

I. Gender Roles and Women's Magazines

World of Women (WOW) and *Nari* (proposed to be researched in this study) are both published in Nepal. The former is an English medium magazine and the latter, a Nepali. These magazines are similar in their functions and purposes as both of them claim to be devoted entirely to women. *WOW* is more expensive than *Nari* as their prices are the index of the classes they stand for. Like other average women's magazines, these magazines also revolve around certain domains: domestic affairs (interior design, home keeping), culinary affairs, fashioning, child care, and bodily make-up. Whether it be advertising, feature article, editorial, and any other element, women are implied to confine inside these territories. Women are not suggested through the contents of these magazines step onto other domains such as engineering, medical sciences, education, and so on. In other words, these magazines pretend to address the issues of all women kind, but they have reduced the category of women (which is a very volatile and complicated variable) into a subset of women comprising city-bred young-to-middle aged home keeper

Laxmi Bhandari Thapa runs a regular feature, *Bahas* (Debate) concerning women's issues in *Nari*. In *Nari* (Nov. 16, 2013 /Mangsir 8, 2070 (B.S.)), she appeals to every woman to come forward for equality and coexistence with their male counterpart. This commitment is logical in itself. But if one juxtaposes it against the textual and visual messages presented / packaged in this magazine, one finds that women are allocated very limited roles (assignments). The roles include, along with others, home making, fashioning, body decorating, child care, culinary care, and entertaining her male partner. In similar manner, *World of Women's* (Nov. 15, 2013) allocates almost the same roles /assignments to women. These roles can be confirmed by the contents of the magazine. By performing these roles women will never enjoy

their equality with their male counterparts.

Linda McLoughlin in her *The Language of Magazine*, offers a comprehensive definition of a magazine:

Despite their popularity a prevailing view is that magazines are a low brow form of entertainment. Magazines do not have to be read from cover to cover but can be dipped into, their format makes them easy to pick up and put down again. It is this reason which has been used to explain the popularity of magazines among women. The association of magazines with women has been linked to their domestic role, but not necessarily one which presents women as ‘tied to the kitchen sink.’ Instead there is said to be a subversive potential which offers women an opportunity to take time off from domestic chores and have some time to themselves. This is somewhat outdated now in view of the number of women who work outside the home. There is also a growing market of magazines aimed at men, some of which are outstripping the sales of women’s magazines. (xi)

As McLoughlin further says “magazines are issued at regular intervals either weekly, fortnightly, monthly or quarterly. The next reference is to the material form of magazines. The text of magazines and their visual and textual messages are often implicit, apparently “natural” and “normal,” with tiers of symbolical meanings” (xii).

Talking about the type of magazines, McLoughlin elaborates:

A glance at the newsagents shelves shows that the magazine genre covers a broad spectrum: there are special interest magazines dealing with topics like computing, DIY, household crafts and music, to name just a few, and the language of these magazines will reflect their

specialist nature. There are also what are referred to as ‘centre of interest’ magazines which are aimed at a much wider audience. Most recently the magazine format has been incorporated into Sunday newspaper supplements. Supermarkets are also producing their own ‘in-house’ magazines. Added to this list is a new type of magazine to be found on the Internet, referred to as the e-zine. (2)

Very often such texts are designed to serve the interests of social actors who have access and control over them. They are also designed to construct, perpetuate, and maintain hierarchies along the lines of the variables such as nationality, gender/sex, class, age, and ethnicity. Public discourses such as newspapers and magazines are sites where signs participate in naturalizing the existing ways of seeing. They naturalize the myths, meanings, worldviews, institutions, and other cultural practices. They obviate the asymmetrical distribution of (cultural and symbolic) capital, opportunities, resources, and power which are compatible with the ideology of the mainstream. The magazines, as Paudel states, “attempt to sell lifestyle, bodies, sexuality, hope, values, addiction, affliction, and ideology. They are the most contested genres as they are contradictory, provocative, and controversial” (33).

The discourse (textual and visual) of magazines /newspapers plays an active role in the construction of cultural meanings and stereotypes. Because of their easy access, newspapers play an active role in influencing peoples' attitudes concerning social issues. Most people do not encounter events in a direct (first hand) manner, involving active participation. Instead passive mass audiences encounter the events through the media. Thus the media messages are mediatized. People are brought together by means of opinions, worldviews, and ideologies projected by the newspapers.

Interestingly, the journalist /editor thinks that s/he collects facts, reports them objectively, and the newspaper presents them fairly and without bias, in a language which is designed to be unambiguous, distorting and agreeable to readers. This professional ethos is common to all the news media, press, radio, television. The newspaper professionals would claim that they give their “readers an impartial and well-informed picture of what was really happening" (Neil qtd. in Fowler 2).

Magazines are composite texts of verbal and visual messages. They are constructed, produced, distributed and consumed by the involvement of a range of participants including the editor(s), writers, producers /investors, artists, models, actors, photographers, distributors, salespersons, viewers, readers, and consumers. Apparently, magazines are published for employing people, entertaining them, publicizing commodities and services, above all for earning profit. Magazines contain regular elements such as feature articles, photo -features, horoscopes /star signs, editorial messages, letters to the editor, opinion pages, and advertising. The numbers and kinds of elements, however, depend on the type of magazines at hand. If the magazine is targeted for corporate sectors and business world, then its elements attempt to cover that sector. Women's magazines, in the similar fashion, incorporate the topics on women, whether it be advertising, star sign, feature article, editorial, or any other. Magazines also differ in the ways they are made. Some are published on the low quality paper with less attractive images intended for lower or middle class consumers with low or medium price range. Other magazines are printed on glossy pages intended for higher class consumers. Put briefly, magazines are manufactured and designed in order to serve the purpose of the investors. The investors, in turn, are, very often, guided by consumerism, male mindset, and heterosexual orientation, at least in the context of Nepal.

If one looks at the bottom of the matter, one may find that the purpose of magazines, newspapers or even a given television program is not just perform the tangible transaction pertaining to materiality. They work at the level of intangible entities, that is, ideas. The advertising of a given brand of cigarettes does not just propose to sell the cigarette sticks, but it attempt to sell idea, habit, culture, and mindset. The female body depicted, for instance, on the glossy pages of a magazine does not just expose it to the viewers; it interacts with the viewers in certain ways. In order to serve their interests, the producers of magazines "package" the visual and verbal messages in special ways. The textual and visual messages of the magazines are used to manipulate the perceptions of their viewers. They are also used to entice and excite their viewers /readers. They are also used to ridicule some and to insult others.

The bodies depicted are to be viewed not just by women themselves but, more importantly, by their male counterpart as they are designed to satisfy the male desire /gaze. By and large, the magazines serve the purpose /interests (economic, psychological, cultural, and social) of the male-led ideology and consumerism and capitalism. So in order to accomplish these functions, women (female bodies) are stereotyped, distorted, dismembered, focalized and "politicized."

The rationale behind selecting these two magazines (*WOW* and *Nari*) published in Nepal, is that they represent the reality of elite and middle class readers /consumers. Further, these magazines (*WOW* and *Nari*) have been selected (as their titles claim) as they represent, to a greater extent, the world experienced by and oriented to women, but not necessarily shaped by female ideology. There are clear evidences that these magazines exist for sustaining and perpetuating the consumer culture of urban elite, young-to-middle aged and heterosexual men and women. One

issue is randomly selected from each of the magazine.

The thesis has three chapters. The first chapter works as a type of blue print for the entire thesis with some background information establishes the territory of the research and locates the niche in the field under investigation by reviewing the relevant literature. Chapter II, as the main body of the thesis analyzes the two magazines under scrutiny. The third chapter presents main ideas generated in this study.

II: Gender Role Assignment in *Nari* and *WOW*

Kantipur Publications, in its Website *ekantipur.com*, claims that it "has a deep seated belief in the power of democracy and freedom of press as 'agents of social change.'" It also claims that its monthly magazine, *Nari*, with its 80,000 copies sold every month, deals with health, beauty, interior, art and literature, lifestyle and glamor. My argument in this study is that Kantipur Publications, as stated earlier, assigns traditional roles for women by confining them to specific domains such as homemaking, child-caring, food preparing, body decorating, entertaining herself and her male counterpart. By assigning traditional roles to women, *Nari*, one of the print media of Kantipur Publications, cannot work as an agent of the social change. Rather it works to perpetuate the male mindset /ideology and represent women as passive entertainer in which the basic role of women is to appear beautiful.

In order to prove my point I have, in this chapter, taken into account all the elements starting from the front of the cover page to its back: front cover, inside front cover, advertising, publication information, contents, regulars, special feature articles, feature articles, horoscope reading, and back cover. In order to analyze the overall meaning of this magazine, a cross-sectional analysis is necessary. For this purpose all the elements of this magazine are taken into account so that general pattern of distribution of elements can be seen. Magazine as such is a composite text with various elements working holistically. When a reader/viewer buys a magazine s/he turns all the pages and gets information and feeling out of it. A large portion of the magazine is occupied by advertising. Out of 160 pages, 76 pages are completely or partially covered with adverts. Out of the 76 adverts, most of them are about cosmetics (nail polish, soaps, facial creams, deodorant, shampoo, beauty parlor, beauty salon, hair remover, vaseline or moisturizer, hair coloring chemicals and

herbal), homemaking (furniture, sofa-sets, interior designing, paints, kitchen appliances, washing powder), fashion (jewelry, boutique, fashion dress materials), food and beverage (wine, Horlicks), business (IME, real estate, bank) and colleges and academy. The adverts on business are just meant to receive money not on self-entrepreneurship and the adverts on colleges are on fashion and decoration. Even the feature articles and horoscope reading are confined to the traditional gender roles assigned to women. Although the letter-to-editor section entitle "Nari Chiththi" seems to raise voices to empower women, it is not the salient element as it occupies just one page in verbal form. No visual images are present in it. Similarly, the news section entitled "Nari Samachar" has presented only those news items that are related to the campaigns for women empowerment. This section is also less salient as it occurs as a verbal message and given a single page. Even the exemplary women are presented in their glamorous mood implying that women's main function is to appear attractive and presentable.

Another feature article "Nari Ramro Kam" (Nari as a worthy task, my translation) has depicted images of women and men in graphic sketches. This is also a less salient message as the real photographs of these people are not given. Another element of this magazine "Nari Report" also depicts the images of women related to foreign employment. In this section also the graphic artist uses graphic sketches, an abstracted form of the real human beings are presented. So my argument is that the magazine while dealing with advertising (earning sources), glamor, homemaking, child-caring, and cosmetics uses more salient images visually and verbally, but elements empowering women, and women's genuine issues are presented as less salient verbally and visually by giving them less space and hence less importance. Exceptionally, only one special feature article, "Nari Sambidhan Sabha" ("Nari

Constituent Assmebly", *my translation*) is presented as more salient element as the real photographs of women are presented. Even in this article the photographs are presented in passport size whereas the photographs of women presented for glamor and cosmetics the whole body on full page size are given. even the title "Nari" (women) does not seem to cover women of all walks of life: child-woman, old women, women from various castes, ethnicities, women from various locations, and professions. By "Nari" as projected in this magazine is meant a young-to-middle aged, middle-to-upper class homemaking women of urban setting. My argument is that the social category/variable of woman is a contested and complex site and this magazine makes a reduced and stereotyped image of women in general. .

Most of the pages of this magazine are covered with adverting. Advertising plays very crucial role in the construction of ideas. Discourse (advertising) and society (readers/writers), as Norman Fairclough holds, are mutually constitutive (33 qtd. in Wodak and Meyer). Looking at the advertising, readers/viewers can formulate ideas about male and female. Advertising is such a powerful mode of media communication as it works as lifeblood of the media. It is not just a piece of information depicted on the page of a magazine. It is also a commodity to be sold in the market. A person's status in the consumer culture is determined by what s/he buys.

In Figure 1 below, the role assigned to the depicted image is that “you are a young women and your main job is to appear attractive for your viewers to be gazed.” So you are the object of gaze. This is not something assigning her a new role so that the media becomes an agent of change. This is what Mary Wollstonecraft centuries earlier contended that the patriarchal society compelled her to draw all her attention towards her body rather than to her mind. In this connection, Wollstonecraft contends:

Women are everywhere in this deplorable state; for, in order to

preserve their innocence, as ignorance is courteously termed, truth is hidden from them, and they are made to assume an artificial character before their faculties have acquired any strength. Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison.

(55)

Talking about male design to dominate women, she further argues:

Men have various employments and pursuits which engage their attention, and give a character to the opening mind; but women, confined to one, and having their thoughts constantly directed to the most insignificant part of themselves, seldom extend their views beyond the triumph of the hour. But were their understanding once emancipated from the slavery to which the pride and sensuality of man and their short-sighted desire, like that of dominion in tyrants, of present sway, has subjected them, we should probably read of their weaknesses with surprise. (56)

This is what John Berger held long ago that in most of the cases of media and art, women are given the role of an object to appear. He says “women appear but men act.” In this connection, he contends:

One might simplify this by saying: men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object -- and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. (52)



Figure 1 (Nari, Ashoj 2070: 143)

Another feature of some of the advertising is that women's body is dismembered. In Figure 2 below, the female legs are put upside down to depict the process of hair removal.



Figure 2 Nari (Ashoj 2070 B.S: 3)

The problem with this image is that the female body is not dismembered as an

inanimate object /organ separated from the body. The legs' integrity is lost since it lost its cohesion with the complete human body. The advertiser has nothing to do with this aspect but to sell the commodity in the market. In this edition of Nari there are more than 12 such dismembered images. The advertising in Fig. 2 uses the linguistic device of code switching. First, it uses English language saying "Oliva® feel beautiful," switches its code to Nepali language saying "removing all hair and smooth and beautiful skin" (my translation). The hairless body is a myth since hair is necessary for the human body for various protective processes. Once the hair is removed it starts growing thicker from the moment of removal. This is a futile task. But the consumer culture, through its advertising, makes people, for at least the time being, forget this fact and apply the hair removal creams.

The advertising in Fig. 3 depicts a young female model in her twenties. She does not seem to have the kind of problems which the advertising attempts to address. Her body is revealed to make her an object of male (female) desire. She seems to be thin with perfect skin/body.

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Face

- 1) Hair Transplant
- 2) Brow (Forehead) Lift
- 3) Eyelid Surgery
- 4) Ear Reshaping (Otoplasty)
- 5) Ear Pinning
- 6) Eye Bag Removal
- 7) Nose Reshaping (Rhinoplasty)
- 8) Cheek Implants/Reduction
- 9) Split Earlobe Repair
- 10) Face Lift
- 11) Fat Injections/Fillers
- 12) Dimple Creation
- 13) Lip Enhancement/Reduction
- 14) Chin Implant/Reduction
- 15) Neck Lift
- 16) Wrinkle Removal (Botox)
- 17) Acne Treatment/Acne Scar Removal
- 18) Skin Growth (Mole, Wart, Cyst, Skin Tag, Tumor) Removal
- 19) Pigmentation Treatment
- 20) Scar Revision

Restore Your Natural Beauty

"My beauty has been enhanced by the under eye bag removal surgery ... Thank you COSMED"

Sahana Bajracharya *Sahana*

Before After

Figure 3 (Nari Ashoj 2070 B.S: 89)

The textual message of this Figure is that it is contradictory in the sense that on one hand it claims to restore women's natural beauty, on the other it attempts to carry out artificial processes of artificial hair transplant, brow lift, eyelid surgery, eye bag removal, cheek reduction, facelift, neck lift and wrinkle removal. For every human being it is natural to grow old with wrinkled body. But the advertising claims to restore natural beauty by artificial processes. There is another anomaly in this advertising as it shows the images of women in their twenties but it deals with the cosmetic processes of older women in their fifties and sixties with wobbling eye bags, wrinkles on the faces, wrinkles on the neck. It attempts to give the message to older /senior women that every woman should look as young as possible. It attempts to impose the ideology of "youthification." As long as you look younger you are important. The moment you do not appear young, you are gone." The female body has been made an object of tightening, lifting, restoring, remodeling, reducing, re-contouring, improving, and minimizing. The natural phenomenon of change is supposed to be brought into a halt so that a middle-aged woman appears forever young forever sexy and forever charming because it guarantees its services. The female body is an object of manipulation by both the beauty industry technology (laser technology) and men. The technology works as a means for two ends: profit (for consumer culture and capitalism) and desire (of male sex). Broadly, the female model and the customers intended by the advertising (here middle-aged women) also work as means for the above mentioned ends.

The advertising does not seem to be honest in its presentation. On one hand it depicts a female model in her twenties, on the other; it attempts to address the ageing problems of middle-aged women with pouches under their eyes and wrinkles all over their bodies. There is some deception in the advertising as it attempts to sell the

“young female body.” The buyers are both women and men. Women are the buyers in the foreground; men are the buyers behind the scene. It is man who needs the tight buttocks, lifted breasts and smooth skin without wrinkles. The advertising does not propose any solutions for men’s wrinkles and pouches. The female body is groomed so that it becomes an object of male desire. In most of the cases the access to resources is under men’s control. So this advertising is, in a sense, for him.

The advertising is stereotypical as it attempts to reduce all women to their twenties. The advertising is intended to a particular group of people who can afford the prices of the services offered in the Clinic. This indicates that such ads are for select people who are living profligate and excessive wasteful life. The advertising attempts to establish the notion that “you can be beautiful only when you appear just in your twenties or less than that” shortening the duration of being/looking beautiful. It also attempts to persuade its customers that you can deceive people by just removing your wrinkles and pouches. The prospective customers can be lured/enticed by the image/icon of the female model. It works iconologically. Iconological images work in the similar fashion as ideology does in textual messages. The image attempts to deceive people by depicting a younger woman and offering false hopes for the middle-aged women. Four variables (class, gender and race and age) are simultaneously at work in this ad. It is exclusively intended to elite class who can afford the charges. It is intended to middle-aged women with pouches and wrinkles in their bodies. It is mainly to those women who, like the depicted model, are fairer in their skin color. And finally it is exclusively for women who have pregnancy stretch marks and loosening wobbly breasts. From the side of production, it is guided and controlled by the consumer culture and beauty industry. From the reception side it is controlled by male and heterosexual ideology.



Figure 4 (*Nari Ashoj* 2070 B.S: 89)

The advertising in Figure 4 depicts a woman in her teenage with "Tibeto-Berman" face. The advertising maker tags her as Asian as if the advertising maker is addressing this case from Euro-American context. It presupposes that the Asian eyelid is a problem so the so-called "Mongolian" eyelids should be converted into Euro-American or Aryan. It attempts to impose the western aesthetic sense to Nepali people. It is also stereotypical in the sense that all women should have bigger eyes.

Without advertising the modern world of media communication is simply unthinkable as it is the life sustaining factor to the mass media. Fueling media communication, it fuels the economy of the nation. However, advertising has multiple functions to carry out. The advertising, in addition to selling the products, attempts to sell other things: lifestyle, bodies, sexuality, hope, values, addiction, affliction, and ideology. In short, it sells us "ourselves." Advertising is the most contested genre as it

is contradictory, provocative, and controversial. It is interrupting, infiltrating, irritating, restless, repetitive, intrusive, and destructive. It is necessary, amusing, creative, ubiquitous, condensed and powerful. It is a hybridized genre appropriating the features of other genres. It has multiple producers/senders and receivers, and purposes. It lives on consumerism. Its mission is to disseminate that ideology. It is the site where the ideologies based on capitalism and consumerism are constituted, reinforced and distributed and consumed. Its symbolic narratives persistently reproduce tastes, attitudes, lifestyles, manners, conduct, wants, desires, angers, struggles, fantasies, cultures, texts, and images that confirm to the capitalist consumer ideologies. It colonizes new territories and helps to create a new global culture which ignores national boundaries.

Whether in the image or outside it, a certain way of being, of acting, of talking, of dressing denotes the belonging of a particular person to a certain class, gender/sex, region, age, and so on. When someone is presented/depicted on a glossy page of a magazine, we know her/his geographical origin, social class, what kind of schooling s/he has studied and what her/his ideological affinities and cultural background are (Kress et al 277). When the celebrities, political leaders, and other exemplary and influential people are depicted in the images of magazines, consumers generally attempt to model/fashion themselves and try to imitate their lifestyles. If the so-called celebrities endorse the product or work as the brand ambassador, then consumers may associate the iconological meaning of that personality to the product itself and the product is imbued with that quality. So the people depicted outside advertising will also have some influence on the buying tendency of the product in question.

By looking at the advertising it can be seen that men's and women's worlds

are dichotomized as if they were from different planets. The ads seem to be suggesting that female participants are associated with these attributes: tempting, flirty, delicious, colorful, pink/red, nail varnished, long nailed, under-clad, fragmented, fashionable, lavish, ornamented, embellished, static, helper, homemaker, cook, subordinate, assistant, warm, cool, long haired, glamorous, child-caring, hot, mysterious, superficial, juvenile, emotional, fleshy (but lacking muscle), vulnerable, chic, well-groomed, narcissistic, phoney, hyperbolic, sensational, loose, coquettish, smiling, slim, calm, smooth, pretty, docile, kind, serving, sexy, sassy, orgasmic, introvert, silky, soft, arousing, tempting, provoking, inviting, attractive, plump, dependent, welcoming, hosting, goal, phenomenon, enhancing, passive, objects, and so on. Moreover, female participants are juxtaposed and associated with panties, lingerie, bras, butterfly, doe, baby (juvenile), make-up-kit, birth marks, cream, lipstick, jewelries, beads, and so on.

The transitivity pattern is used to personalize and imbue the products with human quality and emotion. The consumerism reduces human beings into “objects” and the inanimate products into “subjects.” The female participant is made just the object of the sentence and the inanimate product as a subject. By means of the syntactic process the woman is dehumanized and the inanimate entity is personalized. The product and the female participant are equated as her presence is just to enhance the promotion and sale of the product. By co-locating and juxtaposing women with certain products, the ads attempt to assign them separate tasks and confine them to an entirely different world from that of men, and consequently, imply that men and women are from different planets. The inanimate objects are imbued with gender/sex. One of the crucial issues of magazine advertising is the appropriation of the human emotion of sexuality to the service of capitalist consumerism. Of course, sexuality is

that aspect of human life which is not only essential but adds pleasure to life, enhances relationships between people and fosters intimacy among/between them. Even in the imaginary level of fantasy, it adds more delight to life. Age-specific, self-motivated sexual exploration, age-appropriate exposure to information about sexuality and sexualization are positive aspects of sexuality and sexualization. If sexualization happens between two or more people with their mutual consent/interest and desire without hurting the dignity and disrupting the integration of any individual, then it is a positive aspect of sexuality and sexualization. There is no problem with sexualization in advertising if it adds some pleasure to life and if it does not hurt the dignity of an individual or destroys the integration of that individual.

Sexualization, does, however, become a problem when one person's sexuality is imposed on the other (for instance, the adult sexuality is falsely imposed on children). It does become a problem when women are seen exclusively as sexual beings rather than as complicated people with many interests, talents, and identities. The sexualization becomes a problem when a person's value comes only from his/her sexual appeal or behavior to the exclusion of other characteristics. It also becomes a problem when a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy, and when a person is sexually objectified – that is made into a thing for others' sexual use rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making. The sexualization of the female body becomes a problem to the extent when it is deployed to serve the interests of male and capitalist ideology rather than as a source of pleasure for the female participant herself. The negative aspect of sexualization may occur along a continuum, with sexual evaluation (looking at someone with sexual way) at the less extreme end, and sexual exploitation (trafficking, abuse) at the more extreme end.

The ads under scrutiny attempt to convince them to undergo these processes: tightening, lifting, restoring, remodeling, reducing, re-contouring, improving, and minimizing. The natural phenomenon of change is supposed to be brought into a halt so that a middle-aged woman appears forever young forever sexy and forever charming. The female body is an object of manipulation by both the beauty industry technology (laser technology) and men. The technology works as a means for two ends: profit (for consumer culture and capitalism) and desire (of male sex). From the side of production, it is guided and controlled by the consumer culture and beauty industry. From the reception side it is controlled by male and heterosexual ideology.

These ads attempt to establish the notion that “you can be beautiful only when you appear just in your twenties or less than that” shortening the duration of being/looking beautiful’. Women are often considered sexy only when they appear young, thus blurring the line between who is and who is not sexually mature.

When women are featured as ‘decorative’ in ads (shown standing seductively next to a product to enhance the image of the product) their major purpose is to be looked at. They are presented as appendages to the product rather than as active consumers or users of the products. The advertising maker attempts to sell the product through her marked body. The female participant is depicted here not as a buyer/user (agent/actor) of the product but as an embellisher/enhancer (goal/phenomenon) for the transaction in question. The juxtaposition of the female semi-clad body and the product (such as a commode) implies that the capitalist would employ any tactics to endorse the sale of the product. Very often there is not any link between the female participant and the commodity depicted.

The female body is trapped within male ways of looking. The models in the ads either are depicted to look directly out at the spectator or they direct their focus

elsewhere but they are keenly aware that they are being watched. They invite the gaze; they work-out to be watched. The women's bodies are photographed in certain ways to facilitate the male gaze and emphasize female sexuality. The lines of the women's legs, hips, waist, and arms are over-emphasized. Also the clothes of these women are pictured in help facilitate the male gaze. Their bodies are positioned to facilitate good views of these parts. The director/camera person offers the female body to the (male) viewer to gaze at it as it is available at least in the imaginary level.

The integral human body is reduced to its parts. The female body is fragmented to be focalized for erotic purposes (for the (male) viewer). In addition, the female organs (hands) are represented for the purpose of service provider to the so-called masters (women and men). However, the male fragments are depicted symbolizing a bread-earning machine devoid of feelings and individual identity. These organs are dismembered from the body to serve the interests of consumerism and capitalist ideology.

Depiction of a body in a certain way can have wider implications. One person can influence another person's erotic response by presenting oneself in a certain way. A woman can shape, appropriate, manipulate and control man's sexuality by her fashion (the way her body gets revealed) and gait, at least for a heterosexual person, and vice versa. By sexualizing oneself, a person can influence another person's erotic response. This human behavior has been exploited by the advertising maker. The magazine ads sexualize the female body which has much influence on the sexual response of the viewer.

The consumerism of magazine advertising attempts to sell the ecstatic reverie (the represented female model is depicted as if she were in the climax of sexual excitement by closing her eyes and tightening her body) experienced by women. No

male participant is depicted in a similar fashion (which denies the fact that women are not assumed to watch the male body and derive pleasure as agent/actor, at least in the heterosexual sense).

The participants involved in the processes of production, distribution and reception of these ads, on the main, are men because it is they who have more control over the access to economic resources and information in comparison to women. Even if men are not depicted in the images, they are everywhere: as the manufacturer, producer, director, camera person, distributor, buyer/consumer, reader/viewer and so on. Women participants have to work within the agenda set by men.

The depiction of the female body in advertising is basically for the purpose of selling sex (the female “marked” body) and for enhancing and embellishing the product. The female body even in the so-called women’s magazines is depicted more like a phenomenon/goal than an agent/actor. The male body is in most part depicted for the purpose of executing the action as an actor/agent rather than as a phenomenon. This type of depiction may have deeper and long-term impact on the interlocutors/viewers: it may be one of the factors which may cause women to view themselves in a negative and stereotyped way; and it may discourage female participants to execute any work as an agent or actor.

By and large, the contemporary society is just depressing and constricting for the average man as it is for the average woman. Both women and men are ruled by commercial values that revolve around who has the most, the best, the biggest, and the fastest. The destination of both roads (women and men) is enslavement to capitalism and glamor (Faludi 599). However, women, on the main, are more on the focus of advertising discourse than men.

Treating “woman” as a well-bounded and stable category may be a misleading

process in the analysis of advertising. The so-called feminist solidarity of women and sisterhood evaporate as soon as one woman seems to derive pleasure at the cost of other's pain. The represented female participants may have conflicting ideologies since they may belong to different social classes. The female participant belonging to the working class may be exploited two times more than the woman of elite class. In addition to gender/sex, the magazine ads work along the variables of social class, ethnicity, age, and physical ability. The depiction of young women with fair skin suggests that these ads address the reality of certain race/ethnicity and excludes the reality of others.



Figure 5 (*Nari Ashoj* 2070 B.S:)

Cartoons are abstracted and simplified representations of referents. The images in Figure 6 show the abstraction processes of cartooning. The images in the advertising above are the real photographs of women representing specific individuals. The images depicted in Fig 5 are the abstracted forms with no clear identity as such. They are the reduced and homogenized identity of women.



Figure 6 (Adapted from Nari Ashoj 2070 B.S)

Nari (Poush 2070) publishes a special feature article in its regular report section (Nari Report) on Nepali women in foreign employment. In its textual messages written by Devendra Sambahamphé, the writer narrates women's plight from a distance implying that it is "their" world not "our." The ideology of "them" versus "us" can be detected when one has the closer look at the visual messages

inherent in this article. There are three reasons to show the distance. While depicting the glamor -girls, the images are taken from the front side and the depicted participant is looking at the camera /viewers to imply the direct relationship between the "I" and "You" indicating our world implying closeness and intimacy. The meaning of any visual image depends largely on three aspects: distance, angle and position. By viewing the image one can infer the distance from where the images are photographed, painted or drawn. Similarly one can infer the angle: low, eye-level or high. The angle can reflect the power relationships between the viewer and the viewed. The images can be depicted from the front position, oblique position or from the back. If they are taken from the front, it implies intimacy as "us" you and me. While the images in Figure 6 are depicted from the oblique angle not looking at the camera /viewers indicating the images as objects of gaze and implying "they" that indicates distance and lack of intimacy. Second, the images in Fig. 6 are not depicted as attractive as having asymmetrical and untidy body. Whereas the images in advertising and glamor articles are depicted in the gaze-me pose implying that the images are within the reach of the viewer. The distance of those images are close indicating personal and intimate relationships. The images in Figure 6 have longer distance indicating lack of intimacy and personal relationships. The images show that these unattractive women are meant to be associated with foreign employment. The visual images cannot be separated from the textual images since both of them work holistically.

World of Women is monthly women's magazine published recently (as it is registered in 2069/ 2070 B.S.) in Nepal. Published by Media Nine, directed jointly by Hemant Golchha and Sanket Lamichhane, edited by Charu Chadha, the magazine does not give specific address in Kathmandu but just phone numbers and Email

address. It comes in glossy and thick paper and its cost is NRs. 100.00. The magazine has just 84 pages including the cover. Most of the pages are covered with advertising related to cosmetic productions, jewelry, food and beverages, fashion related items, and other productions of entertainment. Besides, there are other components such as Editorial Page (ed page), Inbox blog (with a question and its responses), What do you think (another Q-A blog), snap shots (a collage of photographs of so-called celebrities), beauty tips, life is beautiful, design on U, style scope, coffee break (women in politics) WOW individual (an account of an individual's life), homeopathy, Chhaupadi: Days in Isolation (this is the only item that deals with common people), eat wise, body wise, love and sex, 9 questions with the WOW woman, life inspirations, WOW parenting (childcare), mental health, WOW fitness, Oral health, men speak, paws and claws (pet animals), WOW lounge, what's new (new arrivals), quiz (on style), sun signs (horoscope reading), WOW events.



Fig. 7 (WOW, Dec. 2013 front cover)

(such as fashion, cosmetics, jewelry, food, homemaking, child care) except one feature article that deals with common people's issue. Otherwise, the entire magazine addresses the reality of women who occupy a very negligible number in the country. My contention is that how can these traditional gender roles can be the agents of social transformation? In this Chapter, as in the previous one, an attempt has been made to demonstrate the stereotypical gender representation through the visual as well as textual messages.

The design of front cover of a magazine plays very important role to persuade its readers to buy it. The textual and visual messages are specially designed to attract the attention of the viewers. The visual images represent the status of both the magazine and its readers. The price tag (Rs. 100) represents the economic status of the readers. The title of the magazine, *WOW* is an acronym of "world of women" that is printed in bold capitals with large size. The textual messages are typographically different. All of them are typographically different from one another. The ISSN number and barcode is printed in extremely small letters at the bottom of the page just as the part of formality. This information is defocused by its size and position. The letters are stylistically artistic as they are bold, highlighted, upper cases, tall and slim, italicized, enclosed in circles and rectangles. The purpose of all these stylistic variation is to draw viewers' attention to sex, love, shopping, foods, skin, relationship, fashion, and style. On the whole, the function of this lexical cohesion and collocation that are related to women is to assign the gender role stereotypically as the total lexical texture on the front page is confined to fashion, food, cosmetics and entertainment.



Fig. 8 (Back cover WOW Dec. 2013)

The advertising in Fig. 9 depicts Hollywood Actor Nicole Kidman in a semi-clad pose. She is depicted with stylish fair hair. She occupies the central portion and covers most of the page. She is depicted in a close shot with her head and shoulder and occupies the more than seventy percent of the page and placed on the left as part of familiar /old information and the watch OMEGA, Ladymatic, to the right as part of the new information. The advertising designer /producer is attempting to sell the watch through the Hollywood celebrity. In a sense, the actor is a means for selling the commodity. The remarkable aspect of this image is that there is power involved in the depiction of this image. She is depicted in the high angle. The camera technician and director may have thought that the represented participant (Nicole Kidman, a Hollywood Actor) is more powerful with higher status than those who produced her image, and probably those who gaze/view her. Power is also involved in her depiction at the center of the page. Her image occupies most of the central and upper portion of

the page implying that she is above the reality side of life. She is presented as a fantasy/dream woman for the viewers. The advertising maker makes the assumption that if she is charming and attractive and high up on the social status so is her choice: Omega.

She is depicted looking at the camera/viewers. Direct contact is made between the represented and interactive participants. This position establishes "I-You" relationship between the depicted person and her viewers implying an interpellation: "hey, you there." The image makes a demand that implies "I as a celebrity have chosen this item, why don't you?"

There involve many voices in the ad from the production side. One voice comes to us through the Hollywood Actor, Nicole Kidman, who seems to say: "Omega wrist watch is my choice." Implicitly, she appeals to the viewers to make it their choice, too. The second voice is that of the manufacturer that is represented by the textual messages: STARRING NICOLE KIDMAN This voice blends two voices together, its own and that of Kidman's. The third voice comes from the showroom in Kathmandu represented by its address (Regency Watch Durbar Marg, Kathmandu).

Although the advertising is intended to a particular class of people, it can be viewed by anyone who has the opportunity to view it. The ad maker attempts to manipulate the human sexuality by depicting the nude female body. The male sexuality can be shaped and controlled by exhibiting the female body in certain ways. So the ad maker deploys the female body to serve its vested interests of consumerism. Nicole Kidman as well as the viewers (male or female) are treated as means to meet the goals of the greater mission of consumerism.

World of Women and the Regency Watch, Durbar Marg, not just import the Omega watch, they import ideas, images, perspectives, ideologies, iconology (icon

with ideas), life style and neo-colonize the so-called third world with the Euro-American ideology that "white is beautiful" and the average Nepali person, woman or man, is not. At the same time the advertising also confirms the ideology of the magazine *WOW* that the basic tenet of any woman is to appear attractive with her nude body. Thus, constructs the stereotyped image of women.

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Almost all these elements are related to very narrow limits of human activities (such as fashion, cosmetics, jewelry, food, homemaking, child care) except one feature article that deals with common people's issue. Otherwise, the entire magazine

addresses the reality of women who occupy a very negligible number in the country. My contention is that how can these traditional gender roles can be the agents of social transformation? In this Chapter, as in the previous one, an attempt has been made to demonstrate the stereotypical gender representation through the visual as well as textual messages.

The design of front cover of a magazine plays very important role to persuade its readers to buy it. The textual and visual messages are specially designed to attract the attention of the viewers. The visual images represent the status of both the magazine and its readers. The price tag (Rs. 100) represents the economic status of the readers. The title of the magazine, *WOW* is an acronym of "world of women" that is printed in bold capitals with large size. The textual messages are typographically different. All of them are typographically different from one another. The ISSN number and barcode is printed in extremely small letters at the bottom of the page just as the part of formality. This information is defocused by its size and position. The letters are stylistically artistic as they are bold, highlighted, upper cases, tall and slim, italicized, enclosed in circles and rectangles. The purpose of all these stylistic variation is to draw viewers' attention to sex, love, shopping, foods, skin, relationship, fashion, and style. On the whole, the function of this lexical cohesion and collocation that are related to women is to assign the gender role stereotypically as the total lexical texture on the front page is confined to fashion, food, cosmetics and entertainment.

The textual message under the regular feature article in *WOW* is "WOW Alert" under which some social issues are covered. The title of the article under this heading is "Chhaupadi Days in Isolation" (40). This article talks about how in western part of Nepal women are stigmatized when they are undergoing the physiological process of

menstruation. The purpose of this study is not undermine the egalitarian perspective of the article mentioned in *WOW*, but to examine the perspectives and distance between the represented participants and the interactive ones. The textual message says:

Menstruation is still practiced in some parts of Nepal. It is considered an event of impurity, stigma and sin. During menstruation, women are kept in isolation inside cowsheds. In this period, women are not allowed to eat green vegetables, fruits and are restricted from entering the house, the kitchen, temple, school and any other places of social interaction. (*WOW* 40)

In this text, the women depicted in Fig. (9) are distanced by the use of the third person pronouns and generic nouns indicating that the world of Chhaupadi women is not "our world." It is their world detached from "us." If one examines the use of pronouns used in the article of the same magazine "Coffee-Break: Women in Politics," says: the episode of Coffee-Break brings you a discussion with Saloni Singh, Tratima Gautam, and Babita Basnet. From this comparison, it can be concluded that these magazine directly represent the upper class reality and underrepresent the marginalized women of Nepal.

The only visual image is that of a young woman, perhaps, in her teen giving her pose in front of the fashion designer. The depiction of such a figure seems to address the reality of teenage world of girls and perhaps of boys.

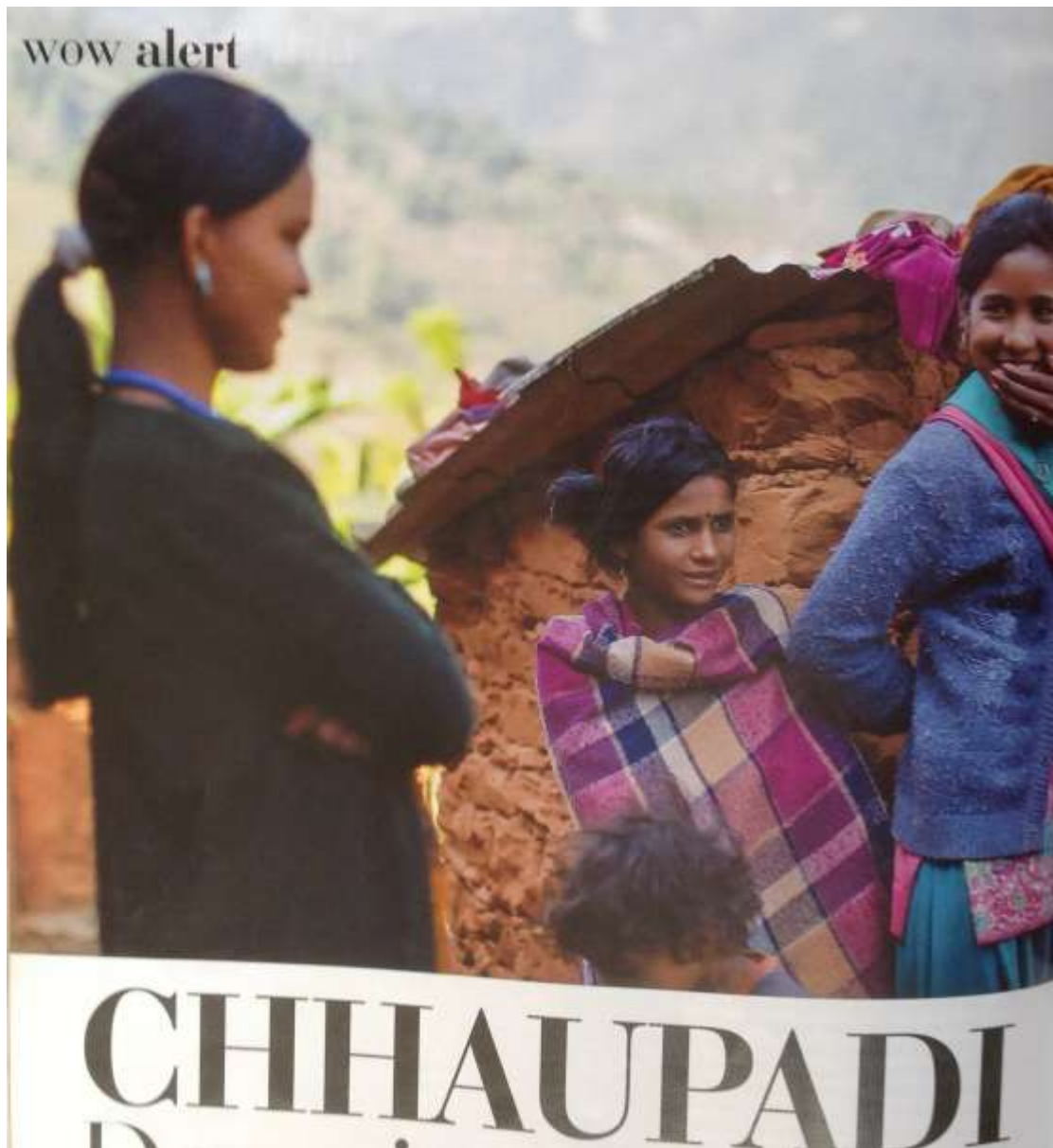


Figure (9) WOW (Dec. 2013)

Talking about the negative impacts of sexualization of (young) women, the American Psychological Association, and APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls contends:

First, there is evidence that girls exposed to sexualizing and objectifying media are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction, depression, and lower self-esteem; research to date suggests that these effects are not as pronounced for African American girls. There is no

research to date on lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered youths. Self-objectification has been shown to diminish cognitive ability and to cause shame. This cognitive diminishment, as well as the belief that physical appearance rather than academic or extracurricular achievement is the best path to power and acceptance, may influence girls' achievement levels and opportunities later in life. (34)

Talking about the negative side of sexist magazines, the American Psychological Association, Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls further concludes:

Exposure to sexist magazine ads featuring women as sexual objects produced a stronger acceptance of sex role stereotyping and of rape myths among male undergraduates. Additionally, high school students exposed to content featuring women as sexual objects expressed more support of these attitudes than did students who did not receive this exposure. (34)

The sexualization of girls and women can, as APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls further argues, "have a negative impact on boys and men. Exposure to narrow ideals of female sexual attractiveness may make it difficult for some men to find an "acceptable" partner or to fully enjoy intimacy with a female partner" (32). Several experimental, the Task Force adds, "studies have shown that exposure to women's unexposable body leads men to rate their female partners as less attractive, to indicate less satisfaction with their intimate partners' attractiveness, sexual performance, and level of affection, and to express greater desire for sex without emotional involvement" (33).

III: Disempowerment of Women in Women's Magazines: *Nari* and *WOW*

Of course, these two magazines play an important role to entertain women and men. They contribute to the development of the nation by publishing advertising of various products. They offer important information to the viewers and readers. The researcher does not deny their contribution. However, the researcher argues that by assigning definite roles to women, these magazines, cannot be “agents of change” for their readers. What these magazines are /have been doing is just perpetuating the traditional ideology on women. They imply that women should appear and men should act. The attention of the women should be to their body rather than to their mind, which was pointed out by Mary Wollstonecraft centuries earlier.

So women are confined by these magazines within the territory of fashion and glamor, homemaking, food, child rearing and caring. All the elements of these magazines: cover pages, feature articles, editorials, advertising, and horoscope reading, to a large extent, reinforce the stereotyped images of women. Therefore rather than empowering women (and men) these magazines, largely, contributed to dis-empowering them.

The implication of the gender role assignment can be seen. It does become a problem when women are seen exclusively as sexual beings rather than as complicated people with many interests, talents, and identities. The sexualization becomes a problem when a person's value comes only from his/her sexual appeal or behavior to the exclusion of other characteristics. It also becomes a problem when a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy, and when a person is sexually objectified – that is made into a thing for others' sexual use rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making. The sexualization of the female body becomes a problem

to the extent when it is deployed to serve the interests of male and capitalist ideology rather than as a source of pleasure for the female participant herself. The negative aspect of sexualization may occur along a continuum, with sexual evaluation (looking at someone with sexual way) at the less extreme end, and sexual exploitation (trafficking, abuse) at the more extreme end.

The female body is trapped within male ways of looking. The models in the ads either are depicted to look directly out at the spectator or they direct their focus elsewhere but they are keenly aware that they are being watched. They invite the gaze; they work-out to be watched. The women's bodies are photographed in certain ways to facilitate the male gaze and emphasize female sexuality. The lines of the women's legs, hips, waist, and arms are over-emphasized. Also the clothes of these women are pictured in help facilitate the male gaze. Their bodies are positioned to facilitate good views of these parts. The director/camera person offers the female body to the (male) viewer to gaze at it as it is available at least in the imaginary level.

These magazines attempt to convince them to undergo these processes: tightening, lifting, restoring, remodeling, reducing, re-contouring, improving, and minimizing. The natural phenomenon of change is supposed to be brought into a halt so that a middle-aged woman appears forever young forever sexy and forever charming. The female body is an object of manipulation by both the beauty industry technology (laser technology) and men. The technology works as a means for two ends: profit (for consumer culture and capitalism) and desire (of male sex). From the side of production, it is guided and controlled by the consumer culture and beauty industry. From the reception side it is controlled by male and heterosexual ideology.

These ads attempt to establish the notion that "you can be beautiful only when you appear just in your twenties or less than that" shortening the duration of

being/looking beautiful'. Women are often considered sexy only when they appear young, thus blurring the line between who is and who is not sexually mature.

When women are featured as 'decorative' in ads (shown standing seductively next to a product to enhance the image of the product) their major purpose is to be looked at. They are presented as appendages to the product rather than as active consumers or users of the products. The advertising maker attempts to sell the product through her marked body. The female participant is depicted here not as a buyer/user (agent/actor) of the product but as an embellisher/enhancer (goal/phenomenon) for the transaction in question. The juxtaposition of the female semi-clad body and the product (such as a commode) implies that the capitalist would employ any tactics to endorse the sale of the product. Very often there is not any link between the female participant and the commodity depicted.

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