

Research Article

From Roots to Routes: Navigating Diasporic Sensibility in Prajwal Parajuly's *The Gurkha's Daughter*

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ABSTRACT

The Indian–Nepali author Prajwal Parajuly's collection of short stories *The Gurkha's Daughter: Stories (2013)* traces the trauma of displacement of the Nepalese against the onslaught of globalisation. Originally from Nepal, these migrant Gurkhas have suffered exclusionary status even after their years of loyal stay in India. They have been persecuted in Bhutan and Burma too. Parajuly traces how the desire to be assimilated within the mainstream culture has been met with frustration. Hence the metaphor of 'home' and 'belonging' play an important role in the consolidation of Nepali identity. Unlike in the classic case of Diaspora, the Nepali Diaspora harbours no dream of eventual return to their homeland. The movement for them can only be onward, not backward. This paper is thus an attempt to make a case history of the Gurkha Diaspora; it will also make an attempt to interrogate the essentialist definitions of 'home' and 'homeland'; and will try to explore where the Gurkha situates himself in the larger narrative of global Diaspora.

Keywords: Indian–Nepali identity, Gurkha, Diaspora, Home, Belonging, Globalisation

INTRODUCTION

The term 'diaspora' is a widely debated and contested term. Although the term originated from the dispersal of the Jews in 70 A.D.; the word deriving from the Greek *dia* meaning 'through' and *sperein* meaning to 'scatter' refers to the dispersion of the Jews after the Babylonian exile. Traditionally it refers to a group of people originating in a land other than in which it currently resides; displaced forcibly, and invoking the trauma of separation

and dislocation. Today the term has expanded in its usage with a flexible and dynamic approach. For William Safran, the concept of a diaspora can be applied when members of an 'expatriate minority community' shared several of the following features:

- They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original 'centre' to two or more foreign regions;
- They retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland including its location, history and achievements;
- They believe they are not-and perhaps can never be-fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate;
- Their ancestral home is idealized and it is thought that, when conditions are favourable, either they, or their descendants should return;
- They believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and
- They continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship¹.

The Nepalese have a sordid history of being displaced from Burma, Bhutan and India after their years of loyal stay in these countries. They were encouraged by the British to settle in these countries to assist them in their Empire-building project but conveniently left their fate undecided as the sun began to set down upon Great Britain. Prajwal Parajuly in his collection of Short stories *The Gurkha's Daughter* (2013) explores the trauma of diasporic displacement of the Nepalese. Often categorized as foreigner, Sajal Nag argues that the Nepali settlement in India has largely been documented only in terms of migration and displacement². However, the politics of diaspora in the context of the Indian-Nepali will make an interesting study because the link between 'homeland' and 'host land' is intricate. The Indian-Nepali suffer an Identity crises since they owe their origin to Nepal but wish to be assimilated into India, which for them is their 'homeland' as opposed to 'host land'. Here the traditional signifiers of 'home' and 'belonging' become serious sites of contest fracturing their National Identity. Avtar Brah offers a critique of discourses of 'home' as a place of fixed origin whereas at the same time distinguishing between 'homeland' and 'homing desire'. For her, 'home' meant a place of origin, or a place of settlement, or an imagined virtual community. 'Home' is generally understood as a privileged site of lived reality, a rooted signifier.

¹See Safran. *Diasporas in modern societies*. pp.83–84.

²Sajal N, 2008. *Contesting marginality: ethnicity, insurgency and subnationalism in North-East India*. Delhi: Manohar Press. pp. 54–56.

There can be several impetus behind this diasporic migration primarily being economic inequality, the desire to improve one's economic prospect by pursuing opportunities.

Although diaspora may involve the wrench from home and the trauma of separation and dislocation remains inscribed in the collective memory; but not all diasporas inscribe 'homing desire' through a wish to return to their place of origin. This would apply specifically to the diasporic consciousness of the Indian-Nepali. It does not imply that the Indian-Nepali diasporic subjectivity is 'rootless' but the paper will argue to reveal what happens when 'routes' becomes more important than 'roots'. The notion of diaspora always implies within itself the idea of a journey, as Brah, says involving processes of multi-locationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries. The historical trajectory of Indian-Nepali diaspora interrogates why and how the diasporic collective struggles to impact their political identity in their new homeland. Borders are lines of demarcation and the Indo-Nepal border due to its porous nature has again made it highly complex³. Gloria Anzaldua's theorisation of border and borderlands involves our thinking on borders not just as lines of demarcation through geographical divide but psychological divide too. She uses the concept of border as a metaphor for psychological, sexual, spiritual, cultural, class and racialized boundaries. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have used the concept of 'deterritorialisation' which is again an important feature of 'border writing'.

Against such theoretical argument, it would not be wrong to say that the Indian-Nepali identity is fraught with crisis as they carry within their psyche the burden of their Nepalese 'past' and the Indian 'past'. Because of their overlapping identity, they are also called the Indians of the Nepalese Origin (INO, when translated in the Nepali language, they are *Nepali Mulka Bharatiya* or *Nepamul*. Numerous other nomenclatures have been used to differentiate them from the Nepalese of Nepal like *Gorkha*, *Gorkhali*, *Bharpali*, *Pahari*; and a number of acronyms like *Bharpali* an acronym of '*Bharatiya Nepali*' and *Bhargoli* an acronym of '*Bharatiya Gorkhali*' are used for the Indian-Nepali. But for the sake of convenience the most convenient forms of distinction would be one framed by Professor AC Sinha:

The 'Nepalese' will refer to the nationals of Nepal; 'Gorkha' in the context of recruitment to the British Indian army; 'Gurkhas' to the British soldiers of Nepalese origin and 'Nepali' to the Nepamul. (12)

The Indian–Nepalese are often seen as suspect and their desire for assimilation within the mainstream Indian fabric has always been challenging. Large scale migration of

³The Indo-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty was signed in 1950. This policy of free entry and exit could be traced backed to the year 1816 when the treaty of Sugauli was signed in 1816 between the British and the Nepalese after the Anglo-Nepali War.

Nepalese into India took place through pilgrimages, trade, marital alliances, military recruitment and a plethora of opportunities that the Indian soil offered. AC Sinha again enumerates a number of 'pull' and 'push' factors for this large scale migration into the Indian frontiers. The medieval history of Nepal tells us of the existence of principalities loosely under the Mughal emperors. Gorkha was one of those principalities whose ruler Prithvi Narayan Shah consolidated these small principalities into a strong Nepal in the middle of the 18th century. The repressive rule of Prithvi Narayan Shah coupled with difficult life provided an impetus to move out of Nepal. The British proved to be catalyst in the organized migration of Nepalese into India. The first encounter of the British with the Nepalese was during the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814–1815, and instantly they were smitten by the brave martial capability of this race. After the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 by the upper Hindus and Muslim Hindustani soldiers, the Britishers could no longer trust them. Creating the myth of the brave invincible Gorkha, several recruitment depots were established in places of India like Dehradun, Gorakhpur, Laheriaseria (Darbhanga), Ghoom (Darjeeling) and Shillong in which the Nepalese made the most of this paid opportunity which was monetarily lucrative and prestigious. The Anglo-Burmese war of 1824–1825 led to the entire north-east India coming under the British control. Darjeeling was acquired as a gift from the king of Sikkim in 1835 to establish a sanatorium for its soldiers. Kalimpong and 18 Duars were annexed from Bhutan after the Anglo-Bhutanese war in 1864–1865. Sikkim became a protectorate of the British in 1888 with a resident Political Officer John Claude White. Further consolidation of the British Empire was pursued by following the 'Forward Policy to the Himalayas' especially during Lord Curzon's regime culminating in Francis Young husband Lhasa Expedition of 1903–1905. AC Sinha elaborates:

This acquisition of thinly populated, entirely wild and mountainous tract eastward of Nepal from Darjeeling to Arakan hills within 75 years required a loyal and reliable man power, which could swiftly move without a murmur and work as an ethnic buffer between hill and plains communities. Furthermore, the tribal hill tracts in northeast India continuously necessitated armed pacification expeditions to be sent. Needless to add that the Nepalese were always available as a regular army, police, constabulary or the coolie corps to restore the law and order. (16)

At the same time the British policy of forest conservation and management during the 1860s also always led to large scale migration of Nepalese who served to work as local labourers. John Claude White posted in Gangtok to watch over the British interests in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet records:

But the country was very sparsely populated, in order to bring more land under cultivation, it was necessary to encourage immigration, and this was done by giving land on favourable terms to Nepalese, who as soon as they knew it was to be had, came freely in. (White 1971)

Thus we see that the Nepalese diaspora was primarily given an impetus by the British to sustain their project of Empire-building. The British wanted to engage the Nepalese in the Tea Plantation and road building projects in the Eastern Himalayas. According to the census of 1941, Nepal provided 45% of foreign immigrants to India. According to 1961 census the number of immigrants per 100 persons over the period 1931–1961 averaged around 35 persons in the hill areas of Darjeeling⁴.

Post-Independent the Indian-Nepalese continue to experience an identity crisis because of the socio-cultural, religious and linguistic similarity between Nepalese from Nepal and Nepalese of India. Doubly distanced from their mainstream Hindu counterparts of India, the Indian-Nepalese are often regarded as the faithful allies of the British. Often looked upon as British mercenaries, their patriotism is often held a suspect. Historical accounts like the Nepali King Jung Bahadur Rana's march to Gorakhpur to help the British in 1857 and the deployment of Gurkha soldiers at the Jalianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 to slaughter the Indians are two such instances. Unfortunately the contribution of the Indian-Nepalese in the consolidation of independent India remains invisible. Thus when the Indian states were being carved out after the Independence of India in the 1950s it was done primarily on the consideration of language' and Nepali being the lingua franca of Nepal, the architects of Independent India did not think it necessary to carve a space for the Indian-Nepalese. Professor TB Subba writes:

What is not politically correct but repeatedly reminded to the Indian Nepalis is that they have all migrated from Nepal. While diffusionist theory in classical anthropology is long discredited, this diffusionist idea about the Nepalis persists in the minds of most Indians. The historical fact about their having emigrated from India, particularly those representing the Hindu-Aryan culture, during the rise of Muslim rule in India is conveniently pushed to the background because that is neither in the interest of the ruling elite in Nepal nor in the interest of Indians at large. Not in the interest of the former because they are of Indian origin in the sense Nepalis in India of Nepalese origin and not in the interest of the second because they will suddenly find the cultural boundary between them and the Nepalis blurring beyond recognition. This is certainly not something all Indians would welcome. (202)

METHODS

Diaspora Studies have been influential in shaping the ways in which we think about 'home', belonging and identity. As such in the formulation of this paper, I have relied heavily on the Wittgenstein's image of a diasporic rope

which does not attain its strength from any fibre that runs through it from one end to another, but from the fact that there is a vast number of fibres overlapping. (160)

⁴See Dasgupta M, 1985. Demographic pattern of hill areas of Darjeeling District in *The Himalayas: Profiles in Modernisation and Adoption*, Chaube SK, editor. New Delhi, p. 52.

Cross-cultural comparisons to make broad generalisations on diasporic phenomenon have been used. General explanations for the causes and consequences of the Indian-Nepali diaspora and identifying 'push' and 'pull' factors on immigration integration and assimilation have been made used here. Using the above theoretical methods, the paper attempts to interrogate the distinctive identity of the Indian-Nepalis through a close analyses of the text in consideration. The hegemonic Pan-Indian culture when pushed down the psyche of the minority community created the process of acculturation difficult. Instead it has led them to develop a strong racial consciousness, to belong and to be accepted within the mainstream Indian national identity. The Classic Diaspora may have be born of flight not choice but the Gorkha diaspora was a matter of choice. It has a unique character as we find that there is no idealisation of the original home; no desire for a return movement; at the same time retaining strong ethnic consciousness positing between two cultures.

Diaspora Sensibility in Prajwal Parajuly's *The Gurkha's Daughter*

Parajuly took the western literary world by storm with his critically acclaimed short story collection *The Gurkha's Daughter: Stories* (2012), shortlisted for the Dylan Thomas prize. Parajuly negotiates through the contested sites of home and belonging in each of these stories. It is a collection that speaks for the scores of Indian-Nepalese who are often labelled as foreigners, illegal immigrants and refugees in India. Even after their years of loyal stay in India, 'home' for these Indian-Nepalese has become a contested site problematising notions of belonging and identity. The concept of diaspora embodies the subtext of 'home':

Where is home? On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, sombre grey skies in the middle of the day...all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations. (192)

Home-building has territorial connotations as well. It involves making space through closures, for only those who belong can come in, and a house-owner can shut the door on outsiders' (Castles & Davidson 130). According to Hage, home-building is the building of the feeling of being at home based on the four 'affective building blocks' of security, familiarity, community and a sense of possibility (Castles & Davidson: 131). However, the world is today connected in a 'Trans-societal flows' and a 'borderless global economy' and cross-cultural exchanges make the notion of home problematic. If the mainstream diasporic writers have always expressed a longing for 'home' because

the trope of 'home' was for them a metaphor of the self, and by extension to the nation; for someone like Parajuly with an Indian father and a Nepali mother lineage living in Gangtok, sharing cultural affinity with the neighbouring Darjeeling hills brewing for State autonomy from the hegemonic control of West Bengal, 'home' can be a site of contestation. In the case of former, the diasporic experience of displacement is always paralleled with the desire for constant longing for 'home' left behind; but Parajuly makes no issues of 'home' being more to do with 'routes' than 'roots'. In many ways 'home' is an extension of the symbolic self as it provides not just a physical space of comfort but with psychic security as well. Unlike the diasporic writers experiencing homesickness, Parajuly shows how 'home' is not in the belonging but rather to be experienced in a state of unbelonging. The notion of 'home' should also give one the assurance of a fixed identity but it is generally seen that identity is multi-faceted and context-specific construct. Some of the important features of group-identity are religion, caste, language, culture and the like.

Brah makes us note that 'homing desire' is not the same as the desire for homeland. 'Homing desire' is a desire for constructions of new identity where the rhizomatic roots become less important than the escape roots. Jyopi Nyman refers to theorist Avtar Brah's notion of 'homing desire' and quotes Nikos Papastergiadis's reflections on the fluid notion of home: The search for home is neither a nostalgic retreat to a familiar past nor a defensive reaction against the brutalities of the present. The meaning of 'home' is now found in the future-oriented projects of constructing a sense of belonging in a context of change and belonging' (Papastergiadis: 9). In Parajuly one can find how the fluidity of our identity runs counter to our traditional notions of home as a fixed haven of stability and permanence. Many cultural theorists have spoken at length about the rootedness to peregrination because with the shrinking world borders all journeys are less to do with striking roots and more to do with tracing routes. Quoting Elleke Boehmer:

Historically, they submit, definitions of self have been formulated through cultural contact and in motion; in relation more to routes of travel than roots of belonging.
(234)

At the material level 'home' as a space does not exist by itself. Home building as a practice is making spaces into homes. Homebuilding practices should carry with it the connotations of comfort, security and belonging to create a feeling of homey or being at home. The story *No Land is her Land* traces the ordeals of the young Refugee woman from Bhutan who is expatriated to Nepal. Anamika Chettri, a Lhotshampa⁵, faces difficulty of taking care of her TB inflicted father and children to learn *Dzongkha*⁶

⁵The Nepalis residing in Bhutan, Lhotshampas, were one of the early settlers of Bhutan.

⁶Official language of Bhutan.

and warding off leering men in the filthy refugee camp. Her revolutionary husband who was busy organising an awareness campaign among the Nepalis of Bhutan has suddenly deserted her to face life alone. Nonetheless, Anamika like so many Lhotshampas was determined to carve a space for herself:

Her theory was simple: if her country (she still referred to Bhutan as her country even after all these years) didn't want her, she didn't want it back. She had long learned to let go-of the eight acres of land her family owned close to Phuntsholing, of the cousins left behind who scraped through the citizenship test that, thanks to her husband, she had failed, and of the food, anointed with copious amounts of cheese and hot peppers, that she never quite succeeded in replicating since she came to Nepal as one of the 106,000 ethnic-Nepalese refugees forced out of Bhutan. (144)

Anamika Chettri desired to take a new 'route' to a new destination rather than clinging to her 'roots' as she appears fully prepared for an Interview with a hope to migrate to America to start a new beginning.

Khudunabari wasn't all that different from Phuntsholing. The people looked alike, spoke Nepali with the expected variation in inflection and followed the same religion and customs. The Bhutanese refugees at the camps often declared that they had done a better job of preserving the Nepalese culture than the Nepalese themselves. Despite living in such familiar surroundings, most refugees she spoke to were hoping for repatriation, unlike Anamika. She had had it with Bhutan. (144)

Trouble began to brew with the declaration of Bhutan as a homogeneous kingdom with one language and culture. Bhutan's first King Ugen Wangchuk had called the Nepalis to tame the unruly terrain, but gradually seen as a threat due to their progress made by dint of their sheer hard work. It is believed that the largest exodus of Nepalese from Bhutan to Nepal took place. Similarly, *Burmeli*⁷ (Nepalis settled in Burma) were forced to settle in the plains of Nepal after being displaced from Burma. The Nepalis settlement in Bhutan was an extension of the British colonial policy of civilising northeast India. With the signing of the Anglo-Bhutanese treaty of 1910, Bhutan was effectively brought under the control of the British. The Southern Bhutanese foothills were now to be inhabited by the Nepalese immigrants. The Nepalis led a life of insecurity as they were forced to fall in line with the *Drukpa*⁸ way of life. They were looked at as suspect possibly because in 1975 the 334 year old *Namgyal*⁹ rule came to an end democratic

⁷Nepalis settled in Burma.

⁸Loosely translated as ethnic Bhutanese

⁹The Royal Dynasty of Sikkim which came to an end after Sikkim joined as the 22nd State of the Indian Union in 1975. Cited in Sinha AC and Subba TB, editors, 2003. *The Nepalis in North-East India: a community in search of an identity*. Delhi: Indus Publishing. p. 389.

fever had caught up and the Nepalis in Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal were agitating for a separate Nepali-speaking state. Through an aggressive policy of cultural assimilation of the Nepalese in the *Drukpa* fold. *Dzongkha* was made compulsory official language, *Drukpa Kho* and *Kira*¹⁰ teaching of Nepalese banned:

An exodus of the Bhutanese Nepalese started in June, 1991 and by August 16, 1992, their number reached above 100,000 at various camps in Nepal and India. Most of the camps are located at Beldangi (14,321), Pathari (16,455), Timai (7,790), Maidhar (9,322), Goldhap (13,378) etc. in the Jhapa district of East Nepal, besides 30,000 in Sikkim and West Bengal. The truckloads of the refugees are daily pouring in these unhygienic and ill-provided camps. (Sinha: 241)

This ethnic conflict in Nepal attracted world attention, several cases of Human Rights violation came up. Several rounds of talks were held between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Royal Government of Nepal without reaching any resolution, the refugees continue to languish in the camps and the Bhutanese continue to maintain that the settlers had left on their own free will.

Similarly the Britishers also created the myth of the Brave Gurkha to sustain the project of empire-building. Lionel Caplan first argued that

the theory of race did not emerge *sui generis* to meet specific military needs; rather it was a deeper manifestation of the wider European doctrine of biological determinism or scientific racism.¹¹

The Gurkha's Daughter is set in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. It is the story of the two young girls playacting their fathers who both serve in the British Army. The gravity of the actual situation is relieved through the little girls who without understanding what the implication of Post-British life for the Gurkha recruit would be like. The little luxuries that could be bought with a steady source of income as a Gurkha soldier deployed in the British Army is displayed through the reference of Phantom cigarette, beer, tape recorder, silk sarees and old plated *bhara-kuti*¹² bought from Hong Kong during their father's deputation in Hong Kong. The narrator is a Gurkha's daughter who is thought to have some ill-luck by the astrologer. These middle class Nepalese continue to carry their vestige of ancient ritual. So the priest was being call in to clear her 'dosh'¹³ which apparently caused her to bring ill-fortune upon them, accident prone and have trouble in finding a suitable match. The desire to reach out to others form

¹⁰Traditional dress of the ethnic Bhutanese

¹¹See Lionel C, 2006. Martial Gurkhas: the persistence of a military discourse on 'Race'. In: Peter R, editor. *The concept of race in South Asia*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. p. 216.

¹²Play-thing of girl children.

¹³Fault caused by the wrong positioning of the stars in the birth-chart.

connections is reflected when the two friends decide to strengthen their bonds with a traditional Nepali ceremony of 'mit'¹⁴. The overheard adult conversations played by the girls suggesting an impending change in their fortune. Her father would be soon losing his job with the British withdrawing its forces from Hong Kong. His hopes of being sent to UK or Brunei were dismal. The aspirations of these Gurkha soldiers were bitterly crashed as they soon found themselves with no alternative arrangements of living. His gift of his prized *Khukuri*¹⁵ to his daughter to make it a plaything is noteworthy as it was now of no use to him. The daughter observes his changed demeanour once he comes back home:

Things are blurry after that. I think Appa came home a few months after Gita left, or it could have been weeks. He had greyed around the temples & looked smaller than I remembered him. He had completed fifteen years in the army and had hoped for a few years of extension or permission to work in the UK, but neither happened. (203)

The agony of a Gurkha pride is played with his daughter proclaiming with a moustache on:

I am a retired Gurkha. I belong to a regiment that has won thirty-six Victoria Crosses. Do you think I can go around looking for jobs as a security guard? (204)

Her father waited for several months seeking a solution to his status, attending meetings of such affected soldiers; and eventually has to comfort himself with a job of a security guard.

Such journeys of displacement resulted in psychological trauma but the migration between Nepal and India was one without any hassle, requiring no passport or visa. According to Article 7 of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950:

The Government of India and Nepal agree to grant, on a reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other, the same privileges in the matter of residence, ownership of property participation in trade and commerce, movement and other privileges of a similar nature

The story *The Cleft* documents one such journey through the mind of Kaali, a domestic help, crossing the border to attend a family function. The journey from Kathmandu to Birtamod by Sarita and her group is nothing more than a casual one, involving no risk or hazard of any kind.

Another short story *A Father's Journey* set in Gangtok which is sandwiched between Nepal and Bhutan. It is a story of Nepali-Brahmin family. The Nepali- Brahmins share

¹⁴A Nepali ritual suggesting bond of kinship.

¹⁵The Gurkha Blade, an important accessory of the Gurkha Regiment.

several affinity with the mainstream Hindu- Indians unlike the Mongoloid Nepalese. The rigid class hierarchy is ingrained in their social structure which is essayed through the choice of a groom by a father for his daughter. The daughter has succumbed to the family pressure of getting married to someone belonging to her own caste:

Your parents have to be Brahmins, their parents have to be Brahmins, and their parents have to be Brahmins. And their parents and their grandparents and their great-grandparents. (67)

The father had rejected Anwesh Pradhan inspite of his solid education with a degree in Political Science to get into politics and favours the marriage of his daughter to a Brahmin. His dilemma is brought out well in the following lines:

What if her husband, a righteous Brahmin in every way, ended up treating his daughter the way he, Prabin, treated his wife? What if Supriya's evolved into a marriage deprived of love like his was? Yes, he didn't cheat on his wife, and he knew she didn't cheat on him, but neither gave the other the happiness one expects from a spouse. Days went by without their having exchanged a word with each other. All the joy that came from their marriage resided in their daughter. And he didn't wish that life for his daughter. God knows he had failed as a husband; he didn't want another man like him, the picture-perfect Brahmin, to fail Supriya. (93)

Since our ideas of 'home' is shaped by our culture and social location; 'home' here fails to assure a safe haven for the daughter.

Mixed Blessing is set in Darjeeling, a Nepali dominated hill subdivision of West Bengal. Rajiv lives under a difficult situation despite having a good education, his job prospect despite possessing a degree in engineering. The frequent calls for shut-downs by the local India-Nepali to force the West Bengal Government to give in to their Statehood demands has been repressively put down. Also the Gorkhaland statehood movement, a legitimate 'home' for the Indian-Nepali is rightfully treated by Parajuly as a movement that is largely crafted by the opportunistic leaders. The movement of the Gorkhas for a home of their own is reduced to a movement based on forcible coercion playing upon the sentiments of the people through a close nexus between the Governments and Local opportunistic leaders. Taking care of his old grandmother and his student brother; Rajiv is burdened with the message of guests pouring in to join them in their festive period. Instead of feeling happy he finds himself in an inconvenient situation as the arrangements for their stay would have to be. He is ashamed of their frugal lifestyle in a one-bedroom house. The only comfort for Rajiv is through the Scots who were in Darjeeling on a charity mission spree. They try to comfort Rajiv by helping him look at what he has rather than what he does not have. So when Ms Scot gifts him a New Testament,

It was, she said, the best way to understand Christianity. They weren't trying to convert him, she added. For someone who was losing faith in everything around him, reaffirming his faith in God, any God-might do a lot of good. They were, of course, available anytime he wanted to discuss the book. (122)

Having no opportunity in their own 'home', these young people seek out alternative spaces in a globalized world. The urban phenomenon of globalisation and its impact upon smaller worlds/ societies/ cultures is best brought out in *The Immigrants*. The story which is set in Manhattan is the story of two Nepali young people and their aspiration to settle in America. The narrator is a young man who has his future plans carefully worked out before him, within few years he was expecting a Green Card which would enable him to work legally for three more years in America. He faces a lot of confusion surrounding his identity; if he said to someone he was of Nepalese origin, they would ask him if he had climbed Mount Everest (disappointed them by saying no nor did he know of anyone else who had); and if he told them he was from Darjeeling they would ask him a tea question. But his little knowledge of tea nor did he drink tea:

And if I told anyone I was an Indian with Nepalese origins, they looked at me in wide-eyed wonder, sometimes pressing me to volunteer information about this curious mish-mash. I wouldn't have minded recounting my family history so much if the inevitable 'So, you're half-Nepalese and half- Indian?' question didn't come up. Sometimes, I drew a map and went through a spiel on the difference between ethnicity and nationality. Most other times, I just stayed silent and let people continue living in their uninformed bubble. (246)

He gets to hire a maid from Nepal who is desperately looking for more jobs but the language issue restricted her job prospect.

She spoke the kind of antiquated Nepali we in Darjeeling made fun of and associated with poor villagers-her verbs agreed with the gender as well as the status of her subjects, a concept we grasped with great difficulty in school and never really used outside the academic world. (252)

The two instantly strike a rapport in a foreign land. What makes them to reach out to each other, in spite of one being a Nepali from India and the other being a Nepali from Nepal, was their common fate in a foreign land. Sabitri does not want to go back to Nepal ('home') because it has little to offer to her. Apparently back at home she has told them she works in an office.

If global capitalism has apparently brought the world closer, it has also brought about social and political disintegration; it has given rise to a sense of local patriotism fuelling identity-crisis and leading to disillusionment to young men like Anwesh Pradhan in *A Father's Journey* or Rajiv in *Mixed Blessing*. With brutal frankness, Parajuly represents

how globalisation does not necessarily imply economic prosperity but a blinding desire to cross borders for better life. It is perhaps this divide which leads the natives to clamour for a separate land of their own. Many post-colonial scholars have argued for a specific geo-political landmass rather than a cultural, economic or political sovereignty as a fundamental element to national ideology, which they believe would be a consequent result of the former. Even Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* has emphasized the central significance of political sovereignty and the origin of national community through the realisation of a physical landmass:

the mass of the country people have never ceased to think of the problem of their liberation except in terms of violence, in terms of taking, back the land from the foreigners, in terms of national struggle, and of armed insurrection. (1968: 127)

The idea of a separate arrangement for Darjeeling Hills has always been prevalent since the days of the British Raj. Several administrative nomenclatures like 'Backward Tract', 'Scheduled Area', 'Partially Excluded Area' and 'Wasteland' have been used to suggest the difference between the Hills and the Plains. Many scholars see this difference as a deliberate ploy of colonial governmentality. The demand for a separate land of the Gurkhas has been since 1907. It is felt that the common identity confusion between the Nepalis of Indian Origin and the Nepalis of Nepal can be avoided if only the Indian Gurkhas had a separate State of their own. Immediately after independence, the clamour for a separate state sprang up on the premise of self-determination, cultural distinctiveness, and ethnic exclusivity. It was only in the 1980s that the political undercurrents took a violent turn under Subhas Ghisingh's political party the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF). On March 13, 1986, the GNLF launched a declaration of Eleven Point Programme of Action with a primary agenda of Gorkhaland. A bloody massacre took place in an effort to curb the movement by the Government. The apathy of the West Bengal State Government can be understood as they considered the bloody agitation as a Law and Order problem which had to be resolved punitively. In 1987, several rounds of talks were held between the Central Government of India, the West Bengal State Government and the GNLF with no final solution. Both the Centre and State governments insisted on the formation of a Hill Council instead of a separate State. As a consequence of such talks, the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Accord was signed in August 22, 1988 between the GNLF leadership, C.G. Somaiah (Central Government representative) and Rathin Sengupta, the Chief Secretary of West Bengal. It is interesting to note their contrary opinions on the Gorkhaland movement. While the State Government labelled it as 'anti-national' and 'anti-constitutional'; the Central Government on the contrary called it 'constitutional'. The then Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi blatantly attributed the movement to the neglect of the State Government in managing the hill affairs. By alleging the movement as not anti-national, the National Congress Party was trying to enlarge

their support base in the hills; and on the contrary, by labelling the movement as anti-national the CPIM State Government was trying to win the vote banks of the then upcoming Assembly elections of 1987. Till today the Gorkhaland issue has never been a priority for both the Central and the State Governments. It should have been considered from the lens of fulfilling the aspirations of the hill people. Today there is a new Government both at the State (Trinamool Congress) and at the Centre (Bharatiya Janata Party); and the GNLF has also succumbed to a new Regional Party the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJMM) The same kind of arrangement has been reached at between the albeit with a new name. Such an interim arrangement has only been made to placate the vested political groups ignoring the aspirations of millions of Gorkhas scattered around the globe.

CONCLUSION

'Home' being one of culture's most powerful symbols, is today a subject of post-colonial literary investigation. Rosemary Marangoly George in *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relations and Twentieth Century Fiction* (1996) tells us of how the narratives of 'home' is equated with the author's attempt at recognising his self-negotiating through the various forces of racial background class structure and gender constructions. She located the concept of 'home' in the gap between the idealisation and the reality of individual subject. Her argument is that 'home is as much an ideological determinant of the subject as race, class, and gender' (2). We have seen how notions of 'home' and 'belonging' are important determinants of identity and the desire to be assimilated within the larger mainstream Indian identity resurfaces through its history of statehood demands within the Union of Indian territory which has been violently repressed¹⁶. The problem arises when 'Indianness' is required to be exhibited through its sharp Aryan features, cultural social and religious habits practised by the mainstream Indians as opposed to the mongoloid features of the Gorkhas. The stereotyping of the India- Nepalese as watchmen and domestic helps lead to further alienation. Their liminal status in India leads them to constantly prove their 'Indianness'. Looks too influenced because there has been a racialisation of 'looks'. The Indian-Nepalese suffer racial discrimination, and so do the inhabitants of North-East India due to their Mongolian looks. The importance of language in developing identity should also be recognized. After much agitation Nepali has been included in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution since August 1992.

What separates Prajwal Parajuly is his unique attempt at not following the ideologies of canonical assimilation within the fabric of mainstream writing. His oeuvre reflects the cultural distinctiveness of the Indian-Nepali as he negotiates their multi-faceted lived

¹⁶A peace rally by the Gorkha ex-servicemen was lathi charge mercilessly on 9th April 2008 a 'Black Day' in Gorkha history

experience. Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986) deals with this issue of literary assimilation vis-à-vis the fragmentation of identity among the ethnic group. (Kafka was a Czech but chose to write in German) Problematising how minor literature and writer consolidate national identity, they write:

A minor literature does not come from a minor language. But the first characteristic of a minor literature in any case is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization. (16)

Deterritorialisation would imply the use of dominant language by a minor writer to subvert the dominant culture. The minor writer will subvert the dominant language by colouring it with his own idiosyncrasies. In a minor literature is everything that is contained in them is political reverberating with stories of individual concern thereby adding a collective value. Thus the minor writer has to speak for his community not in his language but in the language of the dominant group. Parajuly has effectively articulated the pain of diaspora without homeland in *The Gurkha's Daughter*. By discouraging linguistic conformity and blind political obedience, the assimilation of the Indian-Nepalese into mainstream would definitely enrich ethnic diversity.

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