

**Rethinking the Nation: Authors from the Tibetan and  
Nepalese Diaspora**

by

**Koushik Goswami**

**Registration no: AOOCL0100418**

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**Supervisor: Prof. (Dr.) Suchorita Chattopadhyay**

**Department of Comparative Literature**

**Faculty of Arts**

**Jadavpur University**

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## Introduction

The title of my PhD dissertation is “Rethinking the Nation: Authors from the Tibetan and Nepalese Diaspora.” I have selected this area because this area is less explored. It is rather surprising that diaspora from the Himalayan region is yet to find adequate critical attention from literary perspectives in Diaspora Studies, Postcolonial Studies, South Asian Studies or Himalayan Studies. It is primarily to address this omission that this dissertation has tried to explore the literary works written by people belonging to the Himalayan region.

Lived experience in the diasporic space has offered the Tibetan and Nepalese diasporic writers a fertile ground for producing unique literary works. These works document the difficult journeys of the immigrants from their homelands to the host lands and their constant efforts to survive, acculturate and assimilate in the countries of their adoptions. However, the ancestral memory and nostalgic elements related to their homelands are also very strong in their works. By 2023 a sizeable corpus of Tibetan and Nepalese diasporic novels written in English have emerged, and this has started arresting the attention of both the scholars and the lay readers in the very recent past.

This Ph.D. dissertation has focused primarily on the select novels and stories of two Tibetan authors (Thubten Samphel, and Tsering Namgyal Khortsa) and three Nepalese diasporic authors (Manjushree Thapa, Samrat Upadhyay and Rabi Thapa). It has critically explored Thubten Samphel’s *Falling through the Roof* (2008), and Tsering Namgyal Khortsa (*The Tibetan Suitcase: A Novel*, 2015). Among the Nepalese literary works, it will discuss Manjushree Thapa’s novel *Seasons of Flight* (2010), select stories from her *Tilled Earth* (2012) as well as Rabi Thapa’s *Nothing to Declare* (2011), and Samrat Upadhyay’s *Mad Country* (2017). The thesis has analysed the nation-diaspora interface as it appears in the works mentioned above in this paragraph.

There are seven chapters in this thesis including Introduction and Conclusion. Introduction mainly concentrates on the historical and political background of the Himalayan region mainly because the literary works produced by Nepalese and Tibetan diasporic authors are informed of the historical developments. The concept of ‘Himalayan’ identity has also been explored. The Himalaya, as a

sociocultural zone, has connected various nations/regions such as India, Bhutan, Nepal, and Tibet, which is now part of China. This region where the people “never grew up with a strong sense of nationalism” (Shakya 2018, 1) has thus become an interactive zone where people of different nations are bound by a sense of kinship based on physical features, religion, traditions and mixed cultures. I have also critically discussed the issue of how Tibetan and Nepalese communities are stereotyped and how the authors belonging to these groups write back in their representations.

The history and sociology of Tibetan exilic-diaspora and the Nepalese diaspora, are different from each other but they occur from the same Himalayan belt, and have some points of intersections as well. There is a substantial presence of Nepalese, and Tibetan population in India. They are particularly concentrated in some territorial zones (cities and states) in India such as Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh (Dharamshala), Ladakh, Siliguri, Darjeeling and so on. Food and folk songs have connected these communities. India has a strong sense of bonding with Tibet and Nepal. Exilic Tibetans receive support for their cause from other communities as well. They share similar cultural habits and conventions.

In Introduction, I have also discussed how in popular Western perception, Tibetan and Nepalese communities are often stereotyped and misrepresented. Tibet is stereotyped as a place of mystery with an exotic culture. It is also essentialised as ‘Shangri La’, ‘a mythical Himalayan Utopia’, or the like. Nepalese are also racially discriminated and stereotyped. I have discussed how the writers from these communities contest the stereotypes and try to define their diasporic consciousness rooted in two or more cultures.

### **Objectives**

One of the objectives of this research is to understand the diasporic consciousness of diasporic writers who hail from the Himalayan region. I have probed into the nature of this diaspora. I have made a comparative study of Tibetan and Nepalese diaspora in particular and their common struggle for identity formation in the diasporic space. My objective is to analyse the ideology that motivate their representations of the homeland and hostland. The analysis of the texts mentioned above, supplemented by interviews conducted by me,

have helped me bring out the vital differences between the Tibetan diaspora and the Nepalese diaspora. As a comparative project based on the study of cultural works, interviews and general observation of the lifestyle of the immigrants, this work seeks to provide fresh perspectives to the Diaspora and Himalayan Studies.

### **Research Questions**

My research questions are –

1. What are the patterns of migration from this region?
2. What are the responses of the emerging Tibetan and Nepalese authors towards their homeland?
3. What are the responses of the emerging Tibetan and Nepalese authors towards their hostland?
4. How can we compare and contrast Nepalese and Tibetan diaspora?

### **Methodology**

All the works related to the above-mentioned authors have been primarily approached from theoretical perspectives of diaspora studies.

### **Method**

In order to conduct and carry out my research, I have used textual analysis method, interview method and archival method.

## **Chapter 1 (Literature Review): An Outline**

This chapter is primarily based on literature review and exploration of research gap. Over the centuries quite a good number of books have been published on Tibet and Nepal. Publications by Tibetan writers can be categorised under some specific sections. Publications on travelogue and adventure include Edward John Dingle's *My Life in Tibet* (1939) and Marco Pallis's *Peaks and Lamas* (1939). William Montgomery McGovern's book *To Lhasa in Disguise* (1924) is yet another example of a work that describes a Western traveller's secret journey to Tibet. Lowell Thomas Jr.'s book *Out of this World: Across the Himalayas to the Forbidden Tibet* (1950) is an autobiography of an American traveller who along with his father took up a

journey to Lhasa before the Chinese invasion and occupation of Tibet. In his book *India and Tibet* (1910), Francis Younghusband sees Tibet through the lens of imperialism. Sir Charles Alfred Bell is one of the best-known writers on Tibet and his acquaintance with Dalai Lama helped him to gather information about Tibet. He is best known for his work *Tibet: Past and Present* (1902), *The People of Tibet* (1928) and *The Religion of Tibet* (1931). Laurie Hovell McMillin's book *English in Tibet, Tibet in English: Self-presentation in Tibet and the Diaspora* (2001) analyses the relationship between Tibet and the West and narrates the history of Tibetan communities in India, Nepal, Tibet, Switzerland and the US. *Exile as Challenge: The Tibetan Diaspora* (2003), an edited book by Dragmar Bernstorff and Hubertus von Welck, offers an overview of the historical and political framework of Tibetan society in exile. There are also some books on Tibetan Buddhism and spiritualism. L. A. Waddell's *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism* (1895) portrays Tibet as a land of spirituality.

Some books are based on mystery, myth and fantasy of Tibet. W. Evans-Wentz's *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1927) and Alexandra David-Neel's *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* (1929) and *My Journey to Lhasa* (1991) exoticise Tibetan landscape as 'The Land of Snows' and explore the 'mystery' of Tibet. Lobsang Rampa, a British author, whose original name was Cyril Henry Hoskin, narrates Tibet as a land of mysticism and fantasy in his trilogy entitled *The Third Eye: The Autobiography of a Tibetan Lama* (1956), *Doctor from Lhasa* (1959), and *The Rampa Story* (1960).

The book, *The Tibetans* written by Matthew T. Kapstein provides a clear overview of the geography of Tibet, its history and culture. It also talks about the Tibetan myths, beliefs, social institutions, custom, food habit, religious tradition, art, literature and so on. West's distorted image of Tibet and Tibetans has been represented by Donald S. Lopez in his book *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (1998). The book entitled *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections, and Fantasies* (2001) by Thierry Dodin and Heinz Rother provides a detailed description of the images of Tibet from various angles.

Dibyesh Anand's book *Geopolitical Exotica: Tibet in Western Imagination* (2007) is an important book that discusses "Tibet" as "Other" and the politics of representation of Tibetan transnational identity. It examines the Western representation of Tibet and how the West exoticized Tibet. The book *We Tibetans*, written by Rinchen Lhamo, the first woman writer of Tibet, is a personal account of a Tibetan woman's life and experiences.

None of the works mentioned above deal with literary works. There is only one book in English that has discussed Tibetan literary works partially. This book entitled *Resistant Hybridities* (2020) edited by Shelley Bhoil contains twelve chapters, three of which are on Tibetan fictional works in English (and therefore relevant to this dissertation), three on Tibetan poetry in English and the rest are on Tibetan films, pop songs, music, protest pamphlets, performing arts, human rights and so on. Koushik Goswami's book *Reimagining Tibet: Politics of Literary Representation* (2022) is also a relevant book in this field.

As to the studies on Nepal, Ali Riaz and Subho Basu's book *Paradise Lost? State Failure in Nepal* (2007) gives us a picture of political turmoil in contemporary Nepal, the history of state formation, Maoist insurgency, ethnicity and politics in Nepal. Bradely Mayhew's book *Nepal* (2018) analyses the history of Nepal and its neighbouring countries. Keshav Bhattarai's book *Historical Dictionary of Nepal* (2003) offers an overview of the chronological history of Nepal.

*Retheorizing Religion in Nepal* (2006), a book by Gregory Price Gieve, offers us a picture of the traditional way of religious life and modernity in Nepal. The book *Global Nepalis* (2018) edited by David N. Gellner and Sondra L. Hausner is divided into four parts and deals with the history of Nepali diaspora, the issue of belonging, the concept of 'homeland' and the lives of the Nepalis living in UK, USA, India and different parts of the world.

Ramji Timalisina's book *Nepalese Diaspora and its Literature* (2020) is the only book that provides a theoretical discussion of the role of diaspora in Nepali literary creation. This book also deals with fifteen Nepali poems which explores the emotions and imagination of the community. *Unleashing Nepal* (2009) by

Sujeev Shakya addresses the political instability and poor economic condition in Nepal.

*Nepali Diaspora in a Globalised Era* (2016) edited by Tanka B. Subba and A. C. Sinha contains critical essays on Nepalese diaspora and the migration of Indian Nepalis and Gurkhas.

Most of these books and articles mentioned above are written from political and historical perspectives. There are some articles on the fictional works but the treatment of the issues is inadequate. There is practically no book exclusively on Anglophone Nepalese and Tibetan diasporic fictional works. Hence there is a huge research gap that needs to be filled up. This thesis is an attempt towards that direction.

## **Chapter 2 (Theorising Nation and Diaspora): An Outline**

This chapter mainly concentrates on theoretical framework. The focus of this thesis is the intersection between nation and diaspora, and hence the literary works included in this thesis have been interpreted from that theoretical perspective. In the era of globalisation and cosmopolitanism, the idea of nation and its relationship with the diasporic world is constantly evolving. In the world of transnationalism, the border between nation and diaspora is getting increasingly blurred. The idea of singularity of nation is gradually collapsing and the transnational subjects are getting increasingly used to the notion of plurality of nations. In such a context, transnational migrants and particularly the children of immigrants, are beginning to think of the diasporic space as the new nation. Initially they try to respond to the new nation space with their old mindset but the exposure to the new cultural space subsequently forces them to reformulate the idea of the nation. The image of the old nation, however, persists in the imaginary of the immigrants. In short, the idea of the nation remains complex for the immigrant population.

I have taken help of several books written by important theoreticians in order to establish my argument. Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities* (1983) describes 'nation' as an 'imagined community.' Interestingly, the role of imagination is foregrounded by Anderson – it is a faculty that constructs an ideological structure called 'nation.' Like Anderson, Paul James in his book

*Nation Formation: Towards a Theory of Abstract Community* (1996), too underscores the element of the mutual unfamiliarity of the members of the constructed body.

Ernest Renan introduces two important ideas – the spiritual nature of a nation and the issue of ‘remembering’ and ‘forgetting.’ In his essay entitled “What is a Nation?” he interprets the term ‘nation’ in two contexts. One is concerned with remembering the history of the nation and relating it to the present situation. The other is related to the idea of amnesia. Ali Behdad in his book *A Forgetful Nation* (2005) describes the United States of America as a ‘forgetful nation’ and in this respect he also mentions the idea of ‘amnesia.’ Although his discussion is primarily based on America, his concepts of ‘belatedness’ and ‘amnesia’ are quite relevant for our purpose.

I have used the concept of primordialism, perennialism and ethno-symbolism in order to discuss the theoretical ideas of nation. In the Tibetan case, primordial connection is found relevant as they are deeply rooted to their cultural heritage and as they usually look forward to their cultural roots even in their diasporic space. However, in the context of the Nepalese, the pace of acculturation is faster. They always look forward to the better opportunities of the diasporic world.

Perennialists, another school of critics, rely on tracing the history of the origins of the nations and the common cultural characteristics of a nation. According to them, nations existed for many decades and have impacts on ethnic groups. Anthony Smith divides the Perennialists approach into two categories: “recurrent perennialism” and “continuous perennialism.” “Continuous perennialism” will help us understand the origin and the source of a nation. The roots of the nation can be traced back. On the other hand, “recurrent perennialism” will concentrate on nation’s relationship with current trends.

In order to understand Tibet as a nation or Tibetan activities in the diasporic worlds, ethno-symbolist approach is quite acceptable. Tibetan prayer flags, Windhorse, Tibetan religion, Buddhism, Mandala etc. all are the symbols of Tibetan ethnic identity – these collectively form the idea of Tibet as a nation.



The concept of nation steadily takes a different dimension in the world of transnationalism and multiculturalism. Media, internet, websites, twitter, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, satellite television and so many other sites have connected various nations and created a transnational bonding. Diasporic communities are very much connected with these. From the diasporic space they mostly imagine their nation through these media. Since we are concerned in this thesis mainly with diaspora-nation interface in the context of Tibetan and Nepalese transnational migrations, I have discussed critical aspects of diaspora theory and various concepts related to it.

The term “diaspora” refers to both voluntary and forced migration of substantial number of individuals or communities from “homeland” to “host land.” William Safran in “Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return” underscores the shift that has taken place in the meaning of the word diaspora. He has used the term diaspora as an umbrella term that includes expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities and so on. He also talks about “ghettos” (1991, 83). Safran’s definition of the term ‘diaspora’ is used here to highlight both the Tibetan migration and the Nepali diaspora. Tibetan ghettos like Dharamsala or ‘Little Tibet’ and Nepali ghettos like ‘Little Nepal’ in the U.S become the temporary spaces of the refugees or immigrants.

Safran also speaks of alienation, nostalgia, dispersion, relocation and acculturation in this context. All these are palpable in the everyday life of the immigrants. Such issues of relocation and acculturation will be the main points in the context of Nepalese diaspora. In the novel *Seasons of Flight*, Manjushree Thapa’s protagonist Prema leaves Nepal and acculturates with the ‘real America.’ The same is true with other ghettoised Nepalese who look forward to the better opportunities in the West.

Robin Cohen mainly focuses on five kinds of diaspora: (a) Victim diaspora, (b) Labour diaspora, (c) Imperial diaspora, (d) Trade diaspora, (e) Deterritorrialised diaspora. From the above mentioned five kinds of diaspora, the concept of ‘victim diaspora’ (which means the expulsion or banishment of any community from their homeland, for example: Jews, Africans, Irish, Palestinians and

Armenians) has been used to situate Tibetans' large-scale displacement after Chinese invasion and occupation of Tibet.

Sheffer in his book *Diaspora Politics* (2003) refers to two kinds of diaspora: (a) The Stateless diaspora, (b) State linked diaspora. Stateless diaspora refers to the kind of diaspora where the immigrant/ exilic communities are not connected/ linked to their state of origin. However, they possess a collective identity which are mainly based on ethnicity. This concept of stateless diaspora can be applied to the Tibetan context where the Tibetans in exile are unable to connect physically with their lost nation, neither can most of them acquire citizenship in the countries they are settled now. In state linked diaspora, the diasporic groups have the concrete notion of their homeland. In the context of Nepalese transnational migration, the state linked diaspora is applicable.

Behind the migration of an individual or a group, both push and pull factors play an important role. In the case of the Tibetan refugees, push factors and in Nepalese case, pull factors are the major cause of migration.

I have also paid attention to the phenomena known as 'transnationalism' and 'exile.' Exile is the oldest form of diaspora whereas transnationalism is a new form of diaspora. I have taken help of Jana Braziel and Anita Mannur's book *Theorising Diaspora* (2003). In this era of globalisation and cosmopolitanism, transnationalism is an important phenomenon. Technological advancement has widened the scope of transnationalism and networking works as an important tool to connect the idea of transnationalism with Harvey's enunciation of the idea of 'time-space compression.'

This global cultural flow is also described by Arjun Appadurai in his book *Modernity at Large* in five ways: (a) ethnoscapas, (b) mediascapas, (c) technoscapas, (d) financescapas, and (e) ideoscapas. I have tried to utilize these aspects at the time of interpreting Tibetan and Nepalese diasporic situations.

In such a situation the zone of nation-diaspora interface can be considered as an interactive and collaborative zone. It suggests that in all probability one's sense of belonging is not really limited to one nation, to the ancestral one, but to the host nation/s as well. The boundary line between the ancestral nation and the host nation/s gets blurred and the diasporic subject crisscrosses this new,

‘borderland’ consciousness that marks the contours of his/her to-and-fro journey.

In the context of the above, we can see that a diasporic individual is subjected to two kinds of pressure:

- a. that of acculturation / assimilation in the ‘hostland’; and
- b. that of nostalgia for the ‘home nation’ and a desire to return there, if situations permit.

Homi Bhabha defines hybridity as a liminal space where the sign of both the ‘originary culture’ and the ‘culture of adaptation’ are found to be intermixed. Diasporic individuals/communities keep contact with other members of their groups living both in the homeland and hostland. By remaining connected with the people of same ethnicity, they create an international network. This network of relationship, which is primarily built due to the cultural, economic, nationalistic reasons, creates a third space where nation and diaspora meet, collaborate and interface.

### **Chapter 3 (Representing the Nation: Tibetan Diasporic Writers): An Outline**

This chapter has analysed how Tibet and Tibetan exilic lives are represented in the literary works written by Tibetan diasporic writers. It will concentrate on two novels: Tsering Namgyal Khortsa’s *The Tibetan Suitcase* (2015) and Thubten Samphel’s *Falling Through the Roof* (2008). These novels represent not only the Tibetan diasporic world but also hold up a picture of tension between nation and diaspora that the diasporic subjects go through. They demonstrate how a zone of interaction and collaboration between the world of diaspora and that of ancestral nation, created out of the interaction, generates an acceptance of the idea of the plurality of nations.

The title of Khortsa’s novel *The Tibetan Suitcase*, can be interpreted as referring to the Tibetan cultural tradition as a whole. The story is primarily based on Dawa Tashi, the protagonist of the novel, who is torn between two worlds: homeland and hostland. Interestingly, his diasporic experience in India and the United States are quite different and this becomes the main thrust of the novel. Khortsa,

in the novel, deals with three prominent ideas which are very much relevant in the context of the displaced Tibetans. These are: 'home,' 'homeland,' and 'borrowed homeland.' I have critically discussed these three aspects. While 'homeland' here refers to the ancestral land, the country of origin, the two other terms are associated with the diasporic space. The Tibetan characters feel that Tibet is their 'homeland.' Their visits there will be unwelcome to the Chinese regime that control their territory and lives inside it. It is 'a locus of [both] nostalgia and nightmares.' Dawa considers India as an alternative to their original homeland. It is a place that approximates the 'homeland' but is not exactly an equivalent to it. This approximation is felt on the basis of cultural affinities, historical bonding, and the friendship, support and refuge offered to the Tibetan refugees by the Government of India and its people ever since the Tibetans' displacement from their 'homeland.' Thus, to Dawa, India is a 'borrowed homeland' because it provides them a temporary space and a 'home.' Although both India and America are his exilic worlds, his ways of looking at these two nations are somewhat different.

Tashi is torn between two worlds: a world which is a 'borrowed' one (India) and a world where he dreams to go (America). He wants to leave his present home, Dharamsala in India. Khortsa employs Dawa's stay in the United States and his disenchantment with the alluring land as a strategy to establish the fact that India, and not the United States, is ultimately his preferred 'home,' and may be even his 'homeland.' In America, he also misses his cultural and religious practices. The creation of a 'vicarious' homeland, the process of the 'home' being turned into a 'homeland' and 'return' to this home-turned-homeland from the United States is a unique representation of the novelist. The sense of nostalgia both for the 'homeland' and for the 'borrowed homeland' leads to the interface between nation and diaspora.

I have also discussed the role of Buddhism in creating a contact zone. Culture of the homeland is continued even in the diasporic space. Khortsa shows how Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and '*terma* or treasure teachings' of Tibet have greatly influenced people across the world. For the diasporic Tibetans, it is a link between nation and diaspora. Dharamsala which also plays an important role in the lives of the Tibetans becomes a prominent centre of Buddhist culture.

Khortsas with much difficulty has retrieved the history of the brutal Chinese colonial practices and traced the impact of the Cultural Revolution on the Tibetans through various fragmented narratives. In the novel, Khenchen encourages Tibetan and non-Tibetan American scholars to join him in his travel to Tibet. Tibet and its great civilisation, as Khenchen observes, is under China's surveillance and is under constant threat. Khortsas highlights the tragic memories of brutal killing, murder and escape. Listening, recording and noting the traumatic stories of Chinese atrocities, and witnessing the brutal treatment of Chinese oppression against Tibetans constitutes an act of seeking justice. What Khortsas highlights in this novel is the importance of cultural roots and Tibetan cultural and religious heritage.

In this second part of the chapter, I have dealt with Thubten Samphel's *Falling Through the Roof* (2008) which portrays the Tibetan exilic consciousness. Samphel feels that in India, Tibetans in exile "have the freedom to pursue" their professions and observes that, "the freedom we enjoy in India has allowed the Tibetan refugee community to rebuild Tibet in exile" (Goswami 2023, 181). Samphel's *Falling through the Roof* explores the tragic situations of the Tibetans in Tibet and in the diasporic space. The title of the novel has both literal and metaphorical significance. Tibet has been known as the 'Roof of the World.' 'Falling' suggests Tibet's fall as a nation after the Chinese occupation.

The novel takes up the story of a group of young Tibetans studying at Delhi university who try to keep the issue of Tibet alive for themselves and their community. The plot of the story mainly focuses on Tibetan resistance movement against China. He introduces some characters who are mainly students of Delhi University and they form two groups – Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) and Tibetan Communist Party (TCP). Dhondup Kunga, Phunstok and Gyalsten belong to TYC and Tashi, Samdup and Tsering Migmar belong to TCP. Although they have different ideologies – the former has faith in Buddhist philosophy and non-violence while the latter believes in violent movements and communism – they have the same objective – to free Tibet from China. These two political entities represent two standpoints which are polar opposites. All these second-generation characters are not fully aware of Tibetan history, cultural roots and heritage. Thus, Samphel introduces the character of a

lama, Drubchen Rinpoche who has a great knowledge and scholarship about the Tibetan cultural roots, Tibetan Buddhism and religion.

Samphel introduces the character of the lama as a father figure who encourages the diasporic Tibetan youths to find out their cultural roots in India. The motif of the retrieval of cultural heritage is significant here for the second-generation Tibetans. The character of the lama paves the way for a nation-diaspora link (i.e., a link between Tibet and India) by leading the second-generation Tibetans located in India through inculcation of cultural and nationalist values. Like Khortsa's *The Tibetan Suitcase*, this novel too narrates journeys of some characters – Tashi, Tsering Migmar and the lama himself – into the Chinese-controlled Tibet. This journey motif is necessary for exploring the lived experiences of the Tibetans in Tibet as well as to discover the cultural roots of the exiled Tibetans.

In the novel, Dharamsala is a unique place where Tibetan refugees gathered and took shelter. Later, they created Tibetan Government-in-exile. It is the residence of the Dalai Lama. It is no wonder, therefore, that the arrival of the refugees here is called a 'homecoming' in the novel, a home away from home. It is a "Little Tibet" in Dharamsala. It evokes the sense of an alternative homeland. It is from here that they also launch a movement for a free Tibet. The novel focuses on an important aspect of Tibetan activities – they are passionately engaged in the project of retrieving facts and figures about the lost nation of Tibet and retell the old stories.

The characters in the novel involve themselves in finding the old Tibet and in the process search for the roots. Tibetan characters' search for their roots through research, investigation, gathering information and other cultural negotiations in the diasporic world is significant here as Samphel tries to create an academic and cultural bond between the nation (Tibet) and diasporic world (India and beyond).

In both the novels, the writers highlight the Tibetan exilic situations and describe how the characters face difficulties in the diasporic world. On the one hand, Khortsa's novel, *The Tibetan Suitcase*, talks about the binary between homeland and the 'borrowed homeland' and also about the conflict that the protagonist

faces in the hostland. On the other hand, narratives of resistance movements of the diasporic Tibetans against the Chinese occupation of Tibet are found mainly in Samphel's novel *Falling through the Roof*. Like Khortsa's 'borrowed homeland,' Samphel introduces the idea of 'homecoming' in this novel. Both the novels focus on some common issues: Dharamsala as a place of settlement and resistance movements; the popularity of Tibetan culture and Buddhism among the researchers; the picture of Tibetan's life in the exilic world and so on. Both the novels deal with the journey of the characters to Tibet and explore the situations of the Tibetans in Tibet under Chinese regime.

#### **Chapter 4 (Representing the Nation: Nepalese Diasporic Writers): An Outline**

This chapter has concentrated on some select texts written by Nepalese diasporic writers. It has focused on Manjushree Thapa's novel *Seasons of Flight* (2010) and some stories from her book *Tilled Earth* (2007). It has also discussed some short stories written by Samrat Upadhyay and Rabi Thapa. I have selected these literary texts because discussion of these works may yield significant insights about nation-diaspora conflict which is the main thrust of this thesis.

Although Nepal has a long history of emigration to neighbouring South Asian countries, the Maoist insurgency, perpetual poverty, economic crisis and lack of economic opportunities, as mentioned earlier, compelled many Nepalese to migrate to different parts of the world. The experiences of the Nepalese in the diasporic space have given rise to a corpus of new literary works which mainly concentrate on two spaces: nation (i.e., Nepal) and diaspora (mainly the West is viewed as a space of opportunities and a land of allurement).

Manjushree Thapa's novel, *Seasons of Flight* portrays several issues related to diasporic situations such as cultural dislocation and conflict, identity crisis, nostalgia, acculturation, assimilation and the like. All these issues are embedded in the migrant experiences of Prema, the protagonist of the novel. The novel is primarily based on Prema's journey from her homeland, Nepal, to the diasporic world, the United States of America. This journey is not only territorial but also psychological. She leaves her war-torn country for the US after winning a Green Card in lottery. Interestingly, throughout her journey, unlike other diasporic

women, she is searching for her own self and asserts her individualism. Her migration is voluntary. She does not only look forward to the diasporic opportunities in the foreign land but also wants an alternative space where she can make her life complete. Although she enjoys their company and homely atmosphere, she does not want to keep herself confined to 'Little Nepal.' She decides to go beyond 'Little Nepal' and to enjoy the free life in mainstream America.'

Thapa creates tension between nation and diaspora. The two characters – Prema and her sister, Bijaya – represent two different ideologies in this regard. Bijaya is deeply rooted to her nation but Prema is looking forward to the 'promises' of the diasporic land. Prema's movement is 'centrifugal' (i.e. outward to the diaspora) while Bijaya's is 'centripetal' ('inward' or deeper inside her homeland). Bijaya joins the Maoist group willingly. She is a bold and courageous lady who had surrendered herself to the cause of the country. So, in the case of Bijaya, the sense of nationalism is strong.

Prema knows the prospects and the opportunities of the diasporic land and gradually wants to move forward in life. Little Nepal plays a functional role in the novel as it provides Prema a temporary space to gather ideas about the new country, to see and judge the 'real' America from a safe base. She gathers information about 'real America' and wants to be Americanised.

Thapa effectively captures Prema's fleeting identity and her constant search for roots through the employment of the image of the life of the butterfly. The transformation of a caterpillar to butterfly is similar to Prema's transformation from her Nepalese roots to Americanisation.

In the next section of the chapter, I have dealt with a number of short stories in which patterns of relationship of a diasporic subject with both the nation (Nepal) and diaspora (U.S. and U.K.) have been traced. These stories include Rabi Thapa's "Nothing to Declare," Samrat Upadhyay's "An Affair Before the Earthquake" and Manjushree Thapa's "Friends," and "Sounds That the Tongue Learns to Make." The Nepalese characters in these stories are not strongly tied up with their nation/ homeland. They look forward to the diaspora and look for every opportunity to leave the country. If they stay back, they live mostly as



disgruntled subjects. Poverty, politics and corruption in Nepal have made them discontented.

Rabi Thapa's short story "Nothing to Declare," for example, represents the desire of some Nepalese characters to leave the nation for better opportunities in the diasporic world. It focuses on the acculturation process of these characters in the diasporic space.

The story begins with a journey of Bikram, a Nepalese character to London. As mentioned earlier, most of the Nepalese characters first visit 'Little Nepal' in the diasporic world which is a ghetto space and this space helps them to familiarise themselves with the foreign space. This is needed temporarily to know the life of the diasporic world. Most of the characters in the short stories are not mentally confined to a small space, they are outward looking. It helps them acculturate and later assimilate with the multicultural world.

Samrat Upadhyay's story "An Affair Before the Earthquake" mainly deals with the story of anonymous lovers. It begins with the lover pensively ruminating over the departure of his beloved for America. They are two completely contrasted characters in the story. One is trapped by his own thoughts and live in a world of fantasy and the other is not confined by any boundary. He observes that "she was a free spirit" (Upadhyay 186). She seems to be happy in the diasporic world and has no desire to return to her roots. The return motif does not exist. The characters, used in this story, sooner or later, decide to leave Nepal as they were deprived of opportunities, facilities and the freedom here.

The nation-diaspora conflict is also evident in some of the stories in Thapa's book *Tilled Earth* (2007). In the story "Tilled Earth," Thapa has represented the nation-diaspora tension through the representation of her two characters: Kamal Malla who is born and brought up in Nepal and Hrishikesh Pandey who hails from the diasporic world, U.S. Kamal is a young computer programmer who is trapped in traditional Nepalese life, values and ideologies. Hrishikesh is "a Nepali who had recently returned from the United States where he had lived since childhood" (Thapa 2007, 48).

The narrative contains movement of two opposite desires: one of the characters wants to migrate from the nation to diaspora while the other, settled in diaspora,

returns to the nation. However, Hrishikesh's dream of searching his roots in Nepal remain incomplete as he is not accepted by his people as 'Nepalese.'

Thapa's another story entitled "Sound that the Tongue Learns to Make" mainly concentrates on the relationship between Keshab, a poorly paid language teacher, and a white American woman Sarah who is a 'highly paid consultant in Nepal.' The nation-diaspora tension is also prominent in the story. Unlike the story "Friends," this tension is narrated from the perspective of a foreigner. The story is narrated from the point of view of Sarah, an American, who is a diasporic subject in Nepal. American characters, here, become the medium for the Nepalese characters to escape from the Nepal.

The analysis of the Manjushree Thapa's novel and of four stories written by three authors (Rabi Thapa, Samrat Upadhyay and Manjushree Thapa) directs us to some conclusions. The point that emerges most emphatically from the discussion is that Nepalese young men and women located in Nepal tend to escape from their country and relocate to some Western diasporic locations such as the United States and the United Kingdom. The reasons for this migration have been discussed earlier – they include the socio-economic condition of the characters, corrupt administration, meanness of people and political violence such as the Maoist insurgency.

## **Chapter 5 (Nepalese and Tibetan Diasporic Writers: A Comparative Analysis): An Outline**

This chapter focuses on the comparison between Tibetan and Nepalese diasporic writers and their works. Both Tibet and Nepal belong to the same geo-cultural zone of the Himalayan belt. Although these two countries have many differences and divergences, they are interconnected with each other in several ways.

Cultures of the region are historically, socially and religiously interconnected. The writers from these countries are influenced by historical events, political movements and cultural practices. In their works, they have represented several issues such as political uprisings and resistance, migration and relocation to diasporic spaces, 'home,' 'homeliness' and 'homelessness,' nostalgia, the process of acculturation and settlement and the like. They raised questions of the Western perception of, and their attitude to, these Himalayan nations.

Religion, culinary items like momo and thukpa, dress, music, cultural affinities and lived experience in the same environment, all these, connect these two countries.

Through a comparative/contrastive lens, this chapter has discussed the issues dealt with by Nepalese and Tibetan diasporic writers. Naturally, we come across strong nostalgic elements in the works of Tibetan authors located in the diaspora. The Nepalese diasporic writings, on the contrary, are less nostalgic. There are differences in the nature and circumstances of migration from Nepal and Tibet. Tibetan diasporic movements are involuntary in nature. In contrast, Nepalese diasporic movements are voluntary in nature.

The literary representations of the Tibetan and the Nepalese diasporic writers differ mainly in the following fields:

1. In the representation of the nation
2. In the representation of the diasporic space
3. In the identity formation
4. In the role of the writers

Tibetan and Nepalese ways of looking at their home / ancestral nation are quite different in nature. It has become more abstract and more imaginary. Tibetans still anticipate Tibet as their home and dream of returning to Tibet. The crux of the problem is that the Tibetans, like the Nepalese, in the diaspora cannot go back home if they choose to do so. Tibetan writers' patterns of looking at home through memories and nostalgia are unique in nature. The characters, created by Tsering Namgyal Khortsa in the novel *The Tibetan Suitcase*, look at their lost home longingly. In Thubten Samphel's *Falling through the Roof*, the characters remember their homeland nostalgically and utilise the diasporic space to generate a resistance movement against China. On the other hand, Nepalese writers' ways of looking at their home country is quite opposite. Unlike Tibetan people, 'home' for the Nepalese is not a colonized space. It is a free zone where diasporic Nepalese can easily return. On the one hand, poverty and the lack of opportunities in Nepal and on the other hand, American dream and the lure of the diasporic world influence them to leave their homeland. The characters Manjushree Thapa, Rabi Thapa and Samrat Upadhyay have created in their fictional works, do not long much for their homeland.

Tibetan and Nepalese authors' ways of looking at the diasporic space is also different. Tibetans utilise the diasporic space to build up political movements against China. Unlike the Nepalese, they are not overtly eager to acculturate and assimilate with the foreign cultures, although these integrating processes are bound to take place. They have mostly their own cultural life-styles, habits, practices, creeds, religious doctrines, food habits and dress codes which they do not want to forsake. Many Nepalese are living in India and, unlike Tibetans, they do not have the refugee status. Naturally, many of the Tibetan characters in the fictional narratives look at India not exactly as an unfamiliar diasporic space but as a more intimate space of care and nurture. On the other hand, Nepalese's ways of looking at the hostland is almost opposite. They look at the West as a place of fulfilment of their dreams. Nepalese writers in the diaspora, on the other hand, are not much obsessed with their ancestral identity and they do not hesitate to embrace new cultures. Tibetan writers use their writings as a weapon for their political struggle. They march in protest, seek global attention for the Tibetan cause, and start writing fictional and non-fictional works about Tibet and the 'Tibetan question' in order to bring into limelight the Tibetan exilic life and the hard reality in Tibet. The sense of loss, both personal and collective, have been represented by the Tibetan diasporic writers. Nepalese writers use their writings to talk about their community and to explore their life and culture, but they do not use it as a weapon to fight colonial regimes as the Tibetan writers do. Khortsa rightly makes a comparison between the Nepalese and the Tibetan diaspora, "The Nepalese diaspora I believe is generally an economic diaspora whereas ours is more political (we are political refugees)."

### **Conclusion**

This final chapter discusses how Tibetan and Nepalese networking and cyberspace activities have connected both the nation and the diaspora. Subsequently, it discusses how the findings of the present thesis offer new insights and perspectives.