



Global Capitalism and the Lahures¹: A Study of Modernity in *Anagarik*, a Film Directed by Rambabu Gurung

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Abstract

*The Nepali men, also known as the Gorkhas, who joined the colonial British army during and after the Anglo-Nepal War (1814-16), are considered the first foreign economic migrants. These Nepali men, who used to be popularly known as Lahures in their villages, proved to be one of the major harbingers of modernity in Nepal. Since the 1990s, other types of Nepali economic migrants, along with these Lahures, have shaped the Nepali modernity. Against this backdrop, this paper analyzes the Lahure culture in Rambabu Gurung's debut film *Anagarik* [The Unbecoming Citizen] in the light of discourses of modernity. Locating the Lahure culture in the national as well as international historical contexts, this study fleshes out a few major findings. Firstly, the Lahure culture is a significant factor, which has heralded and sustained modernity in Nepal. Secondly, it connected Nepal to the world outside even during the Rana rule. Thirdly, the recent trend of Nepalis migrating abroad for employment is nothing but the variation as well as continuation of the same Lahure culture. Fourthly, the Lahure culture is symptomatic of Nepal's status as a peripheral country in the capitalist world order. This paper is expected to contribute to the ongoing debates surrounding modernity, international migration and Nepal's position in the global capitalist order.*

Keywords: *Modernity, capitalism, Gorkhas, Lahures, migrants*

Introduction

Nepal has a long history of foreign economic migration, which started with the Nepali men joining the British army during and after the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-16). Popularly called 'Lahures' in their villages, they emerged as the harbingers of modernity in Nepal. Along with the other types of foreign economic migrants from Nepal, these

¹ A term previously used to refer to the Nepali men, who joined the foreign army. Now, it is used to refer to all sorts of Nepali economic migrants.

Lahures have shaped the Nepali modernity. Engaging with the discourses of modernity, this paper examines the Lahure culture in *Anagarik* (2008), a directorial debut film of the famous Nepali director Rambabu Gurung. In order to glean its role in the emergence of modernity in Nepal, I locate the Lahure culture in the context of the national as well as international historical scenarios of the time.

This study is based on the qualitative analysis of the film. In order to create the national and the global contexts for the analysis of the text to glean modernity, the study derives from the texts on history. Moreover, it also engages with several texts on modernity to highlight modernity as observed in the countries like Nepal.

This paper has been divided into the five parts. The first part introduces the subject matter. It also discusses methodology and framework of the study. The second part discusses modernity in the context of world order dictated by the global capitalism. The third part creates the national and the international contexts, in which the Lahures became the harbingers of modernity in Nepal. The fourth part consists of the analysis of the film in the light of the ideas developed in the second part. This part also shows how the recent trend of going abroad for foreign employment is the continuation as well as variation of the age old Lahure culture. The fifth section of the paper sheds light on the findings. On the basis of the preceding analysis and discussion, it establishes Nepal's modernity as a peripheral modernity.

Modernity in the Context of Global Capitalism

As modernity and global capitalism go hand in hand, it is important to examine the context in which their relationship has been evolving. In such a context, examining modernity in relation to its historical trajectory sounds relevant. Viewing modernity in terms of its historical trajectory, Vincent Houben and Mona Schrepf claim:

Modernity presupposes, as is implied by standard historical theory, a particular, rational view of the world that has its roots in Europe, where it can be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome, reemerging in Renaissance Italy and coming to full bloom during the Age of Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. This metanarrative has then been extended to include nineteenth century European imperialism in other parts of the world, reaching its culmination in the present condition of globalisation, in which modernity has become a universal phenomenon. (8)

Here, we can see a sweeping look at the history of modernity beginning from the ancient Greek civilization to the present globalization, the climactic point of modernity.

Likewise, the present study, through the analysis of the Lahure culture, examines the history of modernity in Nepal, beginning from the Anglo-Nepal War (1814-16) to the present age of global capitalism.

In this connection, one can borrow the ideas of Andrew Kirkpatrick, who relates modernity to capitalism. He explicates, "Capital has become the universal metalanguage of modernity. It is the single value by which all aspects of life can be measured. Global in its application, the origins of capitalism are inherently international in scope" (39). Kirkpatrick claims that capitalism has rendered modernity with the metalanguage as well as the global dimension. While analyzing capitalism and modernity in Nepal, it is important to place Nepal in the world map. The features of capitalism and modernity in Nepal amply show that Nepal belongs to the periphery of the world order. Deriving from Immanuel Wallerstein, Leslie Sklair observes, "The world-systems approach is based on the distinction between core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral countries in terms of their changing roles in the international division of labour dominated by the capitalist world-system" (40). Indeed, the worldwide reach of capitalism, according to Wallerstein, was

established quite early on in the modern period: "Capitalism was from the beginning an affair of the world economy and not of nation-states. . . . Capital has never allowed its aspirations to be determined by national boundaries" (19). Wallerstein highlights the globalizing tendency of capitalism.

Anthony Giddens also derives the idea from Wallerstein to illustrate how capitalism has grown into a global phenomenon. Giddens seems to agree with Wallerstein's notion of division of the world in terms of the spread of capitalism. Capitalism has this globalizing influence as it is an economic order rather than a political one. Giddens also links modernity to capitalism in this way: "One of the most characteristic forms of disembedding in the modern period, for instance, is the expansion of capitalistic markets (including money markets), which are from relatively early on international in scope" (26). Thus, he presents the global expansion of the market capitalism as a vital feature of modernity. Likewise, Jason L. Powell presents the connection among globalization, modernity and capitalism in these words:

Globalization has a rich history associated with the emergence of modernity. Indeed, the rise of modernity has been defined by a number of historical processes including the Atlantic Slave Trade and attendant institutions of slavery, and European colonization of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The idea of modernity evokes the development of capitalism and industrialisation, as well as the establishment of nation states and the growth of regional disparities in the World system. (3)

Here, one can easily notice colonization and slavery as key historical processes, which were responsible for the rise of modernity, globalization and industrial capitalism. Thus, Powell takes modernity as a legacy of the European culture. He adds, "A hallmark of modernity is the expansion of Europe and the establishment of Euro/American cultural hegemony throughout the world" (3). Along the same line, Stuart Hall, as discussed by Powell, takes "modernity as the dominance of Western economic and cultural interests over the 'rest' of the world. This dominance means the perpetuation of inequality between rich and poor countries and regions. Wallerstein (1980) has described this as the operation of the 'world capitalist order'" (5). In different ways, Hall, Powell and Wallerstein have focused on the capitalist order of Europe as a key factor for the rise of modernity. In such a context, Dipesh Chakrabarty's comment sounds rather poignant: "We are all, one way or another, products of world capitalism and the institutions, practices, and ideas that have accompanied it" (xxi). In this way, several scholars, in different ways, agree with the globalizing tendencies as well as impacts of capitalism.

Then, a question arises: What is the role of peripheral countries like Nepal in the capitalist world order? The periphery, as Perry Anderson remarks, "pioneered the terms of metropolitan advance" (3). Timothy Mitchell also has a revisionary outlook regarding the periphery's role in the emergence of modernity. He argues, "Such questions about the role of the periphery . . . in the genealogy of modernity have shown that we need to reexamine much of the critical writing on the European modern that has shaped our thinking about its passing" (4-5). In the Volume I of *Capital*, Karl Marx relates capitalism to the peripheral countries. Examining the trajectory of the rise of capitalism, Marx locates the periphery as the first source of capital: "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in the mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the hunting of blackskins," according to Marx, "signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production" (703). In the light of such insights of Marx, Mitchell traces out the rise of industrial capitalism as the final achievement of the newlyfound resources in the periphery. He further explicates, "The

production of wealth overseas then gave rise to the protection of trade by the state, the colonial wars, the creation of a national debt, and the introduction of taxation to service it. In the systematic combination of these different colonial elements lay the beginnings of industrial capitalism” (9-10). In this manner, the whole paraphernalia of the capitalist modernity emerged with the rise of capitalism that was based on colonial ventures. Shying away from acknowledging the colonial force as the propeller of history at first, Marx, according to Mitchell, eventually “reveals at the end that force operates upon history itself; contributing to the movement of history, it is therefore something ‘economic’ after all” (1). According to Marx, the effect of colonial force is “to hasten, hothouse fashion, the process of transformation . . . and to shorten the transition. Force is . . . itself an economic power” (703). Here, Marx does not mince his words in singling out the colonial force as the economic power, which has determined the history of the world for the last four hundred years.

In this way, the history of the modern world has followed the singular path of capitalism’s history. According to Mitchell, “The unusual social forms of the colonial system – slaveproduction, protectionism, colonial militarism, the new compulsions of state power – are not diversions from the singular path of capitalism’s history” (11). Instead, they are parts and parcels of the trajectory of the capitalist history. The present study is based on this assumption. In a way, capitalism is another name to modernity. As this study follows the trajectory of modernity spearheaded by capitalism, it takes modernity as a singular phenomenon. Mitchell wants to challenge such a singular western modernity that is based on capitalism so as to highlight the contribution of the peripheral spheres: “It is a question of asking what other histories must be overlooked in order to fit the non-West into the historical time of the West. To acknowledge the constitutive role of these other histories, as Ernesto Laclau among others has argued, would be to deny history – and capitalism – its singularity and to see modernity instead as a contingent process” (11). There is no harm in seeing modernity as a contingent process. But the question is: Does one need to let go of the singular trajectory of capitalism to glean the contribution of peripheral spheres? Maybe reading the same history of capitalism from the perspective of marginalized spheres helps us foreground their contribution to the rise of modernity. Such a reading exposes the underbelly of the history of capitalism.

In such a context, one cannot undermine the uneven relation between different spheres of the world dictated by capitalism. Though modernity is a global phenomenon, it does not get manifested or materialized in different spheres in the same manner. Because of its peripheral status, modernity has not operated as a symmetrical force in Nepal. In this regard, Sanjeev Uprety argues, “The social and economic structure of nation remained largely premodern, the modern discourses of political equality, social justice and democracy were popularized by the leaders of both democratic and leftist parties in this period” (234). Uprety hints at the co-existence of the modern and pre-modern values, practices and institutions. This co-existence of modernity with the pre-modern values and institutions shows the expansion of global capitalism to the periphery and thereby foregrounds the peripheral position of Nepal.

In another case, though the free market has been lauded, the core countries like the USA, China, India, Russia, Germany and France use their military force across the world to safeguard their economic interests just like in the colonial times. With such brute force, they bend the international trade laws and treaties in their favour. As a result, the peripheral countries like Nepal have a very little chance to foster their industries. These states have turned into the managers of the transnational organizations and companies. In such a context, the people of the peripheral countries are bound to migrate

to the core countries and semi-peripheral countries to work as mostly unskilled labourers. Since these peripheral countries do not produce anything, the hard earned remittance gets spent on the goods and services produced by the core countries, resulting into the economic stagnancy. Thus, the peripheral countries like Nepal have been trapped into this vicious circle of poverty, brain drain, international economic migration and outflow of remittance on the import-based international trade. This position in the capitalist world order has its ramifications on modernity of such peripheral states. Their political system, constitution, consumption pattern and lifestyle might look cosmopolitan. Unlike the industrial capitalism, this peripheral capitalism does not seem to be able to tear down the age-old feudal values and practices sustained by fatalism. Dor Bahadur Bista argues that fatalism has led to the failure of Nepal's adaptation to change and development. According to him, fatalism is the upper caste Hinduism, which "contributes to the development of a personality which is devoid of a sense of internalized responsibility towards society at large. Under fatalism, responsibility is continually displaced to the outside, typically to the supernatural" (80). Similarly, fatalism "has had a devastating effect on the work ethic and achievement motivation, . . ." (4). Ultimately, this lack of self-dependence leads the Nepali people to *chakari* ('sychofancy') and *afnomanchhe* ('a close member of a privileged coteries'). Consequently, efficiency, qualification and hard work are simply ignored for the sake of *afnomanchhe*. This is how fatalism works against rationality, maturity, hard work and entrepreneurship required for modernity within Nepal. Neither does Nepal's position in the global capitalist order nor its fatalistic lifestyle favour industrialization. In such a context, even the long international economic migration of the Nepali people has not been able to overhaul the traditional values and practices like *fatalism*, *chakari* and *afnomanchhe*. Therefore, the peripheral modernity, to some extent, is cosmetic modernity, which masks these traditional values and practices.

The Lahures: Harbingers of Modernity

While examining the Lahure culture in relation to the Nepali modernity and global capitalism, it is important to see how the Nepali people had suffered as their young men were lured as well as forced to serve the British Empire as mercenaries. Bhimbahadur Pandey uses the following lines of a song to highlight the sufferings of the family members during the First World War:

Gai palyo banko baghalai

Bhai palyo angreji rajalai.

Reared is the cow only to be eaten by forest's tiger/

Reared is the brother only to be at the service of the English king. (my trans.; 50)

The given lines of the folk song popular in the Nepali villages during the early twentieth century refer to the terror the recruitment of the young Nepali men in the British Indian army had created in the Nepali society. It is essential to examine Nepal's encounter with the East India Company to understand the sentiments carried by these lines. The expanding Nepali Empire and the East India Company collided with each other in 1814. Though this war lasted for two years, it would have numerous long lasting consequences in the history of Nepal. One of such consequences is the Lahure culture, which started with the recruitment of the Nepali young men in the British army. According to Pratyoush Onta, "The Gurkha recruitment into the British service started in 1815 as a byproduct, so to speak, of the war between the East India Company Army and the erstwhile Gorkhali empire" (3). The East India Company had adopted a policy to recruit the Nepali young men to cut down the strength of Nepal from the very beginning of this war. As Nepal surrendered to the East India Company in 1816, Balbhadra Kunwar, the commander of Nalapani fort, went to Lahore with some of his associates and joined the

army of the Ranajit Singh, giving birth to a completely new way of making a living in Nepal. The 'Lahure' culture was a consequence of Nepal's encounter with the British colonial venture, which, in its own right, was also a global capitalist venture. In this British venture, Nepal, as a protectorate of the British empire up to 1923, played its role as a supplier of young men and raw materials and a consumer of British products. In return, Nepal was not annexed and it received a promise of protection from the East India Company. Discussing the win-win situation of the arrangement of Nepal as a protectorate of the British Raj following the Sugauli treaty in 1816, Blaikie et al. argue, "The latter [Nepal] were guaranteed a minimum of support and protection, and-more importantly- virtual insulation from outside pressure for change" (30). No one can deny the colonial aspect of this relation. However, I, in this paper, argue that this very arrangement also unintentionally connected Nepal to the world outside. Because of this arrangement, Jung Bahadur Rana went to Europe. Many Nepali young men, as the soldiers of the British Raj, got opportunities to see what the world outside looked like. Later on, this very Lahure modernity would prove instrumental in constructing the Nepali nationalism within and without the Nepali territory. Furthermore, Nepal was connected to the global economy, supplying raw materials and soldiers to the British Raj, and consuming goods and services produced by industrial countries like British India, Japan and France.

The recruitment of the Nepali young men in the British service, among others, had its financial as well as political dimensions. The Rana rulers like Jung Bahadur Rana and Bir Shamsheer let the East India Company recruit the Nepali young men for the sake of commission as well as the latter's favour in the internal politics. This recruitment touched its peak during the First World War since more than 50,000 Nepali men got recruited. Bhim Bahadur Pandey claims, "It can be said that the First World War of 1971 BS to 1975 BS brought a great economic and social change" (80). The war brought a change in the behaviours and thoughts of the Nepali men from different hill districts. One can observe the entry of several new things like "new foreign behaviors, gadgets, styles, dressing and eating manners, ideas as well as the etiquettes from the overseas did enter for the first time in the long history of Nepal" (Pandey 81). For instance, Jung Bahadur's visit to Europe had also heralded such values and practices to Nepal sixty years before the Nepali young men joined the First World War. However, such values and practices were limited to the ruling elites only. Contrarily, manners, values and practices brought by the Nepali young men from abroad influenced the common people in the hills of Nepal. Thus, their influence was massive. As the Lahures, the Nepali young men "were exposed to the high standard lifestyle and got used to the Western manners- having tea, cigarettes, and wine, regarding money as hand's dirt, the thought that money should be earned and spent as well, and one should have delicious and nutritious food and throw parties for friends" (Pandey 81). Not only had the young men exposed to the modernity changed, but they had also brought changes in the values and practices of the people in their villages. They disseminated the western manners, values and goods in Nepal. Along with these values and manners, the prostitution, gambling, divorce and drinking were introduced by the Lahures following the First World War. Thus, the Lahures became the agents of modernity without any intention on their part. "Nepali soldiers returning home after an exposure to 'modern' ideas," according to Uprety, "played key roles in spreading the ideas, signs and symbols of modernity ..." (234). The Lahure modernity, in this context, emerged as a force to rupture some values and practices. However, it was not strong enough to rupture the age old practices and institutions like the Hindu caste system, sychofancy, favouritism and nepotism. This co-

existence of modernity with pre-modern values highlights the peripheral status of Nepal in the global capitalist order.

From the economic perspective, money, in the form of remittance, was also an important component of this modernity. Since the Lahures had earned money, their families could consume the foreign made products and services. Moreover, money prompted the villagers to follow values and practices ushered by the Lahures. Indeed, they had transformed the structure of the rural economy. As a result, the rural households started transacting in cash along with the barter system. They had brought around 130 million rupees to Nepal years following the First World War. However, Pandey has this to say about money: "The money Lahures brought in 1977/1978 in the hill also proved the bitter truth that a country does not become wealthy and developed only by bringing in a great amount of money from abroad" (89). Even after more than hundred years, this statement still holds water. If the money is not properly invested on manufacturing and other productive sectors, it simply gets spent on foreign goods and services. It leads to the flow of the Nepali money out of the country.

To add to this economic trend in Nepal, since the country's production did not increase as per the increasing demand, the demand for the foreign goods soared up. Not surprisingly, Chandra Shamsher encouraged the import so as to increase the country's income through the import taxes. This rampant import of the foreign goods destroyed the age-old local cottage industries like stone carving and wood carving. However, the other side of this story should also be examined. Because of these Nepali young men who served the British Raj, Chandra Shamsher had his upper hand over the British while negotiating for the review of the 1816 Sugauly Treaty in 1923. Indirectly, the Nepali youths serving the British Raj had helped Nepal win the independence, which it had lost in 1816.

But this global foray of the Nepalis had another dark side, too. Following the First World War, the Nepalis started migrating to other foreign countries in the hope of earning their livelihood. Many of them got stuck in a very poor condition in the foreign countries. Even the Nepali men would go to India to join the army in Lahore. Not all were lucky enough to be soldiers. Some of them ended up being indentured labourers in Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Zanzibar and Fiji to grow tea, coffee and sugarcane for the British imperialists. Nepal's population explosion coupled with the lack of employment opportunities was driving the poor people from the hills to migrate to different parts of India. A large number of Nepali men with the British army did not return to Nepal and settled down in India after their retirement. Out of 11000 Gorkhas released after the First World War, as per David Gellner, "only a third chose to return to Nepal, the rest remaining in India" (13). According to Balikie et al., "By the early 1930s about one Nepalese-born person in twenty was living in India according to Nepalese and Indian census estimates. This proportion has remained almost constant through to the 1960s" (36). This observation reflects Nepal's poverty, illiteracy and autocratic political environment. Eventually, this migration led to the formation of the Nepali diaspora in India, which would become one of the sources of modernity in Nepal. This Nepali diaspora community was more educated and financially stronger than the people in Nepal. But they had to cope with the ethnic discrimination. Therefore, they needed something to unite the Nepali people living in different parts of India. In this context, the role of the retired Nepali soldiers in the diaspora cannot be ignored. According to Pandey, "Around the year 1984 BS, in Dehradun, Mr. Thakurchandan Singh, with an idea of opening the eyes of the Gorkhalis who returned from the First World War, opened 'Gorkha League' and ran two newspapers called 'Gorkha Sansar' and 'Tarun

Gorkha" (71). This Nepali diaspora developed the Nepali linguistic nationalism, which would shape the formation of the Nepali nationalism in Nepal in the days to come.

In spite of being such an important phenomenon in the history of Nepal, the Lahure modernity has been undermined as the very existence of the Lahures has not been acknowledged by the Nepali state. Pratyoush Onta calls these Lahures 'Gurkhas,' who "are known all over the world for their bravery and skills as the finest soldiers in the world. However, in the country of their origin, Nepal, their existence has hardly been officially acknowledged" (Onta ix). The Nepali people do have an image of the soldiers as killing machines without any autonomous intellectual capability. They tend to fall into a trap of stereotypes about these soldiers as frank, stupid, erotic and blood thirsty beasts. Actually, this type of stereotyping has to do with the Hindu caste hierarchy to a great extent. The Hindu upper caste people tend to look down upon the indigenous ethnic communities, which have been placed below the former in the caste hierarchy. They do not accept the food cooked by the people from the indigenous ethnic communities. The people from indigenous ethnic communities are considered physically strong but stupid, dirty and uncivilized. They are called *matwali*, the ones who consume alcohol. These stereotypes spill over to the concept of Lahures in a more exaggerated form because the higher caste people feel challenged by the higher social esteem the Lahures start enjoying because of money they earn. Lionel Caplan explicates that soldiering in the foreign armies continues to be "stigmatized by articulate voices from within the dominant groups . . . as a betrayal of national honour" (53). He states that many Nepalis, especially from the dominant groups, see the continued recruitment of the Gorkhas in the Indian and British armies as "an anomaly in the country's foreign policy, impinging on the country's professed non-aligned, anti-imperial stance" (110). Not surprisingly, the young men, who served the British Raj as soldiers, came from the ethnic communities different from those of rulers. Therefore, the rulers did not want to acknowledge the contribution rendered by these soldiers. The rulers would rather evoke the bravery of the ancestors like Prithvi Naryan Shah, Amar Singh Thapa, Bhakti Thapa and Bal Bhadra Kunwar because they belonged to the rulers' community. The 'imagined community' created by "middle class Nepali men in British India in the early part of this century through the particular promotion of a high culture Nepali language and the writing of a *bir* ['brvae'] national history of Nepal based on the warrior personalities of the 'unification era' (1740-1816) was later improvised by cultural producers inside Nepal" (ix-x). In addition to this, the state under the rule of the Shah monarchy following the collapse of the Rana rule picked it up and endorsed it through the state apparatuses like the nationalized education system. Onta elaborates it with his personal experience: "If Gurkha bravery is how others knew about Nepal, it was certainly not mentioned in my textbook It was not part of the Nepal represented by Balbhadra and other members of the brave pantheon. Gurkhas might have been brave for others but they had no place in our pantheon of brave Nepali heroes" (11). The state, with the help of the education system, forced amnesia on the Nepali people about the Lahures so as to establish a pure saga of bravery of Nepali heroes, who were involved in the Anglo-Nepal War (1814-1816) in which Nepal was defeated at the hands of the East India Company. The narrative of glorious bravery could not accommodate the loss in the war and its byproduct, the recruitment of the Gorkhas. Onta puts it in these words: "The loss in the war and the subsequent beginning of Gurkha recruitment, more often than not, have to be unacknowledged so that a glorious, non-ambivalent and elegant national history of Nepal can be taught to its subject citizens" (41-42). Despite loss, as Nepal was not annexed, its "nationalist rhetoric instead celebrates the above mentioned war as the story of Nepali

bravery at work" (Onta 41). This saga of the Nepali bravery has made the Lahures invisible within their nation.

Summing up, the Lahure modernity is a more complicated phenomenon than it has been taken to be. Its financial and consumerist aspects have become the well-known stories. Its intellectual and political sides have been grossly undermined. However, the indigenous ethnic communities, after the collapse of the autocratic Panchayati system in 1990, have been fighting for getting the due representation of the Gorkhas in the pantheon of brave national heroes. In this manner, "Gurkha military labor and identity are implicated in the history of identity politics of and in Nepal" (Onta 16). A slice of this history of identity politics has been portrayed in Rambabu Gurung-directed film *Anagarik*, which also lays bare the Nepali people's journey from the Lahure culture to the recent labour-oriented foreign economic migration.

The Film and the Lahure Modernity

The story of the film *Anagarik* starts as Lal Bahadur Gurung, a retired Nepali British soldier, returns to his village in Rumjatar located in the eastern part of Nepal. While his children Usha and Ram are growing in the village, Lal Bahadur spends all of his time and money on drinks. The Maoist insurgency looms large in the village. One day, Usha gets killed in an explosion of the pressure cooker bomb planted by the insurgents targeting at the soldiers. Ram's mother, too, falls prey to a mysterious disease and dies as the Shaman (the witch doctor) fails to defeat the evil spirit eating her up. Ram, as a laborious student, passes the SLC in the first division. Despite his grandpa's persistent urge to join the British army, Ram goes to Kathmandu for his further studies. He joins a private college. He makes a few friends over there. He falls in love with Usha, a Gurung girl from Tanahu, a district located in the western part of Nepal. When Ram and his friends, at the request of Usha, go to visit her village, he comes to learn that her family is about to get her married to a British soldier. Disheartened and frustrated, he gets back to Kathmandu. At the completion of graduation, he travels all over the city in search of a job in vain. He is teased by the upper caste officers including his former classmates, instead. As it is not possible to live in the city without a job, he returns to his village mired in insurgency. He is forced to join the Maoist insurgency. One night, when the Maoist cadres beat the Chairperson of the Village Development Committee, he asks them not to use force. In return, his comrades turn upon him. Somehow he manages to escape their clutch and next morning he returns to Kathmandu to save his life. Finally, as he sees no possibility within the country, he decides to go to Hong Kong. The film ends with his departure to Hong Kong.

In the very beginning of the film, one can hear (voice over) and see the following words: "The Sugauli treaty opened up new avenues for recruitment of Nepalese youth in Foreign Army" (*Anagarik* 00:28-00:32). Because of the same policy, the soldiers like Garjaman Gurung and Lal Bahadur Gurung become the harbingers of modernity in Nepal. Though these military mercenaries have brought a few changes in the way they live in their village back in Nepal, they practise the age-old institutions like the shamanism belonging to the Lamaic tradition. The Shaman called for the treatment of Ram's mother manages to diagnose the problem: "She has been under the spell of some evil spirit" (*Anagarik* 8:58-9:01). However, he is defeated at the hands of the evil spirit. The shaman falls flat on the ground. The film portrays him with the help of a top angle shot. This shot foregrounds his helplessness. He surrenders to the evil spirit in this way: "Brother, I drove it away up to Dudhkoshi. But I could not drive it away further from there" (*Anagarik* 13:08-13:15). At the failure of the shaman, Garjaman, Ram's grandfather, leaves everything in the hands of God: "The rest lies in the hands of the

almighty. What can we do?" (*Anagarik* 13:20-13:23). Ultimately, Ram's mother passes away without getting the medical treatment. This scene illustrates modernity's co-existence with the pre-modern values and institutions and such co-existence highlights the condition of the people from the peripheral countries like Nepal.

Ram's father and grandfather, who served the British army, have been brainwashed. As people belonging to the indigenous community that depends on the Lahure culture, they cannot even think of building a career in their own country. Even the people from other communities expect the indigenous youths like Ram to join the army rather than look for other jobs in Kathmandu. As he is looking for a job in Kathmandu, one of the upper caste officers says, "Moreover, you people like Gurungs and Magars should join foreign army, shouldn't you?" (*Anagarik* 1:19:29-1:19:32). Certainly, there is a pressure on him to join the army. As an educated young man, however, he wants to do something in his own country. He considers the service in the foreign army as a modern form of slavery. Responding to his wife, Ram's grandfather expresses his anger at Ram's decision in this way: "Your grandson says he wants to pursue study. He says he won't go [abroad] to become a slave of others" (36:26-36:31). When Ram argues whatever his ancestors have done is enough regarding the foreign army, his father challenges him with these questions: "Does being a Lahure mean only to earn money? Is that what you have understood? Is it not to inherit the name and fame of our ancestors?" (*Anagarik* 37:01-37:11). To his father and grandfather, being a Lahure is a tradition. It has become a part of the identity of the indigenous ethnic communities in Nepal. Even the indigenous ethnic communities, as a part of their political movement, have raised their voice for the Lahures in the foreign armies. Therefore, they have supported the ex-Gorkhas to get equal salaries and pensions. Like the film director Rambabu Gurung, most of these indigenous activists think that the Indian or British Gorkha recruitment is the Nepali state's way of managing the potential rebellion of the indigenous communities of Nepal. Toeing this line of thought, Ram does not want to join the British army even when the recruiters visit his village. He quarrels with his father and grandparents to pursue his higher study in Kathmandu.

Ram performs well in his education because he received his basic education in Hong Kong. Moreover, even in the village of Nepal, he, unlike many other students from the indigenous communities, receives enough resource for pursuing further education because of his father's pension. Because the Lahures are financially stronger than other members of the same community, they are better positioned to educate their children as one can observe in this film. Therefore, most of the young and educated indigenous ethnic professionals, activists and scholars come from the families of the retired soldiers. Some retired soldiers have been involved in different social works like building roads, gardens and hospitals in their respective villages and towns. Deriving from P. Levitt (2001), Kathryn March relates Levitt's notion of 'social remittances,' "to the new Nepalese migrants-as people acquired new social networks and relationships, beyond the traditional boundaries of family, caste, ethnicity, and language. With these ties came new ways of imagining social life" (490). Not only the new Nepali migrants but the Nepali military mercenaries have been involved in such activities in pursuit of fulfilling their new ways of imagining a social life. The foreign employment makes it possible for the Nepalis to imagine and implement a modern social life, which goes beyond the traditional boundaries. This is how modernity seeps into Nepal from abroad with the help of economic migration. Unfortunately, in its bid to highlight the plight of the soldiers from indigenous communities, the film has failed to highlight such role of the retired soldiers like Lalbahadur Gurung and Garjaman Gurung. Even the contribution these men have rendered to the education and overall well-being of their children has remained

underappreciated. However, to this day, the children of the retired Gorkhas, in comparison to their counterparts from non-Gorkha families, are likely to be better fed, clothed and educated.

In the case of Ram, his exposure to the modernity in Hong Kong helps him figure out things in Kathmandu. In the context of the indigenous ethnic communities, most of the people, owing to the Lahures, get to experience and practise modernity. Ram's awareness about the lowly status of indigenous people in the Nepali state apparatuses springs from modernity attached to the Lahure culture that he hates now. Once he fails to get a job in Kathmandu, he returns to his village, ignoring his grandfather's advice to join the British army. When he is chased away by his own fellow Maoists, he, as an economic migrant, decides to fly to Hong Kong. He says, "Sushil, it seems that our forefathers had only saved the sky for us in this country. They had not saved air to breathe. The river was ours but the water was already at the hands of others" (*Anagarik* 1:34:56-1:35:11). Not only the indigenous people like him, the majority of the young people from all the communities from Nepal- as there is a lack of job opportunities resulted by corruption, political instability and absence of industrialization triggered by the feudal values and practices like nepotism, favoritism and fatalism- are forced to leave Nepal in search of jobs. Against this background, to ordinary Nepali citizens, even the ones from the upper castes, it is not easy to go to Hong Kong. For example, Sushil, another Gurung young man aspiring to join the British army, fails to join the army and does not have a British or Hong Kong ID. Therefore, he makes fun of the Lahure culture prevailing in the indigenous communities in this way: "They fulfill the dreams of some and make ashes of that of many others. We are victims of the Lahures" (*Anagarik* 1:15:55-1:16:00). Sushil's argument manifests the hazardous impacts of the Lahure culture on the young people of the indigenous communities. Indeed, the indigenous people have been victimized by the Lahure culture in some ways. But at the same time, being a Lahure, as Sushil's expression reflects, has become the ultimate point of success in the indigenous ethnic communities in Nepal. The very Gorkha army has a provision of ID card for the offspring born abroad. Disillusioned with his ideals about his country, Ram takes advantage of this ID card to go abroad to earn his livelihood. His imagination to become a foreign economic migrant, ironically, is also associated with the Lahure culture. Like his father and grandfather, he is forced to leave the country for survival. Yubraj Limbu has an insightful opinion about the film as he says, "After watching the film, it becomes crystal clear that previously, the state, by negotiating with the East India Company, sent them to the foreign land to avoid the possibility of rebellion; today their children are forced to migrate as they are deprived of consumption of the state's resources" (46). The only difference is that they were soldiers with the British army whereas Ram is an economic migrant.

In the Nepali language of everyday use, other economic migrants like Ram are also called 'Lahure'. Indeed, David Seddon and his co-authors coined the term "the new lahures" to describe these new migrants" (qtd. in O'Neill 312). The economic migrants do not necessarily agree with this term 'new Lahure'. O'Neill echoes this: "New lahure, is, however, an etic category that the young domestic workers I interviewed did not identify with" (312). On the surface, economic migrants and military mercenaries, however, are not similar. Unlike the military mercenaries like Ram's father and grandfather, the new Nepali economic migrants "can be seen as a modern nation-version of the indentured labourers who ended up in Fiji at the end of the nineteenth century" (Gellner 21). Failing to understand the way multinational capitalist ventures and national leaders have victimized them, the economic migrant, just like the mercenary soldier, regards himself to be "a pawn in a global game in which he is forced to play a victim"

(Brusle 217). The involvement of the Nepali people, as soldiers and labourers, in the dirty and dangerous works justifies the conflation of migrants with the military mercenaries and this conflation “constructs them as post-colonial subjects on a global front, in the pay of contemporary warlords and/or colonial masters” (O’Neill 312). In all, the prevalence of both the military mercenaries and economic migrants from Nepal hints at Nepal’s position as a periphery to different phases of global capitalism: coloniality and global modernity. The economic migrants, both the labourers and military mercenaries, in A. Gardner’s words, are “transnational proletariats” (49). Therefore, the Nepali term ‘Lahure’ still resonates well among the Nepali people. Broadly speaking, Ram ends up following the path trodden by his predecessors.

The Lahure Modernity: Modernity at the Periphery

India has been recruiting the Nepali young men since the British left India in 1947. Britain has also been recruiting the Nepali young men at a very small scale since then. In both the cases, the Nepali young men, as soldiers, have been working for the global capitalist forces. Slowly, other Nepali young men, who failed to get recruited or who would not be recruited owing to their caste, started migrating to different countries, especially to India. After the 1990s, they started migrating to Malaysia and Gulf countries. In the recent years, they have also started migrating to the highly industrialized countries like the USA, Japan, Israel and Australia for job opportunities. Because of this, the meaning of the term ‘Lahure’ has expanded to include all the Nepali men and women, who migrate abroad for earning money. In this way, the remittance modernity is simply a continuation of the ‘Lahure’ culture with a few changes here and there. At present, along with money earned by the young men working for the Indian, the British and the Singaporean armies, the money pouring in Nepal especially from Malaysia and Gulf countries is the lifeline to modernity in the rural areas of Nepal. One of the offshoots of global capitalism, economic migration really kept the national economy afloat when all the economic and development activities within the country had come to a halt during the Maoist insurgency. Deriving from Adhikari and Seddon et al., David Gellner claims, “Between them diaspora and India and the more recent diaspora populations around the world have contributed enormous remittances that have effectively kept Nepal going as an economy through the disastrous lost years of civil war (1996-2006)” (19). Nevertheless, one must question the rising consumerism, violation of human rights of the third world employees and sustainability of the remittance driven economy. All these are the byproducts of global market capitalism.

The Lahure modernity is important in the context of Nepal for several reasons. Firstly, it is not limited to the elite class. Its influence is widespread. The Nepali young men and women, who go abroad for earning money, have been the most important source of heralding modernity in Nepal as they get exposed to all sorts of values and institutions associated with modernity. Moreover, they have brought money, which has boosted consumerism in Nepal. Many of these soldiers from Nepal and the Indian diaspora have been an important part of political change in Nepal. In addition, the Lahure modernity, in different ways, connected Nepal to the global capitalism even before Nepal completely opened itself up to the world outside in 1951. In the recent years, too, Nepal heavily depends on remittance. The Nepali state collects capital from these migrants under different excuses like passport fee, labour permit fee, no objection letter fee, income tax and others. Remittance, on the other hand, has spiked up consumerism, which is firmly connected the Nepalis to the suppliers of goods and services from India and China, two rising global capitalist players. Global capitalism has led to “the perpetuation of gross inequalities, but also what has been referred to as the

'Coca-Colonization' (Vincent 1999) of the world, whereby the Third World populations are incorporated into the western economy as passive consumers of standardized products and nothing more" (Powell 5). This is also the case of Nepal. The Nepali people, in the absence of local industries, have become passive consumers of the products of the industrial countries like China, India, Japan and some western countries. In addition, Nepal's fatalistic culture is not favourable to development and industrialization. In the absence of strong domestic industrialization, the people do not get jobs within Nepal. Therefore, the young people, as soldiers or unskilled labourers, have been serving different global capitalist players for earning money. Meanwhile, Nepal suffers from a huge trade deficit as the money received as remittance flows to the industrial countries, which supply goods and services to Nepal. All these things are made more complicated by the prevalence of Nepal's fatalistic culture. Therefore, even the long history of migration with a rich exposure to modernity outside has not been able to change the Nepali society at the institutional level. Instead, the remittance based capitalism seems to have reinforced the prevailing values and institutions. The Nepali people seem to be modern at the level of consumption. Underneath they have remained the same despite their connection to the world outside. Not only do these findings foreground economic, social, political and intellectual roles of the economic migrants, but they also add to the ongoing debates on the conditions of postcolonialism, global capitalism and migration in the context of Nepal.

Conclusion

In conclusion, on the basis of the analysis of the Lahure culture in Rambabu Gurung's directorial debut Nepali film *Anagarik* in the light of discourses of modernity, the present study sheds light on the significance of the Gorkhas, who served the British empire, in heralding modernity in Nepal. As the first ever foreign economic migrants, they were responsible for disseminating modernity at the grassroot level in Nepal. The Nepali foreign economic migrants – both the soldiers and unskilled or semi-skilled labourers – have given the Nepali economy its lifeline through remittance. However, the practice of Nepali people migrating abroad in pursuit of job opportunities as soldiers or labourers exposes Nepal's position as a peripheral country in the international division of labour dictated by global capitalism. Thus, the consumption oriented modernity of Nepal shows the signs of the peripheral modernity, which by and large, masks the age-old values and practices.

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