



**LUND UNIVERSITY**

**Media construction of suffering: Nepalese print media role in representing suffering of earthquake victims.**

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## **Dedication**

*For all the victims out there in Nepal, who are still waiting for proper roof on their head.*

## **Abstract**

In crisis, media plays an important role in connecting people, communicating information and assisting with potential new dimensions, designs and approach. Media representation holds key for ongoing rescue program and upcoming rebuilding program, especially in developing countries where no one knows when the real impact of disaster will come to an end. Moreover, people interest or participation in rescue or rebuilding program depends on how media has represented suffering in their mediation.

In order to better understand the media role in representing suffering of victim, this paper set out an aim to deeper understand Nepalese print media role in representing victims suffering in mediation of 25<sup>th</sup>, April 2015 earthquake in Nepal. Having thoroughly analyse from theoretical perspectives of suffering by Lilie Chouliaraki and Luc Boltanski, this paper reflects that how suffering looks through media images and texts and what happens when media fails to bring voice of sufferer to the spectator. The study has been carried out by using case study research and qualitative content analysis on images and editorial from three different years of three major newspapers of Nepal.

This paper found out that, Nepalese print media focus lies on other issues and actors of society than actual victims in their representation of suffering. Similarly, most of the representations of victim were from distance and it failed to connect with spectator.

*Key words: Media, spectator, suffering, proximity, distance, moral responsibility*

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## List of Abbreviations

BYN	Bibeksheel Youth Nepal
NPC	Nepal Press Council
NT	Nepali Times
TKP	The Kathmandu Post
TRN	The Rising Nepal
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
UNESCO	United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations

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## 1) Introduction

It was 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, around mid-day, when we were sitting outside of our home after having lunch. Suddenly, we felt strong earthquake. In the first few seconds me and my family were in moment of shock, then we saw everyone running out of their houses shouting, 'it's earthquake, RUN'. Right after the earthquake we could not think through the extent of the disaster as traditional media and traditional telephony network were destroyed by it and it was difficult for us to communicate with loved ones. We were outside with lots of other people because everyone was afraid and frightened to go back to their houses. Since our area was not much affected by the earthquake, therefore, we had no idea about the extent of disaster. I was trying to look for updates in social media through my phone and most of the updates were from capital city, Kathmandu. Few major cultural heritages were down and numbers of dead and injured were rising. However, it was in evening when we actually found out the real impact of earthquake through news in television.

It was 7.8 magnitude earthquake and it claimed more than 9000 lives and injured over 20000 people (The Kathmandu Post, 2015). After a week I took part in volunteer program organized by Bibeksheel Youth Nepal (BYN), one of the active organizations involved in relief program. We travelled to Gorkha district, the epicentre of earthquake with tent, food and medical supplies. During this program, I saw the real impact of disaster on people. I saw and met people who lost their family members and houses in earthquake. On 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2015 I came back to Sweden hoping that Nepalese government will quickly eradicate the suffering of earthquake victims. It was the same year I started my Master in Media and Communication Studies in Lund University. In our first course Media and Participation, I wrote my essay on role of BYN in empowering participation in rescue program. I wrote about my own experience in taking part in rescue program and how media could be catalyst in providing such opportunity. During that year I was very hopeful that all important bodies of country for ex; government, media, with help of each other will bring these sufferers out of their misery.

However, days, months and years passed and now it has been more than three years' people (victims) are still waiting for rebuilding program to begin in proper way.

As a student of Media and Communication Studies, we used to discuss about media's role in such disaster, specially focusing on representation of victim suffering in media bodies. The discussion revolves around media duties, moral and ethical role and media responsibility. In such discussions

we came across through scholars like; Lilie Chouliaraki, Luc Boltanski, Rodger Silverstone and Stuart Hall. These scholars reflect that media plays an important role in representing victims to the public sphere. Here, representation is not only about reporting about the facts but it is also related to hear and create an effective communicative space where bodies and voices of those marginalized sufferer can be seen and heard on their own terms (Silverstone 2007: 143).

During disaster what we normally see is when wound is fresh, victims and their stories have special place in media and communication world. While reporting such stories, media shapes the construction of victim. We get to see and hear stories that they want us to see and hear. In doing so, media could either make victim central or ambiguous in the eyes of readers or spectator. In crisis, media has responsibility to disseminate facts about the extent of disasters, to bridge the gap between government and victims and try to make victims calm about the situation than creating traumatic environment (Hakal 2012: 256-257). Such process of mediatization of disaster refers to sphere of activity, in which media creates a shared social space where people (victims and witnesses) get connected with each other (ibid).

Such ideas particularly led me to think about Nepalese media's role in 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 earthquake. From the first week of earthquake, I was closely following the work of media role in it. In the beginning, Nepalese media were actively covering the stories of victims. However, as time passes, there were only few stories coming out in media about earthquake's victims. According to reports of Press Council Nepal, Nepalese media have been accused of being biased, ineffective and not transparent in representing the stories of victim (UNESCO 2016). Therefore, I was curious to know about how Nepalese media represented earthquake victims in their mediation of 25<sup>th</sup> April 2015, earthquake. As (Flyvbjerg, 2001) argues, any social research should address the problems that matter to groups in the local, national and global communities in which we live. If we do this, then we could transform social science to action done in public for the public (p.166). Thus, the chosen case holds the similar research quality as state by Flyvbjerg and I hope it could be an effort to understand the present and guide about the future.

Thus, this research is undertaken to build a deeper understanding on Nepalese media role in representing suffering of earthquake victims. With representation this paper means; reporting about victims in disaster is necessary but one should also focus on the way of construction of stories of victim. As Lilie Chouliaraki argues, the reporting should not be limited on general facts (numbers



and place) or descriptive narrative (dead, injured and displaced) because it restricts spectator's proximity with victim (Chouliaraki 2006: 98).

Furthermore, in the beginning of disaster people normally don't care about the moral and ethics in images and narrative of suffering of victims because at that time people want to know the extent of disaster than moral conduct of reporting. However, on the contrary there lies some questions which seek answers from media body. These questions are related to representations of suffering of victims in the news media. One might argue, why these questions are necessary to study. These questions give us idea on what kinds of role does news media played while representing suffering and whether it helped or harmed victims. Help in a sense, how media is creating a moral space for victims; a space where victim appear to us and the same time invite equal response from us, the spectator, as a potential or actual citizen (Silverstone 2007: 21). On the contrary, when media fails to find a space for these victims in their media space then spectator does not feel any pity for them. As a result, such representation does not incite any action towards victim and it might harm them. Therefore, it is necessary to study how suffering has been sustained and changed over time in relation to news media coverage of victims. In today's context we are in need of such research. especially in developing country where people are still unaware about media's responsibility in reporting crisis. As Chouliaraki argues, it is necessary to study the choices made by media in creating the news text concerning how the sufferer is portrayed on outlets and how the scene of suffering is narrated (Chouliaraki 2006: 3). However, one might argue about nature of research regarding whether it is just limited to choices made by media or it is also about media production and audience interpretation. In this paper, the focus is neither on news production (site of suffering, news room and broadcast) nor news interpretation (audience response to the news) but it is on choices made by Nepalese print media to portray sufferer in their images and texts.

### 1.1) Aim of this research

Taking photos, videos of victims and uploading it to the media platforms is important but what matters most is the stories of those victims after that. What this paper actually aim is for; only reporting about victims and extent of disaster is not journalism. Journalism should go beyond that and look for possible solutions for victims. Similarly, media has responsibility to report about disaster correctly. During disaster any kind of false information or causing panic by false rumors might hurt people more than the actual disaster. Only representations are not media work, representations which bring instant action in favor of these victims is what they need. As

(Chouliaraki 2006) argues, right representation of suffering might lead to compassion, commitment and social change. Similarly, (Silverstone 2007) argues media plays an active role in formation of social, civic and moral space (p.2). Media coverage leaves a lasting impact on the mind of audience therefore, media has responsibility to cover the stories of victim in a way where people sees their own ‘civic self’. Moreover, media should have humanitarian values in their way of reporting. Here, humanitarian values mean, every sufferer must have their voice in media language and image of their representations (Boltanski 1990: 89). Media shouldn’t be there just for providing information about the disaster (Giradet & Hieber 2002: 166). Its coverage must activate civil society and relief activists to engage in rescue event.

With this notion, the aim of this study is to build a deeper understanding on Nepalese print media role in constructing the suffering of earthquake victims. Here, the construction of suffering is related to manner, passion, and moral and ethical behaviour. To fulfil the objectives of this research, the unit of analysis will be images from the headlines and editorials from three major newspapers of Nepal.

In order to address the aim of this research, main question has been posed along with other sub-questions;

- 1) How has Nepalese print media represented the suffering of victims in mediation of 25<sup>th</sup> April 2015 earthquake in Nepal?
  - a) How does media portray “pity” in their representation of suffering?
  - b) How has “media’s reporting” created proximity and distance?
  - c) How has media morally and ethically reported about “victim’s suffering”?

Before moving to literature review, this paper intends to equip readers shortly about development of the Nepalese media and their practices over the years.

## 1.2) An overview of Nepalese media

Nepalese media (newspapers and radio) have a long history of working under different autocratic rulers where they were considered as tool to support them. It was only after the introduction of democracy in 1951 A.D. where practical beginning of journalism took place in Nepal (Bhuwan 2014) (Ramprasad 2005). During these period journalists rouse their voice for the need of democratic system and wrote against authoritarian regime. However, journalists voice was again

repressed in 1960 when The Royal family took over leadership (ibid). The political parties were banned and Nepalese media were controlled by King. Despite restriction, Nepalese newspapers and radio stations became bolder and began to give alternative political views. In doing so, they were working together with political parties to support and raise their voice in favour of democratic values and press freedom. Furthermore, it also divided journalists into three types; independent, follower of King and supporter of political parties.

It eventually gave rise to political parallelism, where journalists were either close to political elite or supportive to state. Finally, in 1990 the multiparty democratic system established and the new Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal officially guaranteed the freedom of press and publication (Bhuwan 2014). It was since this period that Nepalese media flourished in both government and private level in Nepal.

Looking at the current status of Nepalese media, print media still dominates the Nepalese media landscape. According to recent numbers, there were total 3712 newspapers registered in 2016 and among them 613 dailies, 33 bi-weeklies and 400 fortnightlies were found to have been publishing frequently (UNESCO, 2016). All of the major media houses are centred in Kathmandu Valley. Among the newspapers, Nepalese language is the pre-dominant and after that English language is the second most popular language among literate people. Alongside newspapers, radio is another dominant mass media format in Nepal. Radio stations are almost in all parts of the country and as many as 617 FM radio stations have got license (UNESCO, 2016). Beside radio and newspapers, television is another medium of mass media. Some 82 television stations have been registered (ibid). Most of people rely on these media source for the information and communication depending on the availability in their region.

Since the gradual development in digital or online media in Nepal, online news has been a popular medium in mass media. People are using more and more online source for its transparency, interactivity, and accessibility. With the popularity of online news, now every major newspaper in country has its own digital news portals. The Online Media Association of Nepal believe that there are more than 116 online news portals frequently operating in Nepal since 2013 (UNESCO 2016). With the introduction of new media, now most of journalists rely on social and online media to find news and try to develop them as mature news stories. Moreover, since the popularity of new media, the way of consumption of news in public sphere has gone into another level. Today, people no longer have to rely on traditional news portal anymore because social media has emerged as a

quick source to communicate the news. However, with the less percentage of online population and problem of electricity, people are still dependent on radio and newspapers for information.

### 1.2.1) Media practices in Nepal

Historically, Nepalese media have experienced little freedom of expression since they were mostly controlled by state authorities in different periods. Its only after 1990 when restoration of democracy helped in the proliferation of media. Since then, Nepalese media growth is dramatic in both government and private level. However, the surge does not correspond well with the quality of news and its circulation. Critics like; Parsuram Kharel, Dev Raj Dahal, Bhuwan KC, and Kundan dixit argues that Nepalese media need to be efficient in transparency, accountability and credibility. According to (Bhuwan 2014) ‘there still remains political parallelism and lack of professionalism in the Nepalese press’. He writes that in context of Nepalese media, politicization still continues to overwhelm (ibid). On the other hand, Kharel argues, whether its state-owned or private Nepalese media have not been able to make departure from political obligations (Kharel 2001). There could be several reasons behind such partisan. One reason could be culture of Nepalese journalism, which is always under the state and functioned according to motives of state. Other could be, party interest is greater than public interest. There could be other interests too however, Aditya (1996) sums it up well: ‘*As a career, journalism remains socially ignored, professionally weak, economically insecure and politically vulnerable*’. Thus, most of the events and issues have been analysed and investigated in their own way but sadly mostly from partisan angles. Issues other than political parallelism, Nepalese media are also accused of lack of investigative journalism and transparency in their news reporting. One of the main reason behind this is the nature of dependency on other news sources and their inclination towards power and authority than to the sovereignty of people when the crunch comes (Kharel 2001). For example, if one of the major news media report on something than other media houses follows it without any further investigation. Right after the earthquake, there were news in social and online media that another big earthquake is on the way. Due to this people were scared to sleep inside their houses for more than a week. Only few major news media reported that there is nothing to worry about. However, people were still scared since most of the media were reporting about big earthquake. In terms of transparency, Nepalese media still lack what Jurgen Habermas calls ‘communicative action’ for emancipatory interests. To Habermas, public communicative power is produced through a procedure of public opinion and will-formation (Habermas 1996, xxxvii). He argues, “*As a formation of opinion and will, public*

*discourse is not merely a cognitive exercise but mobilizes reasons and arguments that draw on citizen's actual source of motivation and volition. It thereby generates a communicative power that has a real impact on the formal decision making and action that represent the final institutional expression of political will"* (ibid, xxviii). Thus, it can exert public influence on governing body through their conscious will. However, in case of Nepalese media, public discourse has little place and it hardly create any bridge between the state and society.

These are few issues that Nepalese media has to dealt in future to overcome their fragility. Therefore, as Bhuwan argues, in order to find some truth or to get some reliable information on a particular event or issue, one need to look for not just government, private but also presumably neutral news media then only we can form an opinion (Bhuwan 2014).

Hence, this paper also follows the similar idea in selecting the newspapers for this research. This paper has chosen one government, one private and one presumably neutral newspaper and I believe that the chosen newspapers will help to fulfil the aim of this study.

## 2) Diving into literature on suffering and its mediation

This chapter aims to make a critical analysis on existing concepts of suffering and media morality. This chapter has been divided into three categories; review of concepts of suffering and review of media moral role in disaster and media power. The first review will reflect upon theoretical background of suffering of victims and way of its representation in media news (images and texts). While reviewing the concepts of suffering and its representation, the focus will lie upon how suffering has been studied by scholars and researchers. However, it will not focus on the specific ways of audience engagement with sufferers. In the second section, this paper critically looks at the idea of media morality in regard to representation of stories of suffering. The focus will lie upon what are media moral and ethical role in reporting the disaster and how it could effect the victims if media fails to performs their role correctly. Lastly, this chapter review the concepts around media power in relation to other powerful institutions in society.

The reporting of suffering of victims in disasters has long been on the list of media scholars and it has been approached through various theoretical and empirical perspectives. Whenever we discuss about the construction of suffering of victims in natural disaster than we normally witness argumentation on proximity between spectator and sufferers and, media ethics and morality in reporting. As Stijn Joye argues, *in media studies, role of media and mediation in regard to suffering*

*is often investigated in the framework of moral behaviour, humanitarian concern and social consciousness* (Joye 2013: 109). In this research moral behaviour reflects media responsibilities; responsibilities that are not confined only to nuts and bolts of reporting and representation rather based on interrogation of the context (Silverstone 2007: 21-22).

In today's context mainstream media along with internet creates shared social space where sufferer in terms of victims or witnesses can connect to each other, share information/news and could also search for new dimensions for solution (ibid). In doing so, news media creates the construction or meaning of such suffering. While constructing about the image or text about victim, it could be either central or ambiguous to the spectator. In result, such meaning might help victim to connect with the spectator or could result in total disconnection or isolation. Thus, in order to find out the media construction of suffering, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of representation of suffering of victim. Here, dynamics of representation of suffering is related to the regimes and politics of pity. With the aim in mind, discussion on concepts of pity matters since it is directly connected to suffering and its representation in media.

### 2.1) Regimes of pity

Various representations of victim suffering in news media is normal in disaster. Generally, popular form of mode of representations are visual and written, either in form of image or text. Portrayal of suffering through image appeal to wider population than text. In such representation, we see victim as helpless, sad, inferior and unfortunate ones. Whereas, on the opposite side there are helpful, happy, superior and fortunate ones. These happy or fortunate one's have responsibility to collect and represent sufferer into the public sphere. As (Boltanski 1999: 5), argues that sufferer must become the object of 'pathos', so as to make more superior and fortunate people sensitive and responsible to the problem. Hence, representation of suffering literally reflects its importance in linking the people who suffer and who don't because the fortunate one has moral obligation towards the unfortunate or sufferer. However, before digging into the responsibility and morality of spectator to the sufferer, it is essential to understand notion of suffering in depth. As we know suffering is associated with either feeling pity or not, so it will be interesting to examine how regimes of pity are discussed by scholars in relation to media and how spectator react or relate to these sufferers. According to Chouliaraki, *'regimes of pity construe suffering as an aesthetic spectacle, but each offers the spectator a different quality of emotional and practical engagement with the sufferer'* (Chouliaraki 2006: 8).

Thus, one need to understand how regimes of pity are actually shaped by news media. Similarly, the concept of regimes of pity reflects that, spectators do not possess any emotion towards the sufferers, however their emotion are in fact shaped by the values cemented in news narratives about who the sufferer are and how should spectator relate to them. In this sense, pity is not just natural sentiment but a socially constructed disposition of feeling, in Boltanski words, '*it aims to produce a generalized concern for 'sufferer'*' (Boltanski 1999: xx). Hence, in context of pity, normally there are two major themes that reoccurs mostly; suffering without pity and suffering with pity. What is these concepts and why it is important in relation to suffering and media?

### 2.1.1) Suffering without pity

In representation of suffering, news media offers different opportunities to inspire pity to the spectator. However, it never guarantees whether spectator feel close or different with suffering others. One of the most reoccurring concepts of suffering in news media is random or isolated suffering. In such suffering, media fails to demand ethical responsibilities from the spectators. According to Chouliaraki, such suffering in news media is called, 'adventure news' (Chouliaraki 2006: 97). In such news we find, descriptive narrative which normally register 'facts', singular space-times that restrict the spectator's proximity to suffering and the lack of agency that dehumanizes sufferers and suppresses the possibility of action in the scene of suffering (Chouliaraki 2006:98). The question arises here, why sufferers do not get any space in such news. One of the reason behind it is, victim is presented just as news items and news media fails to relate them with the limits of representation of a historical and future context. What I mean to say here is, while representing the victims in news media, media should link these victims to outer or viewer's world (ibid: 97) or to the public sphere, not just to disaster. As a result, such kind of news only maintain objectivity at the expense of emotional commitment (ibid:106). Because to feel the emotional commitment, spectator must have kind of proximity towards the suffering others.

Furthermore, adventure news is primarily descriptive and does not feature prose, standpoint or demand any action from the spectator. This news only raises general facts and fails to represent sufferers as real individuals because either these individuals are presented to us as distant others or fails to feel any kind of sympathy towards them. Moreover, sufferers are referred to as numbers and characterized by functional factors such as ethnic groups, occupation or social status (Chouliaraki 2006: 99). Such description of victims plays a decisive role in establishing a hierarchical power regime for suffering. Thus, the absence of real person with their real name and

face deprives the sufferer of its humanity (ibid, 105). Such representation of suffering in media constructs the domination of powerful against the powerless, and most specifically it could cause victims to be represented like the 'others'. Here, as a spectator the domination surrounds, other suffering as being worthy of our pity and others as unworthy of it (Ibid: 11). Therefore, its likely that spectator is in difficult situation to feel identification and as a result of it, it frees them from the moral obligation to act and feel compassion for the victims (Chouliaraki 2006: 98). Another factor that stops spectator to feel compassion among the victims is, the way they are represented in the news media. The picture which represents only charts, maps or destroyed areas only shows the disaster-affected areas and make the spectator an eye witness for the disaster. Further, the images of victims from the distance or behind takes suffering or pity to far away. Such visual representation does not open up for emotional engagement but for view (ibid). Thus, such representation only creates differences between the spectator and victims. It fails to create compassion, emotion or sense of responsibility in the eyes of spectator.

### 2.1.2) Suffering with pity

This type of news creates bridge between the spectator and the sufferer. It offers an option for action on suffering which adventure news denies to the spectator. Here, spectator gets connected with suffering others through visual and images. According to (Chouliaraki 2006) *such news stories is called, 'emergency news'* (p.18). In this type of news, the representation of suffering moves from visually static and verbally minimal descriptions to visually and verbally complicated narratives with increasing degrees of affective power. Similarly, *it moves from singular and abstract space-times to concrete, specific and mobile space-times and from non-agency to conditional agency where we could see active and personalized suffers* (Chouliaraki 2006: 119). Here, spectators can witness several different aspects of suffering which creates a dynamic reality that adventure news fails to represent. (Ibid). Talking about the several aspects, one aspects that holds important meaning is representing the suffering through images where visualization includes individual images of victims suffering. Such representation where victims are presented as real, with face and name which able to touch the sentiment and emotion of spectators. Images of suffering with exact details makes suffering more visible to viewer (Chouliaraki 2006: 123). Furthermore, it enables spectator to act in favour of them by visualizing spectator role in helping the victims. Such representation reduces the distance or gap between victims and the spectator (ibid, 126). When spectator sees people involvement in carrying out the relief program to victims then such



representation helps to arouse their civic self. People feels kind of responsibility inside them for the others in need. However, these people need presence of other participants in the disaster area because they cannot act directly on their own. Therefore, they look for rescue team, human right activists and charities (ibid, 125). And these participants are conditional agency that are formed to carry out relief program to the victims in disaster.

In emergency news, Chouliaraki divides spectators into three types; voyeur, philanthropist or demonstrator. According to Chouliaraki, voyeur is one who is freed from moral obligation to act, philanthropist is one who feels either angry or obsessive with what he or she witnesses and has potential to act, and last not the least demonstrator, one who feels empathy and shifts from observer to acting in favour of victims (Chouliaraki 2006: 145-147). Through these features, emergency news could both engage the spectator in suffering and imply a requirement for the spectator. However, action of spectator is also depending upon the images that he or she encounters through media. Therefore, the representations of suffering in media plays an important role in bringing spectator closer to sufferer. As Joye reflects, *suffering can actually bring out the very best of humans by raising and disclosing emotions of pity, compassion and empathy with sufferer* (Joye 2013: 5).

Similarly, the other form of news that makes spectator to empathize or to feel for victims suffering is 'ecstatic news'. *This kind of news depicts the event of disaster in real time and makes the spectator an eyewitness* (Chouliaraki 2006: 163). Here, spectator get an opportunity to witness everything happening, from extent of disaster to the ongoing rescue program in the disaster hit areas. In doing so, in ecstatic news, text and images interact with each other to give spectator both the feelings and the facts. Spectator witness's bitter truth through images and gets engaged with the thoughts and feelings of the victim. In such news, victims are not represented as 'other' but as one of 'us' or universal being (Chouliaraki 2006: 164). It not only leads spectator to compassion but also identification. An identification where spectator feels themselves as the victim of the disaster and one of the representative of the victims. As Chouliaraki argues, in order to identify with victim, *'spectator engages with the misfortune of the sufferer continuously, intensely and on multiple occasions'* (ibid, 159). Hence, the notion of identification not only make spectator to feel about the suffering others but also make one of them.

Regimes of pity reflects more about how spectators feel when they see suffering in news media. However, it fails to give a clear picture of how news media plays their role in defining or presenting

these sufferings to human world and to influence a course of action to help these sufferers. Moreover, the above chapters reflect upon how suffering looks like in news media. But it doesn't reflect upon how media systematically articulate the cultivation of specific dispositions of emotion and action towards the suffering others (Chouliaraki 2006: 39). Such symbolic mechanism of news media is called 'politics of pity', '*which construe the spectator-sufferer relationship via emotions of empathy and denunciation*' (Ibid). The politics of pity is also equally vital to get an idea of construction of suffering in news media. Because the notion of politics of pity is related to the manner of showing pity to the spectator. One can say it's a strategy of showing pity by news media through use of image and language. As Silverstone argues, such strategies could be studied through careful attention to both the institutions and manner via which the circulation of news discourse takes place (Silverstone 2007: 8).

Thus, the next chapter gives an overview of how news media represent suffering to spectator and how these representations influence their action towards this suffering.

## 2.2) Politics of pity

A useful approach to get a better understanding of how power shapes meaning of humanitarian crisis and how these meanings determine a course of action is analysis of what Hannah Arendt describes as a 'politics of pity' (Arendt cited in Boltanski 1999: 7). According to Arendt, '*politics of pity is less occupied by question of whether or not suffering is just; rather it focuses in on action in response to spectacle of suffering*' (Arendt 1963: 89). Therefore, to incite action from the spectators, news media inspire pity through different ways of representation of suffering. Pity is shown to us in different manners and these manners could either make suffering central or ambiguous to spectator. Hence, as a paradigm, politics of pity surrounds around between one who suffers and who don't. To add into that, politics of pity distinguishes a fortunate spectator who does not suffer from an unfortunate who suffers. In respect to that, the fortunate spectator has moral obligation to act in some way for the unfortunate ones. So, the politics inside the fortunate and unfortunate is an outcome of ideological struggle which is waged into the context of definite historical structure and relations of power. As Boltanski suggests, the ability of the spectators of suffering to galvanize pity is itself a form of power (Boltanski 1999: 135). Thus, undeniably news media holds a special form of power to inspire a pity in a way which could remove the gap of inequality between unfortunate and fortunate. Here the gap is all about creating compassion in the eyes of spectator for the victims. Since, its compassion that encourage people to act in favour of

victims then how these compassion works and what happens when people are different towards suffering of others or do not feel any compassion towards them. Thus, in next section, this paper builds argument around how spectator feels compassion and indifferences towards victim through news media representation of suffering.

### 2.2.1) Compassion and indifferences

Compassion is a flow of emotions in human which is occasioned by the awareness of other person's underserved misfortune. As Martha Nussbaum reflects, '*compassion as a complex emotion including such cognitive beliefs as that the suffering of other is serious, and that the suffering person does not deserve the pain*' (Nussbaum, cited in Höijer 2004: 514). So in this case, the concept of compassion is related to compassion for the suffering of victims or others in the public sphere. The reason behind using the concept of compassion then other concepts, such as, empathy, sympathy is because these concepts do not accommodate the same political and public dimensions that concept of compassion does (Höijer 2004: 514). With political and public dimensions, what this paper mean is, these dimensions originate in rational and abstract idea of humanity which is also connected to the humanitarian movements. Moreover, the notion of empathy and sympathy is related to natural sentiment of human rather than social category (Chouliaraki 2006: 19). It's a feeling of human for the others who are in need or not living a normal life and these feelings often remains in passive state. Hence, to have compassion for the victims is what we called moral sensibility of a people for the people. However, spectator is always in search for some kind of intermediate link to carry out the relief or rescue program in the disaster hit area. And in this case, its all about media being a link between spectator and victims, and even with humanitarian organizations. Because sometimes, people at distant might feel compassionate to help the victims and in order to do that they need some humanitarian non-governmental organizations which are active in relief program.

One might wonder how compassion works or what makes spectator compassionate about other. In this research, compassion has to do with the appreciating the suffering and needs of suffers through media texts and images. Moreover, as Boltanski reflects there are mainly three forms of emotional commitment in relation to suffering: '*the mode of denunciation, the mode of sentiment and the aesthetic mode*' (Boltanski 1999: 5). Spectator could feel these emotions with news media images and texts that represents suffering. In first mode of emotion, compassion is combined with

indignation and anger and changed into an accusation of the persecutor. Normally persecutor denotes person one who commits crime or someone who pursue with harassing or oppressive treatment to the victims. However, in the case of disaster it's the people in power who are labelled as persecutor. In this mode, suffering is considered as unjust and it is an expression of pity where spectator responds with direct anger towards prosecutor who are responsible for the unfortunate's condition (Ibid).

In the second mode of emotion, attention is focused into victim and benefactor. Here spectator do not search for prosecutor to accuse. They find experience of suffering as touching and sympathizes with victim condition. As Boltanski reflects, *in the topic of sentiment, 'the spectator sympathizes with the unfortunate's gratitude inspired by the intervention of a benefactor'* (Boltanski 1999: 77). Here, benefactor is a third person (for example humanitarian organizations) who shares, recognizes and responds to that suffering. Hence, in news media representation of human suffering, topic of sentiment should be prevailing. As a result, people can feel real pity towards the victim and commit themselves to help victim. However, one might question the authenticity of these two modes of emotion because here spectator do not commit themselves physically into helping the victims. Contrary they look for the prosecutor or benefactor. This is the reason Boltanski introduces us to the third mode of emotion which is 'aesthetic topic' and it is a criticism of first two. In this mode of emotion, *'suffering is neither unjust nor as touching, but as sublime'* (Boltanski 1999: 115). Here, spectator do not look for prosecutor or benefactor to carry out rescue program to the victims rather spectator confronts the sufferer through controller who mediates suffering. By controller Boltanski means; who confronts its truth and reveals its dignity and nobility. The aesthetic topic therefore suggests the possibility of *'a radical rejection of pity'* (Boltanski 1999: 132). In this mode of emotion, revelation of truth is through confronting with the horror of the image of suffering. What spectator sees is the horror. Horror in a sense because these images reveals naked suffering, imputable to non-one and with no hope of remission (Boltanski 1999: 116), and it's the reason why spectator sympathizes with the unfortunate or victims. However, it also depends on how news media represents the suffering of victims in their images and what kind of impact does it leaves into spectator mind. Thus, in aesthetic mode, spectator do not wait for prosecutor or benefactor to carry out the rescue program instead emerges themselves into it.

This concept also reminds us about civic engagement. It refers to the implication of engagement in public life and public good. It also conveys a sense of the humanitarian, *'a kind of 'service' doing*

*nice work for others, such as social or volunteer work*' (Dhalgren 2009, 58). In disaster it is difficult to act alone, therefore one needs some kind of assistance to carry out meaningful interventions in relative politics. As Dhalgren argues, media serve to empower citizens via civic culture (ibid: 35). He argues much of our civic knowledge derives from media, therefore media has responsibility to involve us in such politics and it's a basic characteristic of good journalism (ibid: 81). Similarly, *Arendt in her book, 'On Revolution', argues, the sight of suffering is only legitimate when it leads to action. For her, an idea of action is related to 'being political'; where a spectator can seek to share suffering in such a way that it can establish a political cause. A movement that has capability of inciting direct action from those who have the power to act (Arendt 1990: 87).*

In this case, media is a facilitator for people to engage such political cause. It is media that could encourage a spectator to take in civic-self which is to see themselves as actors who could make meaningful interventions in relative politics (Dhalgren 2009: 24).

However, it is not guaranteed that a spectator always feels compassion with the human suffering rather they could also feel distantiation from suffering. In this study, the notion of distantiation is related to concepts like 'compassion fatigue' and 'distance'. As Boltanski reflects, the spectator's indifference towards the suffering others is due to the omnipresence of suffering on their eyesights (Boltanski 1999: 97). In result, it makes them tired or fatigued towards the suffering others and does not feel any pity. Similarly, the presence of other social and political issues in news media than stories of victims also makes a spectator indifferent towards them (ibid). One might question about other factors that are responsible to distance yourself from the other suffering and the answer is; when a spectator dehumanizes the victims either by becoming numb or immune to remote human suffering. In this case, news media plays a vital role, specially while representing suffering of victims in their reporting. As Tester argues, distantiation from suffering others is not just spectators but connected to the ways in which news messages portray these suffering (Tester 2001: 47). Normally people or spectators interpret news reporting referentially which means the reports are noted as truthful descriptions of reality. In terms of disaster, news media reports are based on dead, injured or displaced victims. Furthermore, the relation of other aspects with the victims like; government, foreign aid and the reality of disaster itself is on news reports. These aspects either claim truth about the disaster or take us far away from truth. Spectators may be aware of such information but sometimes they are also overpowered by the impact of photographic representation of suffering (Höijer 2004: 524). Similarly, misrepresentation of suffering in reporting might lead

spectator far away from the victims. There are several factors that is responsible for taking spectator away from the victims. Like, reporting's, where news is mostly commercial oriented or creates sensationalism. Commercial oriented in a sense where media are only there to gather first hand data as a commodity to sell in the public sphere. Moreover, reports where news media more focuses on human misery then looking for solution. For ex; when news report focus more and more on dead and injured bodies. Such representation makes spectator critical of the media and same time gets fed with the news about suffering. Because of repeated reporting of dead bodies no longer touches spectator. As Höijer reflects, such representation of suffering leads spectator to lose compassion with human suffering (Höijer 2004: 525). In other word such distantiation from the media pictures of human suffering is labelled as 'compassion fatigue'. According to (Tester 2001: 13), *'compassion fatigue is becoming so used to the spectacle of dreadful events, misery or suffering that we stop noticing them'*. Compassion fatigue means being left exhausted and tired by those reports and ceasing to think that anything at all can be done to help. Therefore, Boltanski argues one must be always aware about, *'are the sufferers given a voice in a language or in image by media in their representation of suffering'* (Boltanski 1999: 88).

The above chapter reflects that there are different forms of compassion as well as different forms of indifference which reflects several concepts of politics of pity. If we look at both regimes and politics of pity, it seems like news media has responsibility to bring suffering either near or far away from spectator. Furthermore, spectator dependence on media either make them to take suffering with pity and feel compassion or suffering without pity and distantiation from suffering respectively. The notions above reflect how news media represent suffering to spectator.

However, one might argue that the notion of suffering based on regimes and politics of pity is much more applicable on distant suffering. Even both (Chouliaraki 2006 and Boltanski 1999) research on suffering is based on how television audience react on distant suffering? Then how concept based on distant suffering can be helpful to study suffering up close. Nevertheless, the conceptual framework of these scholars provides a vital theme of suffering to understand media role in representing suffering. Furthermore, in context of media and suffering, media holds symbolic power in public understanding along with raising public action or moral agency towards it. Therefore, its compassion, pity or irony which mediation of suffering problematizes (Chouliaraki 2006: 2). Moreover, it all about the process of witnessing suffering in, by and through media, which

these scholars reflect in their understanding of suffering. Hence, theoretical framework of both Chouliaraki and Boltanski fits perfectly in this case.

However, there are scholars like; Iain Wilkinson and Stin Joye who argues that, these concepts of suffering might not fit all the time to study suffering in distant. As Wilkinson argues, *'there is a lack of diversity in literatures of suffering since most of the literature addresses particular region or audiences'* (Wilkinson 2005: 190). Therefore, there is a need of diverse research by appreciating the significance of such differences. On the other hand, Joye reflects that there should be more research on power structures and social matters in media representations of suffering (Joye 2013: 8). According to Joye, *'generally media portray the sufferer as passive and as an anonymous member of a larger group'* (Joye, 2009). Media normally fails to represent other factors that are responsible behind sufferer absence, factors like; governmental regimes, NGO's, aid-agencies and other social structures (ibid). These power structures sometimes overtake the place of victim and make them ambiguous in media representation of suffering. Thus, suffering is not just about victim all the time sometime it could be other structures too, depending upon which region has been studied.

It shows that media holds a symbolic power in them which could either bring suffering others near to us or make us to act for betterment of them. Moreover, media maintains its power, dominance and influence over public by accompanying powerful leadership. So, the question arise here is, how these companionship works between leaders in community and media. The next chapter, reviews media power and its influence on society.

### 2.2.2) Media hegemony

In context of media there lies several concepts of power depending on the motive of research, specially whether its production or audience research. In this study, the focus lies on influence and character of media power; character that shows media performance and its relation to other institutions in society.

As this paper found out while doing case study on Nepalese media that, Nepalese media still practice political parallelism in their reporting. The notion of political parallelism reflects that; media tends to prioritize and incline towards power and authority than to the sovereignty of people (Kharel 2001). In the context of this paper, media power plays an important role in representing victim in disaster. Medias are regarded as one of the catalyst to bring change in people lives who are labelled as unfortunate or sufferer. Thus, this chapter focus lies on how leaders in society

influence and control influential institutions, such as popular media. In doing so, this paper review the concept around media hegemonic power specially focusing on Antonio Gramsci notion of hegemony.

Antonio Gramsci introduces the concept of hegemony, or ideological and moral leadership of society to explain, how dominant group always enjoys their position in news discourse (Gramsci cited in Stuart 2010: 95). He argues that, dominant group or ruling class in society tries to maintain their dominance and influence over society. In doing that, ruling class tends to control influential institutions, like popular media and powerful forces in society. Such kind of practices in society reminds us of Karl Marx idea of capitalist exploitation of the working class. Before, more of the exploitation used to based on economic factors however, with the change of time, ideological influence has been more crucial in the exercise of power (Lull 1995: 33). According to Gramsci's theory of ideological hegemony, mass media are tools that ruling elites use to '*perpetuate their power, wealth, and status their own philosophy, culture and morality*' (ibid). In doing so, owners and managers of media institutions produces the news favourable to them than other social groups in society. As a result, mutual decision to reinforce the process of ideological influence is the significance of hegemony. Therefore, powerful institutions normally depend upon each other ideologically for their own benefits.

The notion of media hegemonic power helps us to understand how Nepalese print media normalizes their ideologies in society. It also helps this research to examine whether Nepalese print media maintain any relation with other powerful institutions and favour them in expense of common people.

On the other hand, one must not forget about how media should reports on such delicate matter or what kind of moral space should media create for the sufferer. Specially, focusing on what is media responsibility in representing such serious matter to spectator and how they could open doors for humanitarian activities when every other powerful institution fails to act. Thus, it is important to study media morality and ethics in relation to representation of suffering.

### 2.3) Media as moral space

Before digging deep into the concept of media morality and ethics, it is necessary to understand why media morality and ethics is important in relation to representation of suffering. During disaster media has role to connect people, communicate information and assist people with potential new dimensions, designs and approach to engage in relief program. In nutshell media role



should not be based on representation but to incite action to eradicate suffering of victim. Otherwise, as Boltanski argues, it will be unethical for media to depict victim in the public act of suffering (Boltanski 1999: 190).

According to Roger Silverstone, '*media is a representative who is chosen to speak on behalf of suffering others*' (Silverstone 2007: 02). While speaking on others behalf, media present other a proper space and time to speak. In other words, this space is labelled as 'moral space', a space where other appear to us. In moral space we find media functioning with moral and ethical attributes. These attributes are related to practice and procedure to the ways in which media personnel go, don't go or should go. Furthermore, morality and ethics is related to media responsibilities; responsibilities that are not confined only to nuts and bolts of reporting and representation rather based on interrogation of the context (Silverstone 2007: 21-22). According to Silverstone, in media moral space, media makes 'other' appear to us and the same time invite equal response from us, the spectator, as a potential or actual citizen (Ibid: 7). In such case, media represent victims or sufferer as one of 'us' and in return ask a favour for spectator to engage in rescue program. Silverstone wants spectator to feel as one of them. To explain this notion, he carries an idea from Hannah Arendt concept of polis, where she views polis as not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people where they arise out by acting and speaking together...no matter where they happen to be (Arendt 1990: 186). Hence, there lies moral challenge in media to report about those people who are unfortunate or suffering. Thus, what are the moral responsibilities of media in relation to these sufferers. As Silverstone purposes, media bodies should have three themes in their moral philosophy to act morally and ethically correct. In next chapter, this paper discusses the importance of these themes to media scholarship.

### 2.3.1) Moral philosophical themes

As discussed by Silverstone in Media and Morality, there are three themes that media should inherit in order to act morally and ethically correct. These themes are distance, and responsibility and hospitality.

### 2.3.2) Distance

For Silverstone, '*distance is not jut a geographical or social category, it is a moral category*' (Silverstone 2007: 172). During disaster media make different distances with the suffering others. Either distance create sufferer visible or invisible to spectator. Media tries to maintain a proper

distance between them and the sufferer, and while doing that either they make sufferer central or ambiguous to spectator. However, sometimes they failed to bring them into the centre by either dehumanizing or demonizing them. While doing that, sufferer is sometimes pushed to point beyond strangeness and humanity. According to Silverstone, such distance is morally unacceptable and it puts media performance between symmetrical immoralities: the ‘immorality of distance’ and the ‘immorality of sameness’ (Ibid: 173). In order to avoid these two immoralities, Silverstone proposes Kantian enlargement of thinking and mentality beyond own individual and solitary self (Silverstone 2007: 46). Silverstone concept of enlarging mentality is inspired by Arendt notion of ‘imagination’. Arendt reflects that, imagination helps spectator to see things in their proper perspective. It allows spectator to see suffering others by eclipsing or eradicating the certain degree of bias or remoteness and help them to identify their problem or affair as their own (Arendt 1990: 323). Thus, Silverstone ‘proper distance’ reflects there is no distance at all. Whenever, spectator maintains proper distance with the suffering others then it erases all the distance between them.

### 2.3.3) Responsibility and hospitality

When we talk about media responsibility then there is no any specific type of responsibility that media should have. There are several aspects of responsibility and media should feel that responsibility in the need. As Zygmunt Bauman argue, for responsibility we need proximity, the caress and the duty of care. His notion of responsibility is to deny is to deny the possibility of morality and ethics. Such a denial will be ultimate in humanity self-defeat (Silverstone 2007: 134). In media, who are responsible for the production and transmission of the images and narratives like: editors, producers or journalist must understand their responsibility. In case of disaster with responsibility there comes issue of becoming transparency and accountability. Because spectator mostly react through what appear as subjects in the media. However, beside media there lies responsibility of spectator too. It’s responsibility, where people feel responsibility for their own acts, acts that made their life or deed accountable in other eyes.

On the other hand, hospitality is an obligation to welcome the suffering others (Silverstone 2007: 136). With welcoming its reflects the idea of creating a society with justice and truthfulness. In doing that, media has responsibility to hear and to create an effective communicative space where bodies and voices of those marginalized sufferer can be seen and heard on their own terms (Ibid: 143). In practice, it’s something never guaranteed however the notion of media hospitality should be in principle of media justice.

These notions of media morality and ethics reflects that media needs to understand or conceive the idea of creating a moral space where every sufferer whether they are in distance or near have their voices heard. Likewise, media should create an environment where not only they feel its their duty to act in a right way to bring them out from the bad situation but to also enlightened people about their vital role in helping these unfortunates or sufferers.

### 3) Methodology

The aim of this study was to build a deeper understanding on Nepalese print media representation of suffering of earthquake victims. In order to achieve the aim, case study has been chosen as a research method and as a data-gathering techniques, both quantitative and qualitative content analysis were used. Since, this paper has also used images to accompany editorials, visual methodology has been used to extract denotative meaning from images.

#### 3.1) Research design

##### 3.1.1) Case study

It has been believed that a case study is a useful scientific tool to get a deeper understanding of certain subject. According to (Creswell 1998: 61), case study explores a bounded system or case over time *‘through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context’*. In short, case study is a *‘detailed examination of a single example’* (Flyvbjerg 2006: 220). The process of detail examination begins with understanding of how and why it has happened. It helps to understand subject from many and varied angles which could lead us closer to ‘why’ and ‘how’. The key is doing what (Flyvbjerg 2001: 132) calls *‘getting close to reality’*.

In case of this paper, the ‘the case of interest’ is representation of victims suffering in Nepalese print media in 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 earthquake. In this paper, a descriptive case study has been used to study Nepalese print media representation of suffering. Descriptive case study is appropriate choice for this type of study because as (Yin 2009) reflects, the goal of this kind of study is get a deeper understanding of a certain topic. Such as this thesis, which aim to get a deeper understanding of

Nepalese print media representation of suffering. Once a case has been identified, Creswell suggests research should proceed on extensive collection of data through interviews, observation and documents, to gather information about the case (Creswell 1998).

Therefore, the case study method is chosen to examine Nepalese media representation of victims suffering. The study aims to discover how suffering has been presented to Nepalese people. In doing so, it examines how media inspires pity in spectators, do they make spectators compassionate or indifferent towards victim and in what ways suffering were morally and ethically reported to spectators? Through a detailed examination of Nepalese print media representation of suffering of earthquake victims, this paper aims to answer: How has Nepalese print media represented the suffering of victims in mediation of 25<sup>th</sup> April 2015 earthquake in Nepal?

### 3.1.2) Context of the case

As (Flyvbjerg 2001) argues, any social research should address the problems that matter to groups in the local, national and global communities in which we live. If we do this than we could transform social science to action done in public for the public (p.166). This case addresses the problem faced by victims of Nepal earthquake. One might question why is it important to address them and specially in print media than other forms of media. One of the main reason behind choosing print media is, it is still the most popular and circulated media in Nepal (see chapter 3.2.1) and victims are still waiting for rebuilding program to start in proper way.

Furthermore, there are other indicators that make this case prominent. According to reports, Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries to natural disaster in Asia (The Guardian). In 2017 alone, 443 people died and some 1500 people got displaced (The Himalayan Times). Moreover, there has been lots of criticism directed towards government for not being fully prepared and for not carrying rescue program in effective way. Likewise, media personnel are often criticised for ignoring victims in their reporting (see chapter 1.2.1). These are some indicators which make these case interesting to study.

This case is also selected on the basis of practical indicators. Being Nepalese, it made this case most convenient since I was involved in rescue programs and I was following this case from the first day of earthquake. However, it has to be underlined, being from Nepal, I never took sides of any actors involved in this research. My goal is to bring objectivity to readers through a detail and careful examination.

### 3.2) Process of data collection

There are many quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data, however with the aim and research questions in mind, content analysis fits than any other method because this method is designed for the analysis of texts and documents of various media outlets (Bryman 2008: 274). According to (Krippendorff 2004), '*content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context*' (p.403). It reflects the scientific classification of content of communication and the quantification of 'what' messages are communicated (Hansen & Machin 2013: 88). Moreover, it allows researcher to bring out their own context for inquiry which opens the door to a rich repertoire of social-scientific constructs (Weber 1990: 13). Furthermore, even images, maps, work of art, signs are included as data and these data could be also considered as texts (Ibid). Since, this paper chose to examine images and editorials from print media, so content analysis seems more suitable than other methods. In chapter 3.2.6 there is a detail description on how images and editorials has been collected.

Furthermore, to analyze the collected data qualitative approach of content analysis is applied in this research. As Patton (2002: 453) defines qualitative content analysis; '*any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings*'. In this definition the idea of core meaning are implied themes or patterns. 'Pattern' is usually referred to a descriptive finding, whereas 'theme' is related to more categorical or topical form (Ibid).

Thus, in this research, themes were developed deductively from theoretical framework, through researcher careful examination (Zhang and Wildemuth 2009: 309). The idea of developing themes deductively from theoretical framework is guided by Lauri and Kyngäs (2005, in Elo and Kyngäas 2008: 109), *who recommend to use this approach when 'there is not enough former knowledge about the phenomenon or if the knowledge is fragmented'*. In this regard, the paper reviewed concept of suffering to develop the themes. Some of the themes that were developed deductively from theoretical framework were; *suffering with or without pity, compassion and indifferences, distance and media responsibility*. However, this paper has used categories and sub-categories extracted from the main theme to analyze the data. These categories and sub-categories are; *distance, adventure news, (maps, long-shots) and descriptive facts, emergency news (numbers, vague information), hospitality (close-shots, victims), proximity and distantiation (victim, normalization and other actors)*.

### **Why QCA for this study?**

In order to fulfill the aim of this research, QCA help researcher to provide rich description and interpretation of collected data through theoretical framework. On the basis of prior categories or theme developed from the theoretical framework it helps researcher to interpret data through these developed categories, which is important for this study due to its large files of data. In one hand, in this research, in order to analyze the text QCA fits perfectly. On the contrary, the competitive method that research could use to analyze these data is discourse analysis. However, as (Fairclough 2013 and Philip & Jorgensen 2002) reflects, discourse analysis focuses on use of language rather than on underlying reality or interpretation in terms of themes and categories. Moreover, it has been conceived that when a researcher has research design based on theoretical framework then it is recommended not to use discourse analysis.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, images have been used to accompany editorials. Since, the themes developed from theoretical framework were enough to extract meaning from images. However, to extract meaning from images this paper has used Gillian Rose 'Visual Methodologies' specially focusing on compositional interpretation (site of image) to interpret meaning from the images. Since, aim of the research is associated with understanding media representations of earthquake victims, Rose notion of site of image helps to examine simple and descriptive level of signs in images (Rose 2016: 105). In a simple meaning such level of signs are known as denotative- where image meaning are made of image itself (ibid; 23). It is a way of looking at images through 'the good eye'. As Rose reflects, *'it as compositional interpretation where as a researcher we tend to look at images for 'what they are' rather than for what they do or how they were or are used'* (ibid; 33). Furthermore, Ronald Barthes reflects *'denotative signs at some level may be easy to understand but at another they may have so many potential meanings'* (Barthes 1977 cited in Rose 2016: 80). Thus, in this research, images will be examined through its denotative or literal meaning. One might argue about not choosing semiotic analysis to look for meaning in images. However, this research does not look for how image construct meaning through signs rather looks for simple and descriptive level of sign (ibid). Moreover, it says very little about audience and production of the images. Therefore, the analysis of image is related to compositional modality than technological and social modality. Hence, for this research images have been studied on the basis of compositional modality specially looking at key components of still image.

In the next chapter this paper wants to equip reader about data collection techniques, specially focusing on the sampling, selection of newspapers and process of selection of images and editorials.

### 3.2.1) Sampling

In this paper, purposive and random sampling will be the sample strategy. Purposive sampling is used to select newspapers for this study that are relevant to answer the research question. On the other hand, random sampling technique is used to select the editorials that are large in number and has an equal chance of being included in the sample (Bryman, 2008). The limitation, this research is not representative for the entire media of Nepal, but the research generalizes on print media of Nepal.

The selection of newspapers for this study is based on purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which selected sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher (ibid). In doing so, researcher has chosen three newspapers from different background. The chosen papers are representative of both private and government sector. These print medias are still the most popular print media among Nepalese population and all of them has their sister papers in Nepali language. ‘The Rising Nepal’ is a first daily newspaper of Nepal and it is government owned and oldest English daily Newspaper of Nepal (Acharya, 2010). Similarly, ‘The Kathmandu Post’ is first private owned media and it is one of the most selling English dailies of Nepal (Sedhai, 2012). Likewise, ‘Nepali Times’ is another private owned English newspaper. It publishes in weekly basis and is popular among the educated society of Nepal. Furthermore, all of these newspapers have their own digital media sites to their online population. However, there are many other online and offline newspapers in Nepal and were active during reporting on earthquake in Nepal, but of the space and time restrictions, this paper set a criterion to limit the data to be examined. Due to this, researcher is aware about exclusion of other print media and its implication on the outcome of the study.

The data consists of images and texts on the representation of suffering by Nepalese print media during earthquake in Nepal. Here, images are taken from front page and text are from editorial of newspapers. These images and editorials are published in chosen Nepalese newspapers and selected from the official online websites of these newspapers. The reason behind choosing editorials than other news stories is. Comparatively news stories could be opinion of the sources through quotes or it conveys the essence of an issue whereas editorial presents the policy of newspaper’s. It is the opinion of writer on an issue and this opinion are meant to be unbiased

because it reflects the consensus view of the paper's editorial board (Singh 2006). On the other hand, images have been picked from front page of these newspapers since stories in front page is to draw attention of readers and it normally highlights important issues of society.

Since the earthquake struck Nepal on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 and the aim of this study is related to Nepalese print media representation of suffering of earthquake victims the time frame for this study has been divided into three periods; first three months after the earthquake, two months of first anniversary and two months of recent years. For example; from 25<sup>th</sup> April to 25<sup>th</sup> July 2015(1<sup>st</sup> period), 25<sup>th</sup> April to 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2016 (2<sup>nd</sup> period) and 25<sup>th</sup> April to 25<sup>th</sup> June 2017 (3<sup>rd</sup> period). The reason behind dividing time frame into three periods is; since it has been already more than 3 years and still rebuilding program has not started in proper way, this paper tends to examine three different years to look for Nepalese print media representation of victim suffering.

The next chapter presents an overview on selected print medias for this research;

#### a) The Rising Nepal

The Rising Nepal is a first English newspaper of Nepal which was established in 1965 (Infoasaid 2011: 85). TRN is a sister paper of Gorkhapatra which is the first newspaper of Nepal. TRN is owned by government and its stories are believed to be government voice because the managing committee and senior editorial staff are selected by government. Looking at current market the readership of TRN is believed to be decline due to great competition from the private owned media. However, it is still regarded as one of the popular newspaper, specially in the older population and it is also subscribed to all government offices (Ibid). It is believed that nowadays people mostly buy this paper in order to read official government notices. Moreover, it also collects public opinions through its online and offline sources as a feedback.

#### b) The Kathmandu Post

The Kathmandu Post is a first private media house which established in 1993 along with Kantipur. TKP is an English daily whereas Kantipur is a Nepali daily. While there was sole authority of government newspaper in Nepalese communities, TKP publishes with the mission of enhancing Nepali people's right to right information and its commitment towards propagating responsible journalism. Since then its popularity has boost and now it is the most selling English newspapers of Nepal, along with its sister paper Kantipur (The Kathmandu Post). The daily circulation figures



of The Kathmandu Post round up to 102,000 copies and it is mostly popular in urban areas (The Kathmandu Post).

c) **Nepali Times**

Nepali Times is a weekly newspaper of Nepal which was founded in 1999 (Infoasaid 2011: 87). It is one of the periodicals of Himal media which is becoming popular in the current period. This media company mission is to provide in-depth reporting on Nepali politics, society, business, culture and travel. Nepal Times is believed to have reader from expatriate and diplomatic communities (Nepali Times). Kundan dixit, a leading journalist and editor of Nepal, is a publisher and editor of this newspaper.

In the next section this paper presents the process of images and editorials selection. As I mentioned in chapter 3.2.1 that the chosen time frame of this study is 3 years.

**3.2.2) Selection of images and editorials**

All the images and editorials for this research has been selected from official online websites of the three newspapers. The study covered a three-year period after the earthquake 25<sup>th</sup> April 2015 and divided into three different time frames i.e. first 3 months of earthquake year, two months after first anniversary and two months of second anniversary.

At first all the images and editorials were chosen accordingly to its publishing dates. The researcher found out that The Kathmandu Post publishes editorials only in weekdays, likewise The Rising Nepal publishes every week and Nepali Times publishes once a week. Table below shows total number of images and editorials which were published on chosen time frame.

Total number of editorials and images chosen in three different periods;

Table 1, earthquake year: time frame first 3 months

Dailies/Weekly	Newspapers	Time frame	Editorials	Images
Daily	The Kathmandu Post	25 <sup>th</sup> April- 25 <sup>th</sup> July 2015	65	91
Daily	The Rising Nepal	25 <sup>th</sup> April- 25 <sup>th</sup> July 2015	91	91
Weekly	Nepali Times	25 <sup>th</sup> April- 25 <sup>th</sup> July 2015	13	13

Table 2, first anniversary; time frame 2 months

Dailies/Weekly	Newspapers	Time frame	Editorials	Images
Daily	The Kathmandu Post	25 <sup>th</sup> April- 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2016	44	61
Daily	The Rising Nepal	25 <sup>th</sup> April- 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2016	61	61
Weekly	Nepali Times	25 <sup>th</sup> April- 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2016	8	8

Table 3, second anniversary; time frame 2 months

Dailies/Weekly	Newspapers	Time frame	Editorials	Images
Daily	The Kathmandu Post	25 <sup>th</sup> April- 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	44	61
Daily	The Rising Nepal	25 <sup>th</sup> April- 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	61	61
Weekly	Nepali Times	25 <sup>th</sup> April- 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	8	8

With aim in mind, images and editorials that were related to words ‘earthquake’ and ‘victims’ were sorted out.

In doing so, images and editorials found on one of the official newspaper websites had to pass through following criteria:

- a) Published images and editorials were clearly published in chosen time frame as confirmed by published date in e-paper.
- b) In terms of image and editorial selection, it has to relate with words like ‘*earthquake*’ and ‘*victim*’.

For example; out of 65 editorials published in TKP in 3 months in 2015, only 30 editorials were related to words ‘earthquake and victim’, similarly, out of 44 editorials published in 2 months’ period time in 2016, only 5 were related to words ‘earthquake and victim’. To find out the number of editorials related to words ‘earthquake’ and ‘victim’, researcher used search engine in e-paper

of all three newspapers. For example; researcher typed ‘earthquake’ ‘victim’ 2015 and counted number of editorials.

Likewise, now the table below shows the total number of editorials and images of three newspapers of Nepal related to words ‘*earthquake*’ and ‘*victim*’ in three different years;

Table 4, 3earthquake year 2015: time frame 3 months

Dailies/Weekly	Newspapers	Time frame	Editorials related to earthquake or victim	Images related to earthquake or victim
Daily	The Kathmandu Post	25 <sup>th</sup> April-25 <sup>th</sup> July 2015	30	17
Daily	The Rising Nepal	25 <sup>th</sup> April-25 <sup>th</sup> July 2015	22	14
Weekly	Nepali Times	25 <sup>th</sup> April-25 <sup>th</sup> July 2015	12	12

Table 5, first anniversary 2016: first 2 months

Dailies/Weekly	Newspapers	Time frame	Editorials related to earthquake or victim	Images related to earthquake or victim
Daily	The Kathmandu Post	25 <sup>th</sup> April-25 <sup>th</sup> June 2016	5	3
Daily	The Rising Nepal	25 <sup>th</sup> April-25 <sup>th</sup> June 2016	6	3
Weekly	Nepali Times	25 <sup>th</sup> April-25 <sup>th</sup> June 2016	1	2

Table 6, second anniversary 2017: first two months

Dailies/Weekly	Newspapers	Time frame	Editorials related to earthquake or victim	Images related to earthquake or victim
Daily	The Kathmandu Post	25 <sup>th</sup> April- 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	2	2
Daily	The Rising Nepal	25 <sup>th</sup> April- 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	4	2
Weekly	Nepali Times	25 <sup>th</sup> April- 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	1	2

In total, altogether 57 images and 83 editorials were related to above criteria.

All of the images were coded by sub-categories developed from theoretical framework. However, it has been taken into consideration that new categories might emerged in the process. Here is the list of sub-categories that were applied to all 57 images;

- Close-up (with victim real face)
- Maps (long shots, (from distance)
- Other actors

Table 7, total number of images relevant to developed categories in three different years;

Categories	<b>The Kathmandu Post</b>			<b>The Rising Nepal</b>			<b>Nepali Times</b>		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Close-up shots /victim	3	1	0	3	1	0	7	2	1
Long distance shots/maps	5	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0
Other actors (state authorities)	9	2	2	8	2	2	1	0	0

The table shows that ‘state authorities’ have been mentioned several times by Nepalese print media than other two categories. As we can see in table, ‘state authorities’ have been mentioned 18 times in 2015, 4 times in 2016 and 2017 in three newspapers.

On the other hand, since the number editorials were huge. So in order to create a feasible sample, this paper used random sampling to code all 83 editorials. In doing so, all 83 editorials were arranged accordingly to the alphabetical order of their titles. Then, researcher decided to pick every third title. This ensures that the random selection represent almost 97% of total number of editorials. Thus, after counting every third title, some 27 editorials were chosen for this study.

However, one might argue about why all the sample of images were analyzed and why it was necessary to conduct random sampling on editorials? The reason behind analyzing all the images were; as this paper used Rose visual methodologies to extract denotative meaning from images. In doing so, the researcher looked specially into reoccurring pattern in images from the help of categories and sub-categories developed from theoretical framework. It was easy to divide images into reoccurring pattern and to look for those pattern in all images. For example; maps (long-shots), victims (close-shots) and other actors (state authorities). On the other hand, editorials were large in numbers and also difficult to analyze it through reoccurring pattern. Hence, at first editorials were randomly selected and then coded through developed categories from theoretical framework.

The entire sample of 27 editorials have been coded through categories developed from themes of theoretical framework;

- Descriptive facts (numbers)
- Distance
- Responsibility
- Proximity

Now the table below shows number of editorials relevant to above categories or to any new categories;

Categories	No. of editorials
Descriptive facts (numbers)	3
Distance	2
Other actors (state authorities)	11
Responsibility (moral)	3
Proximity (establishing connection)	2

The table above shows number of editorials relevant to categories developed from theoretical framework of this study. In editorials too, new category has emerged as ‘state authorities’ and it has been coded more often than other categories.

The next chapter explains the process of data analysis of this study.

### 3.3) Process of data analysis

#### **Step 1: Preparation of data**

In this study, QCA has been used to boost some level of interpretation to provide meaning of chosen data. In regard to it, data never ‘speak for itself’ and meaning is not given but constructed on the basis of prior theory (Schreier 2012: 2). As suggested above in chapter 3.2.6), entire data has been analyzed through theoretical framework. This existing theories and derived categories has contributed to explain the research question (Hsieh & Shannon 2005: 1281). Hence, the concept of suffering and media morality has been used to look for interpreting images and editorials. Moreover, all the newspapers are already in English therefore there was no need of translation. Furthermore, since researcher is native so it gave this paper an advantage to easily distinguish victims, aid worker, government worker and other aspects related to suffering and media to carry out research in right way.

### **Step 2: The unit of analysis**

According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2009: 310), '*qualitative content analysis mostly uses individual themes as the unit of analysis rather than word and sentence, which is more used in quantitative content analysis*'. Here, themes are expressed by either single word, phrase or paragraph (Ibid). In this notion, this paper chose themes as the unit of analysis.

### **Step 3: Developing categories and coding scheme**

According to Zhang and Wildemuth, categories and coding scheme could be extracted either from data or theories (Ibid). In this paper, theoretical framework has been used to develop the categories and sub-categories and they are; *adventure news (maps, long-shots, descriptive facts and emergency news (numbers, vague information), hospitality (close-shots, victims), proximity and distantiation (victim, action-oriented and other actors)*.

In this paper, sub-categories have been developed from main categories to look at denotative meaning in images and to even get more clear picture of the representation of victim suffering in Nepalese print media. The purpose of creating categories for this research is to increase the understanding of content. However, to avoid doubts regarding the developed categories, this paper has tested coding scheme on a sample of data before examining the whole data.

### **Step 4: Code all text**

When these developed categories are tested and confirmed then the coding scheme is applied to entire data. The data are transcribed into hard copy and marked sentences/word/phrases that are relevant to developed thematic categories with a colored marker. In case of images, it has been printed out, attached in hard copy and kept systematically under the developed sub- categories (see Appendix 2).

### **Step 5: Reporting**

As (Zhang & Wildemuth 2009:5) argues QCA uncovers patterns and themes which are important to social reality than producing the count as well as statistical importance. In this notion, this study aims to keep balance between description and interpretation. In this study, description is related to context whereas interpretation explain the data through theoretical framework. According to (Patton 2002: 503), an excellent research in QCA includes description and interpretation. Thus, an interpretation of analysis is guided by the chosen theoretical framework.

#### 4) Nepalese print media construction of suffering

With aim in mind, in order to better understand the context of encountering suffering of earthquake victims in Nepalese print media, it is important that we investigate the way of representation of images and narratives of suffering. As (Chouliaraki 2006: 3) argues researcher need to study the choices made when creating the news text concerning how the sufferer is portrayed in news media and how the scene of suffering is narrated. Thus, in this section theoretical framework is used as a systematizing tool to study Nepalese print media choices in constructing the suffering in mediation of earthquake victims. The first section examine how does print media inspires or discourage pity to spectator. This chapter specially focuses on narratives used by print media and space-times given to victims. The second section examine how print media creates compassion and indifferences in spectacle of suffering. This chapter focuses on how media systematically articulate the cultivation of specific disposition of emotion, action and indifference towards victim. In third section, this paper investigates above two section to find out, in what ways the construction of suffering was morally and ethically reported to spectators. While investigating the moral and ethical behaviour of Nepalese print media, the focus will be on, in what ways media creates moral space (proper distance, responsibility and hospitality) for victims. Following this, the fourth section discusses about overall finding of the research and lastly there will be critical reflection on what kind of role did Nepalese print media played in portraying the suffering of victims.

##### 4.1) 'Discouraging' or 'inspiring' pity

As Chouliaraki argues, pity offers the spectator a distinct quality of emotional and practical obligation with the sufferer (Chouliaraki 2006: 8). When spectator witnesses suffering in media platforms then it could arouse their inner pity towards them. However, pity only arises in spectator when representation of suffering actually brings sufferer near and oblige them to act. In this regard, media plays a significant role in engaging spectator with sufferer, while mediating different forms of pity. The nature of spectator engagement with sufferer depends upon what forms of pity has been discussed in news media. While looking at the most reoccurring forms of pity in news media representation of suffering of victims then there are two reoccurring forms; one form reflects just a natural emotional sentiment towards the sufferer and nothing more, and other form reflects not



just an emotional attachment but also incite action by engaging themselves into helping victims either by providing aid or by working in rescue programs (ibid). As (Chouliaraki 2006, Boltanski 1999) argues the reason behind feeling just a natural emotional sentiment is due to visually and verbally descriptive narratives and no time-space for victims in media. However, on the other hand spectator feels attachment with victims due to its visually and verbally complicated narratives with increasing degrees of affective power. Hence, media plays an important role in bringing victims either central or ambiguous in the eyes of spectator by either discouraging or inspiring pity.

In context of earthquake in Nepal, Nepalese print media found themselves in similar role. All three major newspapers were mediating images and narratives of victim suffering to western and Nepalese people around the world. While examining images and editorials of these three newspapers through category like ‘distance’, most reoccurring theme were discouraging pity than inspiring. Here are examples from two newspapers which depicts, how Nepalese print media visually and verbally reflects descriptive narratives which discourages pity in their mediation of earthquake victims;



*Figure 1, Nepali Times 2015-05-16/17*



An aerial view of Barkpak village in Gorkha district, the epicentre of the devastating April 25 earthquake.

*Figure 2, The Rising Nepal 2015-04-27*

The first image from Nepali times (NT) shows victims in tents (temporary shelter). The second image is from The Rising Nepal (TRN) which shows the epicentre of the devastating April 25<sup>th</sup> earthquake. Chouliaraki label such news as ‘adventure news’, which normally register facts and restrict spectator’s proximity with victim (Chouliaraki 2006: 98). Such images reflect more descriptive facts which shows, Nepal has been hit by a massive earthquake and due to that victim houses are destroyed and are forced to live in tents. Being a spectator of these images, one could only imagine the extent of destruction caused by the earthquake. Moreover, these images fail to show any real suffering, suffering which actually reflects victim from close, with their faces and voices. As a result, representation full of descriptive facts makes spectator to feel less pity towards victim. Furthermore, these images which represents only charts, maps or destroyed areas only makes spectator an eye witness of the disaster. Let see these images from The Kathmandu Post (TKP) where representation of suffering is limited in map and from distance.



Figure 3, *The Kathmandu Post* 2015-06-03



Figure 4, *The Kathmandu Post* 2015-05-31

Such images taken from the distance takes sufferer pity to far away and fails to open not only emotional engagement but also sense of responsibility towards victim. Moreover, such visual descriptive narratives dehumanized sufferers and suppresses the possibility of action in the scene of suffering (ibid, 98). The reason behind failure of these newspapers to represent sufferers as real individuals is; it fails to include images where victims are represented as real, with face and name. Spectators find difficulties to connect with the victim because they are not looking at any real suffering. In order to feel some emotional engagement and sense of responsibility images should reflect individuals who are suffering from this devastating disaster. Thus, the absence of real name and face deprives the sufferer of its humanity (ibid, 123).



Looking at the above images, Nepalese print media portrayal of victim suffering takes national and local spectator far away from the victim. Therefore, it's much likely that spectator found themselves in difficult situation to inspire pity and as a result, it frees them from the moral obligation to act and feel for the victims (Chouliaraki 2006: 98).

However, one might argue that such kind of images is normal in the beginning of disaster. In the beginning most of journalist do not want to travel to affected areas because of safety reasons. On the contrary, such reporting from Nepalese print media are not available only in the first year of earthquake. Let see this image from TRN;



Figure 5, TRN 2016-05-07

This image is from year 2016 which shows reconstruction going on in earthquake-hit Sunkhani village of Dolakha district. It looks like image has been taken by drone and we hardly see any people. Reporting of earthquake victims still rest in descriptive facts which only gives a slight hint of reconstruction program. But it still fails to represent real suffering or real victims even after one year.

Furthermore, in editorials too this paper finds similar representation of victims were sufferer pity has been presented in an ambiguous way. These examples below show how spectator might get difficulties in locating the victims and any agency that are in ground for rescue program. As editorial in TKP, titled '*Look before you leap*' says;

To reach people who are most in need of supplies, I/NGOs and individuals could first find a local who is active in the locality and then gather information about what is most needed in the area and who needs it the most (TKP 2015-06-03)

In this text, the description of agencies working in rescue program seems vague. There are no exact details (name, location) of benefactor working in rescue programs. As (Chouliaraki 2006: 123) argues, spectator needs presence of some participants in the disaster area because in most of the time they cannot act directly on their own. Hence, they look for rescue team, human right activists. In this regard, media should include exact details so that spectator can engage themselves by contacting these groups who are helping victims. TKP narratives seems descriptive and vague and it stops spectator to build emotional attachment with sufferer.

Thus, such construction of suffering by Nepalese print media reflects an abstract representation, where we find minimal description of sufferer along with visually static description. Moreover, such abstract representation by Nepalese print media reflects their per-formative discourse which aims to establish and legitimize valid representation of earthquake. Similarly, it reflects how news of victim is framed by Nepalese print media.

However, on the contrary there lies few examples where Nepalese print media inspires pity by bringing suffering of victims nearer to the spectator. Let see this image by (TRN, 2015-05-06);



Figure 6, *The Rising Nepal* 2015-05-06

Analysing this image through sub-categories like ‘victim’ reflects victim faces, real suffering and creates proximity between spectator and victims. These victims are moving from Barpak, epicentre of devastating earthquake, to the low lands in search of temporary shelter. Chouliaraki label such news as, ‘ecstatic news’, where text and images interact each other to give spectator both the feelings and facts (Chouliaraki 2006: 158). Here, sufferer is presented as real, with face, touches sentiment and emotion. As (Chouliaraki 2006: 123) believes, images of suffering with exact details makes suffering more visible to viewer and it enables them to act in favour of them. It reduces the distance or gap between spectator and victim which adventure news lacked.

As Chouliaraki argued in ‘adventure news’, when we look at the pictures of destructed areas in map and people in tents then spectator feel less about victim. However, in this image we feel and care about these women who are carrying their children in search of safe place. Such representations of suffering in media to the spectators plays a significant role in inspiring pity. Therefore, in order to inspire pity, representation of suffering must include individual images with real face and name (ibid).

Likewise, one of editorials, titled ‘*Homeless in Nepal*’, by Kundan Dixit, publisher and editor of Nepali Times writes;



Short-term shelter requires coordination between government and agencies like [UN-HABITAT](#) as well as smaller relief groups in order to quickly cover the sheer geographical scale of the affected area. It is important that these temporary shelters not become permanent homes, and that people are given the financial means and technical assistance necessary to rebuild in the longer-term (NT, 2015-05-15/21).

Here in this example, representation of suffering moves from verbally minimal descriptions to verbally complicated narratives with increasing degrees of affective power (ibid, 118). It moves from abstract representation to more concrete and specific information. In above example, spectator could witness different aspects related to suffering which creates a dynamic reality that adventure news fails to represent. Some of the aspects that spectator could witness are; information about agency working in relief program (UN-HABITAT) and Dixit proposal of need of not just financial support but also technical assistance to rebuild in the longer-term. The example above not just only talks about the suffering of victims but also provides agency who is working in disaster hit areas. As Chouliaraki argues, spectator always need presence of other participants because in most of the time they cannot act directly on their own, thus they look for human right activists or rescue team (ibid, 125). Furthermore, it gives spectator an idea of other ways of helping in relief program other than financial help, which is technical assistance. Yes, its true that there is huge importance of finance but along with it, victims need knowledge about aftershocks, building better houses and most importantly precaution for future earthquake. Such assistance not only help victims to minimize their suffering but also to get over with earthquake trauma.

On the other hand, there are few representations of suffering that inspires more pity than other representation because here spectator get an opportunity to witness everything happening in disaster hit areas. Let see these examples from NT;



Figure 7, *Nepali Times* 29/05 June, 2015



Figure 8, *Nepali Times* 22/28 May, 2015

In these images spectator can witness the extent of disaster, along with how victims are living their life and how ongoing rescue program is going on. Moreover, spectator witnesses' bitter truth and facts about suffering through images and texts, and gets engaged with the feelings and thoughts of victim. According to Chouliaraki, such affection towards sufferer leads spectator to not only compassion but also identification. An identification where spectator feels themselves as victim of disaster and one of the representative of victim (ibid, 159).

We could witness similar representation of suffering in editorials by NT and TKP;

In Chautara, the main wing of the Sindhupalchok District Hospital which was inaugurated earlier this year is so badly damaged it needs to work out of tents for at least three more years. Of the 75 health posts in the district, 66 do not exist anymore. (NT, 2015-05/06-29/5)

Around 16,000 people from Sindhupalchok district alone have left their villages and are now camping in Kathmandu or other towns. Thousands of others whose villages have been washed away are likely residing in other areas in their districts, in many cases close to the places where their villages were located.

(TKP, 2015-05-31)

In these texts, both print media is covering the stories of victims of Sindhupalchowk district. The extent of disaster revealed by NT and TKP about suffering of victims in Sindhupalchowk make spectator to realize the effect of devastating earthquake. Such representation makes spectator philanthropist, one who feels either obsessive or angry with what he or she reads or witness and cares for (ibid, 146). As Chouliaraki argues, by seeing such news stories people could actually bring out their anger and frustrations towards the government, agent of aid worker and with other involved actors for not articulating rescue program in time. She points out that, such incident makes us political activist to bring change in the life of sufferer (ibid, 61). Moreover, such anger and emotion help spectator to personally identify with the sufferer.

On the other hand, media should be careful regarding news selection. Media should acknowledge what kind of stories is more valuable in the given context since media sometimes values news reports of others in expense of own people. Hannah Arendt labels it as 'politics of pity', which helps to get a better understanding of how power shapes meaning of humanitarian crisis and how these meanings determine a course of action is analysis (Arendt cited in Boltanski 1999: 7). Arendt reflects that, undeniably news media holds a special form of power which can either makes victim



fortunate or unfortunate ones (ibid). Hence, media should be careful regarding selection of news stories of victim and present in a manner that encourages people to act in favour of them.

Let see these examples from TKP;



Figure 9, *The Kathmandu Post* 2015-05-05



Figure 10, *The Kathmandu Post* 2015-05-12

In first image we can see Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world, and next to it is an image of lost US chopper during the rescue mission. In connection to first image TKP writes; during the earthquake seventeen people have been killed on Everest and some 61 got injured. The toll could go up since, foreign and Sherpas climbers were still on the mountain during the earthquake (TKP, 2015-05-059). Likewise, in connection to second image TKP writes; A US Air Force chopper has been missing at Charikot some 67km Northeast of Kathmandu. Two American attendants and a Nepali captain were on board when they were on rescue mission. These images were main headlines in the ‘The Kathmandu Post’. These images show which news are valued in reporting; one where few people died in avalanche and chopper accident were majority of casualties are foreigners or thousands of Nepalese people who are affected by earthquake and waiting for food and tent. This practice of Nepalese print media shapes the meaning of victim in a way where big numbers of victim space in media reporting have been taken by small numbers. Such formation of victim meaning could determine the course of action. As Arendt reflects, news media holds a special form of power which can either makes victim fortunate or unfortunate ones (ibid).

It reflects that affection on victim suffering depends upon how media construct the meaning of suffering and to whom it has been mediated. If such images will hold special place in media than

it creates a gap between victim and spectator. Similarly, during disaster victims comes in news narrative in different forms of identity, shifting from mere numbers without detail to a human being almost like ‘us’ (Chouliaraki 2006: 12). Therefore, worthiness of discouraging and inspiring pity is depending upon these acts of identity where as a spectator you need to identify with victims. In this case, spectator from outside will identify with these victims rather than Nepalese. Moreover, it doesn’t matter where spectator is from because spectator alone does not possess any pure emotion vis-à-vis the sufferers, but their affection is, in fact, shaped by values inserted in news narratives about who the sufferers or other are and how spectator should relate to them (ibid). Thus, pity is not just a natural sentiment of love, care and affection but also a socially constructed disposition. Hence, *it seems that, the notion of ‘identification’ describes by Chouliaraki fits depending upon which stories have been portrayed and most importantly who is suffering and why it matters for certain group of people than others.* Thus, media should be very careful regarding the choices made during the creation of news concerning portrayal of suffering. This paper will discuss more about this later in the section media moral and ethical value.

Thus, the examples above reflect how Nepalese print media discourage or inspires pity in the eyes of spectator. These regimes of pity focuses on how spectator feel when they witness suffering in images and texts in Nepalese print media but fails to give a clear picture on how media systematically articulate the cultivation of specific disposition of emotion, action and indifference towards victim suffering. Hence, the next chapter examines images and texts of Nepalese print media through categories like; compassion and indifferences to find out how media articulate such representation.

#### 4.1.2) Creating proximity and distantiation

The above chapter reflects that, discouraging or inspiring pity is all about how spectator emotionally attach with the mediatized suffering of victim. When spectator gets emotionally attach with victim then spectator either commit themselves to help them or react differently (remains in passive state). Boltanski label such terms as compassion and indifferences. According to him, *‘compassion is related to humanitarian action towards the sufferer whereas indifferences is all about being silent and passive’* (Boltanski 1999). Moreover, its media that plays a vital role in mediating meaning of suffering to the spectator which either empowers spectator to participate in humanitarian program or stops them.

In this study also Nepalese print media became a facilitator in circulating the meaning of suffering to the Nepalese people via images and texts. After examining these images and texts by categories like; *proximity and distantiation*, this study found out that Nepalese print media depicts more ‘indifferences’ in their representation of suffering than ‘compassion’. Nepalese print media representation of suffering makes spectator indifferent to the sufferer than making compassionate about them. Now this paper reflects upon the reasons behind why Nepalese print media construction of suffering were making spectator indifferent towards the sufferer than compassionate.

Let see these images from TRN;



Figure 11, *The Rising Nepal* 2015-05-07



Figure 12, *The Rising Nepal* 2015-05-21



Figure 13, *The Kathmandu Post* 2015-05-20

These three images from TRN portrays an example of why spectator are indifferent towards the sufferer. As Höijer argues, when media are centered around the political strategies, systems than reporting with greater focus on suffering victim then such representation fails to connect spectator with victim (Höijer 2004: 514). Something similar has been found in Nepalese print media representation of suffering in mediating earthquake victims. Print media were focused more on government role, strategies and foreign aid-worker in rebuilding program than participating into covering the stories of victim. Most focus on government, aid-worker and other issues took suffering far away from the spectator. Due to this, spectator hardly got any sorts of connection or communication with victims. As (Tester 2001: 9) argues, in disaster media should bring suffering to home of not just the political leaders but also to home of general public. In order to incite humanitarian action one must feel pity towards the suffering either in distance or near. Therefore, media should create a space where they bring suffering near to us. If its remain in the political role or strategies than it will be difficult to reach into spectator minds or home.

We could see similar representation even in editorials of the newspapers. In editorial titled, *'Building blocks'* and *'Better late than ever'* by TKP respectively says,

There is a need for politicians, government officials, and representatives of civil society to think seriously about the institutional arrangements necessary for recovery and reconstruction.

(TKP, 2015-05-25).

On Saturday, May 23, almost a month after the April 25 Great Earthquake, the Nepali Congress (NC) held a formal ceremony, complete with guest of honor Prime Minister and NC President Sushil Koirala, bidding goodbye to 50 volunteer teams from its Central Sports Department as they leave to clear debris and construct shelters in the field. Similarly, on Sunday, CPN-UML Chairman KP Oli bid adieu to primary team leading 10,000 volunteers at Bhrikuti Mandap. (TKP, 2015-05-26).

These examples reflect that most of Nepalese print media focus has been on how Nepalese government and other political leaders are contributing in rescuing program. One might argue that media should definitely show general public about how government and political leaders or parties are assisting to help victims. However, this is not a case in the role of Nepalese print media in representing the victims of earthquake.

As Boltanski argues, the presence of political and social issues in news media than stories of suffering of victims also makes spectator indifferent towards them (Boltanski 1999: 97). In case of Nepalese print media, such representation was not only limited in first year of earthquake but also in other years. Such representations of state authorities in expense of victim by Nepalese print media refer to what Antonio Gramsci reflects, how dominant group always enjoys their position in



news discourse (Gramsci cited in Stuart 2010: 95). Dominant group in society tries to establish their own values and morals so that they can become common sense values of all. According to Gramsci's theory of ideological hegemony, mass media are tools that ruling elites use to 'perpetuate their power, wealth, and status their own philosophy, culture and morality' (Lull 1995:33). Moreover, sometimes these powerful institutions depend upon each other ideologically for their own benefits. In doing so, bosses of media houses produce the news favorable to them. Something similar we can witness in Nepalese print media representation of suffering, where political leaders were shown as so called 'protector' of victims. Nepalese print media are trying to reinforce the process of ideological influence by normalizing their presence in media outlets. Hence, Gramsci notion of ideological hegemony helps us to understand Nepalese print media power dynamics in modern societies where most of the focus has been on activities performed by politicians.

Representation of state authorities were not only limited in first year of earthquake. Even in first and second anniversary of Nepalese earthquake, state authorities were more in representations than actual victims. Let see this examples from year 2016 and 2017;



Figure 14, TRN 2016-04-25



Figure 15, TRN 2017-04-25

While examining data, ‘state authorities’ was mentioned 32 times in 87 editorials and 26 times in 57 editorials. It seems like politicization continues to overwhelm Nepalese print media. As (Bhuwan 2014) argues, ‘*there still remains political parallelism and lack of professionalism in the Nepalese press*’. It looks like, whether it’s state or private owned Nepalese print media have not been able to make departure from political obligations.

Reflection of government ideas and values regarding earthquake victims was specially, high in government newspaper. Being a government newspaper, it poses a significant role to communicate information, connect people and assist general public with potential new dimensions, designs and approach to engage in relief program. However, TRN focus has been solely based on government role and strategies in rescue and rebuilding program. As a native researcher, I was not that surprised but felt kind of anger towards its role in keeping suffering of victims into the parameters of parliament and political leaders. Here are few more examples which shows more political leader action than actual suffering on the disaster hit areas;



Chairman of CPN-UML K. P. Sharma Oli handing over the keys of temporary huts to the victims of earthquake in Kathmandu. The temporary huts were constructed by the UML workers. (Photo: Ramesh Chhetri/TRN)

Figure 16, *The Rising Nepal* 2015-06-03



Prime Minister Sushil Koirala along with UCPN-M Chairman Pashupat Kumar Dalal 'Prachanda' (left) and Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) Genarav Shumsher Rana visiting Charikot, Dolakha which was ravaged by May 12 earthquake (afterhook of April 25). Leaders of other political parties also accompanying the PM. (Photo: Santoshi Karji/Charikot)

Figure 17, *The Rising Nepal* 2015-05-15



**President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav observing the Bhaktapur Durbar Square which was affected by April 25 earthquake, Monday. (Photo: RSS)**

*Figure 18, The Rising Nepal 2015-05-12*

Such representation also reflects bad use of media power. John Corner label such media practice as media without any responsibility. According to Corner, when media focuses more on dominant elite groups then it fails to bring up voice of people in need. With elite groups he means one who is usually represented formally in government (Corner 2011: 28).

One of the other aspects that makes spectator indifferent to victims is omnipresence of suffering on their eye sights. As a result, it makes them tired or fatigue towards the suffering. Tester and Chouliaraki label such tiredness as ‘compassion fatigue’, where spectator becomes used to with spectacle of dreadful events, misery or suffering and later stop noticing them (Chouliaraki 2006: 112) (Tester 2001: 13). However, in this research one can say, the notion of ‘compassion fatigue’ works not with the dreadful events or misery of victim but with omnipresence of images of government role and political leader in Nepalese print media representation of victim suffering. As you can see in above examples there are more meaning related to people in power than people in need. We hardly see omnipresence of victim suffering in Nepalese print media.

In comparison to indifferences, compassion holds a little place in the Nepalese print media representations of victim. It might be the reason behind why victims are still in wait for rebuilding program until now. It has been more than two years since the deadly earthquake struck Nepal and still victims are waiting for rebuilding program. Still nearly 70% of the victims are living in temporary shelters and it is normal to see damaged houses, earthquake debris and temples without roofs lying around not only in the remote areas but also in capital Kathmandu (The Conversation 2017).



However, let see some examples which shows how Nepalese print media creates compassion in spectator eyes towards victim.



Figure 19, Nepali Times 2015-06-4/5



Figure 20, Nepali Times 2015\_05-15/21



Figure 21, The Kathmandu Post 2015-05-26

Analyzing these images with sub-categories like; ‘victim’ (*unfortunate*), we see the presence of sentiment, since children has been used to show suffering. Kids in disaster or in any other violent atmosphere mostly arouse our sentiments quickly then other actors in society.

As we can see in these images from NT and TKP, suffering of victims has been shown to spectator as real and serious because it shows real suffering. In these images we can see how these kids are suffering from aftermath of disaster. Kids have lost their houses and school and it gives a feeling where we think these kids do not deserve this pain and there must be something that we can do to take out them from these miseries. Therefore, such feelings toward victim does not stops in empathy or sympathy but moves further. These images bring indignation and anger in spectator



mind and begin to accuse the persecutor (government, aid-worker, etc.) for not treating this victim in proper manner. This is how media needs to represent victim to the general public and people in power. These kind of images helps spectator to relate themselves with the undeserved pain of others. As Boltanski argues, such representation of suffering arouse mode of sentiment in spectator mind where spectator sympathizes with the unfortunate's victim (ibid, 77). As a result, either they commit themselves into the rescue program or look for any benefactor (humanitarian organizations) to provide assistance to help these victims.

This paper encounters similar representation in the editorials of Nepali Times. In editorial titled, '*Trouble in the rubble*', editor Kundan dixit, has shown his frustration on government and donor agencies failure to work systematically in rebuilding programs. As Dixit writes;

It is time for both the government and donor representatives to ratchet down their egos, look beyond their turfs and focus on the 2 million Nepalese waiting, patiently so far, for help to rebuild their lives (NT, 2015-06-19/25).

Likewise, in other editorial titled, '*Fixing what's broken*', Rai writes;

The root reasons for all these problems have been [poor governance](#), political unwillingness and a disturbing lack of accountability on the part of elected officials. The earthquake, therefore, has given us the [chance for a paradigm shift](#) not just in the 15 affected districts, but in the rest of the country as well. And the constitution offers the mechanism to make politics more just and equitable (NT, 2015-07-10/16).

In both examples we can witness media anger towards the government failure to carry out proper rebuilding program. Here, media brings the reality of effort done by political leader and aid-agencies in helping the victims of earthquake. As a result, spectator considered suffering as unjust and responds with direct anger towards prosecutor who are responsible for the unfortunate's condition (Boltanski 1999: 5). The failure of government brings spectator into one mindset i.e. to turn into political activist; where they no longer wait for people in power to do something for sufferer but instead commit themselves physically into helping them. It arouses what Boltanski calls, '*moral sensibility of people for the people*' (ibid: 19). Let see some examples where people are committing themselves physically into rescue and rebuilding program and at the same time empowering general public to act together to tackle the outcome or aftermath of devastating earthquake;



Figure 22, *Nepali Times* 2015-06-26/4



Figure 23, *Nepali Times* 2015-05-01

These examples reflect the implication of engagement in public life and good. According to Dhalgren, it conveys a sense of humanitarian service; a kind of service where people does nice work for others in need, such as volunteer or social work (Dhalgren 2009: 58). As a spectator of any disaster, it is always difficult to act alone. Therefore, one always need support or assistance of other to do some kind of meaningful interventions in related politics. In this regard, media plays a vital role in providing assistance to spectator to do meaningful interventions. As Dhalgren argues, much of our civic knowledge is derived from media or its media who serve to empower citizens via civic culture, therefore, media has responsibility to involve us in such social work (ibid, 35). Nepalese print media representation of how some groups of people are engaging in rescue and rebuilding program not only shows how people are helping victims but also motivates other general public to commit themselves into such programs. People who are participating in rescue program in these images are people from the same area. In the image where we can see women participating in rebuilding program shows if you act in group than it is much easier do deal with difficult situation. Similarly, in other image where a group of people is providing food for the victim of earthquake shows its better to act yourself than waiting for government or political leader to do something. Such representation in media reminds people about their civic engagement which is based on humanitarian action and values. By looking these images spectator might feel compassion towards the victim. However, there is lack of such examples or representation in Nepalese print media and it is the reason behind people are not expressing rightful amount of pity towards the sufferer. There has been an abstract connection between sufferer and spectator than concrete.

The above analysis reflects different representation of suffering by Nepalese print media. It shows, in what ways spectator are connected or disconnected with victim through images and texts of three major newspapers of Nepal. The analysis was much more about how news media represent suffering to spectator. However, it is necessary to dig into, in what ways the construction of suffering was morally and ethically reported to spectators, and how media should report on such matter. Thus, the next section reflects upon Nepalese print media moral and ethical role in reporting about victims.

#### 4.2) Nepalese print media moral and ethical role in disaster

As Silverstone reflects, media is a representative who is chosen to speak on behalf of others (Silverstone 2007: 02). Media forges a direct connection between victim and emergency organizations and plays a vital role in circulating important information to public during and after the disaster. Therefore, media role should not be based on nuts and bolts of reporting and representation but on interrogation of the context (ibid, 21), along with inciting action to eradicate suffering and misery of victim. Similarly, in the case of Nepal earthquake, Nepalese media were there with responsibility to represent victim in a manner that could not only bring them out of pain and misery for certain period but also for foreseeable future. However, this study shows Nepalese print media fails to represent victims more concretely to the public. Most of the representation has been centered either in maps, distance or people in politics. Such representation reflects that there lies a big question mark regarding the Nepalese print media moral and ethical role in mediating earthquake victims. In regard to this, one could easily come into conclusion that Nepalese print media representation of earthquake victims were morally and ethically incorrect. However, it is necessary to dig deep into the ways to know why Nepalese print media turned their back to follow the good characteristics of journalism. What were the reason behind it?

However, one might always question, during disaster media are normally left with no choice to report morally and ethically correct. As Denis Muller argues during disaster media role is to provide the public with an up-to date account of events because its their duty to be present at the scenes of disasters and report about it (Muller 2017). May be in this case the situation was same because media personnel have no choice to report in complete manner then selecting morally and ethically correct images. However, such reporting is valid or morally correct during the first or second week of disaster. Moreover, during the first week of earthquake; images from distance or in map, focus on political leaders, aid-agencies than actual victim is understandable. However, this paper focus

has been on how Nepalese print media have represented victims not only in the early stages of earthquake but also aftermath or post-earthquake period. In such condition, one could hardly question about the credibility of the research to investigate the moral and ethical role of Nepalese print media in mediation of earthquake victims. Since, media responsibility is not fixed for only few weeks of the disaster but it has to go beyond after that.

**In what ways the construction of suffering was morally and ethically incorrect in relation to Nepalese print media representation of suffering?**

As it mentioned, Nepalese print media has failed to represent victim concretely. However, it is necessary to know about factors that led to failure of moral and ethical representation of victim. In order to find the answer, this paper has chosen categories like distance, imagination, responsibility and hospitality.

Going through images and editorials again, what this study has discovered is dominance of distance and state authorities in all three major newspapers of Nepal. In most of the representation of victim, suffering has been shown from distance. Victim has been pushed into the point beyond strangeness and humanity. As Silverstone argues, such notion of distance is morally unacceptable and it puts media performance between symmetrical immoralities: the immorality of distance and immortality of sameness (Silverstone 2007: 173). It reflects that most of representation of victim suffering were not close to spectator. In other words, spectator rarely encounter victim in these three newspapers representation of suffering. Victims were left in darkness or one might say they were ambiguous to spectator. These sorts of media practice either dehumanize or demonize the sufferers. Let me show some of the images from above to support my argument.



An aerial view of Barkpak village in Gorkha district, the epicentre of the devastating April 25 earthquake.



Thus, creating such distance with sufferer is morally unacceptable because according to Silverstone, distance is not just a social or geographical category, it is also moral category (Ibid, 172). In order to make them visible it is necessary to bring them in centre or close to the spectator. Moreover, it is necessary to maintain proper distance between spectator and sufferer. Silverstone notion of proper distance is no distance at all. In this notion, when spectator maintains proper distance with the victim then it erases all distances between them (ibid). This is only possible when journalist will enlarge their mentality which is to think beyond own individual interest or other interest impose on them. Hannah Arendt defines such mentality as ‘imagination’ where she reflects that imagination helps spectator (journalists) to see things in proper perspective. As a result, it will allow spectator to see suffering of victim by eradicating the certain degree of remoteness or bias and help them to identify their suffering or problem as their own (Arendt 1990: 323). It seems like, this is something lacking in professionals or journalists of Nepalese print media. Since, they are failing to overcome against their own interest or interference of other commercial and political interest.

Likewise, the notion of responsibility and hospitality that media should have in such disaster has also its significance to victim. In this context the notion of responsibility and hospitality is related to need of proximity, caress and duty of care to those victims who are still in need of food and shelter. Then how notion of responsibility and hospitality unfolded in representation of victim suffering in three major newspapers of Nepal. First, let see these examples;





STANDING TOGETHER: Prime Minister Sushil Koirala (right), CPM-UML Chairman KP Sharma Oli (left) and UCPN (M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda (middle) talking to journalists at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) after having inspected three earthquake-affected districts—Rasuwa, Nawakot and Dhading—on Wednesday. The top leaders have expressed their firm commitment to tackling the post-disaster challenges together. (Photo: RSS)



Visiting Secretary of State for International Development of the United Kingdom, Justin Greening along with her team meets Prime Minister Sushil Koirala at the PM's official residence at Baluwatar to discuss further assistance to Nepal on Wednesday. (Photo: RSS)



There are several examples like this which actually shows where the media focus has been during disaster. In media, the people who are responsible for production and transmission of images and narratives like; journalist, editors or producers must not forget about their responsibility during such critical period. Yes, it seems legit to focus on how national and international organizations are working to minimize suffering of victims. However, first and foremost the focus of media should lie on people inside rubble, their broken houses, their lost family members. These sort of things related to victim is what media responsibility to show during disaster. If we find lack of such representations, then as Bauman says such denial will be ultimate humanity self-defeat (Silverstone 2007: 134). As Silverstone adds, media has responsibility to hear and create an effective communicative space where voices and bodies of marginalized sufferer can be seen and heard on their own terms (Ibid, 143). Beside that, media also has responsibility to enlighten spectator about their role in helping these unfortunates or sufferers. In context of these newspapers of Nepal, specially The Rising Nepal and The Kathmandu Post focus has been more on international organizations and Nepalese government role during the disaster than actual focus on sufferer lives. As Edward R. Murrow argues, ‘journalism must hold a mirror behind the nation and the world, and this mirror must have no curves and must be held with a steady hand ( Murrow cited in Stuart 2010:

78). Otherwise it might bring big question mark on journalist moral and ethical role and how they value news.

The question on Nepalese print media moral and ethical role deepens more when we examine their role in post-earthquake period. In first and second anniversary of earthquake there are hardly any stories of victims in Nepalese print media. Suffering of the victims is important not right after the disaster or a week or month after but till the date when they are back to their normal life. Suffering shouldn't be worth when there is blood, deaths, destruction and tears (Chouliarki 2006: 50). There should be proper healing of these sufferer. Therefore, media has to cover these suffering and make visible to the spectator or the audience. Thus, during and after disaster media has responsibilities to report in a way where victims are not only visible to spectator but also leads to some kind of action which could bring positive changes in their life.

## 5) Conclusion

In crisis, media plays an important role in connecting people, communicating information and assisting with potential new dimensions, designs and approach. As Silverstone reflects, media has a moral responsibility to hear and create an effective communicative space where voices and bodies of marginalized sufferer can be seen and heard on their own terms (Silverstone 2007: 143). Nepalese print media found themselves in similar role when a 7.8 rector earthquake tormented people of Nepal on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015. However, Nepalese print media have been criticized for not bridging gap between sufferer and spectator. Thus, this study has been an attempt to build a better understanding on how Nepalese print media constructed the stories of sufferer and what kind of suffering were visible in their representation of victim in their mediation of 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 earthquake of Nepal. In order to achieve the aim of this paper, the study is built on theoretical concept of suffering, specially focusing on regimes and politics of pity. After analyzing some 57 images and 27 editorials by categories and sub-categories of regimes and politics of pity, this paper found out that Nepalese print media representation of victim highlights other issue than actual victims. Thus, in this chapter this paper gives an overview of main results of this research.

In crisis, pity holds a special place because whenever spectator encounter sufferings then its pity which arouse emotional engagement with them. With this in mind this paper begins to analyze how Nepalese print media reflects regimes of pity in their mediation of earthquake victims. Regimes of pity reflects on whether suffering has been encountered with or without suffering. In context of

Nepalese print media representation of earthquake victims, the most reoccurring theme were 'discouraging pity' or 'suffering without pity'. Discouraging in a sense because representations were merely based on descriptive narratives and general facts. The most common description of victim was either in maps or from distance. The real faces of victims and the involved agencies in rescue were missing therefore for spectator it was difficult to create any kind of emotional engagement with victims. As a result, the real suffering of victims was not visible and due to this they were becoming more ambiguous to spectator. To inspire the pity Nepalese print media should have focused more on individual images with real face and investigating by going to bottom of their stories. Then only spectator would have engage with feelings and thoughts of victim. As Chouliaraki reflects, such affection leads to compassion and identification where spectator feel themselves as victim and demand humanitarian action (Chouliararki 2006: 158-159).

When media fails to bring spectator near to sufferer or to arouse emotional feelings than it makes spectator indifferent towards them. This indifference results in lack of spectator proximity towards victim. The degree of indifference was higher than compassion in Nepalese print media representation of victim suffering. The reason behind it was Nepalese print media focus on government, political leaders and aid-worker than actual victims. Morally Nepalese print media role was to bring victim nearer to the government but quite oppositely they took political leader and their strategies to their eyes and ears. Similarly, Nepalese print media moral role was to visit victim and share their stories to the people in and out of Nepal. Instead they visited government buildings and aid-worker temporary facilities. As (Höijer 2004: 514) argues when media are centered around political strategies and leaders then it fails to connect spectator to victim. Moreover, representation reflects that it mostly relates to positive work doing by government. But it's not the case, Nepalese print media were giving more time and attention to political supreme leaders than going into the grounds.

On the other hand, compassion also hold a little place in Nepalese print media representation of earthquake victims. However, it became so little that it bought humanitarian action for just few weeks after the earthquake because nearly 70% of victims are still living in temporary shelters (The Conversation 2017) and it has been normal to see damaged houses, earthquake debris and broken temples around not only in the remote areas but also in capital Kathmandu.

Such representations of Nepalese print media led to doubt on their moral and ethical role in their mediation of earthquake victims. During earthquake, Nepalese print media were the representative



who were chosen to speak on the behalf of victim. So that they could forge a direct connection between rescue teams, government and victim. However, Nepalese print media role were based just on nuts and bolts of reporting or descriptive representation than actual interrogation of the context or victim stories. One of the most reoccurring representation was 'distance'. As Silverstone argues, notion of distance is morally unacceptable in journalism because it puts media performance between two symmetrical immoralities; the immorality of distance and immorality of sameness (Silverstone 2007: 173). Moreover, these sorts of representation often dehumanize victims and it is something morally and ethically unacceptable to do. Another most reoccurring representation was 'state authorities' or 'dominant elite'. One could say Nepalese print media focus lies more on what government and political leaders were planning to minimize the suffering of victim. Which eventually led to less encounter between spectators and victims because dominant elite were more visible than victim. Such elite domination in media brings the question of moral and ethical role of media in need.

Overall this study reflects two major findings; one of the major finding was, how media in developing nation still values dominant elite in expense of poor people lives and how such media position develops future public understanding. Research findings shows Nepalese print media still hold political parallelism in their reporting and lacks professionalism. It might be one of the main reason of delay in rebuilding process since Nepalese print media focus on state authorities have made victims invisible. Therefore, people have no idea about what is the condition of victim in this stage. Who knows, may be they are living more pathetic lives and facing more suffering than in the beginning days of earthquake.

One of the other finding was; this research suggests that there is a need of more research on suffering in non-western countries. As this study found out that mostly research on distant suffering dwell around pity, compassion and distance. However, this research shows that there are issues other than maps, tents and invisible or visible faces which also affect victims. As we can see, how focus on state authorities put curtains on the actual suffering of victims in Nepalese earthquake. Therefore, this paper suggests that there is a need of such research specially focusing non-western countries which might help to build new theoretical and conceptual framework to do further research on theme of mediated suffering. As Iain Wilkinson argues, there is a lack of diversity in literatures of suffering since most of the literature addresses particular region or audiences

(Wilkinson 2005: 190). Therefore, there is a need of diverse research by appreciating the significance of such differences.

This study also highlights that, why study on suffering is important in relation to media? In general understanding media is seen as sources of power as well as of meaning because media meanings can have powerful social consequences (Jensen 2002: 273). In context of Nepalese print media exercise of symbolic power, it occupies a key position for building public understanding. As this paper argues how Nepalese print media gives little moral space to victims and high priority to state authorities. On the other hand, such representations of suffering by Nepalese print media puts spectator in a condition where they cannot solely act on mediated instances of suffering. Media has to mediate in a way where spectators have choice to act. Otherwise how one can act on these mediated instances by Nepalese print media where victims are hardly visible?

Similarly, for future research this study strongly calls for ethnographic fieldwork. For instance, as this paper reflects, the role of Nepalese print media in representing earthquake victims were not up to the journalistic standards. There could be several reasons for this; influence of other powerful institutions over media, politics and media own choices. Therefore, there is a need of research on the practice of production and its mode of distribution. This study also calls for further research on need of empirical research on audiences. Specially focusing on how such representations affect audiences understanding of victim suffering. The reason behind need of an audience research is, audience reactions and perception of suffering is largely based on pre-conceived idea or assumptions not on empirical evidence. Hence, this paper suggests that further research on production and audience might shed more light on theme of mediated suffering in context of Nepal.

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- Nepalese media landscape  
[https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/resources/nepal\\_media\\_landscape\\_guide\\_final\\_011011\\_19.12.12.pdf](https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/resources/nepal_media_landscape_guide_final_011011_19.12.12.pdf)
- Nepalese media landscape in the age of digital media  
[https://www.academia.edu/8516834/Nepali\\_media\\_landscape\\_in\\_the\\_age\\_of\\_digital\\_media\\_A\\_critical\\_reflection](https://www.academia.edu/8516834/Nepali_media_landscape_in_the_age_of_digital_media_A_critical_reflection)
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- Asian cities more vulnerable to natural disasters  
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2010/oct/21/asian-cities-natural-disasters-risk>
- 443 killed in natural disaster in 10 months  
<https://thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/443-killed-natural-disasters-10-months/>

### **Newspapers:**

The Kathmandu Post: <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com>

The Rising Nepal: <http://therisingnepal.org.np>

Nepali Times: <http://nepalitimes.com>

### **Appendix 1; Newspaper editorials**

#### **The Kathmandu post**

Road to recovery:

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2015-05-04/road-to-recovery-275953.html>

Rebuilding blocks

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2015-05-24/rebuilding-blocks.html>

Better late than never

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2015-05-25/better-late-than-never-276605.html>

Monsoon is coming

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2015-05-26/monsoon-is-coming.html>

quake of wrath

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2015-05-31/quakes-of-wrath.html>

Look before you leap

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2015-06-03/look-before-you-leap.html>

Build back better

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2015-06-25/build-back-better.html>

disaster chain

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2015-06-29/disaster-chain.html>

Away from home

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2015-07-01/away-from-home.html>

### **The Rising Nepal**

Building ruins

<http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2015-05-04/3946ce19abd9a7d50ad8c474b0024e1e.jpg>

Unite for a common cause

<http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2015-05-06/a5703ec5e84a20ef762d79b225590e10.jpg>

PM assurances on relief

<http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2015-05-07/6eb2c4c463d856af412a89ddb20b68.jpg>

That how it was

<http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2015-05-08/afd7c1f54214b6c7a9083e670cd65b98.jpg>

PM calls for collective initiative

<http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2015-05-20/c320d2342eda4177815a0c42253e8c91.jpg>

Enforce Housing code

<http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2015-05-21/a5710a8ec76955eb609f81cf14da5b27.jpg>

Rebuilding from the rubble

<http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2015-05-25/b50ae5fdf6fb60e2a4547902240733dd.jpg>

Disaster awareness

<http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2015-05-26/978127384df40a85f4e8fbcf32780395.jpg>

Preparing for any possible scenario

<http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2015-05-27/6ac315787f791485897d9074bb4c4f9e.jpg>

United we can

<http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2015-05-28/38b1d8fbc858612d2d3b8cb5406e3eaf.jpg>

Back at school

<http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2015-06-01/824aa7e71e3ec77ed899209d6f570158.jpg>

The need of the hour

<http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2015-06-17/c540c4bfab1e481a180af82d6a636d93.jpg>

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Homeless in Nepal

<http://nepalitimes.com/article/editorial/short-term-shelter-and-long-term-housing,2243>

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<http://nepalitimes.com/article/editorial/post-mortem-of-nepal-earthquake,2298>

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<http://nepalitimes.com/article/editorial/government-donors-should-focus-on-2-million-people-waiting-for-help,2332>

Rebuilding ourselves

<http://nepalitimes.com/article/editorial/instead-of-asking-more-aid-facilitate-more-trade-for-job-creation-and-rehabilitation,2346>

Fixing what's broken

<http://nepalitimes.com/article/editorial/tourism-in-crisis-long-before-earthquake-improve-safety-quality,2387>

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## **Appendix 2: Coding scheme**

## Example of coding process

The data for this research have been analysed through thematic coding with deductive approach. In this process open codes are assigned to developed categories and overarching themes, which are extracted from theoretical framework of this study.

As this paper mentioned in the chapter 3, sentences and phrases which were relevant to thematic and developed categories and sub-categories were marked with coloured marker. Here, is an example of which colour have been used to which themes and categories;

- Green- Responsibility
- Red- State authorities
- Pink- ecstatic news- leads to action
- Yellow- Distance- adventure news
- Blue- Descriptive facts

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories	sentence/phrases
Suffering without pity	Distance  Adventure news	Lack of agency  Descriptive facts (numbers)	<p>To reach people who are most in need of supplies, I/NGOs and individuals could first find a local who is active in the locality and then gather information about what is most needed in the area and who needs it the most</p> <p>Many places of the nation are currently reeling under the aftermath of the monstrous earthquake that swallowed thousands of Nepalese, beside causing widespread destruction and damages to the public and private property</p>

Suffering with pity	Ecstatic News  Proximity	Agencies  victim	Short-term shelter requires coordination between government and agencies like UN-HABITAT as well as smaller relief groups in order to quickly cover the sheer geographical scale of the affected area. It is important that these temporary shelters not become permanent homes, and that people are given the financial means and technical assistance necessary to rebuild in the longer-term
Media hegemony	Power  Other actorss	Normalization  State authorities	<p>On Saturday, May 23, almost a month after the April 25 Great Earthquake, the Nepali Congress (NC) held a formal ceremony, complete with guest of honor Prime Minister and NC President Sushil Koirala, bidding goodbye to 50 volunteer teams from its Central Sports Department as they leave to clear debris and construct shelters in the field. Similarly, on Sunday, CPN-UML Chairman KP Oli bid adieu to primary team leading 10,000 volunteers at Bhrikuti Mandap.</p> <p>Some other party leaders state that while an agreement on the constitution might not be immediately possible, they will push forward with the voting process in the Constituent Assembly. This would be a foolish thing to do. It would unnecessarily polarise society when what the nation most needs is a concerted and unified attempt to deal with the disaster</p>

Responsibility	Proximity	Victim-oriented	<p>Fortunately, our reporters have seen encouraging signs that even families who are in mourning and have lost homes and livestock are harvesting potatoes and millet, watering their vegetable patches and getting ready to plant paddy. Others have managed to dig into the ruins of their homes and salvage seeds, which they can now plant. There are millions of the neediest, hardest-hit villages which will need emergency food aid for the coming year, others will need help to go back to the land.</p> <p>The key here is to avoid the perils of over-centralisation and haphazard planning. The government should also take the advice of disaster experts on the matter. It should further ensure that decisions are taken in a timely manner so as not to jeopardise the millions whose lives have been affected by the earthquakes.</p>
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