

## Representation of Gender Roles in Koirala's *Narendra Dai*\*

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### Abstract

*Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala's novel Narendra Dai is replete with gender issues of the then society that has marked its relevance even at the present time. This article examines how this novel has explored the concept of gender as a performative entity; and shows that the characters perform the traditional gender roles because of the strict socio-cultural obligations. It also examines while performing the traditional gender roles, how the lives of these characters get affected. For that Judith Butler's idea of gender theory has been used. Butler proposes theory of gender as a constant performance: a series of cues observed, internalized, and repeated over time. The significance of this study is to contribute a different perspective for the reader to see Narendra Dai because in this novel, Koirala has shown that since the characters cannot go against the social norms, they perform traditional gender roles via social policing and polishing. The study concludes that these characters define the socially prescribed gender roles because gender is socio-political construction that achieves legitimacy and naturality via perpetual observation and repetition.*

**Keywords:** Culture, femininity, gender roles, masculinity, performativity.

### Gender as a Subject in Modern Nepali Novel

The tradition of employing gender issues appeared in Nepali literary narratives only after the two decades of the beginning of modernism. Rajendra Subedi marked the starting date of Modernism in Nepali literature in 1991BS (5). Nevertheless, these literary narratives could not break the practice of presenting the characters in the traditional gender roles. Rudraraj Pande's *Rupmati* (1935) marks the advent of modernism (Pradhan 55); it promotes the traditional gender role that continues till the publication of the novel *Bhramar* (1936). Gyanu Pandey

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observes that *Rupmati* created a standard for the novelists of the time by assigning a submissive role to its central female character (28). Similarly, Indra Bahadur Rai observes that Nepali novelists provided the traditional gender roles to the characters of these novels. He argues that Nepali novelists confined the characters into the traditional gender role because they want to create an ideal society (25). He notices that while performing the ideal role, the female characters exhibit absolute feminine traits. Consequently, the female characters go through pain and difficulties while establishing an ideal family and the society.

Likewise, Rajendra Subedi analyzes the theme and aspect of the novels of this period and claims that the novelists of this era intended to bring improvement in the society through purification to the person's deeds. Consequently, they promoted the traits such as morality, discipline, and decency through docile female characters (68). He observes that the novelists of this period portrayed the female characters as an idyllic. He argues that the tradition of ideal are immensely found in the novels of this period. Confirming Subedi's idea, in the book *Nepali Saahityako Sanchhipta Itihaasa [A Brief History of Nepali Literature]* Dayaram Shrestha and Mohanraj Sharma have claimed that through his novels Rudraraj Pandey has conveyed the message that idealism should be the foundation of the society (105). These critics observe that the Nepali novelists of modern era depicted an ideal society assigning the traditional roles to the male and female characters. Thus, belonging to this period, Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala also has assigned the traditional gender role to his characters in *Narendra Dai*.

### **Koirala's *Narendra Dai*: A Review of Literature**

B.P. Koirala appeared in the field of Nepali literature with a new trend and style. He portrays human psychology and the internal condition of the characters. He does not give much focus to depict the outer world in his literary creations. His novels and stories introduced the theory of Freudian psychology. Likewise, influenced by the literary trend of the contemporary world literature, he explored the theme such as existentialism and nihilism. Consequently, his literary creations have drawn the critics' attention immensely. Since the novel *Narendra Dai* also is enriched with the various themes and it portrays the contemporary social life as well as people's psychology, it has received appreciation among the critics from the time of its publication. Critics still have been reviewing this novel from various perspectives.

In Nepali *Upanyaasa Paramparaa ra Pravriti [Nepali Novel: Tradition and Tendency]* Rajendra Subedi praises Koirala's skill of depicting the lives of people living near the Koshi River. Subedi praises Koirala for his skill of weaving the plot. He claims that the plots of Koirala's novels revolve around a small number of characters. Nevertheless, most of his characters leave some imprints in the readers' minds. Similarly, in Subedi's view, Koirala skillfully portrays the characters' effort and struggle for their existence (392-94). Subedi admits that though Koirala has enriched his novel *Narendra Dai* by employing the philosophy such as

existentialism and introducing Freudian psychology, he has not properly addressed the problems of the then contemporary women. In fact, in this novel, Koirala has established the optimum value of an ideal woman; by which the novel fails to take necessary steps towards advanced thoughts.

Similarly, Krishnahari Baral and Netra Atom have commended Koirala's expertise in weaving the plot, structure and setting of the novel *Narendra Dai*. They claim that the novel has been divided into three parts through putting symbols at the end and the beginning of each parts. He has divided the novel without giving the title; similarly, he has not divided it into the chapters. By doing this, he has made the structure unique (216). They argue that by presenting the narratives vividly, he has made it very interesting. In fact, the presentation of the story of this novel through three different characters Sanobabu, Munaria and Gauri has not let the novel to become monotonous. They observe that apart from this, the use of letters, flashbacks and dialogues have taken the novel to the higher level. Similarly, they have admired the setting of *Narendra Dai*. They claim that setting of the novel has helped the reader to be acquainted with the people and the life style of the terai region.

In the same way, appraising Koirala's proficiency in choice of setting and atmosphere in *Narendra Dai*, Bijeta Chaudhari considers Koirala an incomparable literary figure. In Chaudhari's view, by selecting the remote and neglected part of the nation as the setting of his novel, Koirala not only exhibits his intimacy to terai region but also unfolds the lifestyle of that region. Moreover, through this he has tried to bring them closer and make them familiar to the reader (143). Chaudhari further claims that in *Narendra Dai*, Koirala has tried to show the prevalence of the feudal practices in terai; likewise, he has depicted the reality of that society. According to Chaudhari, this novel proves to be very useful to the reader who wants to know about Madheshi society, their rituals and culture as the novelist has described these aspects in detail.

In the same vein, Narayan Chalise has analysed *Narendra Dai* as the field of experiment of human psychology. He argues that this novel has captured the mental state of the three major characters: Narendra, Gauri and Munaria. He observes that this novel captures the complication of Narendra's and Gauri's life that is brought by intense and unfulfilled sexual desire. In his view, Koirala has explored the psyche of the characters and has shown that Narendra's sexual relationship to Munaria is outcome of his unsatisfied sexual desire. Chalise further opines that when Narendra fails to satisfy his sexual thrust from his wife Gauri as she does not have the body parts of a grown-up/matured woman, he feels cheated and decides to abandon Gauri. Moreover, he leaves home and elopes with Munaria. Similarly, highlighting the influence of Sanskrit language in Koirala's novelistic language, Matiprasad Dhakal claims that in *Narendra Dai*, Koirala has used plenty of Sanskrit words and the influence of Sanskrit language has

reflected in the sentence structure as well (124). He notices that in order to use fortified language in the novel, he has presented his major characters as educated people. These critics have analyzed *Narendra Dai* meticulously. Nevertheless, they have left the scope for the researchers to analyze it from the perspective of gender theory.

### **Problem, Objectives, and Methodology**

B.P. Koirala has set his novel *Narendra Dai* in the terai region of eastern Nepal and has shown that in the terai, the socio-religious norms differently constrain the males and females to the traditional gender roles. Koirala demonstrates that the male and female characters of this novel display masculine and feminine traits not because those are the innate qualities; it happens because the society plays vital role to construct the characters' gender identity. Moreover, their gender role achieves legitimacy and naturality via perpetual observation and repetition of social norms. Since the society regulates, approves and endorses their performance through punishments, these characters cannot defy the traditional gender role. Rather, they confirm the traditional gender role through the repetition of actions and following the social norms and values. They learn to ingrain the masculine and feminine traits in them through watching other people's behavior. This process is quite similar to the process of internalizing a gender that Butler theorizes, as there are a set of cues that are ingrained through learning and practicing, not through biology. In Butler's view, the cues, however, when processed over time and internalized, create an identity that becomes perceived as natural. Butler describes of learning a gender through repetition of a performance over time. In *Narendra Dai*, the female characters suffer and male characters become the cause of their suffering while following the traditional gender roles. So, in such condition whether they ever try to defy the traditional gender role or not is the basic problem of this study. To find it out, this article answers the following research questions:

- What are the problems the characters face while confining into the traditional gender roles?
- Why do these characters firmly follow the prescribed gender roles?
- How do they lead their life in such situation?

To find out the reasons I analyse the activities and motives of these characters in the light of Judith Butler's performative theory. Judith Butler introduces the groundbreaking theory of gender as a constant performance: a series of cues observed, internalized, and repeated over time, through her seminal book *Gender Trouble*. In this book, she proposes that gender should be regarded as a flexible and fluid variable, rather than a fixed binary system constituted by male and female opposites. Butler maintains that "[t]here is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (25). By this, she means that gender is not a central part of people's

identity, but a performance that varies according to different times and different situations. It is, in other words, what a person does on certain occasions rather than who he or she essentially is. Gender performance, as Butler emphasizes, is a process that is perpetually practised and repeated under the socio-cultural surveillance. Moya Lloyd reinforces Butler's idea of performativity: "Cultural constructions constitute the idea of a gender, but without the constant practice and imitation of them, gender does not exist. Gender is, consequently, an effect of performance and imitation over time" (80). For Butler cultural expectations and norms make up a gender. Therefore, both men and women grow up watching the other men and women around them mimicking performances, and they consequently imitate the performance themselves to the extent of letting them naturalize.

### **Gender Roles and Gender Identities in the Novel**

The setting of *Narendra Dai* has played a remarkable role to show that the gender identity forms through perpetual surveillance, observation and correction. Koirala has woven the story upon a wealthy and reputed Brahman family of an unknown village of the terai region, situated in the bank of Koshi River in Nepal. He has reflected the lifestyle and outlook of the people of the then society through this family. In the novel, Kaptanni Aama, the eldest member of the family, recites the Hindu religious scriptures the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* and other *Puranas*. Therefore, she wants that all the family members reflect the religious teachings in their behavior. She asks them to restrict themselves in the traditional gender roles. For example, Bahuni, the female cook, has to take off her blouse while cooking. Likewise, all the other female members seem to be engaged in household chores. Sanobabu recalls that his mother and Gauri Bhauju used to cut vegetables at the corner of the kitchen. Aunties were busy in their household works; when they became free, they started to web the thread (7). Thus, the female members are restricted within house and hearth. Nevertheless, they seem to accept that restriction as they are assigned the identity of submissive and tolerant person.

In *Narendra Dai*, the characters regularly practice the socially prescribed gender roles; and they try to acclaim their masculinity and femininity through their activities and thoughts. The strict familial and social norms restrict them to deviate from the traditional gender roles. In the family, the female members are kept under control from their childhood days. They are taught to understand their limitation. Not only that, they are rebuked when they try to break the confinement. As Kaptanni Aama scolds Sannani for roaming around the village. She teaches Sannani to stay attractive, quiet and gentle because she knows that female should acquire these attributes; otherwise, she gets punished. Butler claims: "People who fail to do their gender correctly, or do it in ways that accentuate its genealogy and construction, are punished by culture and laws" (*Gender Trouble* 273). Hence, they learn to perform the traditional gender role from their childhood days and they also become aware of the punishment, in case they

deviate from the roles. Therefore, these characters cannot subvert the socially imposed gender identity and gender roles.

In the novel, the central character Narendra appears as a strict and ruthless male from whom the children get intimidated. He cannot create intimacy to the children because he lacks softness and humbleness. Since he acquires toughness through constant practices of manliness, he demonstrates the same in his behaviors and activities. The children believe that he cannot understand the children's feelings and emotions. Sanobabu recalls Narendra Dai's fearful image: When they saw Narendra, they hid themselves from him. They feared as they thought that he punished them for their waywardness (4). Narendra appears as an authoritative figure; he controls children's activities and instructs them to be disciplined and healthy. Therefore, he rebukes them when they aimlessly roam around the village and teaches them to play football.

He always performs the masculine role and tries to maintain his manliness. Butler shows that performance is a crucial part of gender performativity. In her view, "gender performance is performing gender roles within cultural situations or as a response to a set of norms". Belonging to a high caste, high class, rich, Hindu family, he involves in the activities that confirm his manliness because his cultural situations demand the same. Butler claims that the performance and actions of individuals are governed by cultural norms. She argues that "agency is constrained by culture and what I can do is, to a certain extent, conditioned by what is available for me to do within the culture and by what other practices are and by what practices are legitimizing" (Quoted in Olson and Worsham 345). In case of Narendra, his expression of manliness emerges through familial and societal pressure, endorsement, and encouragement. So, he consistently exhibits the masculine traits in all circumstances.

Koirala shows that Narendra's father forces him to display his manliness through his deeds. Socially scrutinized, Narendra's father, practices to act as an authoritarian father. Therefore, he brings up his son as a *marda* [a masculine in true sense]. In his view, Narendra should have exercised his male power over Gauri, and he should have taken her responsibility. Therefore, when he notices that Narendra has not been performing the role of a husband, he insults and rebukes him. For that criticizing Narendra's irresponsible act towards his wife, he provokes Narendra to exhibit his manliness: "*ke sekhi garchhas Narendra, aaphni dulahilaai ta paalne huti chhaina* [for what you are boasting of Narendra, when you are not capable enough to take the responsibility of your wife]" (25). Narendra's father wants his son to perform as a masculine male for he knows that the society assures "rewards for being 'real' men or 'real' women" (Gardiner 4). Since the mainstream masculine norms prescribe a protector model for men, he tries to fit in that model by protecting his son from any kind of gender deviation. He tries to socialize his son and wants him to fit into a rigid definition of masculine role. Consequently, influenced by his father's schooling, Narendra declares that he

has abandoned Gauri as his wife though his father does not expect that. Hence, Narendra demonstrates manliness throughout his life.

Narendra's socio-familial status lays a foundation for him to exercise power and authority over people. Similarly, it pampers his male ego. As a result, he displays the traits such as anger, aggression, and insolence in his every move and act that affirms to Butler's argument: "When we try to become a particular gender, we aim, by and large, to approximate the historical and cultural norms that define what that gender ought to be: how it should look, walk, talk, sit and so forth". She claims that our becoming is always constructed by cultural norms, taboos, conventions and even laws. This is why those who fail to approximate the gender ideal, either deliberately or unintentionally may be severely punished for their failure (49). Narendra's family members applaud him for displaying masculinity whenever he involves in such activities. The narrator discloses Narendra's habit: "*Narendrako krodhako parichaya sabailaai thiyo* [all the family members were well acquainted to Narendra's rage]" (25). Nevertheless, they do not denounce this habit of Narendra. Rather, they accept it as a normal expression of a male. As a result, he reacts belligerently against his father's accusation affirming Thompson's and Kindlon's claim that "boys go one step further in their drive to be 'real guys'. They partake in the culture of cruelty, enforcing male stereotype on one another. Anything tender, anything compassionate is labeled gay" (quoted in Kantrowitz and Kalb 204). Therefore, when he feels that his father challenges his masculinity, he reacts aggressively so that he can exhibit his manliness. He decides to abandon his wife without thinking about her feeling for as a male he practices to be self-centered. The narrator depicts the repulsive situation resulted by Narendra's anger when his father questions to his masculinity:

*'Jaabo eutilaai mero galaama jhundaaidiera bado upakaara gareko chhu bhannuhunchha bhane la, tyo tapaainle merolaagi lyaakeki bhaneki tapaainlaai nai bhayo'. Saachchai nai tyasa dinadekhi Narendrale aaphni dulahilaai tyaagi die.* [‘If you claim that you have done a great favor to me by imposing her to me as my wife, then, I return her to you, whom you have brought for me.’ Narendra furiously replied to his father. In fact, from that day Narendra relinquished his wife]. (25)

From that day, Narendra starts to avoid the family function, the family gathering, and the place where Gauri appears. Moreover, he rigidly stays in his decision of avoiding and abandoning Gauri from his life.

The insistence on the naturalness of sexual difference is not a fact but a belief; consequently, suppressed in the traditional belief, Gauri cannot take action against Narendra's decision of bringing their marriage to an end. Rather, when Gauri observes and understands Narendra's hatred towards her, she completely stops to take part in family functions and assemblies. She acts as a nonexistent object in the house. Michael Kimmel posits: "biological

differences get heightened through social descriptions of masculinity and femininity” (7), therefore, confirming social description of masculinity, Narendra becomes very cruel towards Gauri whereas Gauri becomes more submissive. After Narendra’s declaration, she acts as an outsider in the family; she creates an impression that she does not have any relation to Narendra. Thus, she performs the role of a docile woman who sacrifices her wishes and happiness for her husband. This role of a compliant woman, however, is a forced, conscious performance. She performs that role because the society intends to create Gauri’s image of a sacrificing wife. By including this strange rule, Koirala has absolutely parodied gender performance. He shows that Gauri reduces to singular performance by restricting herself inside the room. Thus her life becomes hellish.

In *Narendra Dai*, Koirala has shown that the characters define their gender through performance. Through them, he has shown that gender is something that is socially constructed and mobile. He also shows that for these characters, fashion is key agent in gender performance. Their gendered outfits adequately pass them their particular gender. These characters followed the socially prescribed fashion affirming Butler’s claim that gender is learned and artificial construction. In the novel, Koirala portrays Narendra’s appearance and shows his manliness through his attire. Narendra carefully follows the masculine fashion so that his fashionable attire and hair style enhance his masculinity. The narrator depicts his fashion:

*Tinako aglo shariramaa sukilo seto kurtaa ra dhoti, chaara taha garera ramrari apttyaai gardanalaai eka phanko bereko seto dupattaa, shiramaathi hiphaajatakaa saatha paalekaa laamaa-laamaa kaalaa kapaalaka guchhaa, gardananera dupattaamaathi jhulirahane keshakaa mundraa- Narendrale sahajai haamro gaaunko naranaariko hridaya jitekaa thie* [He wore clean, white shirt and trouser in his tall figure; he covered his neck with a white colored, four-folded, scarf; he kept shoulder-length, black, curly hair which kept on swinging above his shawl that he hung on his shoulder. Through his dress-up, Narendra had easily won the heart of the male and female of our village] (2).

Narendra exhibits his masculinity in various ways and to wear stylish attire is one among them. Roger Horrocks’ claims that variegated expressions of masculinity are the “driving force that helps man to prove his masculinity”. Horrocks argues that there are rituals of masculine imitation: hair styles, jewelry, there are occupations, ways of speaking, hobbies, sports and so forth. Narendra also puts his effort to acclaim his masculinity. The narrator reports: people did not wear such classy and stylish attire like Narendra in that village, and in other neighboring villages. Therefore, the prestigious people used to invite him in their family function with due respect (7). All of these components of his performance are the metaphorical cues that confirm his masculinity. He learns to perform as a masculine male by observing the behaviors and



appearance of men around him, and by getting directions by other males of the family and the society. Koirala shows that these all direct him to perform his manliness. Through Narendra, Koirala has demonstrated the power of fashion in continuing the performance of gender affirming Butler's theory of gender as 'learned' and 'artificial' construction.

Like Narendra, his wife Gauri also follows the fashion of a married woman for the Hindu society prescribed a certain fashion to a married woman. A married woman should look attractive and beautiful. She should wear a specific cloth item, ornaments and make-up so that her husband gets satisfied and happy in the presence of his wife and feel proud owning a beautiful wife. Likewise, there is a belief that for her husband's long life she has to follow that particular fashion of clothing and make-up. In *Sankshipta Sivapuraan*, a married Brahmin woman gives instruction to the newly married Parvati to decorate herself: "woman who wishes for longevity of her husband, should put *sindoor*, coal, auspicious jewelry; she should do her hair or make braid of her hair beautifully; she never should take off ornaments such as bangles and earrings" (343). Koirala shows that such fashion becomes norm within the materiality of imposed cultural signifiers, such as red attire, bangles, *tika*, *pote*, *tilahari*, and *sindoor*. Therefore, Gauri also performs as a married woman following the socially prescribed fashion. The narrator portrays Gauri's appearance:

*Uni sadhain singaara garera basthina; kapaala chillo paarera tamma koreki, siundomaa sindoorako gaadhaa rekhaa, snigdha goro pharaakilo nidhaaramaa eutaa thulo pita-chandanako tika, . . . shariramaa saanaa-saanaa raataa-kaalaa buttaa bhaeko chhitako tamma pareko cholo, hariyo saari ra godaamaa kalli ra chhaatimaa saano tilahari bhaeko poteko moto maalaa. [She always wore make-up; done her hair very nicely, there was dark line of vermilion powder on the partition of her hair, she put cedar's paste in her hair, and wide forehead, . . . she wore a fitting blouse made up of printed cotton cloth, and green sari, she put anklet, and a necklace made up of small beads with a golden pedal]. (15)*

All of these aspects of Gauri, however, are learned gender cues that she is "performing." Judith Butler's entire theory of performance, as Emily Apter explains, "reli[es] on a subject that makes itself *be* by enacting objectification" (18). Koirala shows that in Gauri's case the objectification occurs because she lets her body to be "inscribed" upon. In fact, the narrator himself sees her through male's eyes. So, for him, she only exists as an object that he has noticed to. He finds her as the most beautiful woman for she exhibits the feminine traits that a male learns to appreciate while molding into a masculine male. He admires Gauri: "*ti saanaa sundara pagamaa uni yati bistaarai hindthin ki uni katai aae-gaeko chaala nai paaindainathyo [In those small feet she walked so slowly that no one could notice her movement]*" (15). Through the description, Koirala shows that the "inscriptions" consist of each stereotypical

“feminine” performance cue: her stature, her hair, and all of the other minor nuances she picks up and learns through observation and social teachings. She displays those performance cues, in order to get social approval of her activities.

Though, Gauri performs the socially prescribed gender role, she cannot get wifely right because Narendra and his family find her unfit in that role. They make a verdict that due to Gauri’s immature body parts; she cannot satisfy him. Therefore, when Narendra denies her as his wife and denounces her presence, they take it as a normal reaction of an unsatisfied husband. The narrator reports Juntunani’s (Narendra’s sister) opinion: She did not think that it was Narendra’s fault. She thought that audacity was the innate nature of male and he had right to expect to get coquetry in his wife. He would keep on collecting wives when he failed to get it in his wife (11). Likewise, the elder male family members also support his decision and suggest many options to him such as to marry another woman, to give her divorce, and to keep on performing as her husband’s role but without touching her body (14). Thus, they internalize the role of a man as superior to woman because they regard Gauri as an inferior sexual object. Therefore, Narendra objectifies Gauri because in that society to objectify women by their male counterpart was not taken as an inappropriate behavior. Hamilton McCubbin and Barbara Blum Dahl posit that “[a] sex role is a part that an individual plays as a social actor – the patterns of feeling and behavior deemed appropriate or inappropriate because of her or his gender” (189). Narendra gets social approval to his mistreatment to Gauri because he is a male.

Since his family indorses Narendra’s decision of the abandonment of his lawful wife as a normal process, Narendra steps forward to the extra-marital affair to Munaria, a poor servant. Thus, he demonstrates and claims his masculinity. Later, he leaves the village and marries Munaria. Accordingly, he again showcases his masculinity through indulging in polygamy. He uses Munaria to claim his masculinity as she depicts her helplessness to the narrator:

*Tapaainharukai ta daasi bhaera dui chhaaka khaana paauthe ra rogi baabuko mukhamaa pani maada laauna paauthe, Saanobaabu! Narendrako prema-aagrahalai maile taarina, tyahi mero dosha ho. Tara kasale sakthyo taarna mero sthitimaa? Jamindaarako ekanasako pranaya hathale gariba daasimaathi sampurnarupale bijaya praapta garna sakthyo bhane aaschyarya ke? [Being a slave in your family, I could have two meals of a day and earn food for my sick father. Therefore, I did not reject Narendra’s love; and that was my fault. But who could reject when one was in my condition? How it could be surprising, when a landlord’s one-sided love could completely win over a helpless slave]. (44)*

Koirala makes evident through Munariya that there are a set of long-followed codes that rely on gender in order to prevail. The patriarchal society assigns the prescribed gender role with the belief that she should not transgress the harshly drawn lines that confine the male and female in

the specific roles; otherwise, all of the rules upon which the social hierarchy operates will be threatened. Thus, it compels her to accept the inferior position and to confirm the traditional gender role. Consequently, she remains in her rightful social position as a woman. Her condition shows that women, and their gender performance, which is highly reliant on subordinate and absurd fashion components, are placed lower on a social hierarchy than men. She performs as his mistress because as a female she is not in the condition to reject that role. Therefore, she brought changes in her appearance following Narendra's instructions. She oiled her hair, put on make-up, and wore a garland (32). Involving in those activities, she practices to become Narendra's mistress as Butler claims: "Though cultural constructions constitute the idea of a gender, but without the constant practice and imitation of them, gender does not exist. Gender is, consequently, an effect of performance and imitation over time" (in Lloyd 80). While accepting the role of Narendra's mistress, she fabricates her body because she has to keep her lover satisfied through those activities. In fact, she follows the cues that Narendra passes to her in order to make her a perfect match for a high-class lover like him. Her performance as a beloved of a high-class lover demonstrates the fabrication of gender. It shows that she follows the certain codes and embodies a particular gender.

Both Gauri and Munaria keep on performing the subordinating role till the end of the novel. When Narendra suffers from the incurable disease tuberculosis, and become penny-less, Munaria accepts to live alone in the alienated place by sending him home. She does not dare to return to the village because she knows that the society will not accept her for it puts the label of a whore after she elopes to Narendra. Therefore, when he leaves Banaras, she becomes helpless. Then, the social agents design the role of a prostitute to her. She has to sell her body in the brothel in order to earn her livelihood. The society fabricates her as a submissive woman. Therefore, she cannot subvert that role as Butler argues: "When looked at through this socially-fabricated lens, gender is revealed", in her words gender is: "a stylized repetition of acts" (179). She does not even try to become a prodigal daughter for she knows that only sons are allowed to do that. As a result, when the life in brothel becomes unbearable to her, she decides to take the role of a wife of an old and rich jeweler. She takes various roles. Nevertheless, none of those roles are of her choice. Rather, the society imposes those roles to her. Moreover, it constrains her in the subordinated position.

Like, Munaria, Gauri also faces the same fate. She gets the role of a wife in her early age. Then she has to perform as Narendra's abandoned wife. Ultimately, she performs the role of a devoted wife, who worships her husband as a god. Since the society constrains her to the identities of subversive, docile, and passive female, she performs accordingly. Butler claims that it is very difficult to escape from the socially prescribed gender roles. Butler asserts:

If gender attributes, however, are not expressive but performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal. . . . If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character. . . . Genders can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived. (180).

Since Hindu religion sets her husband's home as a stage for the female and directs her to devote herself for her husband's happiness and comforts, Gauri does the same. In *Sankshipta Sivpuraana*, as per instruction of Parvati's mother Menaka, a Brahmin woman teaches Parvati the rules those are for a devoted wife: "for a wife her husband is a God. For wife, husband's position is higher than the greatest God Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. So, she never should make her husband worry and upset. She should be in his service like a slave" (343). Therefore, after marriage, through her acts she shows that the purpose of her life is to keep Narendra satisfied and happy. Gauri puts her effort to win her husband's heart. She admits:

*Sharira ra buddhilaai hajurako yogya banaauna maile ke garina? Paushtika bhojana, lobhiko jasto swarthi bhaera dudha, ghyu ra mewaaharuko sewana gardai, nirlajja bhaera dinabhari singaarapataarale aaphulaai raamri paardai dina-pratidina . . . . hajurako ardhaangini hunako laagi pustaka herna thaale, maastara raakhera padhna thaale. Gaanaa sikna thaale. Isaraja bajauna thaale.* [What I did not do to make my body and mind suitable to match with you? I ate balanced diet including milk, ghee, and dry fruits in my meal; shamelessly, I spent every day putting on make-up . . . . I started to read books. I started to learn singing. I started to play Isaraja] (360).

Gauri practices to perform the role of a devoted wife. For that she works on her body, personality, and behavior. She reshapes her physique, acquires education, and learns to play the musical instruments. Butler argues that every gender attribute, such as the way someone walks, talks, or moves, and so many other subtle aspects, is performative, and that these very attributes are the components that constitute identity; without them, there is truly no concept of gender identity (180). Nevertheless, since her husband abandons her, all those efforts become useless. She cannot perform as Narendra's wife for he completely denies her existence. However, when Narendra returns to her life, she again performs the role of a devoted wife. She spends every moment in the service of her sick husband. She brings coquetry in her manner and decorates

every parts of her body so that she can draw the attention of her husband. Narendra comes to her when every other ways of life are closed to him. Even so, he enjoys the privilege for the society provides him a higher position in the family hierarchy. Therefore, he keeps on performing as an authoritative husband claiming his superiority in all conditions.

### Conclusion

*Narendra Dai* traces the problems faced by the characters while performing traditional gender roles. He shows that traditional gender roles provide privilege to Narendra. So, being a male member of a respectable, rich family, Narendra upholds the powerful position in the family and the society. Similarly, while performing the role of an authoritative husband and the master he exercises superiority over his wife Gauri and servant Munaria. This act of Narendra affects the life of both of these women because Gauri has to live the life of an abandoned wife whereas Munaria has to face the hatred from the society. Since the society reinforces the normative masculine standards for men, Narendra exhibits the traits such as ruthlessness, assertiveness, stubbornness, and shows dreadful behaviours that conform the masculine standard. But it does not prove to be fruitful for neither Narendra's family, nor to Munaria's family because exhibiting his manliness, Narendra abandons his wife Gauri and brings a shame to the family by eloping to servant of the family, whose marriage has been already fixed to another man. Likewise, following the normative gender role of an authoritative husband, he unhesitatingly returns to his first wife when he suffers from an incurable disease and becomes penniless in Banaras. On the other hand, restrained within patriarchal parameters, Gauri lives the life of an abandoned wife for several years as the social norms restrict her to defy her husband's decision. Moreover, she performs the role of a devoted wife for she warmly welcomes back her betrayer husband in her life. Similarly, thinking about Narendra's comfort, Munaria decides to live an insecure life in an alienated land. Thus, through Gauri and Munaria, Koirala shows that the social standards continue to govern men's, as well as women's behavior. Following the social norms, these characters perform the traditional gender roles. Due to constrain of time and space, the researcher has delimited this study in the gender study. However, since *Narendra Dai* is enriched with several themes, there is scope for further study using other perspectives such as psychoanalysis, cultural study and sociological studies.

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