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Research Article

Political Demonstrations, Nepali Youths and the Politics of Mourning: A Semiotic Analysis

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Abstract

This paper analyses mainly three representative photographs of the spectacles of mourning as displayed in Fig. 1, 2 and 3 that come to surface during political and social demonstrations in Kathmandu and other towns occasionally. Such spectacles used by political parties and social activists include clean-shaved-head, white linen clothes, burial shroud, bamboo bier, and fire. Together, they give a picture that a mock funeral of Hindu order is being staged. My major concern is to answer these questions: Why do Nepali youths stage such semiotics of sad worldview at times when their transitional politics and society is often praised for being dynamic? Why do they bring such religiously subjective and familial spectacles into the public ripened with politics? I argue in the line of argument developed by political philosophers Friedrich Hegel and Slavoj Zizek and psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud and Carl G. Jung to reach a conclusion that such spectacles evoke the complex state of Nepali youths' political subjectivity. While staging such mock funerals, they stage their helplessness of being youths of a donor-dependent and Hindu patriarchal nation that has been going through transitional politics.

Keywords: Death rites, spectacles, subjectivity, performativity

Introduction

The political subjectivity of Nepali youths is a subject of broader studies. The Nepali youths own over nine-decade-long history of political movements and expressions. Nepal's social, political and cultural historians regard the 1930s as the decade of the rise of political consciousness. This was the decade when educated Nepali youths emerged as a power-sharer in the 'order of things' required to run a nation-state. The force they created in Kathmandu, the capital city, did challenge the autocratic Rana regime (1846-1950) for the first time, right in front of their power seat. The USA-born Nepali historian Ludwig Stiller points out the connectivity between the force that had existed in Kathmandu by the 1920s with the one that emerged in the then Indian cities,

mainly Calcutta (167). A mention should be made here that most of the Ranas and other members of elite class who had had certain conflicts with the ruling class Ranas here in Kathmandu would settle or live in exile in Calcutta. Nepali youths from Calcutta expressed not only liberal political views familiar to them but also personal and familial anger and frustration at the ruling Rana families in Kathmandu. Similarly, Nepali Historian L.S. Baral adds that Banaras as a city of learning and publication of Nepali language and literature in 1920s and 1930s did also play a significant role to gather like-minded Nepali youths who sought for political freedom in their home nation (56-57). Such force gathered in Banaras and Calcutta sent ripples on a regular basis to Kathmandu, where a significant number of youths had already formed a force. In no time the very force generated in and around Trichandra College, Kathmandu played an instrumental role to support, expand and disseminate the revolutionary ideas across the nation. John Whelpton, a British-born Nepali historian, writes that during Bhim Shamsheer Rana's time, a small group of would-be revolutionaries (Prachanda Gorkha) had been broken up and the members imprisoned (66-67). This 1931 phenomenon is taken as the beginning of new era in Nepal's modern history. For instance, Nepali youths were ready to suffer and take risks for changes they were discussing about became a reality. It moved youths within and outside the valley. As a result, Nepali youths' voice got heard, and geared the social and political movement that would bring an epoch making change in 1950. In doing so, Nepali youths expressed their desire to get recognized as political beings. Tired and suffocated of existing autocratic political atmosphere of the Rana regime (1846-1950), Nepali youths can be said to have decided to address 'the cognitive dimension of the emotions', a term that Kathleen Woodward uses to explain and expand Sigmund Freud's term 'strong desire'. She elaborates Freud's aforementioned phrase further: "We speak approvingly of self-reflexive thought, of thought that turns back on itself, interrogating its foundations, its principles, its implications, its consequences" (92). Nepali youths formed a collective force that could question their social and political beings. They did not want to be the way they were expected to be. Many of them were arrested, got jailed for years, and four of them were hung in 1941. Gangalal Shrestha, one of the martyrs, was just twenty-one years old when he was hung. Thus, the era of expressing political dream and message began through protests and rallies, pamphlets and songs. The length of paper does not allow me to follow the historicity of Nepali youth organizations mainly those affiliated to Nepali Congress, Nepal Communist Party and also the Panchayati Regime (1960-1990). But a mention should be made here that every major political party in Nepal has one or other sister organizations as youth supporters for the party. The subject of my paper limits me to concentrate on the mock funerals that the political parties and social activists stage to make them heard among the general public.

The social activists staging mock funerals in Fig. 1 and 2 below belong to the post-1990 politically liberated Nepal. Anthropologically speaking, most of such activists are university graduates, and they come from multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-economic backgrounds. Since most of the recent activism center on women, Dalit and other marginalized group's rights, the group of social activists include not only the activists specializing on the area of issue but also the members of the target communities. In his study about the anthropological characteristics of Nepali social activists, Mrigendra Karki and David Gellner write that the social activists "come from families with a history of political involvement" and some had "fathers who held office in the Panchayat regime," and many are the "sons or wives of those who were early members of the movement" (22). Karki and Gellner made this observation in the first half of 2000s. Fluent in their expression both written and spoken mediums, these activists

generate opinions through disseminating views via social media. They hold protests in the city and also conduct site-based activities. On top of that, they also live in the era when the influence of I/NGOs in the opinion making sphere in Nepal has increased over the years. Mukta S. Tamang, a senior Nepali anthropologist, points out that social activism has played an important role on the domain of raising consciousness of women's rights and identity. After the proliferation of NGOs as "external support became an important part of women's mobilization. Women's groups were formed, and income-generating activities and awareness-raising were extended even to remote corners of the country. NGOs' activities also fostered research on and media advocacy for the rights of women" (98). The social activists pick these issues, which can be communicated directly with the public. They reach out to the donors, media networks and caucus of I/NGOs working on the similar line of issues, and of course with local and regional political leaders. With the rise of Bhagirathi Bhatta's case, the social activists who had been making activism for the justice of Nirmala Panta geared up their effort. The intensity of their activism increased, it drew the attention of the public and pressurized the government. The social activists as represented in Fig. 1 and 2 themselves become an issue. They become "Nirmala Panta" and "Bhagirathi Bhatta". They embody the persona of the victims. They invite the victims' family members to the rally. They create a moment in such a way that the government is projected as the antagonist, someone trying to protect the perpetrators. The storyline of Panta and Bhatta becomes the plot. This could be one of the reasons why the activists invite the theatre artists so that the spirit of empathy with the victims become more lively and stronger.

The Collective Campaign for Peace (CoCAP), an NGO, founded in 2002, had played a very active role in galvanizing the force that brought such a kind of processions and spectacles in the capital city. As part of the movement, it had also helped Panta's parents join the procession, arranged their meeting with the state heads such as the President, Prime Minister, Home Minister and the representatives of the National Human Rights Commission and National Women's Commission and Nepal. Still under the grief, the senior Pant couple felt a certain relief for getting their grief recognized by a wider public. The CoCAP's official website introduces the organization as a "nationwide coalition comprising 43 non-governmental organizations dedicated to promoting Peace and Human Rights in Nepal". It further states that its members come from the marginalized areas such Karnali and Madhesh. It claims to have 43-member NGOs operating various programs in 29 districts simultaneously.

The political culture of displaying semiotics imbued with a political message originated in Nepal in the 1930s. Several Nepali youths had to sacrifice their lives and many of them had to go to jail, and many also had to live in exile for creating thought-provoking political messages during the last decade of the Rana regime (1846-1950). But by the 1990s in Kathmandu such practice was no longer limited to the political leaders and cadres alone. The social activists in charge of running I/NGOs in Nepal also started to create spectacles to hit the issues where it mattered most in the 1990s. In the present political context, they are seen occupying streets and public spaces in Kathmandu and elsewhere to sensitize various social issues. Unlike their political predecessors, they get support from free media. Similarly, the political cadres live through an ideologically divided society that has been going through historically major political changes. They display visuals that are direct, i.e. understood by the general public. In doing so, they happen to channelize their vulnerabilities and complexities out to the public.

In this particular research, the mock funeral spectacles used by the political parties and social activists in Nepal, mainly in Kathmandu, have been reported in media but not theorized and addressed academically. The Nepali political scientists and

historians have analyzed the changes that Nepal has been going through. I have not come across them studying the semiotics of protests as a significant issue. The spectacles discussed below seem to have been overlooked as something ordinary, not worth for serious attention. The free media has also been using such visuals to increase viewership as it were. I would like to fill this very gap with a message that visuals used by the political cadres and social activists, mainly the spectacles of mourning, become very important texts. They reflect the psychosocial and political self of Nepali youths of the present times. As a qualitative based research, the objective of this paper is to expose the hidden message behind such visuals or semiotics, i.e. deep down Nepali youths are tired of the patriarchal structure of their society, and they also loath their nation's political economic dependency on the globally powerful nations. Methodologically speaking, this paper uses the critical ideas such as 'will' and 'subjectivity', explained by G. W. F. Hegel, Slavoj Zizek, Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung. I believe that since Nepali youths belong to a patriarchal society, and also live through times when the geopolitical order determines Nepali politics, such visuals they bring out in the street define their stand indirectly displaying their deeply bruised psyche. While displaying their anger and frustrations, they also happen to communicate the helplessness and vulnerable situations that they have been caught into.

Political Demonstrations in Kathmandu: A Case

As a student of performance studies and someone who has lived through Nepal's transitional politics, I have often gone through several political rallies and demonstrations. Usually, the demonstrators burn tyres and vehicles used by the government officials, destroy railings, and also burn effigies of political leaders. Such spectacles have remained the most-watched visuals of protests in the post-1990 political context of Nepal. Almost all these spectacles are cosmopolitan in their nature as they can be seen being staged globally. But the spectacles of mock funeral and cremation of the Hindu order, which started surfacing since the beginning of 1990s, evoke the visual responses which are unique to the Nepali society. The protest rallies and *dharna* or sit-in programs staged by the civil rights activists' organizations have started holding such mock funerals as well in the recent years. As part of their support and solidarity, occasionally the theatre artists also join such mock funeral spectacles on behalf of the organizers. In addition, such scenes go viral if they are executed properly and the media coverage makes a feast of such spectacles.



Fig. 1. A political demonstration with visuals of mock funeral during the protests organized by CoCAP in Kathmandu on 12 February 2021

In Fig. 1, a political demonstration participated by the social activists associated to CoCAP, the umbrella organization of 43 active NGOs in Nepal, drew the attention of media and the public. The KP Sharma Oli-led Nepali government had started to face challenges from within the party and beyond, and had to resign the same year in July.



Fig. 2. A political demonstration held by CoCAP in Kathmandu on 12 February 2021

Fig. 2 demonstrates that the artist performing the raped and killed victim is carrying a serious expression in her face. Meant to be photographed and circulated through print and social medias, the artist protestors acted out in emotionally loaded spectacles.



Fig. 3. A political demonstration on 20 February 2022 in protest of MMC

In Fig. 3, the cadres of several Nepali Communists parties, mainly of the radical wing held a political demonstration against the MCC (the Millennium Challenge Corporation), an economic package the American government wanted to provide for the Nepali people and government. The cadres burnt a shroud of the US government on 20 February 2022. The very parties which had sent their cadres to display such semiotics of mourning and violent order later formed the government and signed the deal with the US government to let the project begin in Nepal.

I would like to concentrate on visuals from Fig. 1 and 2 taken by Naresh Shrestha for *The European Press Agency* on 12 February 2021 and the photograph in Fig. 3 taken by Navish Chitrakar for *The Reuters* on 20 February 2022, which appeared

in the “in brief” column. The photographs by Shrestha exhibit satire to the government that had failed to arrest the rapists and killers of Nirmala Panta and Bhagirathi Bhatta in the western part of Nepal. Nirmala Panta, a girl in her early teens from Kailali, the western part of Nepal, was raped and killed in a local sugarcane field on 27 July 2018. On top of that, Bhagirathi Bhatta was raped and left dead on 5 February 2021. The culprit in the second rape case has been arrested but not the ones from the first. Many demonstrations were held immediately after the news of Bhatta’s rape and death as the unsolved case of Nirmala had stimulated the protest.

The burial shroud, the four cot careers, all of them wrapped in white are very powerful semiotics in Nepal’s Hindu society. The man in lead is blowing the crunch. At such occasions, it should be blown in a scale without any progressive increase of intensity in sound. Above all, the girl protester artist who is performing the role of the victim, and also the calm expression she is carrying in her face is something remarkable in the figure. These spectacles seem to have been executed with an intention to get noticed in the media. Unlike the visual in Fig. 3, the ones in Fig. 1 and 2 are more serious and less ideological. They are different as they are well-executed, and ‘artistic’ in their format. Several protest rallies organized to safeguard the human rights and justice related issues are often supported by the performing artists of the capital city and elsewhere voluntarily and sometimes upon the request of the organizers. Though attended by comparatively a smaller number of supporters, the organizers seem to have shared the message with the general public that justice delayed is justice denied. By creating such spectacles, they send the message that the pain is still fresh, the case should not go into oblivion. Panta’s plight is a continuum; her ghost is bound to haunt; and Bhatta’s case is the proof. The culprit in the case of Bhatta was later made public and sentenced.

The visual in Fig. 3 by Navish Chitrakar for *The Reuters* captures the angry mood of the cadres of some Nepali communist political parties of radical wing, the segment of the coalition government that had been formed after KP Oli led government had resigned. As a demonstration staged to oppose the proposed MCC support that the US government was about to provide Nepal with the support package, it wanted to share the message with the public that the political parties were still with their older agenda. Later, the bill for accepting the same support was passed by the government that was formed by the same political parties which had sent their cadres to protest through holding such spectacles of anger few weeks earlier: “All mainstream communists supported the agenda contrary to their previous negative stand regarding the MCC” (189), comments Lok Raj Baral, a senior political scientist. I would like to draw the attention, using a piece of white clothes wrapped round the head of protestors, the effigy being covered in the white linen, and the green bamboo-cot the effigy had been carried in before it was cremated. All these symbols come from the pantheon of rituals that the Hindus in Nepal and elsewhere hold while taking the corpse to the cremation site or *smashanghat*. The protesters seem to be sending the message that they mourn to get rid of the subject, i.e. the American influence into Nepal’s economy and politics.

Though it is a mock funeral, such combo of spectacles draws the attention of media and onlookers. On the other hand, in a Hindu society like Nepal one is expected to mourn for the loss of closed kith and kin only. It is not mandatory to shave one’s own head for the loss of the person other than your own parents, prescribe the *Dharmashastras* or the religious canonical texts. Moreover, the act of mourning is regarded as a serious affair culturally and spiritually. The mourners are expected to inculcate ability to control anger and earthly desires during the period.

Nepali Youths and the Politics of Mourning

As soon as the protestors as shown in Fig. 1, 2 and 3 come out in the street, many times the Nepal police force is bound to intervene. The more the police force intervenes the louder the message of spectacles is heard by the public. The presence of influential politicians and celebrities around the funeral procession adds more political fuel to the demonstrations. Since most of such acts take place because of the agenda of one or other political party, the staggers of mock funeral become their political parties. In a sense, the political subjectivity of these youths becomes part of the 'will' of their political leaders in a similar line Fredrich Hegel elaborates the connectivity between subjectivity that an individual tends to live with and the 'will' of others:

The basis of the will's existence [Existerzz] is now subjectivity, and the will of others is the existence [Existerzz] which I give to my end, and which is for me at the same time an other. The implementation of my end therefore has this identity of my will and the will of others within it - it has a positive reference to the will of others. (139)

The youth protesters and mourners become inseparable from their political party agenda. The protester mourners feel oneness with their leaders, party's agendas and rhetoric.

The mock funeral staggers appear on street and join the protest rally. They do it with a purpose to expand political influence and recognition for their leaders, to increase the number of voters, or keep the general supporters busy with the existing order in the political party. Similarly, the political parties' ruling elites allow such spectacles to be staged as they become louder and easily understood by the public. As the creators of visual texts, the protestors borrow such elements from rituals, cultures and spiritualism and use them in a way they want them to be taken. The cadres, mainly the Nepali youths, undermine the religious and ritual dimensions of such acts. In this case, Slavoj Zizek critiques the way political and other forms of power manipulate the psyche of individual citizens in the liberal political world of twenty-first century: "What he takes for his innermost conviction is nothing but the narcissistic vanity of his null subjectivity ... the 'truth' of what we are saying depends on the way our speech constitutes a social bond, on its performative function, not on the psychological 'sincerity' of our intention" (239). In the liberal political context of Nepal, the individual protestor does not take the 'sincerity' of mourning into consideration. He or she goes for the mourning veiled in the propaganda and rhetoric of his or her political party. It is taken as being a 'sincere' follower of the party's ideological stand point at a particular juncture of ongoing political drama.

Collectively, such protestors bring ritually potent visuals and decontextualize them to create a larger impact on the mind of the general public. The individual protestor loses his or her subjectivity in the mass that comes out to stage their political agenda veiled in propaganda. Carl Gustav Jung points out about the danger of living at times when masses and data define the society, "...we are all fascinated and overawed by statistical truths and large numbers and are daily apprised of the nullity and futility of the individual personality, since it is not represented and personified by any mass organization" (25). Nepal's transitional politics from 1990 has centered on bringing the supporters on the street, providing a pressure on the opponent political parties. An individual participant attending such rallies attains the collective identity recognized by their party. Once an individual becomes a group, a political party representing a certain ideology of time, as Freud hypothesizes, he or she becomes "extraordinarily credulous and open to influence, it has no critical faculty, and the improbable does not exist for it. It thinks in images, which call one another up by association... and whose agreement with reality is never checked by any reasonable function [Instanz]" (4354). Nepali youths

freed from the party-less Panchayat regime (1960-1990) entered the new era of exhibiting agenda in order to beat the opponents and garner support from the general public in whatever manner that worked. Nepal's 1990 political opening brought a new political spirit among the general public. A new set of Nepali rulers needed to invent unique ways to discover and occupy the space once that belonged to the leaders of the Panchayat regime.

The spectacles of mourning in a real life make people go emotional and solemn. In a Hindu society, watching a funeral procession is taken as the trace of the grand philosophy that life is transitory in this world, and fooling oneself in the *samsara* or humbug of life is a very trivial. The members of one family and clan tend to forget their animosity and rivalries against the members of other clan and family at such moments of mourning. They even try to wipe out the existing gap between and among themselves. One defines one's own sociability and humanity on such occasions. In an ordinary Nepali person's imagination, attending the funeral ritual as a *malami* or attender, and participating as a *janti*/ a fellow participant in the marriage ritual is considered a significant marker of socialization. Contrarily, the protestors act out in such spectacles of mock funerals and mourning (see Fig. 3) in order to widen a certain gap between the subject whose image is cremated and the political party. In the case of visuals of Fig. 1 and 2, the mourners are enthusiastic to keep the issue of giving justice to Panta and Bhatta alive. They want to pressurize the government and concerned authorities to accept the urgency of the cases. As observed by the members of victims' families as well as the general public, the mock funeral procession keeps the issue raw, and sends the message that pain is too raw to be undermined at any cost.

Fig. 3 reflects the leftist cadres' hypothesis that the MCC support is the American encroachment into Nepal's politics and economy. Historically speaking, the American support to Nepal goes as early as the 1950s as Nepal was the first nation to receive financial support that the American government provided as part of its cold war strategies in this subcontinent. Discussing this historical origin of the American presence in Nepal's politics, Lok Raj Baral writes, "Communist victory in China in 1949 and the integration of Tibet into it changed the geopolitical situation, with all non-communist powers becoming preoccupied with the containing of China. The USA took interest by providing aid to Nepal and was followed by India" (168). China, India and America's interest and preferences on Nepal's politics and politicians have still remained a continuum. Though observed by the fellow comrades and the general public in the street, the target audience of such anti-American spectacles are the supporters of left political parties of Nepal at home and abroad. The creators of such spectacles stage a propaganda that the American support is bound to challenge the national integrity in Nepal. The political leaders sending their cadres on street to act out such propaganda behind the scene become scriptwriters, choreographers and directors of the show. Somewhere scattered across times and places, the anti-American political parties are expected to associate with such images and rhetoric for some time now. By the very performative nature of such acts carry "representation in dramatic form, as movements engage emotions inside and outside their bounds attempting to communicate their message. Such performance is always public, as it requires an audience which is addressed and must be moved" (193) argues Ron Eyerman, a performance studies scholar. As a public event, the mock funeral performance is expected to be watched live and read as reported in the media. Importantly, it is also expected to be noticed by the allies working with the American government.

The practice of death rites is one of the most seriously followed acts among the Hindus in Nepal and elsewhere. An act of mourning gathers symbols and props, texts

and priests, robes and foods and a whole gamut of intangible skills of handling such paraphernalia. Moreover, the *Dharmasastras* (Religious texts) state that mourning has to be handled in a very careful manner. Neither should individuals mourn less nor should they mourn more than it is required. The spectacles displayed in such real occasions are expected to contain the symbolic meanings, and questioning them would be going against the *Dharma*. They meant to be carried out without any arrogance, anger and prejudices. The mourners are supposed to live with *tabula rasa*, i.e. they are not supposed to demonstrate any prejudice and preconditional thoughts and emotions with their former enemies. Honoring the philosophical vision behind going through such mourning, the *Dharmashastras* and handbooks written on how to handle death rites mention, “The final *sanskara* (antyeshti), when performed with understanding and sincerity, undoubtedly help an individual connected to the deceased, go through the bereavement process and emerge from it, as a more mature individual. Thereby, the bereavement process also becomes a spiritually uplifting one” (iii). Mourning on a certain context is an act of embodying the vision of the deceased persona. Like an artist embodying the life of fictional character, the mourners are expected to acquire new social and cultural roles and visions now. In the case of Fig. 1 and 2, the mourners carry a serious mood, they seem to be guided by the zeal to keep the case of Nirmala fresh in the mind of the leaders and the general public and the media-portals. But in the case of Fig. 3, the mourners are not the mourners but the death-wishers, i.e. the enemy mourners, the ill-wishers.

Since Nepal has been going through the transitional politics, formation and dissolution of coalition and alliance between and among the political parties has become a common phenomenon in contemporary Nepal. In addition, the Nepali politics has created its own challenges from within and outside. The political leaders are credited for bringing historical changes in the nation as well as are criticized for not sharing power in a democratic manner within their own party cadres. Krishna Hacchethu, a Nepali political scientist, observes that the major political parties of Nepal need to address “broad-based representation of different segments of society in the party structure” (46) as part of the political spirit of the current times. Similarly, the youths remain the least represented in the central committee of major political parties. Populated with the senior leaders over the seventy years of their age, majority of central committees give an impression as if the youths do not meet the requirement for the leadership. On the other hand, the senior leaders guided Nepali politics seem to have fallen into a hopeless situation. Lok Raj Baral, who has followed and researched on the Nepali politics for the last sixty years, criticizes the political order of Nepal of the recent years in the following manner: “The ideological ambiguity of the political parties, emotive elite behaviors, lack of institutional culture for running governments and parties, rampant corruption that has crept into the body politic, too much externalization of domestic politics and increasing role of geo-politics are some of the causes for democratic decay” (*The Kathmandu Post*, 30 December 2021). At such contexts when cadres and protesters come out with such spectacles, they also come out with political complexities of the time. They come out with the metaphors of their deep seated frustration and aspirations as well.

The Semiotics of Mock Burial Shrouds

To the surprise of youth mourners, as shown in Fig. 3, their leaders keep on meeting the representatives of the American government, also frequently visiting America. The American representatives make a frequent visit to Nepal. The MCC has taken its pace and is often perceived as an American tackle to balance the increasing Chinese influence in Nepal. It is still a force to reckon with such situation no matter how

many times the American flag is burnt on the streets of Kathmandu. Often times such 'dead' force makes dialogues with the leaders of mourners. At such shifting politics of Nepal, the spectacles of mourning also acquire similar attributes. The spectacles become ephemeral visuals. Such acts of mourning are not meant to be taken seriously but forgotten. In addition, they might also appear again. Since the funeral is not the real funeral, the mourners are not the real mourners and the institution that is supposed to have died or ceased miserably is having good times with its influence in a global political order, there is nothing to be afraid and ashamed of. The spectacles of mourning burn themselves not the institution whose death is being staged. Since such spectacles potent with religious and spiritual meanings are the symbols taken out of the contexts, they are expected to be treated in free and liberal manners in the post-1990 political contexts of Nepal. The treatment of such serious and ritually potent symbols can be considered a metaphor of society that has been learning to use such symbols to communicate as the political idioms of a new order. As choreographers, designers and performers of such drama, the leaders and their cadres seem to be celebrating not the truths but the rhetoric of their times and places.

Moreover, the age, cultural background and political context the staggers of such funeral come from themselves become a subject that demands a deeper psychological study. Most of the staggers are found to be youths, mainly males coming from the middle class religious and economic backgrounds. Given the fact that they come from a patriarchal Hindu society in which acquiring leadership and property from their parents needs them go through a serious process. Death of their parents mainly father is supposed to bring or herald the decision-making responsibility and freedom in them. Mourning the loss of father is ritually speaking a process of earning fatherhood, such as a transfer of leadership of the family in the younger generation. Psychologically speaking, mourning one's own father's death is like mourning the death of a son within. A son, dependent on his father, dies during such ritual performance. At a context when most of the politically influential or mass-based parties are led by the senior politicians, their numbers and longevity are naturally taken as a blockage to the rise of youths to the position of leadership. On top of that, such political leaders are supposed to work carefully given the nature of geopolitical order that Nepal has to tackle with. India, China and America being the major influencers in Nepal's political order, the mourners indirectly express their desire to get rid of the 'father' figure as well. When the youths stage a drama of funerals of such order, they may not only be saying enough with dominance of globally powerful nations; indirectly, they may also be telling or demonstrating a political zeal to rise up. They may also be demonstrating a frustration of living with ambitions in a 'father' dominated patriarchal Hindu society that has to work its politics keeping the geo-political order in its preference. Evoking the role as the human anger plays at the subconscious level, Sigmund Freud observes, "Anger has adequate reactions corresponding to its cause. If these are not feasible, or if they are inhibited, they are replaced by substitutes. Even angry words are substitutes of this kind. But other, even quite purposeless, acts may appear as substitutes" (150). The visual shown in Fig. 3 is on the surface that may look like anti-American government; at deeper level it expresses the protestor youths' desire for freedom and independency.

As shown in Fig. 1 and 2, the social activists mourn to extend their empathy with the kith and kins of Bhatta and Panta. They send the message to the government to realise the urgency of the issue, and the measures to be taken. With the general public, the mourners are sending the message that no one's daughter or sister is safe on the land where the culprits of Panta and Bhatta live unpunished. Indirectly, the mock funeral procession acquires certain characteristics of theatrical performance meant to make the

audience raise a question, throw their passivity away, and engage themselves as the critical members of their society. Moreover, imbued with spiritual and religious meanings of the Hindu order, such spectacles directly represent the major section of Nepali society such as the apt spectacles chosen to reach out to the right kind of mass. In a Hindu and middle class patriarchal Nepali society holding such spectacles of mourning as part of protest obtain the meanings that are unique. Translating such visuals into a linguistic form would be “Girls are living an unsecure life in Nepali society”. Indirectly, they are saying enough with patriarchal male brutality.

The semiotics of the photograph in Fig. 3 can roughly be translated into linguistic expression as “we wish you a death”. Wishing death for someone is cursing him or her, saying foul words. It can also be taken as acts that deny the mourners to become the part of dialogue with the subject they are targeting at. With such spectacles of mourning, one is also closing the door of learning from the opponent force. One can further extend it to the point that with such approach to the opponents one fails to understand both antithesis as well as synthesis of the ideas he or she holds with. But since the person or institution who is or was being cremated is fine and living through its best times, the mourners return home defeated. Their helplessness can also be realized as the experience of ultimate reality that “anger is the most invincible enemy of mankind” and “the righteous man desires the well-being of all” as Yudhishtira says to Yaksha, the lord of wealth in a famous conversation in Yaksha Prashna section of *The Mahabharat* (53-54). This means to say by wishing death for the opponents of all forms, the wishers also miss an opportunity to learn from the very institution.

Needless to say that religion still dominates the Nepali society. The fact that religion occupies a central position in the lives of people that challenge the very power seat and that the political leaders as well as general individuals, for that matter, want to claim in the modern political context. Carl Gustav Jung makes an observation that people tend to embrace the religious symbols to establish its superiority to the modern nation-state. “The believer, on the other hand, while admitting that the State has a moral and factual claim on him, confesses to the belief that not only man but the State that rules him is subject to the overlordship of “God,” and that, in case of doubt, the supreme decision will be made by God and not by the State” (33). In Panta and Bhatta’s case, since the state authority equipped with all kinds of power has not been able to arrest and punish the culprits, the social activists aim to expose the lawlessness and impunity rampant in the nation. With such spectacles, they reach the wider public psychologically.

In the case of the photograph in Fig. 3, the protestors seem to be saying that America cannot supersede the agenda in a land of influence of their political parties and leaders. Furthermore, it can also be observed that the leaders instead of creating youths whom they could learn and share power with seem to have created the cannibalistic youths who wish death for the powerful institution and leaders as the only means that would herald an opportunity to them. In a democratic political culture, both the youths and the senior leaders are expected to learn from each other and help each other know the order of society and mind. But the spectacles of mock funerals expose the mind of youths hegemonized by the seniors. As youths, they live through a psychosocial reality that ripe time for power comes only after the collapse of individuals or institutions above. Judith Butler theorizing the formation of psyche of the subject under, the hegemony of power structure makes the following observation: “In each case, power that at first appears as external, pressed upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject’s self-identity” (03). Butler makes the above observation to highlight the psychology of female in the male dominated social and political structure. Her observation helps one to understand the

psychology of Nepali youths living through the political and social structures led by the senior leaders as well.

Ritually speaking, mourning for someone is carving out a safe passage for the person to heaven. It is the duty of a son, for that matter, progeny. It is a process of acquiring legitimacy to provide continuity to the guardianship. But the paradox is that despite all opposition-politics, protests and revolutions in Nepal, the mock-funeral makers land at the same *karma* and destination that the leaders and institutions whose effigies they burn now, and whose funeral they conduct appear like the surreal characters keep on haunting them as it were. They are led by their political party leaders who mostly are their father figure, and mourn for the opposition leaders who are mostly seniors by age. The cadres of various communist parties of Nepal might have burned the American flags and the flags of India multiple times since 1990. Being the youths of donor-dependent nation that is mostly ruled by the senior politicians, the Nepali youths cremate their own dependency on the donor nations. Exposing the nature of human behavior manifested from the subconscious level, Freud writes, "... it is a matter of general observation that people never willingly abandon a libidinal position, not even, indeed, when a substitute is already beckoning to them" (3042). In this case, the Nepali youths seem to be feeling tired of having their nation depended on the donors' support from education to health, media to free market, and also do loath being ruled by the politicians who execute a propaganda campaign to garner power. With burning the American flag, they are burning the images of their leaders as well. Back to the regular rhythm of their life, they may feel the need of burning their own self that is depended on the father figure as well.

Conclusion

In the current geo-political context, bringing globally powerful nations in Nepal's favor would not be possible through wishing them a death as the Nepali youths do on the streets of Kathmandu. An act of wishing death for such institutions is sure to disclose an opportunity to work with them, to learn from them and if it needed to beat them. An individual wishing death to his or her own opponents is killing an energy within himself or herself. Philosophically speaking, the 'opponents' too are the friends of one's own life. The thing one learns from his or her opponents is something that he or she learns from the partners and supporters. As the youth mourners come to the street with the spectacles of funerals, they bring 'self-reflectivity' as well. They surrender their 'will' to the one of their party leaders first. They suspend their rationality. Their political consciousness and pragmatism is displaced or sidelined for some time by the party commands and callings. Their familial and religious identity get replaced or blurred by a party-propaganda for some time. An act of mourning something very subjective, familial and seriously ritualistic becomes a political propagandist. The social activists use the spectacles of funeral to create a bond, an empathetic relationship between the subject of suffering and the general public whereas the youth cadres of political parties use the spectacles to widen a gap between the subject and the general public. Together, they project the image of Nepali youth's subjectivity at home. Given to the existing state of impunity in the nation that is being ruled by the politicians who employ propaganda to keep their hold on power in the geo-political context as the youths in Nepal seem to be using the spectacles of mourning for becoming a puppeteer of the political leaders.

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