

Tribhuvan University

April 2021

Gender Role as Performance in Ghanashyam Khadka's *Nirvana*

– Sushma Thapa

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in English**

Gender Role as Performance in Ghanashyam Khadka's *Nirvana*

By

Sushma Thapa

Roll No.: 231

Exam Roll No.: 6204

T.U. Regd. No.: 6-2-720-79-2012

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

April 2021

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those people who have sincerely assisted me to complete my thesis successfully. I am profoundly indebted to my supervisor, Mr. Hem Lal Pandey, Assistant Professor, at the Central Department of English, Kritipur, for his invaluable guidance and support. Without his valuable suggestion, this thesis would have been impossible.

I would like to extend my cordial gratitude to Professor Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota, Head of the Central Department of English, for providing me an opportunity to carry out my thesis.

Special thanks go to Mr. Pradeep Raj Giri and Laxman Bhatta, Assistant Professors, at the Central Department of English, for their precious suggestions and constructive comments.

I would also like to express a few words of thanks to my friends for boosting my morale and selflessly supporting me to complete my thesis. I am equally grateful to my parents who motivated me to pursue my master's degree by taking English as a major subject. I would like to express my thankfulness to all the teaching faculties and other staff of this department for their support. Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Ghanashyam Khadka, the author of the novel '*Nirvana*', Social Science Baha, Battisputali, and Martin Chautari, Thapathali, Kathmandu, for making my endeavor in writing this thesis in a more convenient way by providing essential references.

April 2021

Sushma Thapa

Gender Role as Performance in Ghanashyam Khadka's *Nirvana*

Abstract

This research analyzes Ghanashyam Khadka's novel Nirvana from the perspective of gender role as performance and female masculinity. It examines the social construction of power, femininity and gender roles corresponding between sex and gender identity. The characters show their performances through masculinity and challenge the conventional gender roles. The major thrust of this research is to examine how female characters have challenged the stereotypical patriarchal system where women are tagged as inferior, feminine, and fragile. In addition, it also analyzes how female characters establish their identities possessing confidence, assertiveness, and independence. Using Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity where everyday action, gestures and representation, and behaviors challenge the prescriptive and proscriptive approaches of sex, sexuality, and gender. In addition, masculinity is exhibited through the perspective of Judith Halberstam's theoretical concept of Female Masculinity, where female characters Dipti, Monica, Savita, and Aaryaa act like male characters and establish their identities. Finally the analysis proves that the novelist is against the imposition of gender roles and identities by patriarchal society. Also, this research emphasizes how a woman can perform like a man. It also suggests that masculinity is not the sole property of male. Masculinity is the social position that can be practiced in an individual way.

Keywords: Gender performativity, Female Masculinity, Femininity, Agency

This thesis is an analysis on the gender roles in Ghanashyam Khadka's novel *Nirvana*. The novel is about transcendental love story and myriad facets of psychology and philosophy. The narrator comes out with masculine attitude where he implicitly observes social formation of gender roles. There are female characters in

the novel present masculine attributes which challenge the male stereotypes, patriarchal superiority and social construction of gender. Here, every characters gain agency by escaping the bounds of society's expectation of femininity which remains subjugated. This research also investigates on the impacts and perceptions towards female characters by the protagonist. It also analyzes how the characters' gender identity is constructed by their performance. This work deals within the context of gender performance especially presentation of gender role, female agency, and female masculinity.

The primary objective of the research is to examine gender performance of the characters in the novel. Secondly, it also shows the masculinity performed by female characters and also their female agency so as to present the changing position of women in the contemporary Nepalese society. Here, through the presentation of female characters the author intends to dismantle the conventional world of women. To specify, this research focuses on reflection of gender and sexuality constructed by social values and norms.

The novel begins from the narrator, Bodhi, who works as a psychological counselor in his organization called Alchemy. The novel starts with the birthday celebration scene where Monica, a friend of Bodhi, requests to celebrate. Bodhi and Monica are in their initial stage of relationship. Bodhi is guided by masculine ideology and gets attracted towards her body and views her as an object of physical pleasure. Monica pleads him to stay with her overnight and she gets asleep. Bodhi becomes confused with her behavior so he escapes from there at mid night.

On the next day, meeting with Bodhi in early morning, Monica asks unusual queries about death and happiness. Bodhi ignores her queries. In the evening, Monica vanishes without informing anybody. Finally, Bodhi tries to find out where she is and

finally, he goes through Monica's Facebook profile. Then he finds a person named Jarin connected to Bodhi and Monica. He is a client of Bodhi. Jarin loses his hope for life due to his wife's sexual dissatisfaction with him. He sets a plan to meet Jarin to inquire about Monica. During day time, he meets his student named Shweta whom he had taught a decade ago while staying at her home. Bodhi ran away from his home to spend carefree life. The reason behind absconding was his father's restriction. He wants to spend his free life there for a year. He was teaching in a school. While, Shweta was in her pre-adolescent stage when Bodhi met her. His reminiscences about the time he spent with Shweta. She was an obedient girl who devotedly followed her young (late teenage) teacher. Due to Shweta's growing physical body along with beauty he can't control his lust so he runs away from there.

While Bodhi is on the way to meet Jarin, he encounters an accident with a multi-millionaire owner of Dipti Airways, one of the richest ladies in the world named Dipti. Bodhi becomes slightly injured however his sister does not allow him to go outside for a while in order to take rest. After a day, while he walks along on the street he meets Dipti and goes with her for coffee. Dipti takes him to the midst of Himalayas where he feels mesmerized from the aura of nature and her cozy lifestyle. Dipti reveals that Monica's family death on plane crash was planned as well. He comes to know that Monica has been to ashram. Dipti wants Bodhi to console her to case file against the owner of Right International Airways William Nichol, who is responsible of Monica's family demise. He is also a rival of Dipti. She wants to make William busy so that she can improve her business economy.

After that Bodhi returns back from coffee trip. He hates Dipti for being self-centered and arrogant. Bodhi meets Shweta and knows the history of Shweta after he left her. Bodhi's one of the female clients comes with a problem. A good looking

around age of fifty becomes confused about her love with a junior colleague in her office. She has family including grandchild but she wants to get married with a junior male. So, she gets confused either it is good or bad to do so. She believes it is bad from social points of view and good from her personal freedom of life. After certain therapy her problem is resolved.

Bodhi gradually becomes attached to Shweta and they decide to get married. Shweta mother dies due to heart attack that wretches Sweta's condition. Shweta wishes him to be contactless from their job and relatives. They plan to visit another country for several years. They enjoy their journey. Suddenly, they encounter ship wreck where Shweta vanishes in the ocean and Monica miraculously rescues Bodhi.

After that incident, Bodhi delves into depression and finally follows the spiritual way. He meets Guru Govinda in the ashram. Govinda has transformed himself into feminine Sobita. His devotion towards spirituality enables him this power to transform his sex according to his wish. He shows gender as a social performance. Eventually, Bodhi also finds the meaning of life that materialistic lifestyle gives a momentary delight to an individual. He is finally aware about eternal happiness can be attained from spiritual way of living.

Ghanashyam Khadka is contemporary Nepali journalist, psychologist, and lawyer. *Nirvana* is his debut writing. This novel can be analyzed from various perspectives like transcendental love, psychology, spirituality and feminism. The protagonist and first person narrator named Bodhi encounters different socially constructed characters and he himself represents this aspect. Monica has lost her family in a plane crash. She abandons her doctor profession and seeks significance of her life. To achieve this she give up and abandons all the phases of patriarchal society. Whereas, the character Shweta, is projected as an independent being and the one to

follow traditional concept of feminine. Guru Govinda (Sobita) spiritual follower has power to convert his body from male to female and vice versa. Dipti, one of the richest ladies in the world has been painted as a masculine, who defies the traditional concept of feminine. The character performs their role according to their circumstances and their experiences.

Ghanashyam Khadka somehow attempts to present that one's gender and identity is determined by society where subject perform their assigned role. This study analyzes by following the notion of gender construction. Female masculinity is another angle to analyze the socially constructed phenomenon. So, this research highlights the concept of sex, gender, and sexual identity. For this, researcher gives the evidences from novel's different characters, its plot, and dialogue. This research reflects through the perspectives of Judith Butler concept of gender performativity.

Feminist movement is not a new phenomenon. In late 1960's and 1970's many feminists were actively involved in the feminist movement. In 1949, French feminist Simone de Beauvoir in her prominent book *Second Sex* forwards the concept that women are not born feminine rather they are conditioned to be feminine by patriarchy, "One is not born a woman but rather becomes one"(1). Gender is socially and culturally constructed rules given to males and females on the basis of biological difference termed as "sex" by society. In another term, gender prevails according to prescribe and proscribe appearance, behavior, and preference in accordance to sex. Butler has borrowed this concept later in her book *Gender Trouble*. She argues that gender identity is the result of social construction depends upon performance. She mentioned in her book *Gender Trouble*, "gender identity is not innate but rather a set of behavior that all members of a culture perform" (61). In this sense patriarchal notion of gender, sex, and sexuality is neither social nor cultural however it is product

of action and behavior typically by performance. Nikki Sullivan in *A Critical Introduction to QueerTheory* illustrates that, “It is commonly held belief that gender is a natural attribute, an internal essence that manifests itself in characteristics such as (in case of females) passivity, nurturance, and maternal feelings ” (Sullivan 81). Here Sullivan also supports the idea of Butler that gender relies on performance of a character rather than an innate behavior.

Similarly, this study often focuses on feminist perspectives on the agency. To examine this Butlerian theory of performativity agency is apt. In *Life Writing*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson describe how Butlerian agency functions:

Feminist philosopher Judith Butler situates agency in what she calls performativity of subjectivity. According to Butler identity is enacted daily through socially enforced norms that surrounds us. Thus, it is through our reenactment of the norms of, say, masculinity or femininity that we know ourselves to be a “heterosexual man” or “a woman”.(44)

Butler highlights that a subject can assert his or her agency through the repetitive performances. Similarly, this research often explores the female masculinity in khadka’s *Nirvana*. Here, research is applied on the idea of female masculinity. Men’s studies also commonly referred to as masculinity studies or critical studies of men and masculinity, an interdisciplinary field, under the gender studies, which is concerned with the social, historical, cultural, and psychological construction of masculinity. Women are always considered as the subordinate to men. Since the beginning of human civilization, women are suppressed and oppressed by men. They are seen as the opposite of men. It means, their identity is determined on the basis of their performance.

Female masculinity is alternative model of gender variation; it is not simply

the opposite of female. Judith Halberstam's *An Introduction to Female Masculinity: Masculinity Without men* introduces the issue of femaleness or female masculinity. Halberstam claims that far from being an imitation of maleness, female masculinity actually affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculine. In other words, female masculinities are framed, as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing. She introduces the term "heroic masculinity" which has been produced by and across both male and female bodies. According to Paul Smith, in his book *Masculinity in Contemporary Culture* mentioned that, "masculinity or masculinities are in some real sense not the exclusive "property" of biologically male subject- it's true that many female subjects lay claim to masculinity as their property" (8). Therefore, masculinity is not the property of men. Masculinity in the 1990s has recognized as, at least in part, a construction by female as well as male born people. Halberstam asserts "In alternative models of gender variation female masculinity is not simply the opposite of female femininity, nor is it a female version of male masculinity" (29). Similarly, Janet Wolff's *The Invisible Flaneur Woman and Literature of Modernity: Culture and Society* to criticize the rational, hegemony and rejection of female access in the modern world. Richard Howson's *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity* is an innovative and radical exploration of domination, gender, and social justice. Howson contributes to contemporary understandings of men and masculinity, presenting a detailed examination of hegemonic masculinity.

When the novel was published, many scholars, critics, readers of any inclination were attracted because its blend of love, romance, spirituality, and psychological therapy. They have analyzed the novel from different perspectives. Some of them interpret it through tragic love story while other study it from the

perspective of life guiding. There are yet others who see it as experimentation and appreciate comprehensible language.

Anjali Subedi views this book through the lens of people's everyday life. According to her, this book finely deals with the everyday life as well as the eternal, or the spiritual world at the same time. In course of his job, first person narrator, as psychologist, lets reader peep into the world of intense mental stress and quite helpful therapies as well. She argues: "The book makes readers think about human life in a different way. Since they see Monika rising above the worldly ties for the 'ultimate' goal of human life – 'Nirvana'- and succeeding in remaining blissful rather that way, they may love to compare it with their own versions of life" (16). The readers might have a problem with the fact, real life is generally not as smooth or dramatic as the writer play it out. It is far messy and demanding to be prepared to follow the footsteps of someone like Monica or the psychologists.

CP Aryal tweets his views on Nirvana by appreciating the novel from writers grip on language deftly avoiding the use of elaborate language for the sake of just usage, giving a novel genuine authenticity. He also views this book from witty and thought provoking one line that are prepared through the span of the book enrich the reading experience as well, "A great quick-read laden, with profound insights, the novel will undoubtedly serve as a modern-day marker for those who enjoy exploring spiritual themes through fiction, for others it might even come in handy as a lucid self-help book" (11). He further explains the novel with the experimentation on plot: ". . . brings a unique Nepali flair to the tried- and-tested plot trajectory, at times the book does go in dizzying circles and is over dramatized"(9).

Similarly, Sudhir Sharma argues that this novel has been presented in a simple and fascinating way. He further argues that whatever the reader quest in the novel

they find it. He also says that every readers find their own story in some angle in the novel. He contends: “the book touches upon such deep subjects; even so, Khadka is able to present them in a simple and intriguing way. Khadka’s ability to give a literary touch to issues that he reports on has been materialized in the novel” (3). Abhaya Shrestha noted, the novel as ‘self-realization’ aspect of Buddhism is prominent in the novel. He even compares the novel to Herman Hesses’ magnum opus, *Siddhartha*.

Zeal Subedi highlighted about the book through the writer’s diligence over rhetorical analysis of writer to give cathartic effect for readers. He also discusses that novel is not merely about tragic love story but goes beyond it, introducing to the mystery of life.

After reading their visions they have portrayed about the different aspects of the novel from different points of view and arrive at several findings and conclusions, none of them entices the issue of gender performance, female masculinity. Here the study of performance of female characters challenges the gender role assigned by patriarchal society.

To conduct this research, the researcher makes use of Butlerian theory of gender performance as well as Judith Halberstam’s theory of female masculinity. The concept of different scholars assist particularly Judith Butler to lay the basis of methodological framework whose conception proceeds to produce through analysis of the text. Butler’s performativity theory introduces in her book *Gender Trouble*, gender is constructed through repetitive acts of individual. It relies on the repletion of imitation. Those imitation become norm and natural. She elaborates this notion as, “Substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence . . . Identity is performativity constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results” (33). Here Butler tries to explain

that gender identity is formed from the repetitive action of a character. Writer also presents the similar notion from the character guru Govinda.

Biologically guru Govinda is a male. He has a power to transform his sex in accordance with his desire. He acquires it as his achievement from nirvana. He can transform his biological and social role as per his wish. The following lines spoken by guru Govinda's disciple Monica explains about his power. She narrates that, "Shovita is not a woman, he is my supreme Guru, Govinda" . . . He experiments seriously with many forms of Tantras. This time he is practicing to be a woman, today is the last day of his practice session. Tomorrow he will be back in his original form" (206).

Looking guru Govinda from Butler's point of view, his identity is created by the repetitive performance. Sex and gender is neither biological nor social however it relies on what subject repeatedly acts and imitates. When guru Govinda turns into female he acts like female. He named as female appellation Shovita. His physical body seems like female i.e. automatic removal of moustache and beard, growth in breast as well as change in skin texture:

He started to develop the characteristics and the feelings of being a full and mature woman in himself seven months back. In two months' time his skin texture changed and his moustache and beard were gone. In the third month he developed breasts. In the fourth month his voice changed. By now he has all the feelings of a woman. No one can distinguish by looking at him by the outer vision alone! (207)

Guru Govinda is born with male genital, in the concept of phallogentric he is supposed to act as male. He has achieved his gender transformation through nirvana. For Butler, "Sex does not cause gender, and gender cannot be understood to reflect or express sex" (142). From this point of view gender requires a performance that

repeated through a character guru Govinda who is merely an imitator. The biological male Guru Govinda turns himself into female by continuous practices. The performance of Guru Govinda is applicable from the perspectives of Butler's performativity theory which she introduces in *Gender Trouble*, based on the repetition of imitation. Eventually it becomes a norm, the original. She further points that the "Substantive effect of gender is performativity produce and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence . . . Identity is performativity constitute by the very expression" that are said to be its results" (33). Butler suggests the action of gender requires a performance that repeats through character Govinda as a female imitator, regards as woman. Gender is created by repetitive acts where gestures and movements play crucial role Butler's theory of performativity emphasizing in her seminal work *Gender Trouble* she mentioned that:

Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.(519)

Here Butler elaborates that gender is an artificial construct. She believes that gender is not biologically fixed, but socially constructed where they learn from the social norms. The similar notion Butler presented about gender is explicitly explained by guru Govinda:

Even the notion of male and female is illusory. This division of male and female is relevant only to the extent of biological existence. At the state of consciousness, there is nothing like male consciousness and female consciousness. If I am capable of recognizing only the body and if I

understand only the language of body, then you here are a male and you there is a female . . . then for me, no one is either a male or a female.(214)

In the context of guru Govinda, he turns himself into a female biologically pretending as woman since last seven months. It means Govinda achieve his gender transformation through his masquerade but he could not completely change his biological sex which is proved by narrator explaining , “I remembered that Shovita’s arms looked big and strong, like a man's arms”(207). Similarly Govinda as a female also adopts the traditional gender role assigned by patriarchy. In traditional gender roles, females are assigned to work in a kitchen. When Govinda performing as Shovita, she cooks food, which maid describes to Bodhi and Monica, “In the course of her transformational process, I was told that Shovita got more involved in cooking. She had lately been deeply and devotedly involved in the chores normally assigned to the feminine gender like hospitality management, cooking and other such activities. She did that on this last day of her practice too” (209). This lines explicitly show that female should be bounded in the four walls of house. They are assigned to look after the kitchen and also tends to make others happy by the proper hospitality.

Bodhi the protagonist and narrator of the story works as a psychological counselor in his organization named Alchemy. In the initial phase of life, he is guided through his sex and often guided by the patriarchal principle of the phallocentric world. He views women from the lens of patriarchy where he minutely analyzes the physical appearance and character of women. He easily gets fascinated towards the outer look of woman. In the starting of novel, Bodhi encounters Monica who seems to be suffering from anxiety. In spite of showing sympathy, he analyzes her from sexual point of view. He compares herself with the role of woman who follows patriarchal gender roles. Bodhi in some sense represents all the minute characteristics of

patriarchy. For instance, female requests for drinking wine is considered as unusual in traditional society. In case of Bodhi, he views the act of Monica in an adverse way. He defines the act of Monica through the conventional gender norms, “In fact I should have insisted her to drink. I should have invited her to dine. I should have taken initiation. Instead I remained unresponsive to her invitation. I felt a surge of masculinity kick in” (10). From this Bodhi tries to impose the gender role assigned by patriarchal society. He also introduces reader mostly through his attraction towards female from sexual point of view.

I was feeling a strange kind of tickle at that moment. A sort of joy was dancing inside me. I wasn't able to speak though. The night was at its zenith. I started becoming restless inside. I glanced at her. She was in tranquility. There was no hint of restlessness in her . . . Then she switched off the bright light and switched on a dimmer one. Changed her dress as if there was none in the room. Then she lay down on her back with face up. I was astonished by this natural flow of her manner.(17)

It apparently shows that the lady seems indifference towards the situation. She takes it normally sharing bed with male. The performance, which he shows towards female character can be associated with phallogocentric. His attitude is guided by the notion of male as subject and female as object. His mind is overwhelmed by his libido but controlled by the social norms. When he meets another character named Shweta similar feelings arises in his mind. He cannot resist his eyes from looking at her outer beauty. “I had an urge to keep looking at her. I felt the supreme god has not yet created a more beautiful face than hers . . . So I forcibly removed my eyes from her face and closed the curtain” (47). He gazes each and every females from the male centric view as if they are commodified being. He judges them at first from their

bodily appearance. For him female is viewed as a fragile being, innocent, inferior, and should be caresses by superior ones. He is a person whose identity is socially constructed in accordance with his sex and patriarchal society. His attitude towards female shows how he is grown up and taught culturally to view femininity as a passive and demure being. He also analyses the performance of noble lady Dipti with the lens of orthodox gender role claiming her as a corrupted woman who is hunger of power and aristocratic lifestyles.

I found the fair and lovely face of Dipti being smeared with the black of intrigues and conspiracies and turning ugly. “Live an honest life, Dipti!” I suggested softly, “What kind of riches do you not have that is making you do this?” “What do you mean?” Her arrogance exploded, “Are you asking me to “live” or “leave” an honest life?” “How have you understood it?” “If you meant “live”, I am living it; if you meant “leave”, how can I leave something that I have not started?” (125)

The given lines explores that the protagonist views Dipti as an egotistic character who can attempt any action in order to achieve their goals. As afore stated, Bodhi profession is a psychological counselor. While going through the course of treatment one of his clients Jarin attempts to suicide due to his wife. He also describes Jarin’s wife Savita as youthful, and energetic longing for lust. While Bodhi was resting after his accident, he delves into the thinking about the act of Savita. He exposes the role of Savita as reckless who failed to delight her husband. He describes Savita as:

His wife was a gregarious woman full of youthful beauty. There was a chasm between the two of them in many respects. Jarin was almost past forty, exhausted, and a loner. His wife was just past twenty-four, expansive, and full of energy. Jarin was definitely ahead in terms of knowledge, worldly

experience and social status. But in terms of youth, sensuality and lust Savita was miles ahead of Jarin.(37)

It shows that narrator is an individual whose gender identity has been socially constructed in accordance with his sex and also guided by the notion of patriarchy. Her description has also been shown from male gaze and how male views an outer appearance.

When Jarin is in his anxiety due to his wife. He is distrustful and attempts to do suicide. Bodhi as a counselor, efforts many ways to heal Jarin's anxiety. Finally, he asks Jarin to perform the role of dead person. For this he should act totally numb as dead person. Neither he has feelings, nor can he defend the rumor because he is performing the role of dead one. He became neutral by forgetting all his agony and despair because dead body has no feelings at all. Bodhi suggests, "Now you are not living in this world and your thoughts have vanished too. Don't react with what is right and what is not. Remember that you are dead. Sunshine, rain, and pains and pleasures of this world don't have any meaning for a dead person" (39). Here acting like a dead body can be considered as symbols. He thinks and repeatedly performs of being dead, he feels himself as dead and forgets the social belief and do as per his wish. Jarin roles can be considered as feminine here. He born with the male sex organ. For that he must perform the role of masculine however he acts the role of fragile female in the context of gender role. As society demands male as a controlling being but he is following the order of Bodhi like an obedient female being. And he could not use his sexual and gender power to fulfill his wife demands. As a result, his wife left him to seek sexual pleasure. He does not have power to combat with obstacles in his own married life. His attempt to commit suicide in a reason of abandonment of his wife shows his feeble nature.

Similarly, Simone de Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex* asserts that “The body is not a thing, it is a situation, and it is our grasp on the world and our sketch of our project” (85). Butler agrees with her that “no one is born with the gender-gender is always acquired”; however, Butler continues her interpretation in a disapproving way by saying: “Beauvoir was willing to confirm that one is not born with the sex, as a sex, sexed, and that being sexed and being human are co extensive and simultaneous . . . cultural construction of sex, the myriad and open possibilities of cultural meaning occasioned by a sex body” (Butler142). As body and sex derives the meaning from social and cultural performances. Carter brought a new prescriptive to what Beauvoir said concerning becoming a woman. According to Carter, the construction of gender is valid for both sexes, not only for woman. Thus, she claims that “to be a man is not a given condition but continues effort” (Carter 63). Carter projects that gender is a regular practices depending upon how a character present themselves.

In the novel, author attempts to show nature of gender not merely from characters but also through the use of simile. Nature of woman has been considered as arrogant especially showing wild attitude towards man for the acquaintance of her natural beauty. In the novel author has compared female with nature. When Bodhi and Monica are walking on the way, he compares her face with sky with the changing expressions on her face, sometime clear and sometime murky. “Right now it was very clear and open, just like her face, displaying a million stars”(14). He compares her mood like a changing weather which is not stable. In addition, author also compares the nature of woman with stream. While he was trekking towards Shweta’s village with her father Ashok, he was mesmerized with the beauty of stream and tries to touch him and got shocked from its flow as a reply Ashok told that “Young man, If you enter straightaway into the mainstream of a waterfall like that, it can kill! . . . If

you bear-hug a girl who does not know you, wouldn't she thrash you with a plank? This is just like that" (52). Here female is displayed as an innocent and meek who can easily make you to get through in an accident. Female should be touched slowly and gradually through a cuddle. Whereas, male should have the capability of persuading female to lure. Adverse characteristics of nature are compared with the nature of women.

Again, moving forward to show the gender role through the character, Monica who is presented as lust, lighthearted lady in the first part. She is introduced in the exposition of the plot. The novel instigates with the meeting between Bodhi and Monica. Where Bodhi finds her character unusual. First, she asks strange queries about the reason for being happy. Bodhi takes all her enquiries as a jokes and wander about her conception and behavior. But his motif is to seduce her. He is controlling himself due to the lapse between his lust and Monica's unusual questions. Bodhi expresses the act of Monica, "I thought this girl is not what she appears to be. What she was saying did not match her age nor the moment"(13). Here, her performance show prototypes, who is challenging the stereotypes. She forces to drink wine to Bodhi which is generally consumed by male according to stereotypical society. She also assembles with him up to mid night and requests him to share bed which is totally vice versa of the gender role. In addition to that, on the next day she calls Bodhi in rush and asks strange question about death and she vanishes. But at the resolution she appears differently that she has been presented as a truth seeker engaged in spirituality. Her performance shows that she denies all the gender roles, illusion of the society and walk through the path of truth. She is born as female but she is determined, optimistic, patience, and indifference towards the roles assigned by society. Analyzing Butler's concept of performativity, Geoff Bouche states, Judith

Butler celebrated the concept of performativity is designed to expose conceptions of identity as fictions” (112). Identity is constructed and is changeable. In the same way, Monica also seems fluid. Her life in an exposition seems to be in dilemma about the notion of life, death and happiness. She had been presented as a cheerful lady who open her dress in front of an unknown guy at first meeting, and appeals to share bed together.

“Let’s sleep now.” She responded. Then she switched off the bright light and switched on a dimmer one. Changed her dress as if there was none in the room. Then she lay down on her back with face up. I was astonished by this natural flow of her manner. “Am I also supposed to sleep here?” The words tumbled out suddenly. “Of course!” She gave a simple reply as if she were saying today is Sunday.” (17-18)

She is experiencing miserable situation due to the demise of her whole family in a plane crash. But in resolution she seems peace, calm and gay. She establishes herself as a committed, independent which transforms her agony into peacefulness. Her strength to face the death of her whole family while being alienated she seeks for perpetual happiness is considered as her masculine character.

Similarly another major character Shweta whom Bodhi encounters since her early teenage. Bodhi was once teacher of Shweta. She is the first girl in Bodhi’s life whose beauty forced him to run away during her early teenage. He can’t control his heart from the fragrance of transforming from bud to flower. He stands in the position of subject and views Shewta from the patriarchal and societal construction of gender roles. Shweta represents the gynocentric world who has been presented as pretty, submissive, delicate character while Bodhi as male centric viewing female in terms of sex, beauty, and physical appearance. Shweta deliberately plays with feminine role.

All description about Shweta was shown through masculine point of view. While Shweta is in her adolescent period Bodhi couldn't keep away his sexual desire apart from her although he is her mentor. He entices her every activities especially her physical appearance which allure him in an erotic way. He elaborates her each and every parts of her body by narrating:

Bulging breasts, cylindrical neck, lips like rose petals, cheeks like well puffed fresh cake, strong hips, soft palms . . . All parts of her body looked stunningly beautiful to me. . . Spreading her legs on soft grass she was peeling the pomelo with a knife. Her white calf muscles, knees and thighs were glowing in the sunshine. I felt steaming inside. My cheeks started burning. The body had heated up. Something was pushing me from inside. It was like an outsider calling on me. I was slightly apprehensive and highly romanticized by the novelty of my own persona. (88)

But she is unknown about it. She always gives respect to Bodhi. She is emotionally connected with him. When she becomes young she surprises Bodhi being a client. When he sees her, he clearly compares her beauty with nature. In addition he started describing what she wears at the first time when he saw her. “. . .Dressed in white *salwar-kurta*, the hair of this voluptuous blond was flowing all over her face and back like sea waves. . .” (46). For Bodhi physical link comes primarily while emotional link comes secondarily. Her performance represents feminine based on patriarchal belief of gender roles. She has been depicted as diligent girl, sincere daughter, and caring friend in an entire plot.

The next character of the novel who is presented as a masculine in the novel is Dipti Chand. She is the billionaire bachelor (listed on one of richest ladies of the world), managing director of Dipti Airways. She acquires success in her early age.

She is stronger, bold, courageous and independent. She is deeply ambitious woman who lusts for power and position. She has a masculine soul inhabiting female body. In spite of having luxurious and sophisticated lifestyles she dreamed to acquire power. She has a business competitor named William Nichol; owner of Wright International Airways. In order to expunge him from her way she tries to manipulate Monica to file lawsuit on the charge of air crash caused by Wright International Airways. It was held two years ago where more than 250 passengers died including Monica's family. Dipti claims that it is a conspiracy done by the owner William Nicole in order to eradicate the black mail done by pilot Aquino. She is narrated about the problem by William while he is drunk. His pilot Aquino has shot the private video in his personal jet and black mails William asking for heavy ransom. He becomes scared that half the shares of Nicole's company is in the ownership of his wife Maria. At first he fulfills the demand but later he feels insecure that Aquino would black mail him again. He doesn't want to let Maria know about the fact because she would leave and claims half of his property. So William plots to murder Aquino by the help of his aeronautical engineer Julia where the plane dived into ocean. Dipti is seeking the right person who could file case against her competitor so that she could uplift her company. She directly asserts about her lust for power: “. . . she spoke with unnatural intonation, “the biggest enemy of Dipti International Airways is Wright Airways. If I can kill its reputation, my company becomes the number one flight company in the world . . .”(125). However Monica denies her proposal. Finally, after many quests she finds Bodhi to persuade Monica to file case against Nicole.

In the novel, her character has dared the patriarchal concept of gender roles. She even braved male by her attempt to conquer them. Dipti is seen vividly as a masculine character. She has confronted male masculinity to change the conventional

role of women in a society. R. W. Connell also declares, “Masculinity is a social position, a set of practices” (81). Masculinity is a social position, a set of practices because gender role is constructed by society. Dipti is a free being; she declares that in her revolts there is no law for her, nor any rule. She existed for herself alone. Connell further defines masculinity as “...simultaneously a place in gender, and the effects of these practices on bodily experience, personality and culture” (71). From this definition, masculinity can be taken as practices on bodily experience. Masculine position works as an individual way that is not only the property of male. Here Dipti also acts like a man to challenge the male masculinity. That means she is trying to prove masculinity is not the private property of men. She wants to exist as a masculine woman. It also exist in women’s bodies and they can perform like men to establish their existence in a man’s world. Her masculine characteristics made her the lady aristocrat of the world and often leads to fight with the traditional domain. She is guided by her own vision and mission.

Here, Khadka has presented the characteristics of Dipti as a new woman possessing the characteristics of independent with progressive ideas who seeks radical change. Also she moves forward pushing the male dominated society. So, Connell also adds, “masculinity and femininity can become gender project in the lives of individual” (81). Through this line, we can understand that masculinity and femininity are an individual project, which is not construct by society. So we can appreciate Dipti is totally guided by masculine qualities because she takes the actions in a masculine way not by being feminine.

Here Khadka enables to show female masculinity who takes action and decision according to her desire. She even didn’t listen to her father’s suggestion: “My dad says, learn from Nicole. I say teach a lesson to Nicole” (125). This line suggests

that Dipti accomplishes her mission by herself because she is a self – responsible who is searching for her own distinct identity in the patriotic society. So we can appreciate Dipti is totally guided by masculine qualities because she takes the actions in a masculine way not as being feminine. It shows that she is confident and attack the male supremacy. She is confident and arrogant who manipulates other to feed her hunger of power even though she is success. The attributes ascribed to women like passive, weak, emotional, meek, docile and submissive have been proven false.

Another minor character of the novel whose name is kept secret can also be considered as courageous as well as masculine. She breaks the traditional gender roles. First of all she is independent with dignified post of a bank manager. Although her age is running in fifth decades, she executes audacious and prototype characters. Even though she has grandchild and family, including caring husband she has an affair with a bachelor boy of her office. She wants to marry with him. She wants to enjoy her life lavishly. But she is sacred of social norms and belief. She reveals:

So what is your dilemma?" I asked. She was silent for a moment. Then she said, "Is it right or wrong?" "What do you think?" "Sometimes I think it is right; sometimes I think it is wrong." "Why do you think it is right?" "Because it is my life; I have a right to do what I feel like. It is better to fulfill your desire in this only lifetime." "So why do think it is wrong?" "I am a married woman. I have aged as well. I have a family. I have sons and daughters. Grand children as well. The society, the morality and the law do not condone me doing this. (102)

It shows that she can't fully break the rules of society. She gathers courage to express her suffering but she thinks that she can't resist which alternative is appropriate for her. Halberstam urges, "Female masculinity by studying biological women who

perform in ways typically coded as male” (4). Halberstam believes that female masculinity is performed adopting the roles allocated to a man by society. All women have feminine qualities but if they act like men that women can be a masculine. In case of the lady, she abides feminine qualities in the context that she couldn't run away from the rules set by society but her steps to fall in love with young boy who is half of her age and also her courage to think of fleeing with him can be considered as masculine performance.

In the course of narration Bodhi also expresses an incident of one of his clients Martin and Aaryaa. Martin is aristocratic while Aaryaa is beautiful. They fall in love with each other. It shows that Martin is subject and Aaryaa is an object who is guided and attracted towards beauty and money respectively. Bodhi expresses, “While Aaryaa had all the beauty, Martin was very rich. In the relationship of their mutual love, it was difficult to say whether Martin's wealth or Aaryaa's beauty was the critical factor.” (73) Here, Martin is guided by conventional gender roles quashing and controlling his beloved Aaryaa. He assumes that females are inclined and can be attracted by money. So he tries to control Aaryaa. Moreover, he accuses Aaryaa having attachment with another boyfriend. He considers Aaryaa as his private property. In order to calm his rage he slaps Aaryaa in the public place. However the boy whom Martin accuses is her cousin. But Aaryaa repels the accusation made by Martin. Narrator exposes Aaryaa as an extrovert and desirous. Bodhi proclaims, “Aaryaa was a gregarious girl, like most beautiful women are. She enjoyed mixing up with boys. She liked to visit nightclubs too. Martin was wary of this trait of her” (73). Here words used by the narrator “gregarious girl, like most beautiful women are” overtly shows that his perception is guided by phallogocentric world. Through the representation of Aaryaa he elaborates how comportment of beautiful lady is

presented in the patriarchal society. But analyzing the attempts of Aaryaa from female agency she succeeds in disrupting and dismissing all the gender stereotypes through the resistance. Kabeer Naila in “Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the measurement of Women’s Empowerment” states, “ Agency sometimes take the form of negotiation, manipulation, subversion and resistance as well as more intangible, cognitive process of reflection and analysis. (453). Naila believes that resistance is one of the ways asserting agency in a society. Supporting this argument, the researcher claims that Aaryaa as well exercise her agency through resistance. Her action to slapped Martin in public for being accused shows that she is powerful woman dealing with injustice that pervades in life. Traditionally, women have had the little agency which is false ideology according to the feminist philosophy. Ideology is mainly associates with men which restricts the women’s agency. As a result of it, they show their reluctance to engage in work, or to go to public sphere and voice out on any issues. Women should be treated as potential intellectual equals and social equals to men. As Lisa Lucile Owens in her writing “*Coerced Parenthood as Family Policy*” opines that “In the feminist context, agency is used to describe the universal core to feminism and to equality more generally. As both critical and concrete issues of feminism are re-characterized as struggle for agency, the cause of women and feminism is advanced” (1). Agency is used for the equality where no one is inferior and superior and everyone has same authority in the power structure. Here Aaryaa’s powerful story is a proof that women have as much agency as men but women should voice out for their identity. Aaryaa is a powerful woman dealing with injustices that pervades in her life. She renounces Martin for accusing her with other man shows that her degree of independence, voice for equality, decisive and acting power of women.

Correspondingly, analyzing the roles of mother and sister, they embody traditional women who are dependent towards males. Both of them possess the feminine characteristics like gracefulness, gentleness, sensitive, and humility. They are merely limited within a house by caring family. They behave as traditional women do at time and accept the submissive role in the male dominated society especially father is superior and controlling character. Both of them remain hush and instinctively accept the decisions made by father. Sister is presented merely in the periphery of Bodhi where she continuously do kitchen work as well as cares brother. Her roles appear in the novel when Bodhi meets an accident and gets injured, his wound is noticed by sister. She performs the role of traditional woman circumscribed inside the home by caring and servicing her brother. Similarly mother's role can also be considered as feminine who does not utter a single word in a decision made by father. He ruled over his house and nobody are allowed to deny his decision. It highlights prevailing social construction as male as power and female as powerlessness.

Furthermore, in the course of plot, emblematically the yearning of females is highlighted through a painting. It refers to subdual of women by male centric world, where they seek for freedom. In the novel, Shewta is a prominent artists. Her painting is auctioned and brought by the tycoon Dipti. Shewta elaborates the meaning of the painting with Dipti. Shewta's painting also symbolizes a deep meaning. She has expresses her anxiety and dreams through the medium of painting. She states:

Lines have no meanings," I got fluent, "whatever the viewer thinks about it that is its meaning. What I think need not be the same as what another person thinks about the world. As for me, I created this picture to indicate that one has to nurture a dream to get away from all the problems in the world. This

black cloud symbolizes the pains and problems. It indicates that the world has darkness only. It has covered the sunshine of hope. The wings of this young girl are her dreams. Her emergence from the dark cloud is symbolic of her riddance from pains and problems. But this is my interpretation, solely mine. It needs not be someone else's interpretation too. So what I am telling is that it does not have a specific meaning. (139)

Here, Shewa asserts the liberty a woman wants to enjoy in the phallogentric world. She moreover uses color symbolism especially black. Where black indicates pessimism, agony, suffering, anxiety, suppresses of women. It attacks the patriarchal society where women experience ordeal situation. Whereas wings symbolize freedom where they can exercise the act they want to perform. Through the medium of painting, Khadka tries to interpret the suffering of entire women and their dream. They want to be break all the restrictions and boundaries created by the phallogentric world.

The researcher claims that female can embrace chauvinist qualities and male womanly respectively. Female can be macho and male as feminine. In this novel, the acts of Dipti along with most of the female characters acts as man. It means they have virile qualities. So, they have challenged the conventional gender roles and often compete and liberate themselves like a man. Therefore, femininity and masculinity is socially constructed that can be perform by both male and female which are not sole property of male. So, masculinity cannot designate for only male and femininity cannot signify only female which are reliant on their actions and performances. Furthermore, masculinity can be vigorously espoused by women, as men do. As Reeser argues “It might be the case that masculinity appears more fluid at some points rather than at others, but that fluidity is always present in some way” (39). We can see

such prevalent women in society through the representation of women in the novel both conforming to traditional femininity and also rejecting it.

This research concludes that, gender identity is depends upon the performance of an individual. In addition, female can have masculine qualities and male can have feminine. Gender identity is not an innate, however it is all about how an individual act in order to create their own identity. Female can perform like male and male can perform like female. In this novel, majority of characters are female where most of them defy and reject the gender stereotypes and able to prove their agencies and established their identities. Here, Khadka presents the protagonist Bodhi in terms of his sex and also guided by the patriarchal norms of phallogentric world, especially gazing women's physical appearance. Similarly writer also employs various literary tents and concepts in order to give his character agency. As each character in the novel plays a special role. Bodhi encounters various characters, who perform against the stereotypical gender roles.

Female characters Dipti and Monica's movements can be considered as macho who has been presented as an independent, challenging the phallogentric world. Dipti's desire and her efforts to defeat the world's richest person Nicole as well as she is able to assert her own personality and guided by own belief demonstrates her as an agent having the potentialities, strength and intellectual mind. In case of Monica, she endlessly combats to find perpetual happiness staying far from the phallogentric world. Both of their performance verify female masculinity with fullest capacity which has been denying to the female.

In phallogentric world male are assigned to be superior, masculine, and gracious. Conversely, male character Jarin has been portrayed as a feminine, sliding, inferior, and fragile. Highlighting Butler's concept of gender performativity, it

illuminates that masculinity is not just reserved for a male gender. Masculinity instead is learned as set of behaviors that men should follow to be accept within the social norm of a hegemonic man, but may also be adopted by female in many situations. In addition, biology does not determine gender identity but it is gradually shaped by their circumstances and their upbringing. Congruently, Khadka attempts to prove the attributes ascribed to women like passive, weak, emotional, meek, docile, and submissive are false. All these convictions are the result of reiterated performance where male and female inculcate various sorts of attributes after their birth. When such practices are performed for long time these become norms. Finally, this research shows that performances assigned to men can be accomplished by female as well leads the way for female masculinity.

Works Cited

- Aryal CP "The Higher Quest - # Nirvana." Twitter, 17 Sep 2016,
<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/author/cp+aryalhttp://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2016-05-03/khadkas-nirvana-launched.html>
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
- Butler, Judith. *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory in Theatre Journal*, vol.40, no.4, 1988, pp. 519-31.
- Carter, Angela. *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography*. Virago Press, 1977.
- Connell, R.W. *Masculinities*. University of California Press, 1995.
- Halberstam, Judith. "An Introduction to Female Masculinity: Masculinity Without Men". *The Masculinity Studies Reader*. Edited by Rachel Adams and David Savran, Blackwell, 1992, pp. 8-29
- Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Duke University Press, 1998.
- Howson, Richard. *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity*. Routledge, 2006.
- Kabeer, Naila. "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurements of Women's Empowerment." *Development and Change* vol.30, no.3, 1999, pp. 453-464.
- Khadka, Ghanashyam. *Nirvana*. Alchemy Publication. 2016.
- Khanal, Nishant. *Nepal*. "Novel on New Taste". 6 August 2016, 2073.
<http://nepal.ekantipur.com/news/2016-06-08/20160608193404.html>
- Owens, Lisa Lucile. "Coerced Parenthood as Family Policy: Feminism, the Moral

Agency of Women and Men's Right to Choose." *Alabama Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Law Review*, vol.5, no.1, 2013, pp. 1-6.

Paul, Smith, editor. *Boys: Masculinity in Contemporary Culture*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996.

Reeser, Todd W. "Theorizing Masculinity." *Masculinities in Theory*. Wiley, 2010. pp. 1-54.

Sharma. Sudheer. "Khadka's Nirvana Launched". *The Kathmandu Post*. 3 May 2016,<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2016-05-03/khadkas-nirvana-launched.html>

Subedi, Anjali. "A Thought Provoking Read." *My Republica*. 12 August 2016,<http://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/a-thought-provoking-read/>

Subedi, Zeal. "Nirvana: Book Review." *YouTube*, uploaded by Bindaas TV, 17 March 2018.

Sullivan, Nikki. *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2003.

Wolff, Janet. *The Invisible Flaneur Woman and Literature of Modernity: Culture and Society*, vol.2, no. 3, 1985, pp. 40-60.