




The Rhetoric of the Body in BP Koirala's Life Narratives

Mahendra Bhusal (PhD Scholar, TU) 

Department of English, Patan Multiple Campus, TU, Lalitpur, Nepal

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Corresponding Author: Mahendra Bhusal, Email: mahendrabhusal10@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the rhetorical significance of representing body in BP Koirala's life narrative published in the form of an interview taken between 1979 to 1981. Using Kenneth Burke's rhetoric of identification and Michel Foucault's notion of body as the theoretical framework, the paper explores the motif of the narrator behind representing his body through his narrative among the contemporary intended audience. Koirala identifies with the public by means of the rhetoric of his body narrative. His motif behind the narrative is to showcase his national ethos through the pains and torments he had sustained in his body and to identify with the ethos of the general public thereby evoking civic national ethos. The study reveals that body can work as a powerful instrument in writing the life narrative that evokes the author's sense of shared ethos.

KEYWORDS: Body rhetoric, national ethos, identification, life narrative

INTRODUCTION

Beyond his key personal memoir *Aatmabrittanta: A Late Life Recollection* (2001), BP Koirala has a number of such personal accounts of his life enriched with personal experiences, anecdote, general worldview, and primarily a political philosophy. They include; prison narratives in the form of prison diaries, personal stories, speeches, and interviews based on the personal accounts. This paper examines Koirala's interview with Bhola Chatterjee which was taken in 1979 to 1981, and was compiled in *Portrait of a Revolutionary: B.P. Koirala* (1982) from the perspective of body rhetoric. The book is roughly divided into two parts. The first part is Chatterjee's remarks on the contemporary Nepali political scenario which serves as the backdrop for the second part, which is the interview itself. This paper focuses on the second part. The second part is autobiographical in its essence which is in the form of as-told-to narrative and covers almost all aspects of Koirala's personal and political life, somehow in a chronological detail. The paper, however, takes heed of how he inscribes pains, torments and national ethos upon his body through the body rhetoric especially in terms of his narration in *Portrait*.

The researcher contemplates over *Portrait* from the perspective of Koirala's revolutionary nature of his subjectivity formation as projected in his narrative. His body is found to be tormented almost throughout the narrative. This torment begins as his father Krishna Parsad Koirala decides to stand for the public good and social welfare, revolting against the Ranas and the pain perpetually remains till his demise due to the fatal throat cancer. BP Koirala places his tormented body at the center of his narration. Primarily, he narrates about the predicament, pain, and perpetration inflicted upon his body by the autocratic rulers. At one of the key junctures of the narrative, Koirala got a chance to pay the most awaited visit to King Birendra. As per the incident, the king appears to be a savior of Koirala's cancer-stricken body as he promptly recommends him to pursue an advance treatment in the USA, temporarily releasing him from the prison. Koirala is obsessed with the suffering that his body undergoes. His narrative inscription upon the body transforms it as a battleground and a political symbol of his revolution against the autocracy.

In the case of the reception of Koirala's personal narrative in particular, there is little research based on the body politics and its rhetorical implications. Despite the abundance of either eulogistic account or blunt political criticism, the genuine studies on Koirala's rhetoric of personal narrative on the body politics have virtually gone unnoticed. There are studies on the novels, stories and other literary façade of his writings; however, specific research on his body rhetoric is untouched. Therefore, the researcher aims to cover this gap to open up the future research on this dimension with a special focus on Koirala's personal narratives.

The paper therefore interrogates why Koirala puts his body at stakes and how he inscribes pains, predicament and suffering upon his body through the narrative and eventually what he achieves in depicting his body the way he does. The primary aim of this paper is to tease out why he keeps his body at the center of his narrative so that the readers can understand the rhetorical dimension of highlighting the role of human body as a political agency, in the form of body politics through his life narratives. In this paper, the study is delimited within the bound of the personal details mentioned in *Portrait* as a primary text in which the focus is on the rhetoric of narration with a special focus on the body. Furthermore, the study is rhetorically based on the foundation of Burke's (1969) theory of 'identification' and 'consubstantiality'. In the case of body politics, the paper stands on the Foucauldian discourse of the body, primarily illustrated in *Discipline and Punish* (1975).

RECEPTIONS OF KOIRALA'S LIFE NARRATIVES

Owing to his versatile nature, Koirala is a prolific writer. His writings can be broadly categorized into two categories: pure literary writings and political writings. Literary writings reveal the sensibilities of contemporary Nepali society as the product of contradictions of his moral philosophy and anarchy blended with Freudian psychoanalysis as he declares himself an anarchist in literature and a socialist in politics. On the other hand, his memoirs are replete with personal worldviews on the Nepali society and his overall political philosophy. There are a plenty of writings and criticism based on his literary texts; however, in-depth research on the rhetorical dimensions of his life writings is scanty.

According to Guha (2001), Koirala's memoirs are the account of his political career in relation to contemporary Indian politics and his counterparts like Nehru, Ram Manohar Lohia, Dr Rajendra Prasad, and others. He further opines that Koirala's memoirs are the reflection of his perception into Nepali politics. They must be read for what it tells about India and Indians. They should be perceived as the records of the true

rebel who took the right side in the great (and unfinished) battle of the modern world between autocracy and democracy (Guha, 2001). He further argues that Koirala's political battle was unfinished. There are several dimensions of this unfinished project. One of them is a persistent internal tussle in his party primarily due to the rivalry with his own brother Matrika Parsad Koirala. His struggle continued till the death but the battle against autocracy remained unfinished during his life time.

Chalmers (2001) reads Koirala's personality traits and their political dimensions reflected in his memoirs. He contends, "What *Atmabrittanta* forcefully reminds us is that BP was a multidimensional personality. A striking and, to many, magnetic character himself, considerations of psychology and creativity, and of the individual, informed his eclectic socialist political outlook" (p. 209). Rather than the critical observation, Chalmers creates a eulogistic account of Koirala's personality, his political and somewhat literary career.

Lamichhane (2016) examines Koirala's life narrative *Aatmabrittanta* as the alternative history of margin. Lamichhane argues that Koirala reproduces his political as well as personal experiences to set it against the official mainstream history of contemporary Nepal in his memoir. Though the narrative appears to be personal, the events and issues narrated in the text make it less personal and more political. Lamichhane (2016) declares that "the text becomes the common experience of general people beyond author's journey of life and contradicts the mainstream history with full testimony of rebel" (p. 76). Thus, he observes Koirala's autobiography from an alternative angle to view contemporary Nepal from the margin. Hence, this is a new historical reading of Koirala's narrative.

Chatterjee (1982) pays homage to Koirala in a context immediately after his death and observes, "He symbolized the hopes and aspirations of his people in search of liberty, equality and fraternity of a Nepal they could call their own" (as cited in Jha, 1982, p. 374). He remembers Koirala as a political icon of the country who worked for the nation and the people. However, in the same context, Jha (1982) internationalizes the personality of Koirala in reference to the editorial remarks of *The Indian Express*, which labeled him as "the 'Asian statesman' and highlighted that aspect of his personality which transcended the narrow bonds of nationalism" (p. 374). According to Jha, Koirala's political impacts were not parochial as to limit himself in the context of Nepali political scenario, but his recognition was across the Asia. Rather than the critical observation, these remarks are also primarily eulogistic in essence.

Next, Jha (1982) captures the immediate reactions of the renowned Indian national dailies published immediately after his demise. Jha refers to one of the headlines of the dailies, "India's Homage to BP" as it revealed the international views upon him. Moreover, the remarks on the homage published also depict India as the closest neighbor and Indian people's views upon Koirala's life and his political stories. Jha (1982) further quotes from *Indian Nation*:

One of the highest points of consciousness, courage and compassion in the contemporary world has merged into the unknown and infinite in the sad demise of Bisheshwar Prasad Koirala. The loss caused to humanity by his death is incalculable. It is no exaggeration to say that a man like BP is born in centuries. The story of his sacrifice and sufferings however will continue to inspire mankind for generations to come. BP had many rare qualities in him. He was a thinker, a writer, a crusader, an orator, an organizer and a successful diplomat. But what distinguished him from other people was his dedication to the cause of freedom and democracy. (p. 375)

This eulogistic remark also stresses on how Koirala is remembered as the national as well as international political figure. It portrays him as a man of extraordinary and outstanding attributes which are epochal.

In a biographic account, Mishra (1994) picturizes Koirala as a devout humanist, arguing that "BP, a humanist, socialist, who remained committed to his principles and beliefs through to the end of his life, had also aim of bringing the King of Nepal out of his royal palace to common people's home" (p. vi). Mishra weaves Koirala's biography with recourse to the references from his life writings gleaned from different sources like interviews, anecdote from the family members, contemporaries, etc. He concludes Koirala's biographic account with the impressions as it reads: "BP passed away in his modest abode, in the midst of the mountains, among his people and the land he loved and cherished most" (p. 147). Mishra (1994) foregrounds Koirala's attachment with the people and his sense of national ethos. He demonstrates through these remarks that understanding Koirala's connection with the aspirations of the people with a wider significance is a genuine tribute to him.

The limited literatures on Koirala's life narrative stress not on the inherent and boarder dynamics of their socio-political implications in Nepali society and politics, but on the eulogistic accounts. By the same token, the idea of body rhetoric in his narrative seems yet to be explored which could have a rich implication in understanding the similar political narratives. Therefore, this study delves into the body politics theme as manifested in Koirala's life narratives with a particular focus on *Portrait* in order to answer why a politician like Koirala highlights his body and renders it a political battleground and a political symbol in itself.

THE CONCEPT OF IDENTIFICATION AND BODY POLITICS

The study adopts qualitative research method based on library research to analyze the rhetorical dynamics of Koirala's *Portrait* in terms of the manifestation of his body in the narrative and thereby the national ethos. A close textual analysis of the second section of the text has been done in the light of the Burke's (1969) theory of 'identification' and Foucault's (1975) notion of body. Since Koirala represents his body as the primary site of political resistance, contestation, and an agency for the identification with the public ethos, the researcher employs Burke's theory of identification in terms of the study of the rhetorical dimension and Foucault's (1975) notion of body to reveal the body politics inherent in the narration. Beyond Foucault, the ideas of Eakin (1999) and Smith (1993) are of special significance in examining Koirala's life narratives from the perspective of body politics.

Burke's (1969) rhetoric has its root in his definition of man. He defines man "as a symbol-using animal" (p. 3). By this, he means that the rhetoric is the essence of all human communications with an inherent motif. A general motif of the rhetoric is to share things, which are worth sharing with the audience. An act of identification is at its core when a speaker shares something through symbols (language) with the audience keeping persuasion as its target. When an act of persuasion is the target, the speaker seeks for the available means of persuasion in the given context and thus the act turns out to be an act of identification. In this sense, there is the nexus of Burke's identification with Aristotelian rhetoric of persuasion.

Here is how identification works. According to Burke (1966), "A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B" (p. 20). When A addresses B in terms of the common interests, they tend to identify with each other. This happens even when the interests are not exactly similar but one is successful to relate his stories with the other and persuade him or her. In this case, A

assumes that he/she shares something with B. Identification takes place in sharing common attributes among the audience and there can be numbers of such attributes. The common pains and suffering incurred by a human body can be a point of such convergence towards which this study focuses that takes Koirala's narrative as a case.

Human body has always been a center of debate in terms of its significance in the production of diverse academic discourses. One can trace back the debate originating from Descartes' (2006) seminal statement, "*Cogito ergo sum*" or "I think therefore I am". This is what called Cartesian dualism. This means that mind or thinking is prior and important than being. This notion valorizes mind over body. This is one of the prime debates in the western epistemological discourses. However, a number of seminal philosophers including Foucault (1975) question the very foundation of Cartesian rationality on the basis of the primacy and significance of body and its sensibilities in the production of social, cultural, and political discourses later.

In this line, Foucault (1975) offers an extended answer to how body has been treated in the human history of punishment. He particularly focuses on how penal system has been evolved throughout the human history particularly in the west, which helps to understand the dynamics of the usage of human body in the politics. He further answers how discipline has been enforced in human conduct to place the human body at work. Foucault's apparent study of penal system has a larger implication in the wider arenas where formation of power, discourse, and knowledge take place that govern the human societies.

In regard to the significance of a body, Foucault (1975) argues that it has been a subject of study in historical demography or medical biology; however, there has been no adequate study on its deeper political significance. When the body is used as a political instrument, it is "meticulously prepared, calculated and used" (p. 26). Foucault (1975) insists that "the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body" (p. 26). Foucault's perception on the body as such opens the way in which one can study how human body is kept at stakes to achieve some larger ends especially in politics. He analyzes the body in terms of subjugation both either by the use of violence in the past and without the use of it.

The knowledge of how to put body into work either using violence or not is what Foucault (1975) calls 'political technology of body'. The political technology of body works deftly. When the political technology is at its work in subjugating the body "it may be calculated, organized, technically thought out; it may be subtle, make use neither of weapons nor of terror and yet remain of a physical order" (p. 26). He further clarifies that this technology does not work in a linear and continuous trajectory but it is diffused. It "implements a disparate set of tools or methods" (p. 26) to operate. The study of the operation of the political technology of body, according to Foucault, involves 'micro-physics of power'. He elaborates:

Now, the study of this micro-physics presupposes that the power exercised on the body is conceived not as a property, but as a strategy, that its effects of domination are attributed not to 'appropriation', but to dispositions, maneuvers, tactics, techniques, functioning; that one should decipher in it a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege that one might possess; that one should take as its model a perpetual battle rather than a contract regulating a transaction or the conquest of a territory. (p. 26)

The knowledge of how the microphysics of power operates upon the human body is the political technology of body which is understood particularly as the strategy rather than mere agency. It is the knowledge of the complex relation of the network that are

associated with the body. It is the knowledge that body is a profound site of contest in which multiple conflicting forces manifest.

Furthermore, the microphysics of power does not work only in unidirectional order. It works in both ways: top-down as well as bottom-up directions. Foucault (1975) claims, "In short, this power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege', acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions - an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated" (p. 26-27). As per his interpretation, the microphysics of power operates both ways: from the dominant against the dominated as well as by the dominated against the dominant.

Taking the side of Foucauldian political technology of body, Eakin (1999) lays special emphasis upon the narrated body particularly in the life narratives. This narrated body in the form of narration is the body of embodied experiences. Here, Eakin raises the idea of embodied self in the autobiographical narration in an anti-Cartesian foundation in which body is valorized over the mind whereas Smith (1993) is concerned with gendered body.

A debate on body becomes sharp after the Cartesian dualism came to the fore. Cartesian dualism exclusively places mind, distinct from the body. Eakin (1999) by giving the references of few critics concludes: "Collectively, they agree that any attempt to remodel our concepts of the subject, self, or consciousness (as they variously term the subjectivity they study) requires a return to the body, undoing the original Cartesian exclusionary move" (p. 9). He further brings the reference of "'Madame I' a young woman who lost 'body awareness' and lost herself in the process" (p. 10). Taking such references from the neuropathology, Eakin justifies how body is intimately connected to our being and thereby our stories of selves. After an elaborated discussion he insists that "subjectivity and selfhood are deeply rooted in the body, that psychology and physiology are intimately linked" (p. 20). In making our selves through the stories we tell; somatic experience is always at the center according to Eakin. It means our stories are actually the stories of nothing but the body.

These ideas on the body politics with the central emphasis on Foucault on the one hand and Burke's theory of identification on the other prepares a perspective to examine Koirala's personal narrative in which the researcher can put a special stress on how he narrates and inscribes his experiences upon his body. This further helps to understand the symbolic importance of his narrated body that resists, contests, and fights against the contemporary Nepali political odds evoking civic national ethos. Thus, what follows is the in-depth analysis of Koirala's personal narration in *Portrait*.

KOIRALA'S PORTRAIT: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Koirala's body appears in three major settings in *Portrait*. First is at his home setting where his body suffers indigence. The second is the body set at the prisons and the third is the cancer-stricken body at the hospitals and sickbeds. The first setting is full of immediate family members, close relatives, and friends where sustenance becomes a pressing issue due to the poverty as the repercussions of Rana confiscating all properties of Koirala family and forcing them to exile. This is the immediate result of Koirala's father's revolutionary stance against Rana autocracy. The second setting is the prisons at home and India where Koirala is handcuffed, deprived and starved to extreme agony. The prison life is the consequence of Koirala's revolutionary stance against the Ranas. The third setting reveals his body predicament and its struggle against the fatal disease cancer which ultimately claims his life.

The Body amidst the Indigence

An inciting event of the story takes place when Koirala's father Krishna Parsad Koirala takes a decision to devote his life for the sake of downtrodden people at a point in his life when he was at bliss owing to his prosperity and affluence and sends a sarcastic message to the prime minister Chandra Shamsheer. This event turns everything upside down. Koirala's family falls to indigence from affluence in no time. In *Portrait*, Koirala narrates, "My father was very self-satisfied, he had two wives, a flourishing business and all the worldly things he could ask for" (as cited in Chatterjee, 1982, p. 60). A kind of supernatural incident happened when his father was returning home from his regular business inspection. Koirala further mentions about this incident as an anecdote in *Portrait* that "suddenly he seemed to hear God's voice which said: 'Krishna Prasad you have made some property, built a house, raised a family, but you have not given a thought to those who are less fortunately placed'" (p. 60). This is the watershed incident since when everything changes and Koirala family completely turns out to be a political family. This is an act of identification with the general public by Koirala family devoting everything for the sake of a common good.

The idea of consubstantiality is central to the theory of identification. As Koirala's father decides to devote his life for the sake of public good, it is a tremendous act of associating oneself with the substance of the common people, renouncing everything he has. Consubstantiality is the state of finding common substances in and among the people who are in a certain circumstance of interaction particularly in terms of rhetoric or language use in this context. Burke (1969) asserts, "To identify A with B is to make A 'consubstantial' with B" (p. 21). In regard to the rhetorical significance of consubstantiality, this is how Burke explains what make human interactions consubstantial. Here, renouncing everything Koirala's family becomes consubstantially one with the sensibilities of the common people to whom he addresses.

After this epiphanic moment, Koirala's father sends a parcel to Chandra Shamsheer, the incumbent prime minister, which offended him to the extent that he immediately placed an order to put Koirala family into exile confiscating all possessions. He narrates:

It was winter and large number of his men, very poor and in rags, were migrating to India in search of employment. He asked one of them for his clothes and himself fished the rags out of the man's bag. And he had them sent to the Prime Minister with a covering letter saying that this was the usual clothing that 'your subject wears in winter and compare this with what you are wearing. I hope it will not be interpreted as disrespect on my part to have sent these dirty rags to Your Highness. I am afraid that when this parcel is opened it may create some consternation in the Durbar. But I want Your Highness to understand in what condition your subjects live'. (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 62-63)

Narrating this anecdote has two strong rhetorical implications. The first is the demonstration of magnanimity and personal sacrifice on behalf of the general public by Koirala's father. The second is the indication of the point of time when his family enters into the abyss of predicament. The first is also a strong act of Burke's identification of Koirala's family with the downtrodden people. The second puts Koirala's body into the trials and tribulations associating his ethos with the general public.

Henceforth, the story moves ahead as the story of body into indigence and exile. Koirala remembers the days when his body along with the other family members starved due to the lack of basic diet. He narrates:

In those days, I remember, we did not have regular meals. The family had 45 persons to feed, but none of them had any employment. In the morning, all of us

would go to the terrace, where mother used to give us germinated gram with a bit of jaggery for breakfast. Till I went to college I had no shoes, no woollen clothes, for that matter no change of clothes. Whatever I wore was all I had. (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 65)

A malnourished and starved body is at the center of this narration. The body is not a mere body that starved to death without a noble cause but it is a body or collective bodies set against the social injustice and irrational oppressions upon the innocent lives of the general public. This body is not an ordinary body but the body of a rebel with a noble cause. A tool for political struggle and a site of resistance.

Two factors are important to notice in the rhetoric of this narrative; the external and the internal. The first is the external. As mentioned earlier, it is the repercussion of the revolt against the Rana that resulted into confiscation and exile. The second is the internal. It is the choice the Koirala family made on their own for the sake of public good and nationality. The second choice has a profound association with the identification rhetoric and by this token the body politics also begins here. For instance, Koirala remembers, "My father joined the non-cooperation movement and all our foreign clothes were burnt. My mother had very expensive foreign clothes, sarees and all that, but they were also burnt" (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 65). This is not a compulsion but a voluntary choice of undoing the extravagance. The stories of wearing *khaddar* clothes and buying a new shirt when the previous turns tattered have a deep rhetorical significance. It is a sacrifice made for the sake of a noble cause on the one hand and being substantially the same with the general public that they are bound to, in terms of indigence, on the other.

Again, body is at the center in renouncing the earthly pleasures. Burke (1969) claims, "For substance, in the old philosophies, was an act; and a way of life is an acting-together; and in acting-together men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them consubstantial" (p. 21). This notion of consubstantiality for the sake of identification stands on the common attributes that all human beings share when they are acting together. The theory of identification is thus significant in answering how Koirala relates his struggle for democracy with the ethos of the general public keeping his body predicament at the core of his narration.

The Body in the Prison

The second is the prison narrative which recurs the most in Koirala's *Portrait* in terms of the body exposure, its manipulation, and the pain inflicted upon it. In terms of the body, Rabinow (1991) discusses Foucault's notion of 'bio-power'. Bio-power can be categorized into two poles. One is the pole of human species as a whole and the other is "the human body: the body approached not directly in its biological dimension, but as an object to be manipulated and controlled" (as cited in Rabinow, 1991, p. 17). This notion of body is significant in this context. Foucault claims, "But the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (as cited in Rabinow 1991, p. 25). The body is politicized and employed in a multifarious use either as a political or economic instrument. What follows is the illustration of how Koirala politicizes his body inside the prison for the sake of identification with the general public in this Foucauldian line.

The body as the site of resistance is prominent in the narratives of this setting. Here, the body performs a political act for the explicit political end. Rhetorically Koirala identifies with the poverty-stricken and power dominated bodies of the general public, bearing pain in his own body so that he could liberate the people forever. Koirala's pain

is consubstantial with the pain of the general public. He deliberately takes the pain for the sole cause of relieving pain inflicted upon the public by the rulers. His first arrest was in 1930 in which he is alleged to have connection with a terrorist organization in Banaras. This arrest was not connected with the Nepali politics but it was a sort of rehearsal for the upcoming one. This arrest proved to be fruitful since he met *satyagrahis*, political prisoners connected with Gandhi's civil disobedience movement.

Next, Koirala's real political career begins when he joined the Bihar Socialist Party as the assistant secretary in 1939. Inclining towards the identification rhetoric, he writes, "I worked among peasants for the socialist Party's peasant organization, among students and also among industrial labors" (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 75). His second arrest was in 1942 in connection with Gandhi's Quit India Movement. His political arrest was evolving to maturity during these frequent arrests.

His third arrest was directly connected with Nepal's internal politics. He was arrested in March 1947 in connection with Jute Mill's Labor Movement in Biratnagar. This incident was pivotal since the movement later transformed into "a mass political movement for civil rights, civil liberties [and] responsible government" (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 84). The fourth arrest was the prime arrest in 1948 by Mohan Shamsheer in which his body was heinously prosecuted to break him physically and mentally down, but in vain.

The prison days after this arrest were remarkable in terms of the pain inflicted in Koirala's body as he remembers, "I was kept in unimaginably horrible conditions" (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 86). He did not have sufficient clothes and even a pair of shoes during the arrest. This arrest also forms a climax of the body narrative under the subjugation and power oppression. The implication is that Koirala's body is not less powerful as it resists against the oppressor in Foucauldian sense. Koirala recalls:

They arrested me and kept me in that condition and forced me to sleep - mind you, it was winter - on the bare floor of a barrack in the Singha Durbar compound for three days and three nights. For food, they gave me only *chiura* [flattened rice], some pieces of fried potato and one small piece of radish both in the morning and in the evening. I shivered all the time because of cold and I fainted once. I thought I would die because I could neither keep standing nor sit as the bare, stony floor was much too cold. My mind did not work. Sometimes, I used to get up, sit down again and crouch just to keep myself from losing my reason. (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 86)

The compassionate audience after going through these lines can feel the sense of pain and torment inflicted upon Koirala's body. One can interrogate why Koirala does not yield and accept the pain. The answer is that he puts his body at stakes not for his personal gain but for the people and the nation. It is to exchange his pain with people's pleasure. Koirala, once a son of an affluent father, in a due course of time deliberately puts his body into trials for a larger gain as he writes, "I rolled myself in the carpet and placed a brick under my head for a pillow" (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 87). Not only this he is compelled to cook his daily meal in latrine *lota* and wear a single set of dirty clothes for months. This is the body which calls sleep putting brick under the head. This is a body which even undergoes hunger strike under these extreme physical as well as mental tortures. This is not an ordinary body like that of homeless street dweller. This is a body of a man who is a center of key national and even international political concern, as he remembers the incident when his letter accounting this situation was escorted by Krishna Parsad Bhattraai and Balchand Sharma to India and handed over to Nehru, Koirala narrates, "They told me that Nehru was visibly moved and became tearful on reading it" (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 91). Koirala's narration inscribed in the body

is so powerful that not an ordinary man but even a man of reason like Nehru melts into tear.

To elaborate the body politics in Koirala's narratives, Alter's (2000) notion of body is significant. Alter discusses the dynamics of body politics in reference to Foucault. He asserts, "As Foucault has pointed out, the body is a site of power, and in my view, it is that precisely because it articulates, on the level of anatomy and physiology, muscles and morals, elements and erotics, the tension between "me" and "us," and the struggle, therein, over what "we" is in terms of both local action and global vision" (p. xvi). Alter is referring to what he calls 'matrix of power'. He further clarifies, "By "matrix of power" I mean the kind of practices, both minute and magnificent, that cut across cultural domains and link experiences that otherwise might be labeled as philosophical, political, economic, medical, sexual, and recreational, to cite but a few examples" (p. xvi). It means that body is not only a mere physiological phenomenon but it is linked with multiple networks of power relations and the discourses generated by this. In this connection, Foucault (1975) argues that the "power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who 'do not have it'; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them" (p. 27). Study of Koirala's political investment of his body from this standpoint helps to understand how his body has symbolic value that resists against the contemporary state apparatuses. He deploys his body from the vintage point of the oppressed one against the oppressor.

The Body at the Sickbed

The third site in which Koirala locates his body is at the sickbed in the hospitals and at home. This sickbed ultimately turns out to be a deathbed. His major political memoir *Aatmabrittanta* came as-told-to from this bed. For the first time he diagnosed cancer in Tata Cancer Hospital in 1946. Koirala reports, "I had developed some trouble in the throat. There was pain and I used to bleed" (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 77). Despite the horror of this fatal disease, he is in a plan to organize a mass movement in Nepal. So far as the mass movement is concerned, he was simply ignoring the fatal disease his body was fighting against.

It means that the disease is of secondary concern to the mass movement. He implies that he has a robust will power to render the movement successful. Despite the fatal ailment in his body his priority has always been the will of the people. This is how he identifies with the public will. He asserts, "At that time, I did not know that cancer was such a serious matter. I was in Bombay for six months undergoing treatment. It was about that time, 1946, that I thought of organizing a mass democratic movement in Nepal" (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 77). The body he projects in the first case of indigence and the second case of prison, works as an agency to resist against the oppressors (Ranas and Kings) but in the case of cancer, he desires for disembodiment. It means that he wants to forget that his body is diseased. He desires a kind of detachment from the body which at that juncture of his life is inscribed with cancer. It is like he desires to remain oblivious of the cancer in the body.

The most prominent incident about the symbolic importance of his body lies in the rhetoric of his narration in which King Birendra recommended to treat his body with the best available treatment in the world and temporarily releases him for the treatment in the USA. Koirala remembers,

The King started talking about my health. You see, I did not know how bad my condition was. I was weak, but there were no other symptoms of illness except the loss of vision. I said that I thought he had sent for me to discuss the political

situation. He replied. 'Your health is very critical.' I remarked that the health of the country was also very bad. (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 129).

This is the way Koirala places country over his physical ailment. Country's health is primary to his health. Furthermore, he remembers an incident in which even Gandhi and opponent Padma Shamsher become anxious of his health. He remembers Gandhi who wrote a letter to Padma Shamsher requesting Koirala's release as his colleagues pleaded Gandhi to do so. He writes, "Mahatma Gandhi interceded on my behalf. He wrote a letter to Padma Shamsher for my release" (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 85). But later in an appointment, Padma Shamsher himself claims that he did not release him on behalf of Gandhi's letter but did out of his own conscience. Koirala writes, "Padma Shamsher told me, 'Don't think I release you because Gandhi interceded on your behalf. I released you when the doctor told me your life was in danger'" (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 85). This indicates how Koirala's body was a key concern to all the stakeholders and even to the opponents.

In an audience with the King Birendra, he explicitly narrates, "Since my life was precious, the King said, he would like to send me to the best surgeon in the world. He suggested two names, Dr De Bake and Dr Cooley. The hospital he suggested was in Houston, USA which was considered the best place for the type of operation I needed" (as cited in Chatterjee 1982, p. 130). In the narration, Koirala rhetorically establishes that his body is the matter of central concern and protecting his body is pivotal in the contemporary political circumstance. He leaves an impression that everyone including the opponent takes his side to fight against the cancer since his body has an enormous strategic value at that juncture of Nepalese political history.

There is a connection of what Smith (1993) argues about the political significance of the somatic experience of a body in narrating about it, in Koirala's context as well. Emphasizing the role of somatic experiences in shaping the socio-political discourses, Smith argues that an autobiographer while writing her story juxtaposes her specific body with the available cultural body, here, through critical self-consciousness, she becomes aware of the existing body politic as it is mentioned,

The body offers itself up in bits and pieces, in its blood, immune system, organs, in its topography and its pathology for use in constructing the social environment and the positions of persons in that environment. This facile movement from the body to the body politic makes the invocation of the body for the purposes of the social a discursive commonplace. (Smith, 1993, p. 129)

Though Smith has particular concern with how female body is subjugated in the male dominant society. It is the study of how culturally constructed gendered identities are inscribed in female body and serve the patriarchal discursive regime. The way body is employed in her understanding has a close relevance with Koirala's deployment of body in his narrative but for different political end than that of gendered body.

CONCLUSION

Koirala's political rhetoric manifests in his personal stories in the form of body rhetoric. This paper explored how his political narrative implicates the inherent body politics. With a special focus on *Portrait*, the paper reveals that Koirala places a significant emphasis on his body to bring his life time political experiences in connection to his body, to the fore. During the course of the narrative analysis, the researcher examined his body rhetoric in the form of body politics based on the Foucauldian notion of body in which the body functions as the locus of power, resistance, knowledge and revolt. This paper is an answer to how Koirala's tangible experiences of pain and torments during his life time in multiple settings like home, prison, and sickbed,

inscribed upon his body have a political as well as rhetorical significance. More specifically, this is the answer to why and how Koirala makes use of his body narrative. The implication of this research lies in the contemplation of the way political leaders use different means like body in this case, to go to public.

Koirala uses his body rhetoric to convey the message that he has a noble purpose of liberating people from the fetters of autocracy and monolithic regime, since he identifies deep down with the contemporary ethos of the general public. He is successful to do so rhetorically keeping central emphasis on the stories of tangible experiences he had through his body in his life time. He is successful to articulate and associate the substance of his pain and suffering with the pain and suffering of the general public. To this point he evokes a sense of civic national ethos by way of Burke's consubstantiality among the audience of his life narratives.

Despite the availability of literature on the Koirala's core literary texts, little research has been available on the genre of his life narrative. This study, fundamentally limited to the rhetoric of body in his life narrative has opened up new avenues in which one can inquire into the multiple dimensions of how a statesman like him employ language to convey a larger-than-life message through different means like body in this argument. There can be a larger space to explore further on what other means does the political leader employ like body and narrate his/her stories to bind the people together for a larger purpose and by that token assume the statesmanship.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

I declare that this manuscript is originally produced by me.

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