom to keep women economically politically, and socially oppressed as an underclass" (Tyson 94). Lois Tyson's observation is highly pertinent here. This quote encapsulates the central tenet of Marxist feminism, which argues that women's oppression is rooted in both economic exploitation and patriarchal dominance. Ghimire's family's economic hardship plays a crucial role in shaping her experiences. Despite her aspirations and intellectual capabilities, her opportunities for education and personal development are severely limited by her family's economic status. Had she been from the upper class or middle-class family, she would no doubt have had a wider access to education and intellectual growth. Her economic constraint is not merely a matter of financial limitation but is intertwined with patriarchal norms that prioritize resources for male family members. If her brother had any disability like hers, parents would show more worry about him and seek opportunities for his growth. The rest of the society would also view his difficulty differently. Patriarchal customs play a dominating role in the society that restricts her autonomy and political agency. Decisions about her life, including her health care and education, are made by male relatives or community leaders. Socially, Ghimire faces isolation and stigma due to her disability, further exacerbated by gender biases that devalue women with disabilities. The patriarchal manipulation of economic forces is evident in how Ghimire's labor and

contributions are undervalued. Her role within the household, despite her physical challenges, is dictated by patriarchal expectations of women's work, which is often unpaid and unrecognized. This reinforces her economic dependency and perpetuates the cycle of oppression. "While all women are subject to patriarchal oppression, each woman's specific needs, desires, and problems are greatly shaped by her race, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, educational experience, religion, and nationality" (Tyson 105). Ghimire's class, nationality, religion and educational experience compound her oppression.

Class intersects with her disability and gender to create a compounded experience of marginalization. Understanding the impact of class on Ghimire's life is crucial to appreciating the full extent of her challenges and resilience. With this foundation, we can now explore the role of gender in her narrative, further unraveling the complex interplay of social identities in shaping her lived experiences. As she started working as a regular columnist in the Kantipur Daily, only then did she feel a bit better financially. Her identity now as a useful family member uplift her self-confidence and morale which changes her own perception as well as that of others towards her. In *Jeevan Kada Ki Phool*, her experiences as a woman with disability are deeply intertwined with the patriarchal structures of Nepali society.

Synthesizing Interconnected Oppression and its Cumulative Effect

The discussion above in the light of disability, gender and class illustrates that Ghimire's life is beset by multiple forms of oppressions. First, her birth as a daughter is unwelcome, which does not meet the social and family expectation. Right from her infancy to the present, she experiences disadvantages in the way she is treated, both at home and outside. In addition, her inability to live a normal life combined with the imposed identity of disability overlaps. She now feels simultaneously the dual disadvantages of gender and disability. Being disabled in the eyes of the society, she

lives a disgraceful life. This hurts her self-respect as well. If she were able to express at least orally, it could be a bit easier for her to alleviate the repressed in her. Being unable to speak, we can easily surmise her suffocation which is ultimately vented through writing. Furthermore, living in destitute and being unable to contribute to the family financially, she deserves no space, no love and care from the family.

Her childhood experience is much worse in the family. This adds to her life yet another dimension to her intersectional experience of oppression. *Her age makes* her more *vulnerable* as children in her family were not considered worthy of attention or respect. As they are expected to be docile, they are not listened to. Nor are they asked about what they need and what they desire. They are virtually ignored. This disregard was compounded by her disability, which further silenced her and made her an invisible member of the household. The intersection of her young age and her physical condition meant that her childhood was marked by extreme neglect and isolation. She thus perceives her own identity in a complex way *She feels* discrimination not one after the other, but together. As a child, she was not only marginalized due to her gender, disability, and class but also because of underage. Ghimire, a woman with a disability *from a rural household*, faces multiple layers of oppression that intersect, creating a unique and compounded experience of marginalization. She was not only physically limited but also socially excluded, with her thoughts, feelings, and desires being consistently devalued. This intersectional approach helps to illuminate the complex layers of disadvantage that shaped her early life and continued to influence her experiences as she grew older.

Ghimire weaves her story with a complex layering of oppressions. Gender, disability, class, and cultural norms are all intertwined. They do not move in straight line. Rather, they crisscross and function in a complex way. So, the effect they leave is

more than the sum of the total. For instance, her gender and disability are not separate; she experiences them together. Being a girl with a disability in a patriarchal and economically disadvantaged household, her identity as a female and her physical limitations intersect to create a more profound form of marginalization. This simultaneity makes each form of discrimination more severe. For example, if she were only facing gender discrimination, it might have been difficult, but when combined with her disability, it becomes much more challenging. This layering creates a situation where each form of oppression amplifies the others, leading to a more intense and pervasive experience of oppression. The simultaneous nature of these oppressions means that Ghimire faces a constant barrage of marginalization. This not only affects her opportunities but also deeply impacts her psychological and emotional well-being. The feeling of being devalued on multiple fronts—gender, disability, and class—creates a sense of profound isolation and helplessness. The oppressions Ghimire faces are reinforced by the structures and norms of her society which highlight that the oppression is both systemic and deeply entrenched. Her marginalization is not just a result of individual attitudes but is embedded in the societal expectations around gender roles, the treatment of people with disabilities and class hierarchies.

The plight of the protagonist can thus be understood as one of compounded and simultaneous discrimination. Each layer of her identity—being a female, disabled, from a lower-class background, and a child in a patriarchal society—intersects to create a more intense form of oppression. Rather than experiencing these forms of discrimination sequentially, Ghimire encounters them all at once, which deepens the impact and makes her struggle more complex and challenging. This simultaneous experience of discrimination is vital to understand the depth of her experience. It highlights how interconnected forms of oppression can create a uniquely intense and multifaceted experience of marginalization. Crenshaw in the context of black women's

condition argues, "... *the intersections of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately*" (1244). Just as Crenshaw argues that the experiences of Black women cannot be understood by isolating race from gender, Ghimire's life cannot be fully understood by looking at her gender, disability, or class separately. These factors interact and overlap, creating an experience that is different from what she would have from the single categorization.

Conclusion

In *Jeevan Kada Ki Phool*, Ghimire encapsulates the multiple forms of oppression she faced from the time of her birth to her adulthood. By examining her experiences through the lens of intersectionality, it becomes evident that Ghimire's marginalization is not the result of a single factor but rather the simultaneous and compounded effects of her gender, disability, class, and cultural context. These intersecting identities create a unique and complex form of oppression that significantly shapes her life and identity.

Ghimire's story illustrates how each aspect of her identity intensifies the challenges she undergoes. Her gender, combined with her physical disability, economic hardship, and the societal norms that devalue children and women, creates a multifaceted oppression that is greater than the sum of its parts. This intersectional approach allows us to unravel the complexity of Ghimire's struggles in a more comprehensive way. Her life is a demonstration of the resilience and strength required to discover such deeply entrenched systems of oppression. Simultaneously, it is also a powerful critique of the societal structures that perpetuate these inequalities. The narrative anticipates the need of recognizing and addressing the interconnected nature

of oppression in order to achieve true social justice and parity. It challenges readers to rethink traditional understandings of marginalization in a new light and consider the forces that shape individuals' lived experiences.

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