

Khuwalung Encroachment and Resistance: Shifting and Silencing of the Indigenous Movement in Nepal

Tara Lal Shrestha¹, Bidhya Shrestha² ✉, Dipankar Senehang³ and Bibechna Sharma Timsina⁴

¹Lecturer, Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

²Lecturer, Central Department of Population Studies, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

^{3,4}Student, MA IV Semester, Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

✉ **Corresponding Author:** Bidhya Shrestha, **E-mail:** bidhya.shrestha@cdpl.tu.edu.np

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Received: 08 September 2021

Accepted: 02 October 2021

Published: 14 October 2021

DOI: 10.32996/jhsss.2021.3.10.1

KEYWORDS

Khuwalung encroachment,
counter-resistance, indigenous
movement.

ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore the foundational and functional phases of the Khuwalung resistance movement. It is based on grey literature documents. To synchronize the significance of an indigenous movement, the first part of this study briefly presents the context of the hegemonic ideology of the ruling elite persisting in Nepal with reference to Khuwalung. The second part covers the phases of the resistance, which look far more constrained as a counter-resistance. The last part presents potential insights related to Khuwalung for transforming this counter-resistance into an organic indigenous movement in Nepal.

1. Introduction

Khuwalung, an ancient huge holy rock situated in the middle of the Saptakoshi river, is associated with *Mundhum*, the holy scripture of the Kirat. It has a spiritual, philosophical, and metaphysical resemblance to the identity, history, and civilization of the Kirat community. It is compelling to preserve it not only to sustain the Kirat culture but it is also an icon of indigenous aesthetics. Such an icon came to prominence in the form of a resistive movement through the discursive salutation of the then Prime Minister of Nepal K.P. Sharma Oli. It awakened and acknowledged indigenous people, especially Kirat communities regarding the cultural significance of Khuwalung. Subverting the authoritative agenda, it challenged the discursive monopoly of the government and stood as an impervious force against suppression and obliteration. But, the movement dearth the resistive power within because the origination has no auratic root; it came into the limelight only after a person poked it as the disruption in development work. PM Oli's developmental assertion for the clearance of the obstruction for the streamer in the river created havoc on the concerned indigenous people that germinated the seed for the resistive movement. Obliterating the governmental verdict, the Kirat people reiterated protest programs and tried to defy problematic decisions. Countering the persisting dominance and the prejudices, the resistance soon got vehement energy and showed integrity, however, failed to sustain its pace.

This article overviews the insusceptible indigenous agitation as the counter-resistance that demands recognition and loathes the biased gaze of the state. It attempts to expose the extreme endeavour to protect the cultural asset that developed not as a mature movement in continuity, rather in a fragmented form. As the movement is not initiated from the ground level, the confrontation of political issues and reflection of fear consciousness are the pivotal aspects to instigate the movement but have failed to obtain the desired transmutation disintegrating the hegemony imposed by the ruthless government.

Nepal endorsed secularism after the end of the Maoist movement and was constitutionally inscribed in 2006. However, the supremacy of the ruling elite over ethnic groups still prevails. The Khuwalung politics is an exemplary depiction of blunting the

sharpness of their resistive activism. Krishna B. Bhattachan, from the perspective of the dominant political parties, also opines, "the ruling...and the opposition..., ethnopolitics does not exist in Nepal" (39).

Although the ruling elite might understand Khuwalung merely as a boulder or trifling stone, Kirat takes it as a symbol of their civilization and it has become a pivotal resistive apparatus. This paper aims to express the concern over Khuwalung acknowledging its imperatives and resistive forces. To explore the diversion faculty, we reviewed referential and relevant literature and accumulated substantial information without methodological constraints. Furthermore, to scrutinize the issue, we incorporated several studies, including audio, visual and verbal materials. The collected documents attempt to illuminate the dynamics and ambulation of the Khuwalung discourse.

2. Khuwalung icon: existence and encroachment

Khuwalung, identified as an identity within which resides the firm faith and belief of the Kirat, holds the power of culture and tradition that has been transmitted from one generation to another since the pre-historic period. Khuwalung is located just beneath the confluence of the Tamor, Arun and Sunkoshi rivers, which jointly form Nepal's biggest river called Saptakoshi. The tri-junction area is addressed as *Triveni*- not merely the tri-junction of three rivers, but also the tri-junction of three districts (Sunsari, Dhankuta and Udayapur). It can also be reached through Baraha Kshetra, as it is situated three kilometers ahead of Chatara Saptakoshi Bridge. Khuwalung has religious, cultural and moral significance to the Kirati community as uttered in a religious text while performing rituals and carries the philosophical meaning. It also has a high aesthetic value in indigenous world views. Khuwalung can be repeatedly heard in Kirati oral scriptures especially in *Mundhum* which, in the words of Dilli Bikram Edingo, is "Prehistoric property in terms of its accounts, sermons and moral or philosophical exhortations in a narrative of the oral epic" (165). Khuwalung also holds the position in folktales, myths and oral traditions including the rituals performed by the Shamanism and Dhami marking the significance in the Kirat community as the epicentre and the soul of the Kirat cultural domains. As Birat Anupam quoting Dewa Kirati views, "Khuwalung is one of the greatest iconic Kirati natural landmarks...it contains an incredible mark in its tradition."

Kaushal Yadav, quoting Bhogiraj Chamling's words published in *Kantipur Daily*, writes, "For Kiratis, Khuwalung is not just a rock. According to the sacred oral tradition, centuries ago, several groups migrating from their original settlements approached the Saptakoshi River near today's Belaka Municipality, Udaypur. As an offering to cross the river, the first group sacrificed a bird, a bulbul. A large rock then appeared in the middle of the river, providing them with a surface with which to cross the water. The second group that reached the banks offered blood from a woman's finger. Several other groups, all crossing with the help of the rock, settled in Nepal's eastern hills." It has been revealed that Khuwalung is a cultural heritage of Kirat that must be preserved instead of plotting conspiracy for the destruction. Marking Khuwalung as a hurdle in the mission of development threatens the cultural, religious, historic property of the indigenous communities. Shaurya Khastri, quoting Shalik Shatsak Rai, opines, "The holy rock has, over centuries, inspired both faith and superstition." And it has made a greater impact upon the Kirati community as Man Bahadur Rai says, "These are just tall tales that have come to be associated with the rock's legend, but there's no denying that it is an important part of Kirat culture and history. Any attempt to harm it could not go overlooked." Kirat people comprehend and celebrate Khuwalung as a holy site that has imperative prominence for the continuation and regulation of cultural and spiritual values.

However, the knowledge regarding Khuwalung and its significance were circumscribed only to limited people. The cultural essence and its prominence were compounded in the form of situatedness rather than positionality. The space it occupied is tremendously after the outburst of political encroachment and hegemonic discourse. To resist the infliction upon it, Kirat people initiated the Khuwalung Conservation Movement as a counter-resistance against the existing controversial and monolithic declaration of its demolition; this indigenous movement can be observed chronologically in three distinct waves: the historical epoch of the encroachment, origin and expansion of the movement, and shifting and silencing of the resistance

3. The historical epoch of the encroachment

The government's bigotry over the Khuwalung is not a preliminary encroachment towards indigenous people. Probing the history of Nepal illuminates horrendous and terrific reality which is guided by power politics and hegemonic tendency. Khas-Aryan's continuous accession to power and overwhelming imposition of their cultural-traditional values have ever subordinated the 'Others'. Nepal, being a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious country, has ever been ruled by a homogeneous tendency, except in the Kirat dynasty. High hill elite Khas-Aryan males have dominated Nepalese polity and regulated it through homogenous monolithic values. The marginalized communities remained ever sidelined and boycotted from the mainstream. To consolidate the power structure and sustain supremacy, they strategically implemented several hegemonic policies that constantly paralyzed the 'Others'. According to George Modelski, "if the hegemonic cycle that seems to be operating in the modern world persists, we are likely to face another very dangerous situation in about the year 2030" (qtd. in Chase-Dunn, Christopher, et al, p. 362). Probing the history of Nepal demystifies the kingdom can be traced back to the Gopal dynasty, also known as, the first king and kingdom of Nepal who was Khas-Aryan. Gyan Bahadur Karki writes, "Nepali society before Gopal's ruling is not possible to address exactly. During the reign of Kirat who had ruled before the Lichhavi era, the Lichhavi, Kolia, Brijji, etc. caste entered from India who had

strong firmness in the conception of the caste system. Furthermore, he writes, "it is assumed that Lichhavis, who had succeeded in seizing the power politics from the Kirat dynasty, were the implementers of the caste system and the first king who implemented it was Supuspa" (Our trans. p. 5). This system was further consolidated by the legal code of Ram Shah and reached its utmost with the promulgation of *Muluki Ain* in 1853 by Jung Bahadur Rana which employed *Jaat* (caste) for the first time in legal documents. Yogendra B. Gurung et al. write, "The Adivasi Janajatis of Nepal are the ethnic groups with distinct languages, kinship systems, and self-identities. But because the *Muluki Ain* was written from the standpoint of caste society, it viewed all Nepal's diverse ethnic groups as castes and treated them as such within the national code" (2).

The political encroachment, monolithic values, and assumption of majoritarianism had never counted sidelined minorities as the members of the nation and always boycotted from the participation of nation-building process. Gabriele Köhler, et al. opines, "These excluded groups suffer from multiple and compounded disadvantages. They have unequal rights and have long been denied a voice in the political process" (232). The hegemonic superiority of caste and overwhelming domination of cultural beliefs of elite ruling groups had obliterated the cultural aesthetic values from the proliferation and its enhancement. In the words of Walter L. Adamson, "Unlike the bourgeoisie, the proletariat has never had an independent geographical base for the formation of its culture, a factor which has held back its development" (42). The marginal indigenous group has not got sufficient space to articulate themselves for their cultural formation. The dominant group who had ruled (still ruling) Nepal for more than a millennium and a half had superimposed their cultural beliefs and values upon the margin and created a general assumption of grants from the minorities, omic power. Stoler observes, "a common historiography assumption is that racial discourse- a discourse of those with power- or those trying to maintain their hold" (Qtd in Hangen, p. 51). Furthermore, the constitutional assertion inscribing Nepal as a Hindu state in 1962 during the panchayat regime by King Mahendra shows the bias and univocal comprehension of the social dimension. The political authority and kingship never acknowledged the heterogeneous appearances of the society; rather, it was understood as one dimensional and hierarchic dissemination in which Khas-Aryans were regarded to be the supreme caste with sufficient potentialities. Bhandari et al write, "For more than two centuries, the ethnic, linguistic, and regional diversity of Nepal has been deliberately suppressed by the centralised feudal state" (7). This conception not merely penalized marginal groups but also made them victims of cultural hegemony that compels common people to comprehend the hegemonic discourse as normalcy. The ordinary folks were required to educate themselves with the discourse formed by the dominant group articulating the grammar of education disseminated by them.

The people's movement of 1990 brought tremendous changes; however, it did not make a firm effort to ascend the situation of indigenous people. As Mahendra Lawoti argues, the 1990 constitution, in addition to other social and historical factors, plays a significant role in the continued exclusion of marginalized socio-cultural groups. He names the adoption of the unitary state instead of federal structures as "the major reason for exclusion, as the system does not address cultural cleavages" (qtd. in Alexandra Geiser, p. 20). It was the constitution of 2006 that played an impervious role to afford the group's recognition and participation. Nevertheless, it hasn't accentuated the backward people up to the level of majoritarianism. The reservation act 2003, Nepal as a secular state in 2006 and the declaration of the federal government in 2007 are significant landmarks towards the transformation of indigenous situatedness. Moreover, the proportional representation system and the abolition of the monarchy (deeply rooted in the Hindu cultural epoch) in 2008 are also the impact factors that gave a chance to illuminate indigenous people on the social and national ground.

Despite the remarkable changes made in the constitution, there is still a tremendous gap between the assertion of the constitution and its implementation. The declaration of a secular state, for instance, is a remarkable step but the dominance of Hinduism and governmental affinity towards its conservation and proliferation is comparatively higher than to other religions. It is not a strange and peculiar phenomenon, because as Gene E. Robinson et al argue, "Genes do not specify behaviour directly but rather encode molecular products that build and govern the functioning of the brain through which behaviour is expressed" (896). The power authority has always held the common genetic code. Thus, it has shared similar biases and conceptions towards the groups other than them. Regarding national heroes, for instance, Prithvi Narayan Shah, Amshu Barma, Amar Singh Thapa, Balabhadra Kunwar, Motiram Bhatta, etc. all from the dominant group, are highly recognized but a Kirati indigenous icon. For instance, Srijangha is not addressed yet. The prejudice and contention of the dominant group have excluded the cultural figure and symbol of indigenous groups, sidelining the essential commemoration which is necessary to the further generation to sustain their cultural identity and origination. The propensity and tendency have become one-way traffic where there seems to be no way for the people who have anti direction. They have succeeded in persisting the dominance and blistering their cultural discourse because of their unbroken political sustenance and accession to power.

There is always an intricate relation between power and culture which may be explicit in some cases whereas implicit in others. However, in either case, power functions as a regulating mechanism that helps to silence the powerless and signifies the power holder. As David Oswell asserts,

...the question of the relation between culture and power becomes highly significant...the power of words and ideas, of stories and imagination, of passion and experience in the building of worlds, worlds that include some but exclude others, that congratulate some but disparage others and that allow some to accumulate great symbolic, cultural and economic wealth and for others to have very little. (41-42)

The powerful group always earns the surplus and beneficiary from the powerless and recognizes them merely as a commodity, frolicking them always. Why are the cultural aesthetics of Khas-Aryan so popular? How have they succeeded in sustaining their cultural values to their future generation? Why does the government disseminate more religious funds to Hinduism? Why does the nation show a positive affinity towards them and why does the entire nation celebrate their festival as a national holiday? It is because of power. The answer is a little peculiar but not so far from absolute. Because of the power of authority, mostly the bureaucrats, parliament, judiciary, constitution maker etc. all are overwhelmingly dominated by the same group of people: Khas-Aryan, as Lawoti opines, "the judiciary and bureaucracy are still highly unrepresentative where the domination of caste high hill elites (CHHE) is still high disproportionately" (113). Thus, there is no obstruction to block their way out towards monopoly and dictatorial ascertainment for their cultural preservation and the implementation of a homogenous mentality. The power structure and its continuous suppression are absolutely naked and hierarchic which is a toxic injection to break down social integrity and solidarity because as Bryan S. Turner et al argues, "... the naked force is ultimately an ineffective, expensive and unstable basis for social order" (71). Indigenous people have become vulnerable in the cultural domain of Nepalese society. The baffling encroachment of the government and deterioration of their cultural assets have crippled the cultural identity and aesthetic values of indigenous people. Khuwalung is an exemplary subject matter that exposes the preeminent strata of the government that subdues the cultural voices of the indigenous groups. It's not a new phenomenon that the indigenous people and their cultural values are undermined, but the strategic and deliberate announcement of the then PM Oli rhetorically obliterated the indigenous' faith and origination that enabled indigenous communities to penetrate the heart and feel the coldness of the blood of the dominant group. The Kirat community instantly alarmed the atrocious political infliction upon their cultural replica that rudimentarily paid incentive for the initiation of agitation and protest.

Different organizations, Kirat Rai Yayokka Central Working Committee, Federation of Indigenous Nationalities Litterateur/Writer of Nepal (FINLON) in particular including many activists from the root participated in the protest that encapsulates the delapidation of Khuwalung. Furthermore, the media coverage and social media platforms also played a significant role in accumulating the resisting voices not merely from the country but also from abroad. The dissemination of the significance of the cultural epitome seeded cultural impulses and solidarity among the Kirat that increased the urgency for its rapid objection. The booming of accelerated resistance succeeded in challenging the government itself through the collaborative forces of organizations, activists and academics. As Andrew Miller et al argue, "Nations are often understood as political, geographical or even biological phenomena, but there is an obvious sense in which they are primarily cultural" (139). But the political superiority in Nepal, dominated by a dominant group, is obsessed with monopoly without considering the cultural issues of subordinated communities. However, the resistive forces acquainted by the minorities are not to be suppressed because as Nabiha Gul writes, "Whenever deprivation and frustration among common people increases, they fight for their rights and revolt....It is a multi-dimensional problem, which has political, social, economic and even ideological factors behind it. One needs to see this issue from a broader perspective. The problem is far more intricate than one can imagine" (39). The suppression of Khuwalung should be taken as the suppression of ethnic groups and their existential factor. If it is not taken into consideration before the verdict that the government makes, the consequences would be unimaginative and far more beyond one's comprehension.

4. Khuwalung movement: origin and expansion

Indigenous people have been experiencing domination of the hegemonic power over their aesthetics and are compelled to live with the sense of threat since historicity. As Dwight G. McCarty writes, "It is the mercenary commercialism that has no appreciation of art or beauty and no thought of the feelings and welfare of the people" (113). A deliberately silenced indigenous community for the recognition of their culture, identity transmuted themselves into rebels and are voicing over the encroachment. To quote Asef Bayat, "The 'everyday forms of resistance' perspective has undoubtedly contributed to recovering the Third World poor from 'passivity', 'fatalism' and 'hopelessness'- essentialist features of the 'culture of poverty' with its emphasis on identifying the 'marginal man' as a 'cultural type'" (56). The encroachment in a form of discourse was disseminated that made the spirit of the Kirat turbulent. The following table elaborates on the consequences of the scandalized situation regarding encroachment and confrontation.

Date (February-June, 2021)	Events
Encroachment	February 20 K.P. Oli while addressing the mass in Biratnagar said- 'that stone' (Khuwalung) would be destroyed
	February 28 Initiation of the movement from Damak
Confrontation	February 24 Appeal for the resistance by Rajan Mukarung
	February 26 Kirat-Rai Students' Community and Kirat-Rai Writers' Community organized a confrontation program
	March 4 Documentary on Khuwalung Article on Khuwalung by Dr. Sumaya Rai, Former President Kirat Rai Yayokha Central Working Committee
	March 8 Save Khuwalung Cultural Movement
	March 11 Khuwalung Preservation Committee members: Dinesh Kamdung Khambu and Sajan Rai, arrested
	March 12 Dinesh Kamdung Khambu & Sajan Rai Released
	March 13 Protest through writings
	March 14-30 Protest through different genres of literature
	March 31 Chief Minister Sherdhan Rai pledged to conserve and develop Khuwalung as a tourism hub
	April 1 Yayokha of Britain presented a memorandum protesting the PM's statement on splitting Khuwalung
April 2-8 Inactive Period	
April 9 Video on 'Protect Khuwalung'	

April 10 - May 28	Inactive Period
May 29	Declaration of demolishing Khuwalung in the budget speech
May 30	Warning of stakeholders to retaliate government's declaration of demolishing Khuwalung
May 31	Rajan Mukarung's appeal for unified resistance
June 1	FINLON's press release
June 3	Interview

Table 1: Confrontation against the encroachment of indigenous aesthetics

As mentioned in the above table, the discourse of Khuwalung obtained public recognition following the utterance of Oli when he was conveying his developmental scheme on February 20, 2021, to the mass gathering at the Capital of Province No. 1, Biratnagar. Addressing the masses, he disseminated his plans to metamorphose the use of the river to let humans experience the standardized means of development, in his words, "Ships (jet boats) ferry people from Bhojpur to Chatara within 11 minutes. We will dismantle the one trouble-making boulder (Khuwalung) with the help of cranes and clear the waterways" (27:31- 27:56). The phrase, "dismantle the one trouble-making boulder" was the act of ill-treatment towards the people belonging to the Kirat community. Because they perceived Oli's 'the trouble-making boulder' as none other than their holy Khuwalung. Shaurya Kshatri writes, "To the Kirat, the rock is the fulcrum of their long and illustrious cultural history". As Kshatri writes, "Several activist groups, as Save Khuwalung Movement activists, emerged via Facebook within hours of the PM's speech condemning the supposedly polemic public statement." Rajan Mukarung on 24 February took the lead of the campaign which was followed by several social activists. The organizations, in particular, Kirat-Rai Student Community and Kirat-Rai Writers Community organized a confrontation program on 26 March in Jhapa. Amid the resistance of the Kirat community, PM Oli presented his rhetorical speech addressing the gathering at the program on 28 February in Damak. The media personnel were actively covering the confrontative voices that emerged after the PM's speech. Media indeed played a prominent role in spreading the voice of resistive forces. Via *Rhythm Online*, Rajan Mukarung says, "It is cultural encroachment and an act of suppression and we understand this as K.P. Oli's continuation in a chain of suppression, therefore, we thought of initiating the movement. We are in the movement now" (Rhythm 7:03-7:51). Furthermore he adds, "We want development with no destruction of the cultural monuments (11:10-11:11, Our Trans.). The entire interview asserts that the dismantling of Khuwalung results in the government's deliberate collapsing of the culture of Kirat in order to keep the hegemony of the dominant group.

Kirat visualized the significance of Khuwalung to aware people around the globe. A broadcast of a short documentary on 4 March about Khuwalung shot by *Nanyo Online TV* claims that Khuwalung represents the essence of Kirat civilization. Khuwalung succeeded in making its pace in the public forum. From Dr Sumaya Rai to Kishor Byung Rai united in activism. Rai's poem "I am Khuwalung", presents Khuwalung as an alive soul of Kirat. FINLON, Khuwalung Area Preservation Committee, Yakthug Writer Organization jointly organized Save Khuwalung Cultural Movement on 8 March with the spirit of resistance and *Onlinekhabar* quotes the words of activist Bachchu Himanshu and writes, "Indigenous people have been oppressed in the name of stadiums, ships and temples, which is a subtle politics of encroaching indigenous peoples' land." In a movement, people were expressing their indignation towards the state's indifferent attitude. Shaurya Kshatri, quoting Shalik Shatsak Rai, writes, "Colloquially known as Khuwalung, the structure is said to mark the beginning of Kirat civilization. The scripture, known as *Mundhum*, mentions Khuwalung as being the centrepiece of Kirat culture." The voices for the preservation of the holy site of the Kirat were in an inclining position with no chaotic scenarios but the arrest of the Khuwalung Preservation Committee members Dinesh Kamdung Khambu and Sajan Rai, on 11 March created upheaval. *Sarbajanik* writes, "Police have arrested Dinesh and Sajan during a dispute between the jet boat operator and Dinesh Kamdung Khambu." Rajan Mukharung strongly condemned the arrest of the Khuwalung conservation leaders and demanded their immediate release. Along with a mass of activists and academics he protested against the arrest of the youths over a general dispute. Their arrest was taken as deliberate terrorism on the faith of indigenous communities. The police administration was sent an ultimatum by the Secretary of the Committee asking for the release with no conditions within 24 hours. The news of their release on 12 March as the *Aamdarshi Sanchar* writes entitled "Khuwalung

conservation engineers have just been released”, added a sense of pride to the concerned activists. Prominently, the words of Oli reflected the hegemonic force demeaning the essence of the multicultural and multiethnic aesthetics that a country Nepal holds. Bhogiraj Chamling questioned the Oli government and its imbalanced nature towards the multicultural epitome that the nation holds. He writes,

This statement is the latest vivid proof that Prime Minister Oli is not at all sensitive to the multicultural uniqueness of Nepali society. On the one hand, he offers a huge sum for gold cover to Pashupati, on the other hand, he orders the demolition of Khuwalung, the centre of faith of Kirat. Why is this kind of imbalance appearing in him?... Oli's remarks and behaviour have raised suspicions that the rulers are trying to destroy the multicultural coexistence of Nepali society, which has been built by centuries of hard work.

In an article entitled- Khuwalung conservation engineers say, 'uproot development is not needed,' including the quote of Rajan Mukharung in the *Shilapatra* report writes, "Don't just take Khuwalung as a stone. It is an image of the entire Kirat civilization" (Our Trans). Various groups of people involved in voicing for the preservation have homogeneous thoughts on Khuwalung, nobody wants the development eradicating the root of their cultural archetype. According to Rajendra Maharjan in Aayomail, "the government will not listen until the massive civil movement warms up the streets." He adds, "The government's political game should be stopped for the cultural attacks" (Our Trans). Individuals' voices are also heard aboard. However, since the Nepal government has a hearing deficiency until the roads are warmed nothing happens. The preservation of Khuwalung was heightened over the offline and online platforms excessively. Actor Dayahang Rai opines, "Khuwalung is not only ours. If Kirati is considered a citizen of this country, then Khuwalung is the heritage of the whole country." The erasure of Khuwalung is not only an erasure of the Kirat community, therefore, the voices including alternatives to conduct the development work were heard in the voice of people to save the heritage of the country. Prakash Chamling quoting Chandrabir Tombapu says, "Kirati's philosophy *Mundhum* has the oldest history." He adds, "Khuwalung is not only a myth, but it is also the history older than *Mundum*."

The demolition of Khuwalung is not only the dismantling of the stone but it is also the destruction of Kirat culture and indigenous aesthetics. To quote George F. MacDonald, "Culture may be understood as a consortium of communication (or a bundle of messages) that a given people have in common: their shared experiences shared perceptions and values, shared consciousness" (10). The confrontation on annihilating the origin must be continued in the common space of the movement. As Pradip Menyangbo writes, "Yayokha has expressed concern over Khuwalung's connection with the myth, culture and civilization of the Kirat. The Kirat Khambu community has explained Khuwalung as their deity and all the rituals start from this icon stone." After a long dispute regarding Khuwalung, Chief Minister Sherdhan Rai said that it was an unessential controversy. Menyangbo includes the statement of Rai, and writes, "the Khuwalung dispute was made public unnecessarily...some unemployed activists had created an unnecessary controversy." He claimed that PM Oli had not said Khuwalung should be blown up with a crane. He also said that the only thing that can be done is to remove the 'obstacles' for the jetboat in Arun, Dudhkoshi. He further said, "There was no decision to shift Khuwalung." The CM's expression provides a sense of unawareness regarding the rhetorical use of the PM's words. The contest can be seen uninterruptedly at the time.

Alternative voices to conserve Khuwalung were presented in the genres of arts as well. Nirvik Jung Rayamajhee writes, "Rangbhumi Academy is trying to revive the theatre culture in Dharan, also known as Lahureko Sahar (the city of soldiers). Recently, this theatrical troupe performed a play in the 'Khuwalung Bachau Andolan' (Save Khuwalung Movement) held at Chatara Koshi Bridge." Bishnu Moktan, the Chairman of the Academy, who also acted as the Khuwalung Dhunga (stone) in the street play reports, "Aware citizens cannot remain silent on national issues." Moreover, writers "artists should unite and use the streets as a platform to fight against regression." Through the play, he said that the Khuwalung was a symbol of the faith of the Kirat community and as Sujata Limbu quoting Rajan Rai writes, "Our invaluable cultural heritage cannot be destroyed." He also adds, "No one can destroy this historical heritage. It doesn't matter which party, which government."

According to *The Rising Nepal* (31 March 2021), "CM Rai has pledged to conserve and develop Khuwalung as a tourism hub." The news was a sign of victory for the Kirat community; it assured them the protection of their heritage. Gradually, the resistive force put a hold on their moves. After 1 April, from April 2 to May 28 the revolt against the political conspiracy was in an inactive mode as presented in the above table. A video was broadcasted on April 9, 2021. The inactive period indicates the deficiency in the efforts.

The peace exploded after the declaration of demolishing the Khuwalung in the budget speech on 29 May 2021. *Mundhumstar*, on 30 May writes, "The budget of the Fiscal Year 2078/79 can be seen with the phrase 'Obstacles to operate water transport from Chatara of Koshi River to Bhojpur will be removed.' The government had announced plans to break the 'Khuwalung stone'...Point No. 304 of the budget under the heading of water transport reads, ...allocated necessary funds for the construction of infrastructures including terminals for the operation of ships on the Koshi, Narayani and Karnali rivers. Obstacles in the waterway will be removed to operate water transport from Chatara of Koshi River to Bhojpur." As Nirbhik Jung Rayamajhi includes the statement of Rajan Mukharung and writes, "Removing the obstruction of Saptakoshi means breaking Khuwalung." He adds,

Mukarung also called the budget a weapon to encroach on Khuwalung and considers the announcement as an attack on cultural identity. Various Kirati organizations, for instance, Kirat Rai Yayokka Central Working Committee, FINLON, Kirat Rai Student Community, Kirat Rai Writers Community, Khuwalung Area Preservation Committee, Yakthuk Writer Organization began to unite. Some committees put out a press release to confront the decision.

The press release of FINLON on 1 June 2021 cited in *Janachasokhabar* writes, "...Nepal is repeating the mistake of imperialistic development that once Eupore made". The Kirat community was back to the literary platforms. Manu Lohoring Rai in her poem, "Beware! Don't Dare to Step on Khuwalung" expresses the indignation on behalf of the Kirat community. The chaos entered the Kirat community. *Satabdi News* writes, "In the name of development, exploiting the mentality of a citizen within the country on the basis of different caste and creed is still a continuation of the autocratic Rana-era, monarchical king." The repeated discrimination and an encroach on the historic civilization dispenses the unconcerned attitude of the government. Kaushal Yadav writes, "after the budget speech, FINLON appealed to all activists, academics and the general public to protest against the 'casteist' intention of the government." Broader solidarity from the non-Kirat expanded gradually.

5. Shifting and silencing of the resistance

The resistive voices concerning Khuwalung are in transitory positions. The state experienced a state of agitation from 20 February to 2 April 2021 but with fluctuation; a shift in resistance probably led the movement to silence. The inclination of confrontation was seen when the activists Dinesh Kamdung Khambu and Sajan Rai were arrested. The active participation of the Kirat community in releasing memorandum protests in the Khuwalung area was seen through genres of literary work. But the provocation of the Kirat community can be seen merely when they are poked, which symbolizes the fractured enthusiasm in marking the conversion the community desires. The shift is even weakening the auratic essence that Khuwalung holds.

On 31 March, when CM Rai delivered the concept about the preservation of the Khuwalung as a tourism hub, the Kirat community was blanketed with a sense of assurance. The silence within the community reflected a state of equilibrium. But, the deliverance of the plan to demolish the Khuwalung in a budget speech failed to guarantee the retardation of an indigenous movement. The movement was brought into the track through numerous texts though it does not seem to stick to sustainability. The oscillating enthusiasm which is firmly based on an assault of the opposition party, seems to annihilate the progression of the community. The boulder has obtained space and flexibility to occupy the tremendous location that was vacuumed before. It has succeeded in changing its situatedness into positionality which has elasticized its territorial aspects. Transforming its physical entity into an abstract element of cultural entity, it has obtained international attention with its elevated assumptions and dignified values. The physical situatedness of the stone has shifted its location from the particular place to the inner soul of the Kirati people. The metamorphosis of the cultural stone has become a seeding element that rejuvenates the cultural movement. It is the cultural element that resembles the exemplary role of a cultural entity that can derail the entire discourse to another direction.

The generalization of the government, despite knowing the significance of Khuwalung in the Kirati community ensued resistance. The community resisted the valorization of their aesthetics, protection of liberty and the resolution for the problems therefore, resistance must have the potentiality to arouse the flame of rage for the desired change. Brent L. Pickett writes, "Resistance is what eludes power, and power targets resistance as its adversary" (458). Resistance must have potential power for antagonistic proceedings. It must threaten power that dims the effectiveness of the existing indigenous aesthetics organizing multiplicities. But, the contemporary Khuwalung resistive movement is in a fragmented form; a narrower boundary has been established which dearths for the true sense of rebellion. Resistance must be taken in a broader perspective for the efficacy of the movement. As Jasper opines, "Resistance" is most readily thought to refer to social movements (or the even broader categories of "protest" (Qtd. in Hollander and Einwohner, p. 535). Moreover, it must be perceived from a macro and micro political level for its sustainability debunking power politics. Khuwalung resistance requisites Antonio Gramsci's permanent persuader for the transformation of resistance from the counter-resistance to an organic movement. Permanent persuaders are the academicians, activists, organizers that influence others for the change and make the revolt firm enough to obtain the change in a continuous manner. Antonio Gramsci writes, "The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of the feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life as a constructor, organizer 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator" (qtd. in Peter McLaren, et al. pp. 26-27). The work of intellectuals functions on a practical basis in an ongoing state as they have the artistic sense in maintaining ideological hegemony to break down the political hegemony. Further, they have cultural intelligence that can eliminate the structure of power politics for the formation of concrete consciousness circulating the message of social equality and mobility. Brooks Peterson argues, "Knowledge about Cultures (facts and cultural traits) + Awareness (of yourself and others) + Specific Skills (behaviours) = Cultural Intelligence" (13). As it is a rootless counter-resistance in the present time, with its shifting resistive forms which even have been a major reason in silencing the voices of the confronting groups. The continuous resistance and representation can only establish a firm indigenous movement promoting sustainability. Further, the institutional backup for the arousal of solidarity and an erasure of the sense of insecurities among activists also promotes long-term perspectives. Khuwalung has got transnational recognition which was previously undermined.

6. Conclusions

The persisting hegemony of the dominant ruling class has crushed the liberalization of the indigenous community and have compelled them to live with disillusionment even though the political system of Nepal is based on the federal democratic republic since 2007. Bhandari et al. write, "The struggle for identity and equal rights along these lines, together with the struggles of women, marginalised castes, and indigenous communities is carving out a new system of political rule" (7). The struggling phase of the indigenous community has the greater possibility of curtailment if the movement occurs at irregular intervals. The movement can be a real resistance with broader solidarity. However, the contemporary movement is yet to flourish as a gigantic rebellion because resistance is broader. The mass conception of the movement is even essential and for this, the intellectuals play a crucial role in disseminating the motives to the mass. Intellectuals are the channels that strengthen the autonomy of minorities. Antonio Gramsci's discussion of 'high culture', as a programme concerning moral and intellectual reform and as "a cultural revolution to be accomplished by intellectuals who represented a 'lay culture' and 'a modern 'humanism' able to reach right to the simplest and most uneducated classes" (Quoted in Riccardo Paganò, p. 50). According to Gramsci, "Understanding and knowing how to assess one's enemy means that one already possesses a necessary condition for victory. Understanding and knowing how to assess one's own forces and their position in the field of struggle means that one possesses another extremely important condition for victory" (5). The intellectuals with the amalgamation of knowledge on both groups not only generate sustainable perception for the wider protest but also demand the preservation of the unitary values promoting a sense of communion. Robert T. Moran et al. argue, "A community or institution's culture facilitates or inhibits change. As we progress in this new millennium, the increasing pace of social and technological change requires leaders who do not merely plan and cope with change but use it for positive and competitive advantage" (102). The constructive metamorphosis requires the plan along with the techniques of implementation for the effective result and for this, leaders play a crucial role in recommending the alternatives causes and effects.

Khuwalung movement at first seemed to be a counter-resistance initiated via the issue driven by power politics. The disproportionate booming of agitation and its upheavals reflects the discontinuous attention and integrity of the indigenous group. Awakened by the atrocious infliction of political torment and silence in the flowery rhetoric of authoritative assertion depicts the vulnerability of the indigenous movement. The fluctuation of the resistive force and fragmented integrity in the composition of constraints against the monopoly of the government has diluted the motto of the movement and resulted in aphasia. The movement is still waiting to be an organic resistance of the indigenous people because spasmodic resistance does not have sufficient efficiency and capability to uproot the entire system rather merely works as gunfire on air. The overwhelming domination of the dominant group has sidelined indigenous groups from history. It has made unyielding firmness in the social domain. The intellectual interference (including non-Kirti) with cultural intelligence is the most significant conscription to debunk the persisting elite hegemony. Besides, until and unless the leaders themselves acknowledge the beauty and aesthetic of cultural diversity of the country, the movements might be baffled.

Khuwalung resistance demands the permanent persuader, the leader with politico-cultural intelligence, an organization with a shiftless goal and collective target to delapidate the power hegemony and booming of indigenous aesthetics which has not yet achieved this functional phase of an organic and auratic mode of resistance.

About the Authors

¹ **Tara Lal Shrestha**, a PhD on Subaltern Studies in Native Literary Context, has published four research-based books on the subaltern themes and edited eight anthologies related to the history and struggle of the Bhutanese refugees. His research field includes wider politico-cultural issues of the subaltern communities and their struggles. He is currently a Lecturer in the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University and teaches Travel Writing, Environment Studies, Life Writing, Nepal Studies, and Experimental Fiction courses, in particular in the Masters' Degree and Resistance Studies in MPhil.

¹ **Bidhya Shrestha**, a PhD scholar and Lecturer of the Central Department of Population Studies, Tribhuvan University, has presented papers in national and international conferences. Her area of research includes women empowerment, maternal health, and socio-cultural issues of the marginalized communities. Currently, she is on the verge of completing her PhD.

¹ **Depankar Senehang** and **Bibechana Sharma Timsina** are students of the Fourth Semester in the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University. They have been engaged in independent research works and collaboratively published articles in national and international journals.

References

- [1] Adamson, W. L. (1983). *Hegemony and revolution: A study of Antonio Gramsci's political and cultural theory*. Univ of California Press.
- [2] Arrighi, G. (1994). Hegemony and Social Change. *Mershon International Studies Review*, 38(2), 361-376.
- [3] Bayat, A. (1997). Un-civil society: The politics of the 'informal people'. *Third World Quarterly*, 18(1), 53-72.
- [4] Bhandari, R., Shrestha, N. R., & Dahal, D. R. (2009). Rising Ethno-Cultural Nationalism in Nepal: Postmodern Illusion or Democratic Delusion?. *Sociological bulletin*, 58(1), 6-24.
- [5] Geiser, A. (2005). Social exclusion and conflict transformation in Nepal: women, Dalit and ethnic groups: Swisspeace. *Retrieved from <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail>*.
- [6] Gramsci, A. (1978). *Selections from political writings (1921-1926)*. International Publishers.
- [7] Gul, N. (2002). Question of Nepal: Political Instability and Maoist Insurgency. *Pakistan Horizon*, 55(3), 27-40.
- [8] Hangen, S. (2005). Race and the Politics of Identity in Nepal. *Ethnology*, 49-64.
- [9] Harris, P. R. (2007). Sarah V. Moran Managing cultural differences: Global leadership strategies for the 21ST Century.
- [10] Hollander, J. A., & Einwohner, R. L. (2004). Conceptualizing resistance. *Sociological forum*.
- [11] Köhler, G., Cali, M., & Stirbu, M. (2009). Rethinking poverty and social exclusion responses in post-conflict Nepal: child-sensitive social protection. *Children Youth and Environments*, 19(2), 229-249.
- [12] Lawoti, M., & Hangen, S. (Eds.). (2013). *Nationalism and ethnic conflict in Nepal: Identities and mobilization after 1990* (Vol. 58). Routledge.
- [13] McCarty, D. G. (1925). Protecting the Public: Encroachment of Social Legislation on Private Rights. *American Bar Association Journal*, 11(1), 36-42.
- [14] Murrin, K. (2019). Children's development, capability approaches and postdevelopmental child: The birth to four curriculum in South Africa. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 9(1), 56-71.
- [15] McLaren, P., Fischman, G., Serra, S., & Antelo, E. (1998). The specters of Gramsci: Revolutionary praxis and the committed intellectual. *Journal of thought*, 33(3), 9-41.
- [16] Milnar, A and Jeff B. (2002) *Contemporary Cultural Theory*. Rawat Publication, p. 139.
- [17] Pizzolato, N., & Holst, J. D. (Eds.). (2017). *Antonio Gramsci: A pedagogy to change the world* (Vol. 5). Springer.
- [18] Pickett, B. L. (1996). Foucault and the Politics of Resistance. *Polity*, 28(4), 445-466.
- [19] Turner, B. S., & Turner, B. S. (2002). *Regulating bodies: Essays in medical sociology*. Routledge.