

***Nari* Prescribes Stereotype Gender Roles**

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Abstract

*This research article tries to focus on how Sarvottam Nari one of the print media of Kantipur Publications prescribes stereotypical gender roles to female. Kantipur Publications' Sarvottam Nari dated Mangsir 2076 (Nov-December 2019) is chosen to study how it prescribes gender roles. A qualitative research methodology is employed to scrutinize the text. Though Kantipur Publications, in its Website *ekantipur.com*, asserts that "the company firmly believes in the people's right to right information (Homepage) it is not disseminating the right information instead it allocates stereotype gender roles. It is restricting women to precise territories such as homemaking, child-caring, food preparing, body decorating, entertaining herself and her male counterpart. By allocating traditional roles to women, Nari, cannot transmit the right information and work as an instrument of the social transformation instead it works to disseminate the male mindset/ideology. Findings of the study prove that Nari (Nov-December 2019) has proposed, transmitted and reinforced patriarchal ideologies which restrict women in the four walls of house and prescribe the traditional gender roles.*

Keywords: *stereotype, gender role, patriarchy, objectification, commodity*

Introduction

Media plays a vital role in constructing ideologies. Different modes of media do the same task in different manner. They construct convictions which are followed by the people in the society or the readers/consumers. Norman Fairclough holds, "discourse (advertising) and society (readers/writers) are mutually constitutive" (76). Readers/viewers build up their perspectives after being exposed to these media. Kantipur Publications, in its Website *ekantipur.com*, asserts that "the company firmly believes in the people's right to right information (Homepage). Though Kantipur Publications, as stated earlier, "believes in people's right to

right information” it is not disseminating the right information instead it allocates stereotype gender roles to women by restricting them to precise territories such as homemaking, child-caring, food preparing, body decorating, entertaining herself and her male counterpart. By allocating stereotype roles to women, *Nari*, cannot transmit the right information and work as an instrument of the social transformation instead it works to disseminate the male mindset/ ideology. Kantipur Publications’ *Sarvottam Nari* dated Mangsir 2076 (Nov-December 2019) is chosen to study employing qualitative research methodology to meet the objective of finding out how this magazine allocates gender roles. To do so, the whole content of the *Nari* is taken into consideration.

Cross sectional scrutiny of *Nari* is urgent to find out what kinds of roles are allocated to women. The magazine *Sarvottam Nari* dated Mangsir 2076 (Nov-December 2019) is a complete text with an amalgamation of innumerable components operating holistically. Thus, to examine the role assigned to women overall display of the content is taken into consideration. The approach employed to choose some items out of many choices provides the basic ideology working behind the scene. At first when a reader/viewer buys a magazine s/he turns all the pages and receives information and senses it.

Avaran Nari- Supushpa Bhatta (1) and (106). Even the title *Nari* (women) and the cover photo does not seem to cover women of all walks of life: child-woman, old women, and 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. Even most of the time the cover lady belongs to a certain age group, with the “perfect body” type resembling urban lady of certain class hence the contention 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. In this issue too Supushpa Bhatta, an actress has been chosen as a cover girl.

Nari Chitthi (12) the section which is related to the letter-to-editor is to raise the voices to empower women appear to be less significant as it seizes just one page of the whole text without any visual image.

Similarly, the news section entitled *Nari Sarokaar* (14-15) has presented only those news items which are related to the campaigns for women empowerment. This section is also less salient as it covers two pages where the items presented reinforce traditional gender roles.

Another feature article “*Aajaki Nari*” (today’s women my translation) (16) has depicted images of three women. The women presented here reinforce traditional gender roles. The first

feature is about Miss Cosmopolitan-2019 which highlights the beauty of the women, second is about a human resource manager which is said to be women's job and the last is about a handicapped girl Nirmala who desires to visit whole Nepal. The feature articles about them are just like short news report this means the importance is not given to them.

"Mero Jivan" (My Life my translation) (18) presents an interview with a literary figure Bimla Tumkheva with a full-sized photograph. This also depicts that woman's image/body matters more than her words. Her views are limited to few words' answers which are kept in a small box. Not only is this, on the other side of this, an advertisement of Dabur Honey presented where a young lady with a so-called alluring perfect body is presented. The attractive body in the advertisement attracts the readers rather than the body of the literary figure. This emphasizes the traditional gender role is to maintain the body and to look beautiful is more important than being a literary figure.

Nari Vichar- "Mangsir Jastayi Manxe" (20) by Kavita Sharma is a text which talks about marriage, *Yaun Tatha Prajanan Adhikaar-* (22) in this Padamraj Joshi highlights on the rights of women related to pregnancy and childbirth. These two indicate that marriage and childbirth are the issues meant for women only.

Nari Bahas- "Mahinavari Kin barne?" (24-25)- In this the views on the topic is collected from different personalities as Sarita Lamichhane (Artist), Melina Rai (Singer), Sunita Raut (Sociologist), Rangina Shah (Indoscopic Gynecologist) and a psychologist Gopal Dhakal. The problem lies in if the views are taken from all the females then why a male psychologist's views are presented. A female psychologist would present her view related to this better than a male. Dhakal's view is presented at last and his picture also indicates that he is in mode of answering, his face is also faced and positioned in such a manner that it indicates he is more powerful whereas female participants' pictures are just kept to show who they are and this tells us that man is active and is in action whereas women are mere recipients. Further it also indicates that in our society the final verdict is of men.

Nari Rojgari- "Vyavashayik Bhansa" (26) - the story presented here is of Rohit Tiwari who is the founder of Foodmariyo App. where Seema Agrawal just works and earns. So, this again shows that women work under men and why the men's story of success has been chosen in a magazine fully dedicated to women tells us that the power plays a significant role.

Nari Bidesh- (28) is kept as an exception, only one special feature article, is presented as more salient element as it features a girl Sydney Kob in *"Maya Malaviko"* who is the winner of GA 2018- Youth Leadership Award for her social work. Even in this article the photographs

of the location where she worked is presented in a small size whereas the photographs of women presented for glamour and cosmetics cover the full page with their whole body.

Nari Yog- "*Desh bhar Yogko Lahar*" (30) - by Sujata Mukhiya, and "*Yuva dekhi Vriddha samma Garxan Yog*"- (36) by Swastik Shrestha and many other small texts are written on Yog covering 30-36 pages. So much emphasis is given on Yoga which shows that Yog is essential for women and nothing is more important than this.

Nari Save Your Life- (38) "*Vyayam ani Jado Mausam,*" "*Kasto Mask Lagaune?*", "*Kabjiyatbaata Chhutkara*", "*Gastritis baata Jogina*" again these titles and the texts focus on fitness and physical health. This shows that women need more concentration on physical health. We do not find so much space occupied by these types of issues in other magazines.

Nari Depression- "*Mahilalai Winter Depression*" (40) - Sujata Mukhiya writes about the women depression. First thing is she a psychiatrist? If she is a psychiatrist then why her designation is not presented if not then who is she to describe, prescribe, suggest, etc. Second the title itself indicates that only women suffer from winter depression.

Nari Khanpaan- "*Jado Mausam Ra Khanpaan*" (42)-this is about the diet tips about what to take in winter. Bipin Karki (Dietician) suggests about the diet to be taken. The disagreement here is that the picture at the top suggests that the tips are provided for female and the dietician are male this clarifies that men are the instructors whom women need to follow.

Nari Swasthya-"*Garbhawatilaayi Chahinchha Jadoma Thap Syaahaar*" (44) - Dr Balkrishna Sah- this also indicates the same that we need to follow men's instructions. Why men experts are asked to give suggestions instead of women experts who are also present in the society. The traditional mindset here works that men are only experts. If *Nari* claims that it concentrates on the issues pertaining to women then why men's suggestions are of so much importance.

Nari Swasthya Samachar - "*Norvic Attyadhunik Suvridha Sampanna Naya Bhawan Banaudai*", "*Nepalma Poshanko Sthiti*", "*Orchid Care Homeko Dementia Unit*" (46).

Nari Fitness- "*Gharmai Health Club*" (48) by Laxmi Bhandari Thapa, is about women's fitness. All this indicates that women are sick and they need so much of care in relation to their health. Women are only responsible for the nutrition in Nepal. We do not find so much emphasis on health in any other magazine except the journals related to only health.

Mahila ra Kanoon - "*Ansha Daabima Mahila*" (54) - in this the readers are made aware of the legal procedure of property right in case of divorce and others. In its textual messages written by Sunita Adikari (Advocate) she presents the legal perspective and its usage but in

this only female is thought to be the readers whereas men also need to know about the property rights of women as they are also associated with women.

Nari “*Balbaalikalai Stylist Dekhauna*” - Anchal Pradhan (56) in this page only boy child’s picture is presented this shows that only boys need to be stylish. Apart from this as this is kept in *Nari* it indicates that it is female’s job to make children look stylish so they need to be educated for this.

Nari Tips - “*Durghatanabaata Jogine Upaya*” (58) - Sitaram Hachhethu (traffic volunteer) it implies that only women need to be educated about traffic rules and male drivers are already experts in driving so much so that they know and follow all the traffic rules.

Nari Outlet (60) “*Bhatbhateni Fariya Ghar*”, “*Meera,*” and “*Thamelma Bhera Pizza*” as these items are focused and presented here this asserts that dresses and eatables are female domain.

Antarik Sajja - “*Ekikrit Bastiko Avadharana*” (62) – Srijana Dulal Shrestha has featured about the integrated settlement where she has talked about Er. Arjun Prasad Neupane. He has done a lot of work in this area. The two pictures are juxtaposed in the last page where on the top some men are wearing garlands and working and below that there is another picture where a line of women labors carrying bricks on their head is shown. The juxtaposition of these two pictures gives us the sense that men are praised and garlanded when they work whereas women are mere workers. Men’s work earns prestige in the society whereas women’s work is uncountable.

Pushpa Mela - (68) though it is a report about flower exhibition, the question is why flower exhibition’s report becomes the news to be covered in female’s magazine. This reinforces the fact the decoration of body, home, garden or society is women’s job or domain.

Vivah Vishesh- “*Pre-Marital Counseling*” (70)- Sujata Mukhiya presents it and the inclusion of this type of text indicates that the issue of marriage is the female sphere and the counseling basically is needed to women. The marriage is a mutual obligation but inclusion of this in *Nari* indicates that it is necessary for women.

Saundarya – “*Dulahi Makeup*” - Rashmi Manandhar (82), “*Hair Style*” - Poonam Shrestha (83), “*Complete guide for a bride*” (84), *Pahiran Shaili* - “*Bridal Wear ma Fusion Choice*” - Manju Dhakal “*Pahiran Fashionma Teen Pushta*” (88) makeup, hairstyle, *pahiran* (clothing) all these are female territories as set by patriarchy.

“*Samajma Baby Showerko Badhdo Trend*” (92) - Prakriti Dahal, and Yuvraj Gautam. It also tells us that baby is the responsibility of a female. Men don’t have any concern to a child

that is why these kinds of texts are found in magazine like *Nari* not in others.

Nari Katha - "House Wife" - Juni Bhandari (96) the story chosen here is also about women and her sufferings as house wife. In the magazine like this, the story one can imagine of anything like the success story of any female leader, a player or a mother who is able to raise children despite many difficulties but it concentrates on a women who is mere house wife which justify that this *Nari* just talks about women and prescribe women to be a good house wife as patriarchy wants women to be.

Nari Raashifal (98) is written by Preeti Attreya Gyawali. The 'horoscopes' are based on brief readings for individuals born with the sun in the respective signs of the zodiac and they consist of a combination of generalized advice and prediction. The horoscope reduces all human beings into just 12 categories. Then the horoscope writer assigns women participants with fixed gender roles as somebody who is interested in food-preparing, homemaking, child caring, body decorating, homemaking, and unemployed person depending on her husband, and married one. The horoscope on pages of *Nari* moves around these terms: dress materials, jewelry, marital life, family life, relation to other women members of the in-laws, childcare, husband and children, pregnancy, domestic affairs, shopping, maternal support, and married life.

Nari Khelkood (100) - "*Mahila Cricket*" this is remarkable that it at least is able to grab a space of two pages in this magazine where female power has been described. This also tells us that women are coming out of the patriarchal mindsets. As female are not allowed to play games like cricket.

Nari Kala – Dosro Antarashtriya Performance Art Festival (102) – Srijana Dulal Shrestha reports that art has been changed these days she gives examples of three artists where she includes only one man's picture.

Nari Tukratukri - (104) - Keki Adhikari, Varsha Sivakoti, and Dheeraj Magar these artists are presented in this section. This shows men too can grab space in women magazines.

Nari "Photo Samachar," Nari Manoranjan - "Samjhanama Vivah" (108) - Prakriti Dahal presents women of different fields in this section.

Nari "Samajik Sanjal" (110), *Nari "12 Prashna"* - Rajani Shrestha (Body Builder) by Laxmi Bhandari Thapa. This is about the interview of a body builder Rajani Shrestha. This also inspires women to break the conventional norms related to gender roles in the society.

Apart from these contents mentioned above immense portion of the magazine is conquered by advertising. Among available 115 pages, 45 pages are entirely or partly covered

with advertisements. Most of these advertisements are about cosmetics (lip balm, shampoo, face wash, soaps, facial kits & creams, nail polish, powder, deodorant, shampoo, beauty parlor, beauty salon, hair remover, Vaseline or moisturizer, toothpaste, hair coloring chemicals and herbal), homemaking (furniture, sofa-sets, interior designing, paints, kitchen appliances, winter appliances, washing powder), fashion (jewelry, boutique, fashion dress materials), food and beverage (wine, rice, honey, tea, oil, Horlicks), business (IME, App., real estate, bank) and colleges and academy. All these advertisements have business motif they are to earn money not for enabling a person to become an entrepreneur.

The feature articles and horoscope reinforce traditional gender roles directly or indirectly. *Nari* presents advertisements which are sources of income -glamour, homemaking, child-caring, cosmetics as more salient images visually and verbally but contents that empower women and their issues are offered as less salient verbally and visually. Mostly, women and their genuine issues are either excluded or are provided minimal space thus it indicates that for *Nari* they are least significant.

Advertisements are the basics of modern world of media because it is the fuel with which the mass media runs. Advertisement has numerous utilities. Advertisements not only help selling the products they also attempt to sell something more as lifestyle, bodies, sexuality, hope, values, addiction, affliction and ideology. Basically, it sells us 'ourselves.' It has multiple producers/senders and receivers, and purposes. Its assignment is to disseminate consumerist ideology which is based on capitalism and consumerism. These ideologies are constituted, reinforced, distributed and consumed. Goldman states, a 'commodity sign' designates the joining together of a named material entity (a good, product or service) as signifier with a meaningful image as signified. The entire intention behind creating these associations is "Contemporary advertising teaches us to consume, not the product, but its sign. What it stands for is more important than what it is" (694). Advertisements dichotomize men and women as if they belong to different spheres. Female are allied with attributes as tempting, flirty, delicious etc. in the advertisements. In 1973 Wagner and Banos discovered that women recognized with advertisements involving cleaning products, drugs, clothing, and home appliances; whereas men recognized with advertisements related to cars, travel, alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, and banks.

Overall, magazines and their advertisements imply that women's bodies are sexual objects for other's viewing pleasure. Although there is nothing wrong wanting to look attractive, ads for women's cosmetics overwhelmingly advertise seduction and sex appeal.

The exemplary female prototype in advertising displays youth (no lines and wrinkles), good looks, sexual seductiveness and perfection (no scars, blemishes, or even pores). She is slender and typically tall and long legged. Cortese mentions, “the perfect provocateur is not human; rather she is a form and hollow shell representing a female figure”(54). If women want to look like the ones in the advertisements (perfect woman), they will have to spend a lot of time and money on this never-ending quest. Thus, Gauntlett says advertising is oppressive and coercive to women (80). This aspect is dominating aspect to the women. When women are featured as ‘decorative’ in advertisements (shown standing seductively next to a product to enhance the image of the product) their major purpose is to be looked at. 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. Very often there is no link between the female participant and the commodity depicted.

The magazine advertisements attempt to sell the ecstatic reverie experienced by women which is fake. 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 advertisements, 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. Goffman concluded that “advertisers do not create the ritualized portrayals they employ, but rather conventionalize what already exists in our society” (as cited in Courtney & Whipple 24).

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. Rajagopal and Gales explored “The power that advertisements carry with them is sensational. They have the ability to change and shape people’s opinions of themselves with one picture of an image that is technologically modified to represent the advertiser’s perspective of what is seen as perfect by viewers” (3333). Further “Anyone would be self-conscious of his/her image after looking through a magazine filled with attractive women who portray unachievable images... It is these stereotyped representations

that help to shape women's opinions of what they should look like" (3333). 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. Faludi states that the destination of both roads (women and men) is enslavement to capitalism and glamour (599). However, women, on the main, are more on the focus of advertising discourse than men.

Like advertising and horoscope, the articles written in *Nari* are about homemaking, cosmetics, child care, and culinary affairs. Rather than working as agents of change they are also reinforcing the traditional roles assigned to women. Interestingly, while depicting women from rural setting, the images are not real photographs of women. Rather, they are the cartoonized sketches of women. The writer/artist of these women is not talking about "some real person" with specific identity but about "nobody" an abstracted person. Images shown in pages 20, 23, and 96, show the graphic sketches with vague and abstracted identity. Cartoons are abstracted and simplified representations of referents. The images in the advertising above are the real photographs of women representing specific individuals. The images depicted in 20, 23, and 96 are the abstracted forms with no clear identity as such. They are presented as the reduced and homogenized identity of women.

Conclusion

The critical analysis of *Sarvottam Nari* dated Mangsir 2076 (Nov-December 2019) shows that the ideology behind the presented content of the magazine is patriarchy. *Avaran Nari*, *Chitthi*, *Sarokaar*, *Aajaki Nari*, *Mero Jivan*, *Mahila ra Kanoon-Ansha Daabima Mahila*, *Tips-Durghatanabaat Jogine Upaya*, *Khelkood - Mahila Cricket*, *Kala- Dosro Antarashtriya Performance Art Festival*, *Tukratukri*, *Photo Samachar*, *Pushpa Mela*, *Antarik Sajja- Ekikrit Bastiko Avadharana*, *Samajik Sanjal*, *12 Prashna*, *Yaun Tatha Prajanan Adhikaar*, *Bahas - Mahinavari Kin Barne?*, *Nari Bidesh*, to some extent deals with women's issues though they too do not represent and address all the Nepali women as the publication claims. In the similar manner the contents as *Yog -DeshbharYogko Lahar*, *Yuvadekhi Vriddhasamma GarxanYog*, *Nari Save Your Life – Vyayam ani Jado Mausam*, *Kasto Mask Lagaune?*, *Kabjiyatbaat Chhutkara*, *Gastritisbaata Jogina*, *Nari Depression - Mahilalai Winter Depression*, *Khanpaan*

- *Jado Mausam ra Khanpaan, Swasthya Garbhawatilal Chahinchha Jadoma Thap Syaahaar, Nari Swasthya Samachar- Norvic Attyadhunik Suvidhasampanna Naya Bhawan Banaudai, Nepalma Poshanko Sthiti, Orchid Care Homeko Dementia Unit, Nari Fitness - Gharmai Health Club* cover the issues related to women's health which means women are sick and they need more health awareness.

The sections presented in the *Nari: Vichar - Mangsirjastai Manxe, Balbaalikalai Stylist Dekhauna, Outlet – Bhatbhateni Fariya Ghar, Meera, Thamelma Bhera Pizza, Nari Rojgari -Vyavashayik Bhansa, Vivah Vishesh - Pre-Marital Counselling, Saundarya–Dulahi Makeup, Hair Style, Complete guide for a bride, Pahiran Shaili - Bridal Wearma Fusion Choice, Pahiran Fashionma Teen Pushta, hairstyle, pahiran ,Samajma Baby Showerko Badhdo Trend, Nari Katha- “House Wife”, Nari Raashifal, Nari Manoranjan - “Samjhanama Vivah”* all these are female territories as set by patriarchy. That is, *Nari* represents the patriarchal consumerist voices for the continuation of the society. Further, the magazine *Nari* is an instrument for the politics of the commerce and not with the sincere service to the females' rights and people's right to right information. In fact, the females' rights are not promoted in the way the magazine is expected to do rather it allocates and prescribes stereotype gender roles.

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