

Transgressing the Border of Gender in Sheeba Shah's *The Other Queen*

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Abstract

Setting the novel in the rule of the King Rajendra Bir Bikram Shah (1816-1847 BS), Sheeba Shah's *The Other Queen* documents the actions and activities of the King Rajendra and his queens Samrajya Laxmi and Rajya Laxmi which resulted on the unbalanced power sharing of the nation. Shah stresses that the main cause behind this is crossing the gender boundary by the King and the Queens as they undermine the stereotyped gender roles and identity. In the novel, the king disobeys to stick to the image of an authoritative valor; so, he appears as subservient coward. Queens are self-confident and powermongers; they deny to perform the roles of submissive and self-sacrificing women. Thus, this article aims to study the reasons that instigate the major characters to defy the conventional gender image and cross the gender border set by the society. It also highlights the consequences faced by the characters for crossing the gender confinement. To address this objective, Butler's concept of gender performativity has been used as she claims that the 'performances of gender' are not natural one; they are imposed to an individual through the social script. She views that an individual creates one's gender by performing the script repetitively; nevertheless, s/he finds the space even there and repeats the acts differently. Hence, one gets options within those constraints to break them. Moreover, gender is constantly reconstructed in response to socio-political changes. The implication of this article is to find insights in understanding the emergence of power in the Queens that is resulted by the performance of their gender roles. It concludes that characters of Shah's novel challenge the socially prescribed gender roles and they recurrently cross the gender confinement.

Keywords: femininity, gender role, masculinity, stereotypes, subversion

Introduction

Gender as a Key Issue in Nepali Novels

The tradition of employing gender issues rigorously in Nepali literary field only after the people's movement in 2005-6. However, female's issues have already been addressed in Rudraraj Pande's *Rupmati* as the novel depicts the society that confined the females to the conventional gender roles. In this novel, Pandey displays the pain and anguish of female characters. This novel provides a true picture of the then Nepali society and the condition of female. Whereas Pandey (2012) has believed that though Rudraraj Pandey has exposed the miserable condition of females in his novel, he is not a feminist writer because he has not advocated for the right and equality of female. Rather, he has endorsed the inferior place for women in *Rupmati*. He has applauded the female character for tolerating the injustice mutely (p. 28). Similarly, Rai (2001) argued that Nepali novelists confined the characters to the traditional gender role because they believe that women should be confined to the traditional gender roles otherwise society fails to become an ideal place to live in (p. 25). In the same line of argument, Subedi (2007) claimed that the novelists present the female characters as a weaker sex because people of the then society treated female as 'other sex'. So, in society, females never enjoy equality, right, and justice as their male counterparts (p. 68). These critics believe that to acquire feminine traits is a must for females as the female characters are idyllic.

After 1930s, the Nepali novelists show their concern in gender equality and deploy gender equality as a major theme in their literary creations. Baral (2016) observed that during 1930s, novel becomes a prime medium to inculcate the idea of gender equality among the people (p. 398). In the same way, Baral and Atom observe that the novelists such as Bijaya Malla, Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, Madanmani Dixit and Prema Shah presented gender issues in their novels (p. 94). These novelists provide the changing gender status of the people in Nepali society. Likewise, to use gender as a prominent theme rapidly raises during and after the time phase of the Maoist movement. During the Maoist movement, the Nepali novelists explore gender as a major subject of their fictional narratives because the political changes in the country bring awareness to them regarding gender equality (Baral, 2013, p. 87). Baral points out that due to the effect of the People's movement, the novelists deploy new themes such as gender, ethnicity, environment, and the like. Among them, they use gender as a prime subject in their novels. In these novels, they depicted the characters' struggle for equality and identity based on gender. Similarly, in Acharya's (2012) perception, influenced with the changed scenario of the nation, authors focus their writing in gender issues. Moreover, gender has been used to deploy the gender issue in novels as gender becomes a common social issue (para. 12). Consequently, Sheeba Shah also focuses her writing on gender issues in her novel *The Other Queen*.

Research Questions

To achieve this major objective, the article has tried to answer the following research questions:

- What consequences do the major characters face for crossing the gender confinement?
- What are the factors that instigate the major characters to defy the conventional gender image?
- How do the major characters cross the gender border set by the society?

Research Materials and Method

To address the above mentioned research questions, this article uses the qualitative research model. The gender theory has been used to interpret and analyze the primary text *The Other Queen*. Similarly, the critiques' views on this novel, books on gender theory, and research documents have been used as the secondary source. These materials have been collected through library, book stores, and websites.

This study is based on the assumption that gender is constructed through performance. So, it is a most unstable or fluid entity. In Haraway's (1991) perception, argues: "Men and women are socially constituted and positioned in relations of hierarchy and antagonism" (p.131). She believes that gender is socially constituted through cultural norms, rituals and practices. Likewise, highlighting the constructed nature of gender, Butler () argues that gender is acquired through performance (p. 191). Butler suggests that to construct a particular gender image, one needs to involve in certain activities routinely. In the same line of argument, Connell asserts: "Gender is not an expression of biology, nor a fixed dichotomy in human life or character"; rather, gender is a pattern in our social arrangements and in the everyday activities or practices which those arrangements govern (*Gender* 10). In these critics' view, gender is socially constructed phenomenon. These theorists conclude that gender is not a biological phenomenon. Gender is constructed through performing the scripted roles designed by the society. Moreover, they claim that individual constructs a particular gender image under the social pressure. Since gender is constructed through performance, there is always chance of its deviation. Based on this domain of knowledge, this research addresses the above mentioned research questions.

Results and Discussion

Disobedience of Gender Roles in Shah's Literary Narratives

Mostly, in Sheeba Shah's novels, the female characters appear intolerant towards the injustice done to them. In her female centric novels, the female characters belong to aristocratic family where they get chance to exercise power like their male counterparts; therefore, they are vocal against any kind of disparity that done to them. The article "Retailing the history" points out that in her novels, Shah has presented the story of women who are furiously passionate and

daringly ambitious and who are brave to denounce the society's repressions (para 3). In her novels, the female characters intend to achieve authority. Consequently, they are unhesitant to take part in the conflict and conspiracy that often happen in their family. Shah (2018) herself disclosed that her novels portray the rebellious behavior of the female protagonist who belongs to a prosperous and oppressive class. She allows her female protagonists to dismantle the social barriers and set them free. Shah admits in the interview "Sumansanga" that in *Loyals of the Crown* and *The Other Queen*, she gets fascinated by the sagas about the rebellious nature of the queen Rajendra Laxmi and makes it the subject of her novels (Interview). In her view, though the society has constructed both attitudinal and behavioral barriers to constrain women's freedom, by their effort they get liberated both psychologically and physically.

Similarly, Kathmandu (2017) Tribune mentioned that, in her novel *Loyals of the Crown*, Shah has presented the story of women who are furiously passionate and daringly ambitious. In this novel she has shown that queen's rebellious fervor seems to be product of the society's repressions (para. 7). Shah discloses that exploring the taboo areas of gender and sexuality, she has rebelled against the restricted themes assigned for the female writers by the society. In her novels, she provides agency to her female protagonist who trespasses the social restrictions imposed on women. Her female characters rebel against atrocities, violence and oppression meted out by male members to women.

In her novels, Shah delves into how female characters rebel to bring to an end of the domination, torture and assault of males. In Pandit's (2012) view, her first novel *Loyals of the Crown* revolves around the rebellion of Kanchhi Maharani. Likewise, her third publication *Facing My Phantoms* depicts the rebellious zeal of the protagonist Sanjeevani (p.12). Set in one of the most turbulent times in Nepal's political history, against the backdrop of political turmoil, she depicts several upheavals face by the protagonist Sanjeevani. In *Facing My Phantoms*, the major characters break the gender confinement. She denies to follow the values prescribed for females. Her behaviors and attitude what the standard society would call transgressions constitute the major portion of the narrative.

In the same way, Alisha Sijapati observes that in *The Other Queen*, Shah has explored the family history of Shah dynasty and projects her female protagonist as tough, independent and courageous lady who is always ready to take step against every kind of discrimination designed against her. According to Sijapati (2015), in *The Other Queen*, Shah has used the historical material and has imaginatively reconstructed the life of the queen Rajendra Laxmi who subverts the stereotypical image of woman as demure, self-less and weak. Rather, she appears as fearless and stubborn (para. 5). Similarly, Peter J Karthak claims that in *The Other Queen*, Shah equips her female character, Kanchhaa Maharani, with unrestrained passion and energy so that she can reflect the psychological state of the queen when she is left ignored by her husband (para. 3). Karthak points out that depicting her inclination towards Gagan and the initiation of

passionate love affairs between these characters, Shah has presented *The Other Queen* as a bold and ruthless queen who does not hesitate to commit the massacre in the palace. She does so as a revenge against the indifference shown to her by her husband which reveals her rebellious nature. Thus, the critics have analyzed Shah's literary narratives as rebellious zeal of the female protagonists. Still, the above mentioned critics have left the room for evaluating the gender issues of her novel *The Other Queen*. Therefore, the researcher explores the novel *The Other Queen* from the perspective of gender theory.

Crossing the Border of Socially Imposed Gender Image

The novel *The Other Queen*, centers on the queens', Samrajya Laxmi's and Rajendra Laxmi's, never-ending clandestine efforts to take agency. The novel's story revolves around the clash of two women to get the authority of the nation. Defying the socially imposed roles of a submissive wife, these female characters appear in the role of power monger. In fact, while seeking the way towards the throne, they try to make the king their instrument at every turn. Not only the king, but the whole power structure of the country is set by the queens. Therefore, though the king Rajendra runs the estate, his wives stay behind the steering while he takes any decision of the country. Likewise, they show their incredible ability to uphold the authority by converting the courtiers as well as people to their follower. Thus, the queens manage to throw off the restricted gender image imposed by the society, when they feel that they cannot confine to the gender boundary in order to achieve authority.

In *The Other Queen*, both of the queens Samarajya Laxmi and Rajendra Laxmi, break the gender confinement. Actually, they even seem to be completely negligent towards the socially imposed gender roles and identity. Both of the Queens persistently behave masculinely confirming the claims of gender theorists that gender is an unstable entity so it can change according to circumstances. Spence and Helmerich (1979) provided constructive view on the shifting notion of gender. They believe that masculinity and femineity emerge not from biology of an individual; rather, it is a sociological process of learning, adaptation, evolution, assimilation, upbringing and the like (p. 87). Since gender behavior is not a biological process, the queens act in so-called masculine way as they get favorable environment to establish their agency.

Transgressing the socially imposed gender image, the queen Samrajya Laxmi, the eldest queen of the King Rajendra, appears as a farsighted and rational lady. From her juvenile age, she plans to get the authority of the country. For that, she designs to hold the king completely in her grip. Her sister Rajendra Laxmi notices that; Samrajya Laxmi learned to keep her husband under control from her juvenile age and for that she finds out her own way like: she began to mother him. She helped him with his reading and learning.... She cleaned his wounds when he was hurt, brushed his face when he came back from many excursions from the stables or the fields, smeared with mud and dust. She learned to comfort him when he was reprimand-

ed by the regent queen (Shah, p.36). Samrajya Laxmi's effort of constructing the image of an authoritative person confirms that; "gender is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a 'doing' rather than a 'being'" (Butler, 2007, p. 25). Hence, crossing the limited gender image set by the society, Samrajya Laxmi constructs the image of a wise ruler. She knows that by becoming the ruler of her husband, she can easily rule over the nation.

The queen Samrajya Laxmi denies to be restricted to the stereotyped female's image of an emotional and irrational being. Instead, she works on her personality and constructs the image of an authoritative lady. Through regular practice, she acquires all the qualities those are needed to become a queen. Her efforts affirm that the idea of gender is merely a social process. Eveline and Bacchi (2010) claimed: "gender is accomplished through the disciplining of bodies, actions and language"; so, it is not possible for an individual to perform the prescribed gender roles all the time (p.96). Coping the regent queen, she practices to appear authoritative. She laughs, talks, and walks like the regent queen because aping the same solemn grace, she aspires to be as eminent and as commanding as the regent queen.

Samrajya Laxmi never gets confined to the so-called feminine image of a docile woman. Rather, she acts assertively even though assertiveness is regarded as a masculine trait because "Regardless of one's sex, one's gender identity may consist of some combination of feminine and masculine behaviors"; therefore, both male and female may exhibit masculine and feminine traits in their personality (Tyson, 2008, p.115). She all the time regulates her younger sister's activities. Likewise, she gives instruction to her sister to follow the protocol of a queen. Since she thinks that as a queen, one should not spend the valuable time in a petty thing like makeup. So, when she notices Rajendra Laxmi is spending too much time in makeup, she rebukes Rajendra Laxmi for wasting her time in a useless thing. She expresses her dissatisfaction: "you waste too much time beautifying yourself, Rajendra Laxmi! Festooning yourself with this and that" (Shah, p.25). Falsifying the cliché that woman should look beautiful and for that they have to spend pretty much time in it, Samrajya Laxmi presents a very different image of her as she herself gets indulged in the state affairs most of the time.

Samrajya Laxmi appears as a very astute person who always works on very carefully to take the agency over people. She recurrently imposes her authoritative nature to her sister Rajendra Laxmi. She criticizes Rajendra Laxmi for becoming a liberal mistress towards her slave women and asks her to keep them under control. Doing her duty of an elder sister and the eldest queen of the nation, she gives her instruction to her younger sister Rajendra Laxmi: "Do not forget you are queen, and these are not your companions but your slaves, Rajendra Laxmi" (Shah, p.26)! Likewise, she very wisely creates a rift between the king and his beloved friend cum wife Rajendra Laxmi, when she notices their growing intimacy. She realizes that to get the

power of the country in her hand, there should not be anybody's presence between the king and her.

Dismantling the image of a weaker sex, she displays courage in her deeds and actions. She fearlessly challenges the English regiment and decides to attack the English troops and small villages because she wants to expand of Nepal's boundary further. Likewise, she wishes to straightly protest against any kind of interference in the nation's internal affairs. Displaying her courage, she declares: "Hodgson is a fool if he thinks I will comply with his outrageous demands, I refuse to tolerate his meddling in my private affairs" (Shah, p.39). She is so clear and determine about her opinion regarding the independence of the nation that she believes that the king should take action against the British's interreference. She restlessly opines that the maharaja cannot remain silent when an intruder such as Hodgson reproaches queen's words and commands over her jurisdiction. Her actions displays that she performs the role that is expected to be done by the king as a male. As Butler (2007) claimed: "gender is not real; gender is revisable. So, what we take to be real, what we invoke as the naturalize knowledge of gender is, in fact, a changeable and revisable reality" (xxiii). Samrajya Laxmi confirms Butler's idea that there is no necessary relationship between one's body and one's gender.

Samrajya Laxmi takes the agency in the state's affair. She gives instructions to the ministers and prime ministers in the issues of the nation. Showing her authority, she instructs the government officials and ministers to follow her will: "I am queen of Nepal and I insist that my government shall run as I dictate" (Shah, p.40). Butler (2007) argued that an individual can undermine the gender identity simply by reinventing the gender identity or deviating from the prescribed gender dispositions while performing. Likewise, one can defy the stereotyped gender roles by performing the gender role in unconventional way (as cited in Lloyd, p. 65). The narrator highlights the so-called masculine attributes such as reason, gallantry, tactfulness and the like of the queen: "Samrajya Devi Shah is not one to be led on by fickle talk. She needs assurances that are validated by facts and good reasoning" (Shah, p.42). Likewise, she persistently does queries about British's interreference in the nation, and decides to protest against their action.

Samrajya Laxmi seems hardly fitted in the conventional gender image of an unambitious, tolerant and passive woman because she is an ambitious woman fixated with the idea of ousting the British. For that she actively involves in several plans and plots. But when out of hesitation and fear the king denies to take stand supporting the queen's will, she feels insulted and gets enraged. Since she is an obstinate woman, she wants her plan to reach to a successful end. So, when her implacable desire to rid the English from her domain has been put on hold by fearful misgivings of her own husband, she gets raged and desires to hurt her husband. Then furious queen warns the king: "They are not your allies, but are using you as a pawn. They merely encroached upon the territories. History is evidence" (Shah, p.115). Revealing Samrajya

Laxmi's nature, Shah has confirmed that the image of a tolerant woman seems to be inappropriate for Samrajya Laxmi. Her sister further highlights her so-called masculine traits: "Over the years I have seen her arrogance become irrationally compulsive, forcefully assertive and extremely overbearing" (Shah, p.56). As Halberstam's (1989) rightly pointed out that "female also can be masculine through her efforts and actions. Female masculinity is all about who feels themselves to be more masculine than feminine"; so, female masculinity is not the result of biology (xi). Since Samrajya Laxmi is a haughty, intolerant, and belligerent woman, she leaves the palace to put pressure on her husband. She decides not to return to the palace unless the king agrees to her plan.

Her mind remains active reflecting and examining every possible way of throwing out British influence from her domain. She keeps on thinking: "What if we start a war? If General Amar Singh Thapa could do it then, what stops us now" (Shah, p.147)? As a skilled queen, she calculates the condition of the state and draws the conclusion that "We are better equipped now, our soldiers have increased in numbers. They are well trained guerrilla warfare, and the rugged mountainous terrain of my country will give my men an upper hand over the firangees soldiers" (Shah, p.147). She believes that what one needs to win the battle is courage and determination. So, having these qualities in her, she thinks that she can give command to the soldier to wage the war against the British. She dreams to sign a new treaty, to take back once lost Garhwal and Kumaon in Sugauli treaty.

Samrajya Laxmi develops herself as a wise leader who regulates the king's every move. Butler (2007) argued that "An individual is constructed through repetition because gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p.45). She insists the king to take a bold move against the British's interference. When she notices the king's weakness and fear out of which he is unable to fulfil her wish, she urges to the king: "This rājgaddi belongs to you maharaja, not the British. Do not give in to their masquerades. They merely bide time" (Shah, p.115). The wise queen knows that if the king keeps on succumb to the British government's will, they will make him weak and depended and eventually seize the king's rights as well as territory and call it their own. As a far-sighted queen, she tries a lot to save the nation from the interference of the British government in the nation. Ultimately, she dies while struggling to maintain the sovereignty of the country.

Like the eldest queen of the king Rajendra, his youngest queen Rajendra Laxmi also grows as a bold ruler of the country. Either it is the matter of the nation or of her life, she wants to take full authority in her hand. Therefore, when as a wife, she goes through utter indifference from her husband, she seeks a way out to keep her happiness and self-respect. Consequently, she gets closer to Gagan Thapa. In patriarchal society to keep mistress is regarded as a male's part, but challenging the social practice, she declares Gagan Thapa as her lover. She spends her

time in his company. Not only that, she provides valuable clothes, jewelries, food and money as lures to Gagan's wives. Hence, she prioritizes her desire and wish instead of suppressing them.

After the death of the eldest queen, being acquainted with the king's weakling nature, the queen Rajendra Laxmi decides to hold the leash of kingdom. Moreover, she designs to become a supreme power. As a result, she makes the king to declare that he hands over the power to her: "Whatever you decide, Maharani Laxmi Devi, or suggest for the government and for the welfare of the kingdom will not be applicable to any option by me, the king, nor anyone else. This is my order" (Shah, p.220). Queen's activities show that she crosses the gender border of so-called femineity and enters to the masculine zone confirming that "masculinity and femineity are socially defined state; therefore, masculinity is not exclusive to males, neither are feminine traits exclusive to women. Women may be more or less masculine and men more or less feminine; it depends upon the situation" (Synnott, 2009, p.12). After the king's declaration, she holds the full agency over the government. Coins are minted in her name and one after another, men of worth and great accomplishments bow to receive her coin. In fact, she becomes a queen with power and a queen in command. She starts giving audience and order to the powerful ministers and commanders like Chautaria Guru Prasad Shah, Kazi Ranjore Thapa and Captain Jung Bahadur Rana.

Likewise, exhibiting her rational self, she moves forward friendly hand towards the British. Since she realizes that king is not able to protest against the Britishers, she also decides to stand beside the king and to get the support of him as well as the British government. As a smart lady, she takes a smart decision and sends her message to the British regiment via Nepali personnels: "Make it clear to him that I esteem the English highly and am friend as long as they are mine. 'Make it very clear that my approach will be different from that of the previous queen', my dear departed sister" (Shah, p. 222). By assuring the support of the British resident, she wants to maintain her authority.

Rajendra Laxmi is eager to acquire the agency. Her eagerness for power, pulls apart the belief that female is self-sacrificing and she always prioritizes to other's desires; rather it confirms her so-called masculine gender image of self-centeredness. Halberstam (1989) argued: "femineity can produce in male body as well; likewise, masculinity can be produced by and across both male and female bodies; however, female masculinity has been blatantly ignored in the culture" (p.2). In order to reach to power, she weaves a plot and to concretize her scheme she develops a circle of supporters who shield her from every kind of problems. Following her plan, she appoints her closest friend Junga Bahadur and her lover Gagan Singh as ministers to the King's court. Hence, she becomes more and more confident; as she reveals her growing confidence when she realizes that she is the prime factor behind the vicissitude of cabinet of ministers. Moreover, she becomes the cause of happiness and sorrow of everyone. She admits: "I am the designer and prime mover and I am the queen supreme. At my will, I can

make a man weep and laugh at the same time. I feel omnipotent” (Shah, p.237). She is desperate to obtain authority and she gets success in it.

Females are not supposed to be an ambitious but Rajendra Laxmi exhibits her ambition in her every action. In order to hold the supreme power, she designs a plan to remove the eldest prince Surendra from the line of protocol as first successor and dreams to place her son Ranendra on throne. She instigates Junga Bahadur to file a complaint against Surendra for his atrocious and barbaric behavior towards his companions just for entertainment. She is well aware about his nuisance habits that unfits him to become a crown prince. So, she wants to use this weakness of the would-be crown prince against him.

Crossing the feminine gender territory set by the society, Queen Rajendra Laxmi wants to follow her free will. Following her free will, she plans to make her son the crown prince; likewise, she continues her extramarital affair with Gagan Singh. She makes Mathabar Singh Thapa the prime minister of the country so that he distracts the attention of the king and his council to other more important issues and she can continue her love affair without interference. Similarly, she knows that when she makes him the prime minister, out of gratitude towards her, he will remain her ever-willing servant, protecting thereby all her interests. She also knows that none of the ministers and courtiers will dare utter a word that will harm her, when all of the ministers including the prime minister will be in her clasp.

Ultimately, Rajendra Laxmi makes all of the people effortlessly acknowledge her sovereignty. Consequently, every matter of the state is discussed with her. She reports her authority: every decision was taken after her consultation. Every commission of each kazi was received from her hands. Every command to the army given by the sardar is first brought to her for consideration (Shah, p. 275). The authoritative image of Rajendra Laxmi confirms that women “can possess so-called masculine traits and can exhibit dominant and ferocious behavior” (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001, p.16). From the foreign affairs to the religious and economic matters of the nation, not a single decision is taken in her absence. She discloses her supreme power: “In a word, I am the law. The mukhtiyar and commander-in-chief General Mathabar Singh Thapa not only supports but endorses all my instructions without a furrow on his brow. Her utmost desire to get agency over the people, her rationality, courage, tactfulness, haughtiness, self-centeredness are evident that she does not confine to the gender boundary set by the society.

Later, though her illicit relationship to Gagan Singh is disclosed to the king Rajendra, she remains undistracted as she admits: “I never fought with my fears. Over time, I learned to play with them. I learnt to manipulate my fears to my advantage....My fears have fortified me” (Shah, p.288). She keeps on trying to influence the ministers to be involved in her plan of ousting the prince Surendra from the line of a crown prince. She still makes vicissitude in the ministers’ cabinet. She appoints Jung Bahadur as the premier of the nation along with the rank

of Major General and Gagan Singh as the chief commander of the army. Likewise, she unhesitatingly and cruelly punishes the people who come in her way to freedom and ambition.

Conclusion

In *The Other Queen* both of the queens transgress the gender boundary set by the society. Gender is a constructed phenomenon; so, it is practicable to stay out of the restricted gender roles and gender images. Since the queens get favorable environment to sabotage the socially imposed gender image, they freely appear in so-called masculine image. Samrajya Laxmi all the time act boldly. She dismantles the socially imposed gender image of a self-sacrificing woman and acts as a haughty woman who wants to fulfil her wish at all cost. She not only holds the power over her husband, and the nation, she also recurrently exhibits her authority over the British government. She keeps on protesting against the interference of the British government when she observes that the British government's intrusion in the internal affair of the nation. Likewise, she encourages the king to return the territory of the country that had been lost to the British government in the past. As a rational leader, she also plans to reappraise the treatise done with the British government and to set equal status of the nation to the British government. In fact, as a determined lady she denies to compromise with her plans and desires. Moreover, she even sacrifices her life in order to materialize her dream.

Shah's novel unveils that though society confines the women to the conventional gender images. However, queen Rajendra Laxmi dismantle those images. She displays the so-called masculine attributes such as decisiveness, wisdom and even cruelty in her behavior. Since she is in a privileged position, the society cannot force her to remain in a so-called feminine image. Consequently, she transgresses the gender boundary and construct the so-called masculine gender image through her actions and activities. She takes the authority of the nation in her hand. She regulates not only her life, but also all the state affairs. In fact, she constructs such a powerful image of her that all of the government officials, army generals, ministers, and prime minister of the nation accept her sovereignty. Hence, both of the queens violate the gender boundary and construct the socially restricted image of bold, self-centered, rational, far-sighted person. Through their actions and behaviors, they confirm that gender is a constructed entity. Gender can be constructed by both the society as well as an individual can construct the gender image. In the novel, the queens defy the socially imposed gender and construct the one on their own.

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