# Micro resistance from the margin: Tracing modernity in Bhisham Sahni' s *Madhavi*

**Ramesh Gyawali[1]**

1 Far-Western University, Nepal.
✉ sitalgyawali@gmail.com  🆔 orcid.org/0009-0005-6013-1592

## Abstract

*Bhisham Sahni's adapted myth, in the form of a drama, portrays the character Madhavi as a victim of patriarchy. She is used to fulfil the male ego, such as Galav's stubbornness for Gurudakshina, Yayati's generosity, and Vishwamitra's sexual desire. However, in the end, she valiantly challenges the male domination by boycotting the Swayambar. It deals with the issue of micro resistance from the characters belonging to the margin. Furthermore, it endeavours to reveal the process of modernity through resistance, the practice of self-decision, and the use of reason, which serves the purpose of elevating modern human beings from the docile to the autonomous agency, resulting in a modern social context. This study aims to reveal the hitherto cultural hegemony prevalent in society through the use of myth and creating the spirit of modernity. The text, Madhavi, in English, was selected purposefully for data collection and analysis. Data related to the resisters, authorities resisted, causes, and the way of resistance were collected and coded, determining the categories to develop the broad theme of resistance from the margin. Themes were analyzed, making connections among the categories and approaching with the theories of modernity, especially accentuating traits of the modern person. The findings indicate that characters from the margin, such as Ashramites, Tapas, and Madhavi, challenge the authorities from educational, cultural, and political domains. They resist the authorities for justice and social harmony through rationality. The revelations suggest that an in-depth study of mythical episodes can further reveal more about the malpractices and beliefs prevalent in society, which can pave the way for the search for modernity.*

**Keywords:** Madhavi, Micro resistance, Authorities, Modernity, Patriarchy

## 1.0 Introduction

Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi* has immense traces of modernity made possible through the creation of characters to resist the authorities of various domains and institutions as well. The Gurukul system and kingdom renunciation can mark the path of modernity; however, modernity has been postponed due to cultural grip. Rationalization and creation of justice are at the heart of modernity, which *Madhavi* also seeks through characters such as Madhavi, Ashramites, and Tapas.

To suit the purpose of resistance to the authorities, Bhisham Sahni derives the myth from "an episode in the Udyog Parv of the Mahabharata, in which Yayati is portrayed as a valiant, generous king, Visawamitra a learned Sage, Galav his dutiful disciple and Madhavi Yayati's docile obedient daughter" (Behera, 2017, p. 175). Sahni deconstructs the ancient myth to situate the myth in modern contexts. His creation of female agency and resisters to various authorities, such as Ashramites and Tapas, paves the way for the modern approach to the text.

While exploring the micro-resistance from the characters from the margin, the research tries to seek the answers to questions such as who the resisters are and whom they resist, along with how and why they challenge the authorities. The objective of the study is to identify the micro resisters and the authorities challenged while analysing the ways and reasons for resistance. Sahni's appropriated myth in *Madhavi* contributes to the study of characters of modernity, which appeals

to rationalization and resistance against the authorities. The research focuses on the characters Ashramites, Tapas, and Madhavi and their efforts to challenge authority. To achieve this purpose, characters are situated with the causes and ways of resistance against the various domains of authority.

## 2.0 Review of Literature

Various studies on Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi* have concentrated on digging out the ideology of male chauvinism, exposing the instrumental and subjugated position of women prevalent in the classical myth; however, Sahni's appropriated myth in the form of drama poses challenges to patriarchal authority and other authorities under it.

While analysing *Madhavi*, most of the researchers have delved deep into demystifying the male ideology to subjugate women, keeping Madhavi in the central role. Lamichhane (2021) argues that the idea of eternal virginity is rooted in the male ideology, creating a scar of male domination which Madhavi insightfully rejects and decides to liberate herself towards the journey of actual eternity declining the invisible chains of male chauvinism (p. 105). However, *Madhavi* has been rewritten to suit the female agency to elevate the status of women to challenge authority. Singh (2009) sets forth her argument that Sahni was motivated to rewrite the mythical segment of the epic Mahabharata from the perspective of Madhavi because myth denies her essential humanity, motherhood, upbringing child, and love and freedom. Therefore, he raises her from the docile position to a complete human agency who can express her bitterness of agony, anger, boldness, and rejection overall to the injustice created by male dominations (Singh, 2009, p. 167-68). In the same vein, Pankaj and Jaidev (2001) state that Madhavi's desire of happiness and freedom, her bonding with her mother and her children, her self-awareness, and the capacity to learn from experience are all things that Sahni grants her that the myth has denied with the purpose of elevating Madhavi from the status of production machine to protesting and resentful moral being (p. 3).

The original myth of Mahabharata provides an instrumental position to Madhavi, which is inspired by the traditional beliefs of male supremacy, resulting in the reification of females. Santwani (2019) presents the grim picture of alienation and reification of women, accentuating the feminist perspectives without relating the remade myth of *Madhavi*. According to her, in Mahabharata, Madhavi, who had the boon of begetting Cakravartin kings, was bartered so many times by various kings for their greed from getting Cakravartin kings and she was reduced to a breeding machine and was alienated from her own sexuality and reproduction (p. 68). Nonetheless, Sahni's remake cannot be separated from his intention to reverse the role of Madhavi from functional to decisive to provide her with the position of independent agency. Behera (2017) strikingly sets forth that Mahabharata provides only a functional role to Madhavi, whereas Sahni brings Madhavi to the front, providing a specific identity and agency; consequently, she dares to defy male ideology (p. 175-6). Madhavi undergoes the journey of subjectivity. She plays the role of a submissive player of authority. However, the journey turns out to be her source of knowledge to liberate herself from the chains of domains of authority. Basu (2017) argues that Madhavi is intelligent enough to understand her agency being denied by patriarchy, and her reluctance to regain her eternal virginity poses challenges to patriarchy, which fails to persuade her, resulting in her final decision to opt out of her Swayambar and refusal to regaining eternal virginity (p. 97). Moreover, Budkuley (2010) accepts Madhavi to be the icon of resistance who, in the end, develops courage and self-respect to refuse the man whose egoistic promise to his Guru is instrumental in her ruthless exploitation (p. 25). Budkuley (2010) is of the opinion that Madhavi develops the courage to challenge and resist the patriarchal ideology of domination and subjugation, which plays a significant role in the path of self-realization and the practice of freedom.

The reviews discussed manifest the concentration sheer on Madhavi, especially her courage to reject the male chauvinism at the end of the drama. There have been traces of resistance and

rejection in the form of mockery and questioning from the beginning of the drama. Her valour to challenge the distinct domains of authorities ranges from political to educational and cultural. Moreover, other characters such as Ashramite 1, Ashramite 2, and Tapas are not less significant figures to resent the political and educational domain of authority. Although immense studies have been conducted on issues of subjugation of women and male chauvinism, little study has been done on revealing the micro resistance existing in *Madhavi* from the perspectives of modernity, which envisions the agency of characters to challenge the status quo and bring about the change in the society.

The research paper aims to explore the issue of micro resistance against the authority from the margin and manifest the micro efforts made by the people from the margin; however, their voices are unheard. To achieve this aim, the topic of micro resistance will be explored keeping into consideration on who the micro resisters from the margin are and which authorities they challenge. Simultaneously, the research will be confined to how the people pose challenges to the authorities and why.

### 3.0 Methodology

The research embraced the philosophical assumption of "multiple realities" Creswell, 2013, p. 20) as it was based on the evidence of multiple sources for qualitative study referring to Bisham Sahni's *Madhavi*, reviews on it and books on modernity as well as approach, constituting ontological assumption because it believes that "there is no reality other than what humans create in their own minds" (Willis, 2007, p. 9). Meanwhile, for exploring the traces of modernity in the rewritten classical myth of the Mahabharata in *Madhavi* critically, the "subjective evidences" (Creswell 2013, p. 20) of knowledge were given prominence, assuming that the collected data provided epistemological, philosophical underpinnings because it believes that "all knowledge is situated in the experiences and context of the researcher" (Willis, 2007, p. 10).

As a research paradigm, the interpretive research paradigm was used to explore the traces of modernity in the rewritten classical myth of the Mahabharata in *Madhavi* critically because it "focuses on understanding and meaning-making, as opposed to explanation, as the main purpose of research" (Given, 2008, p. 464). Moreover, "interpretivism sees human action as inherently meaningful with meanings being processual, temporal, and historically unfinished" (Harrison, 2014, p. 229).

As the study was based on the qualitative approach, the research design was based on the qualitative textual analysis as it enables the researchers to understand how members of various cultures and subcultures make meanings of their lives in relation to the world they live (McKee, 2003, p. 1). I purposefully selected Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi* as the source of primary data to analyze. Data related to resisters, authorities challenged, ways of challenge, and the reasons for the challenge were selected to explore the traces of resistance as a way of modern human traits. In addition to the primary texts, I drew on some of the primary and secondary sources to address the theme of resistance to authority from the margin, especially the theories of modernity and resistance critically that contributed to exploring the theme of challenge or resistance in rewritten classical myth derived from the Mahabharata. I coded the data on various categories to find out the challenging characters, challenged authorities, and challenged domains. Then, the theme of challenge or resistance was compared and contrasted within different categories to generate the meanings. Such meanings were interpreted in reference to the theories of modernity and resistance to discover the answers to the research problems.

The theory of modernity is based on the ideas of rationalization, resistance, and the exercise of human agency through courage and valour. Phuyal (2024) emphasizes the aspects of modernity's courage and valour that motivate giving rise to the human agency when he writes, "Modernity celebrates the formation of such courage and valour through the birth of agency" (p. 93). Phuyal

(2024) views in a similar way when he talks about the birth of agency as Kant (2010) proposes for Enlightenment. According to him, a modern person has the ability to pierce the self-incurred tutelage; such tutelages include "lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another (p. 54)". When a person becomes capable of coming out of the chains of submissive status and begins to use reason and agency, they begin to question critically denying the status quo, which marks the beginning of resistance. Wagner (2001) also believes that modernity is the situation when human beings reject the impositions from external guarantors (p. 4). Thus, modernity provides the theoretical framework to analyze *Madhavi* as the portrayal of resistance from the margin as it reflects the characters such as Madhavi, Ashramite 1, Ashramite 2, and Tapas who challenge the cultural, political, educational, and patriarchal authorities liberating themselves from the state of immaturity. Similarly, the concept of resistance has played a significant role in examining the issue of resistance in Sahni's *Madhavi*. Resistance is "any action imbued with intent that attempts to challenge, change or retain particular circumstances relating to societal relations, processes and/or institutions...[which] imply some form of contestation...[and] cannot be separated from practices of domination (Baaz et al., 2016, p. 140)". Baaz et al. (2016) believe that resistance refers to the actions of conscious human beings, which are taken with the intention of bringing about changes in societies and social relations. Resistance is closely related to domination because it arises as a reaction to domination. Thus, Lilja (2022) relates resistance with a reaction against power when she writes, "resistance is sometimes parasitic on power or a reaction against it (p. 204)". Power gives rise to domination, resulting in resistance against it. Then, it becomes interesting to explore who the resisters are. In the opinion of Lilja (2022), subalterns are resisters who make efforts of resistance to challenge the authorities to claim their rights, as she relates "'subalternity' with resistance" (p. 205). However, Vinthagen and Johansson (2013) do not believe that resistance is just the practice of subalterns. For them, any human subject who can exercise some human agency can perform the act of resistance. Therefore, any human being can be attributed to the factor of resistance along with subalterns. However, there is no one-to-one relation between subaltern and resistance (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013, p. 36). Baaz et al. (2016) apparently summarize the resistance as:

> Resistance could then, to summarize, be understood as a response to power from below—a subaltern practice that could challenge, negotiate, and undermine power, or such a practice performed on behalf of and/or in solidarity with a subaltern position (proxy resistance). Irrespective of intent or interest, we view resistance as (i) an act, (ii) performed by someone upholding a subaltern position or someone acting on behalf of and/or in solidarity with someone in a subaltern position, and (iii) (most often) responding to power (or, as we will see below, other resistance practices, which in turn emerge as a response to power). (p. 142)

Thus, resistance is a response to power either from the subalterns or on behalf of solidarity for the subalterns, which may or may not carry the intention or interests of the resisters but contains the act that benefits the subaltern position.

## 4.0 Results and Discussions

### 4.1 Micro Resistance: Resisters, Authority, Way of Challenge, and Reason of Challenge

The original text, *Madhavi*, was selected to explore the issue of micro resistance from the margin. At first, the characters were extracted who contributed to challenging the domains of authority in various ways. Furthermore, the resistance that they made was examined in accordance with the issues that needed to be addressed in order to answer the research questions, such as the way and reason for the challenge. The data selected from *Madhavi* were simultaneously coded as the theme of micro resistance, further categorized into Resisters, Authority, Ways and Reasons of challenge for the appropriate analysis to uncover the traces of modernity in the form of micro resistance.

Hollander and Einwohner (2004) have argued that "the act of resistance may be individual or collective, widespread or locally confined…the targets of resistance also vary, from individuals…to groups and or organizations…institutions and social structures" (p. 536). *Madhavi* portrays the resisters individually and collectively against the individual, groups, and institutions as well.

**Table 1:** Resisters, Authority, Way and Reason of challenge

| Micro Resisters | Authority Challenged/ Domain | How they challenge | Why they challenge |
|---|---|---|---|
| Madhavi | Patriarchy/Yayati/Galav/ Political and cultural | Declining to regain eternal virginity Rejecting to take part in Swayambar. | Liberating from the grip of hegemony, developing agency through self-decision. |
| Ashramite 1 | Kingdom renounced King/ political and cultural. | Reminding the injustice. Inspiring for rationalization. Mocking at Yayati, | Reminding duty toward the daughter and agency of Madhavi. |
| Ashramite 2 | Kingdom renounced King / political and cultural | Reminding donation of daughter as an act of ego | Reminding duty toward the daughter and agency of Madhavi. |
| Tapas | Guru / educational and economic institution | Reminding about irrational demand as Gurudakshina. | Liberating disciple from the irrational demand of Guru. |

The findings demonstrated that Madhavi challenged the patriarchal cultural authority by rejecting to regain eternal virginity; however, she was given the boon of regaining for the sake of liberating herself from patriarchy. Meanwhile, two characters, Ashramite 1 and Ashramite 2 appear to be the challengers to the authority of the Ashram and hangover of the kingly behaviour of the kingdom-renounced king. They resist the decision of King Yayati to grant his daughter Madhavi to Galav as a gift to prove his generosity, having reminded to Yayati of his ego, which could push his daughter's future into the abyss as they intended to protect her from being reification. Furthermore, Tapas, one of the disciples of Vishwamitra, presented himself as a resister to the authority, especially the authority of Guru or educational domain, by reminding Vishwamitra about his irrational demands as Gurudakshina because he intended to protect Galav from further suffering and Madhavi being abused for the fulfilment of Galav's vow. All the challengers belonged to the margin. As a result, their voices were unheard. However, they kept on challenging to bring about the change.

The results manifested that characters from the margin, such as Madhavi, Ashramites, and Tapas, attempted to challenge various domains of authority, contributing to rationalization and transformation, which indicated the emergence of agency from the position of subjectivity. Despite being situated in the historical context, Sahni's *Madhavi* appealed for the traces of modernity, deconstructing the ancient myth of Mahabharata.

**4.2 The Series of Resistance**

Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi* brings some of the characters to the front raising them from the status of margin to create resistance to the authorities. These characters are male dominated Madhavi, a

system of Ashram-dominated Ashramites, and educational system-dominated disciple Tapas. No doubt, the ancient myth of Mahabharata deals with the well-knitted web of male supremacy; however, Sahni's efforts to remake can be perceived as guided by his motive to provide justice elevating from the subjugated position, which has been made possible through the micro resistance presented by characters. The vivid picture of resistance can be visualized through the dialogue of characters from the margin. Maase (2017) presents "the concept of 'resistance' as a willful activity" (p. 49) that an individual exercises for the transformation of society and social structures.

### 4.2.1 Resistance from Ashramite 1

Ashramite 1 stays with the kingdom-renounced king, Yayati, at his Ashram. When Yayati makes the decision to donate his daughter to the unknown young man, he attempts to coax Yayati not to do so. With astonishment, he alleges Yayati, calling his act of gifting as the act of throwing his daughter out of the house. Ashramite 1's surprise gets exacerbated by Yayati's gifting decision because he thinks Yayati has done injustice to Madhavi. His argument is how a man can give his own daughter as a gift. Yayati is egoistic and only concentrates on his fame and generosity. He does not even keep the information on whether the number of horses Galav needs to offer as Gurudakshina is available or not in the whole of Aryavarta. This is what Ashramite 1 cynically reminds Yayati below:

**Ashramite 1**: Maharaj, what … what are you saying! Thrown your daughter out of your house! You don't even know the young man! What you have done is unjust, Maharaj. You can't give your daughter away as a gift. You are a great man, Maharaj, but you should at least have tried to find out if there is a king in Aryavarta who has eight hundred Ashwamedhi horses. (Sahni, 2002, p. 9-11)

Ashramite 1 is just an ashram dweller. He cannot bring about the change in Yayati. However, he makes efforts to remind and persuade him that what he is doing is unjust. Despite his status of margin, he tirelessly continues to challenge the authority, Yayati, who bears the traits of a modern person. A modern person is conscious of himself and the society around him and tries to challenge and transform with the establishment of agency. Eyerman (1992) is of the opinion that "the modern individual is aware of himself or herself not only as an individual, that is, as creator of self and society, but also as an individual with a future" (p. 39). Eyerman's opinion about the traits of the modern individual is guided by the assumption that an individual can create the self and society while ensuring the future as well.

### 4.2.2 Resistance from Ashramite 2

Ashramite 2 directly resists the act of Yayati. He challenges Yayati to say that he cannot give his daughter as a gift. He furthers by reminding Yayati that he does not have a duty only towards Dharma but also towards his daughter. He charges Yayati for forgetting his duty towards his daughter. He argues that what Yayati is doing is different from the duty that he has to perform. It is an ego satisfying act to quench the thirst for being famous and praised as a great, generous soul, which Sahni vividly presents:

**Ashramite 2:** You can't give him your only daughter as a gift! You have duty towards your daughter also, Maharaj. You didn't do your duty, Maharaj. You gave her away as a gift – to satisfy your ego and to ensure that people continue to praise your generous soul. You have pushed your daughter into an abyss. (Sahni, 2002, p. 9-11)

Voices from the margin are unheard; however, voices keep roaring up. Authorities blind themselves to their vested interests. Sahni's *Madhavi* also exemplifies the authorities' blindness. Meanwhile, the resistance creeps along with. Yayati is the father authority and authority of the

Ashram system; however, Ashram dweller tries to make resistance for the justice of Madhavi and correct the decision of Yayati. Modern person thinks independently and with cognitive flexibility and tries to liberate themselves from traditional sources of influence.  In the same vein, Inkeles and Smith (1974) put forth as:

> [The modern man] is an informed participant citizen; he has a marked sense of personal efficacy; he is highly independent and autonomous in his relations to traditional sources of influence, especially when he is making basic decisions about how to conduct his personal affairs; he is ready for new experiences and ideas, that is, he is relatively open-minded and cognitively flexible. (p. 290)

Ashramite 2 has the traits of a modern man because he is far from the traditional way of thought. He does not see any generosity in donating his daughter rather an ego to spread the fame of generosity. He is open-minded to consider about the act of Yayati which, he believes, is the ego satisfying way, pushing his daughter into the abyss.

### 4.2.3 Resistance from Tapas

Tapas is the disciple of Vishwamitra and the friend of Galav. He thinks that he should not silence himself for a long time. Although Vishwamitra is not interested in Tapas's questions, He asks why Vishwamitra knowingly put Galav in difficulty because he believes that Vishwamitra knew that there were merely six hundred horses available in Aryavarta. Tapas reveals the unreasonable demands for Gurudakshina and suspects the hidden intentions of Vishwamitra to collect horses. He reminds Vishwamitra of the consequence of the condition horses are not found and alleges him for the trading of Madhavi, which Sahni lively extracts as:

**Tapas:** I have been quiet for a long time, Maharaj, but I must speak now. When you knew that there were only six hundred Ashwamedhi horses in Aryavarta, why did you ask Galav for eight hundred? Maharaj, since there are no horses to be found anywhere, how will he find them? I haven't understood what prompted you to ask for such a Gurudakshina. Even if you had wanted to teach Galav a lesson you could have made a reasonable demand. Or … is it… that you really want to collect Ashwamedhi horses? That Galav should fail the test? Kill himself? He is trading a young girl for them. Galav is my friend. (Sahni 2002, p. 46-8)

Tapas represents rationality, whereas Vishwamitra represents irrationality. Meanwhile, Tapas challenges Vishwamitra with his questions and arguments for the sake of friendship and to stop Madhavi from being bartered with horses. Tapas is in the system of Gurukul. His loyalty to his Guru and Gurukul is a must; however, he uses his reason to challenge the unjust decision of his own Guru, establishing himself as a modern actor. Schabert (1979) also justifies this as he states that "modern man should be cured of the cancerous growth of prejudices which have lasted for millennia (p. 133)".

### 4.2.4 Resistance from Madhavi

Madhavi has become the prey in the hands of patriarchy. She has been gifted to Galav to fulfil the vow of Gurudakshina. Although she is dissatisfied with her father's decision, she is in the chain of the system, which results in her being trapped. However, she mocks at the power mongers who are never satisfied with their achievements. Sahni raises Madhavi's consciousness to prepare her to challenge the patriarchy. He presents:

**Madhavi:** As a gift! (To Yayati) What do I want? What difference does that make? I am only an instrument to be used by you to fulfil your vow (to Galav). What should I do? Dance? Sing? Be ecstatic about my life and my fate? And anyway, you don't have to pity on me. I have been put on sale for an equal measures of horses. Isn't it strange that a man who

already is a king longs to become an even greater king and is willing to challenge other to capture his Ashwamedhi horses… A king wants to be an even greater king! (Sahni 2002, p. 9-17)

Madhavi is conscious of her fate and expresses that because of her, Galav will achieve his end of offering Gurudakshina. She sees the palace as a dungeon and returns the clothes and ornaments to the palace when she leaves. She challenges the palace and patriarchy by calling the dungeon to the palace and returning clothes and ornaments. Phuyal (2024) has argued that "when people make a conscious attempt to bring about change in society, they force transformation in the underlying structure (p. 87)". When Galav says they are free, she does not accept herself as free. Instead, she feels trapped in chains. Sahni, (2002) puts forth as

**Madhavi:** You will achieve your end… I must do what I am fated to do. There is no way out. What strange game is this, Galav? I feel that I am being taken to a dungeon instead of a palace. Return these to the King. These clothes and ornaments are for a queen, not me (to servant). Did you say that we are free? Who is free Galav? I feel as if my legs are bound with chains. (Sahni 2002, p. 18-32)

As the boiling milk spills over, Madhavi's patience spills over too and reacts to the ideology of patriarchy, which claims Madhavi to make happy. Moreover, she calls the king of Ayodhya a buffoon with disrespect because the king, in addition to extramarital relations, marriages two more women after Madhavi enters the palace. Madhavi's realization of the patriarchal trap paves the way for challenging the authorities. Phuyal (2024) views what rationalization does while dealing with modernity. He opines that rationalization is the way to pose critical questions, which provides knowledge of organization and distribution of power relations. At the same time, rationalization brings out the realization of differences in society in terms of power and privileges. According to him:

Rationalization develops out of the social quest to logically understand its organization and distribution of power and privileges. Naturally, social and intellectual maturity pave the road to modernity through rationalization in that people develop an attitude of posing critical questions in society. Rationalization points out why a certain group of people enjoy a better life and a better position in society (Phuyal, 2024, p. 87).

Sahni (2002) vividly picturizes as:

**Madhavi:** But I knew that the servant girls belonged to the king, just like my clothes and my ornaments. And that the son in my womb would belong not to me but to the King. You want me to be happy? My father wanted me to be happy. The king of Ayodhya also wanted me to be happy. Yes, I have received nothing but happiness everywhere. I did what I thought was right. Give Maharaj my salutations. …that buffoon- the king of Ayodhya. I was innocent then, and so everything around me brought me joy. I mistook everyone to be a god… (Sahni, 2002, p. 34-8)

Coming through the ages and with bitter experiences, Madhavi realizes it is her mistake to take everyone as god. This realization brings her from the state of subjectivity to agency. Giddens (1990) argues that modernity is the understanding of unanticipated results of our own activities and decisions rather than underlying meanings of nature and the influence of Deity (p. 30). For Giddens (1990), modernity envisions the consequences of individual activity and decisions rather than being submissive to power.

At the end of the drama, Madhavi becomes an autonomous agent ready to travel in freedom. She takes duty in a different sense because her duty is for herself, her freedom and her agency. She does not want any more to remain under the subjectivity of patriarchy. Sahni (2002) puts:

**Madhavi:** to be free? You are absolutely free, Galav. I don't want you to feel that you are tied to me. Remember how I asked to run away with me? Today I am really going to fulfil my desire. I am going to run away. You have done your duty, now let me do mine. (*Kindly*) the world is a vast place. I am sure that somewhere there will be room for me. (*Walks towards the exit. She stops when she reaches it, and turns around*) Go. All the sages are waiting for you. I shall bless you for ages and age. I have done my duty and fulfilled all obligations… (Sahni, 2002, p. 67-8).

Madhavi's decision not to regain eternal virginity, not to participate in Swayambar instead, emancipate herself from the grip of patriarchy, is a beautiful picture of modernity. The act of Madhavi can be justified by references to theories of modernity as well. For Inkeles (1969), modern man is oriented towards a new experience, leaving the old one (p. 210). In the same vein, Schabert (1979) argues that to be modern means "to step over the threshold between a past darkened by ignorance and a present brightly illuminated by learning and almost perfect wisdom (p. 127)". The characteristic of modernity is the realization of the dark past and the bright present and future. A modern person is committed to releasing oneself from the dark past. Likewise, Madhavi realizes the dark past, which treats her as a puppet in the hands of patriarchal power. Simmel (1971), on the other hand, views that the greatest issues facing contemporary society stem from people's attempts to preserve their uniqueness and independence in the face of societal authorities, historical legacies, and outside cultures and ways of living (p. 324). Everyone is unique and independent; however, cultural and political practices turn them into docile forms. It is indispensable to recognize the uniqueness and try to face the challenges posed by authorities in the society. Kivisto (2011) thinks that Modernity's project becomes one that must be produced rather than one that is firmly established by tradition or custom. "It also, however, grants to individuals the possibility of engaging in life planning—in adopting a variety of lifestyle options" (p. 166).

Bhisham Sahni's appropriated myth *Madhavi* opens the avenues of diverse perspectives, among which the approach of modernity is remarkable. Despite being situated in the ancient context, the drama creates the ethos of micro resistance for the transformation of an unjust system and structure. Mainly, characters such as Ashramite 1, Asharamite 2, Tapas and Madhavi are genuine figures of modernity in creating micro resistance.

The study has focused on modern actors who challenge the authorities for justice in an unjust society. However, socioeconomic facets and institutional patterns of modernity can reveal more about getting a full-fledged study situating on the spirit of modernity.

**5.0 Conclusion**

The research examines the act of micro resistance from the characters from the margin against the authorities in Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi*. The findings portray that Madhavi, Ashramite 1, Ashramite 2, and Tapas as the resisters from the margin. They challenge the authorities, such as the political and cultural domain and overall patriarchy represented by Yayati and Galav, as well as educational and economic institutions represented by Guru Vishwamitra. They challenge the authorities by reminding unjust practices, ego-fulfilling acts in the form of donating, irrational demands of Vishwamitra as Gurudakshina meanwhile, rejecting to gain eternal virginity and take part in Swayambar as well through the use of reason because they want to liberate themselves from the grip of cultural and patriarchal hegemony and to exercise their agency. They make efforts to rationalize the authority, which brings transformations. The study manifests the spirits of modernity through the resistance produced by the characters from the margin. Although the research concentrates on the actors and their resisting efforts, a deeper study of multifaceted dimensions of modernity can contribute to bringing out the spirit of modernity. Mythical references are generally taken for granted, which, after scrutiny, can reveal the ideology to

maintain the injustice in society. Sahni's attempt to remake the story to subvert the traditional belief system can influence the further advancement of societal transformation.

## References

Baaz, M., Lilja, M., Schulz, M., & Vinthagen, S. (2016). Defining and analyzing "resistance": Possible entrances to the study of subversive practices. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political, 41*(3), 137–153. https://doi.org/10.1177/0304375417700170

Basu, S. (2017). Negotiating the patriarchal ideology of the Mahabharata: A study of Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi* and Saoli Mitra's *Five Lords Yet None a Protector*. *Theatre Street Journal, 1*(1), 89–100.

Behera, G. C. (2017). Deconstruction of myth as feminist strategy: Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi*. *Middle Flight, 6*(1), 175–181.

Budkuley, K. (Ed.). (2010). *Mahabharata myths in contemporary writing: Challenging ideology*. Sahitya Akademi.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE.

Eyerman, R. (1992). Modernity and social movements. In H. Haferkamp & N. J. Smelser (Eds.), *Social change and modernity* (pp. 37–54). University of California Press.

Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford University Press.

Given, L. M. (2008). *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. SAGE.

Harrison, A. K. (2014). Ethnography. In P. E. Nathan & P. Leavy (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 81–98). Oxford University Press.

Hollander, J. A., & Einwohner, R. L. (2004). Conceptualizing resistance. *Sociological Forum, 19*(4), 533–554. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11206-004-0694-5

Inkeles, A. (1969). Making men modern: On the causes and consequences of individual change in six developing countries. *American Journal of Sociology, 75*(2), 208–225. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2776103?origin=JSTOR-pdf

Inkeles, A., & Smith, D. H. (1974). *Becoming modern: Individual change in six developing countries*. Harvard University Press.

Kant, I. (2010). An answer to the question: What is Enlightenment? (1784). In H. S. Reiss (Ed.), *Kant: Political writings* (pp. 54-60). Cambridge University Press.

Kivisto, P. (2011). *Key Ideas in Sociology* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Lamichhane, Y.R. (2021). The Politics of Body in Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi*: Rethinking the Mythical Performance. *SCHOLARS: Journal of Arts & Humanities*, *3*(2), 98-107. https://doi.org/10.3126/sjah.v3i2.39428.

Lilja, M. (2022). The definition of resistance. *Journal of Political Power, 15*(2), 202–220. https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2022.2061127

Maase, K. (2017). Popular culture, 'resistance,' 'cultural radicalism,' and 'self-formation': Comments on the development of a theory: Subjects, representations, contexts. In M. Butler, P. Mecheril, & L. Brenningmeyer (Eds.), *Resistance: Subjects, representations, contexts* (pp. 45–70). Bielefeld. https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839431498-004

McKee, A. (2003). *Textual analysis: A beginner's guide*. SAGE.

Pankaj, K. S., & Jaidev (2001). Decentering a patriarchal myth: Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi*. In K. Sangari & U. Chakravarti (Eds.), *From myths to markets: Essays on gender* (pp. 3–17). Manohar.

Phuyal, K. P. (2024). Self-postponement vs. visionary in exile: Nepal's quest for modernity in the 1960s. *Sudurpashim Spectrum, 2*(1), 85–104.

Sahni, B. (2002). *Madhavi* (A. Bhalla, Trans.). Seagull. (Original work published 1982)

Santwani, S. (2019). Transgression versus transcendence: An analysis of dynamics of women's sexuality in the Indian epics *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. *Urdhva Mula, 12*, 54–69. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338223400

Schabert, T. (1979). A note on modernity. *Political Theory, 7*(1), 123–137.

Simmel, G. (1971). *On individuality and social forms* (D. N. Levine, Ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Singh, A. (2009). Aesthetics of Indian feminist theatre. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities, 1*(2), 157–170. https://www.rupkatha.com/0102indianfeministtheatreaesthetics.pdf

Vinthagen, S. & Johansson, A. (2013). 'Everyday resistance': Exploration of a Concept and its Theories. *Resistance Studies Magazine* 1 (September), 1–46.

Wagner, P. (2001). *Theorizing modernity*. SAGE Publications.

Willis, J. W. (2007). *Foundations of Qualitative Research*. SAGE.