

Exploring the Flight from Nepali Ethnic Identity in Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*

Sucharita Laha

Abstract

Affiliation with an ethnic group has wide-ranging impressions on personal and social identity. Ethnic identity has remained an important aspect of how people define themselves. It alludes to a person's social identity within a larger context based on membership in a cultural and social group. It is actually an assessment of one's feeling of belonging to a particular ethnic group. It is not rigid; therefore, ethnic identity of a person can be seen as an ever-changing phenomenon as it is constantly shifting. In this sense, we can say that ethnic identities are negotiable. Sometimes traumatic events, ethnic conflict, socio cultural problem, experiences of discrimination, prejudices or stereotypes associated with ethnic group prompt a person to take a "flight" from that ethnic identity. The notion of "flight" from one's own ethnic identity refers to the phenomenon where the person chooses to dissociate themselves from their ethnic identity as they perceive that their cultural background hinders their growth and opportunities or limits their scope of betterment of their life. Anamnesis of traumatic event also generates problem and disrupts one's identity. In Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* (2010), the protagonist Prema is discontent with her Nepali ethnic identity and she wants to fly away from her ethnic identity for various reasons. In Nepal her condition is like a cocoon and she cannot explore her potentials. She, therefore, flies away from her ethnic identity and transforms herself. Finally, she emerges as a butterfly in America. The title of the novel is often thought to convey her phases of transformation and how she tackles and deals with it. My paper, therefore, is an attempt to explore why the protagonist of Manjushree Thapa's novel *Seasons of Flight* takes a "flight" away from her ethnic identity and how she reinvents herself single-handedly in an alienated land. This paper also explores the impact of trauma on identity. Traumatic event can alter the identity of a person and it causes to mould a new Identity. In Thapa's novel *Seasons of Flight* the protagonist Prema's identity is affected due to the traumatic events. Traumatic events causes her to fly away from her ethnic identity and re-build a new Identity in an alienated land.

Keywords: Memory, identity, trauma, dislocation, ambivalence