



The Resolute Women Characters, “Indramaya” and “Chitrangada”

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Abstract

This paper made study of two strong women characters Indramaya and Chitrangada in Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala’s *Tin Ghumti*(2004) and Sharada Sharma’s *Kampa*(2016) respectively. Drawing on feminist theory and gender theory, I analyzed these characters as real humans who are not immune of shortcomings, hardships and conundrums they face in their life. My effort was engrossed to explore how women’s sense of self esteem, freedom and existence is revered in these two novels. By resisting the imposed androcentric values these two characters choose to live their life independently saving their soul and individuality. Such characters can be found in Nepali society where they drift, fight, and claim their right to existence. The narrative, dialogues, and plot portrays these two women of the 21st century heroine, imperfect and sometimes absurd. True love is on the cards, but prohibited relationship nearly sinks them. But they realize and rise without remorse. They represent the world which is non-compliance with the world patriarchy has organized liberating oneself from the sense of inadequacies. They are the voice in the novel that is heard the loudest.

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Introduction

Women’s role and their images have been developed not just from the exigencies of biology and social situations, but they are deeply rooted in myths, legends, tradition, and religion. The strong hold of tradition and mythology affects the sensibility of Nepali society. Nepali consciousness validates Sita’s endurance and Draupadi’s devotion without questioning its pragmatic and utilitarian irrelevances. Women’s heroism is seen in their martyrdom of Sita and Draupadi. Hence, Sita’ endurance of suffering and Draupadi’s status of subordinated wife is still considered “preferable, desirable, virtuous, and even imperative” (Nabar, 2003, p. 23). Generally, female characters in Nepali novels are portrayed in stereotypical role confined to domesticity and apparent passivity or further exaggerated by writer’s own perception and imagination. Gender stereotypes is predominant in Nepali novels as per the reality of Nepali society, which has a long way to go to accept female’s own attempt and own decision to cope the situation in their own life. However, the powerful characters Chitrangada in *Kampa*(2016), Indramaya in *Tin Ghumti*(2004) are presented in paradigmatic plot based in their strength, autonomy and aspiration; their voice resonates louder in the novel. Their consciousness is trying consistently to break through a hidebound, the traditional patriarchal values. These characters’ spectrum of thinking is shaped by intellectual endeavor, rationality and self- esteem. No doubt, strife, crisis and stress become integral part of their journey without their male counterpart.



However, their belief on individual freedom within the boundaries of necessity has been a common thread running through all the variant modes.

Indramaya in Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala's *Tin Ghumti*(2004) and Chitrangada in Sharada Sharma's *Kampa*(2016) are strong female characters who build their own trajectory to struggle and to live a life of dignity. Both these women are strong minded and strong willed who take the radical stand for themselves. They survive all odds despite the constricting nature of their private and public world. Breaking conventional boundaries of caste, gender and values, these characters drive the plot of the story forward. They are an embodiment of the voice in the novel which the reader hears louder. As the story of these characters is true to itself, these characters are unique and true to themselves in addition to its realm of reality. This article is discussing on two prominent writer's presentation of female protagonists who are growing to an adult embracing their femaleness and autonomy against cultural expectations.

Methodology

Author have chosen interpretive methods to analyze the chief characters of the novels that I have selected as primary texts. Feminist literary theories and narrative research method will be applied to scrutinize the social setting and personal behaviors of the characters, and narrative style of the novels. The qualitative research design will be used to analyze the selected two primary texts. Books, journals, articles by prior researchers will be taken into consideration as secondary sources.

Impulsive Lovers: Indramaya and Chitrangada

Indramaya and Chitrangada cross the threshold of their community and values; belonging to so called lower caste than their counterparts, they choose uppercast males as their life mate. Indramaya, even during the panchayat system discards her family for Pitambar. Her love transcends all the barriers when Indramaya adores and accepts Pitambar. She does not dread the social boycott from her family for taking the bold move of accepting Pitambar as be all and end all in that point of life. She has transgressed the gender role by entering Pitambar's gate without taking his consent. In fact, it is supposed to be done by Pitambar, but things happen the other way round. Despite her mother's importunity, she dreams to tie a knot with Pitambar. Existential consciousness and self-esteem become the strong guiding force for Indramaya throughout. Hence, atavistic identity and inheritance cannot outweigh her love for Pitambar. Her decision to be with Pitambar in his all ebbs and flows is the first mode she takes in life. And gradually, "Indramaya, displaced from the Newari soil, entrenches in the new ground and steadily grows up to realize that this environment is conducive to nourish her" (Koirala, 2061, p. 13).

Indramaya's love falls never slighter for Pitambar; she is truthful and forthright in her love. Even Pitambar is awestruck on her audacity as she gets away from her community to cast herself on his world. She never feels humiliated for materializing her feelings and dreams even after her second mode of life. The duty of a true wife has been her first priority. She wants to make sure that their relationship stands on a solid ground. After some days of separation, she wants to establish that closeness making everything flow more freely. He cannot realize that she wants to feel connected. He does not show his concern what she needs at given moment, rather he scorns and offends her by saying 'barren'. Instead, he shows discrepancy and is exhausted by her appeal.



Indramaya's fondness for Ramesh gets more intense when she starts receiving malice and contempt from Pitambar. Though she has heard of Pitambar's intimacy with other women in town, she never condemns him, nor is she resentful. Instead, she feels that she needs to yield more and give plenty as wife. Her relation with Ramesh is considered illegitimate by the social parameter; adulterous love is never considered sovereign. So called illegitimate passion of Indramaya ever denies the permanence of possession. For the time being she entails herself to a love that is iniquitous and risks more than other women by violating the rules of conjugal order. Her love bears the precious fruit; the motherhood she highly celebrates which in turn is disregarded by her husband calling her a wanton. Her illegitimate love provides her the pleasure mingled with fear and guilty, which weigh on her constantly, surrounding every sensual delight with a livid and thrilling aura. The elated soul and agile body proclaim every moment of pleasure. Indramaya finds it futile to fiend to be a chaste and loyal wife when the fire of sensuality and attachment is blazing inside her. She gives in to Ramesh's call by being truthful and honest to her desires, respecting them which otherwise would crush her. As Marry Wollstonecraft contends,

Love is, in a great degree, an arbitrary passion, and will reign, like some other stalking mischiefs, by its own authority, without deigning to reason; and it may also be easily distinguished from esteem, the foundation of friendship, because it is often excited by evanescent beauties and graces, though to give an energy to the sentiment. . . . (Adams, p.396)

Indramaya is tempted to add one more accumulation to her life though her relationship with Ramesh can never be recovered. It was an end in itself, not a foundation for a deeper relation. With Pitambar's shattering relationship, the original essence is not lost but buried under the impediment of life. The core of reality is still there and needs to be uncovered and reaffirmed. Indramaya is beyond the perception of androcentric ideology. She is a misfit for a traditional and essentialist niche. Her motto and philosophy obscures androcentric consciousness. Like a saint when not finding the world compatible and conducive, she deserts her domesticity of Pitambar.

Chitrangada, the name is renamed by the character herself in her early childhood as the given name Siddhilaxmi sounded archaic to her. Name is pride and identity which Chitrangada maintains from her childhood. Described as a carefree, frank and the leader amongst the children of her age, she has strong dislike of prejudice and inequality. The meaning of freedom and justice has been imprinted in her subconscious mind by her maternal grandfather and paternal aunt Heratata. Living her childhood to the fullest by romping around the allies and square with her peers, she proves herself an intelligent girl by securing highest position in SLC. Her love for Rajbabu, a high caste Brahmin is not a proper match in caste, culture and creed. They are two poles apart in disposition and upbringing; Chitrangada's carefree childhood and Rajbabu's strict family discipline are ostensibly incompetent background for each other. Her choice was fundamentally an impulsive one. Marriage and motherhood could not be her ultimate destiny. A rebel and a reformist woman can no longer tolerate the tyranny and discrimination at home at any cost. Her legitimate rage of resisting a battered identity and realization of her own strength prepares her for more tough actions.



Chitrangada, in her relation with Parimal, is devoted physically and spiritually. The love between them stands on the ground of holistic consciousness of body and soul. However, Parimal interprets it as superficial entrapment obstructing his path of fame. He disappears to engross himself in tough penance to free his soul from vulgar and beguiling body. In fact, it's Chitrangada who outsmarts him in argument and makes him disillusioned.

The narrative employs the intermingling of present and past of Chitrangada's life as it is woven around the context of terrible earth quake of 2072 B.S. Chitrangada's story begins after her death in that second great tremor though she had survived the first one. Breaking the boundaries of hypocrisy, abuses, tyranny in the mortal world she flies in the transcendental world, which paradoxically seems the extension of her previous world. Sharma's novelty of narrative technique reconstructs the "*Garuda Purana's Preta Kalpa*", when Chitrangada's spirit journeys through the vastness of dystopic metaphysical world. Her struggle to raise her voice against the false charges, the corruption, and false values continue in that world, which is not immune of mundane problems like corrupted bureaucracy, adultery, impunity, border issues, imperialism and colonialism, perversion, and riots. The ethereal world she is travelling seems to be the prototype of the mundane world fraught with chaos and mayhem. The concept of heaven as imparted by religious scripture and myth has been alluded to show that heaven or utopia is the embodiment of justice and goodness.

Two rebels resisting the patriarchal charges and preserving self esteem

As Ashok Thapa (2019) has critiqued "In all his works B. P. has portrayed women with dignity and lauded their assertiveness, honesty, perseverance and sacrifice" (p. 626), Koirala has inculcated Indramaya with philosophy and stoicism. She does not quarrel though the conflict is intense whereas Chitrangada raises her voice loud against every unjust situation. These two characters do not accept martyrdom as they prove themselves in battle of human survival though they fall in love or fail in love. Joanne Frye (1986) marks,

Within this sexual ideology, the conflict for women seems inescapable: love and work, sexuality and autonomy, body and mind are set in inevitable conflict. The internal dilemma yields the forced choice between being either an acceptable female or a non-female adult. (p. 2)

However, they have challenged the cultural notion of womanhood. Their readiness to encounter the larger world and their decision to act for themselves expand their self-definition. Both the novels, *Tin Ghumti* and *Kampa* react on dominant sexual ideology that encodes women as objects. Meaning of woman's life even in 21st century, lies in marriage and motherhood; life without marriage is assumed to be painful and solitary. Similarly, to save marriages from any kind of catastrophe especially by women at any cost, is valued. Indramaya and Chitrangada resist oppression and passivity after being unable to bear the atrocities inside their home itself. Eliane Hoffman Brauch states that women's utopias differ from men's because men are engrossed to acquire their utopia through control over the individual and through rules and restrictions who is seen as a threat whereas women crave their utopia by arriving at freedom through elimination of the restriction (xii). Both characters strongly defend themselves against the charges they are assaulted. Their resistance to breakout from vicious circle of cultural



programmes and problems showcase that they have liberated themselves from the sense of inadequacy.

When Pitamber calls her wanton, Indramaya defends herself that she was not trading with Ramesh because erotic bliss cannot be acquired without love and emotion. And chastity is related to her own self, not the other's concern. Once again he blunders by proposing her to handover her daughter to Ramesh as she is not his own blood, but an illegitimate child of Ramesh. On this blame Indramaya argues that banishment of daughter cannot alone correct their relationship because Pitambar's love for her has fallen short who could not identify her circumstance. Love is to accept the partner with all pros and cons, with all virtue and vice, in a complete acceptance of body and self. She assesses Pitambar's resistance grounded on immature, superficial, and androcentric foundation. Both women are rebel in androcentric culture which conceives woman as "Passive and her agency is subsumed within the agency of the male. . . . She lacks independent ethical weight, being valued as a means of other's ends in the family rather than accorded value in her own right deriving her social worth instrumentally from service to others (Plumwood, 2002, p.104).

Likewise, Chitrangada defends herself against all charges at the royal court of *Dharmaraja*. When accused of adopting a higher class attitude transgressing a barrier of caste, she counters it with her argument that humanity is the only race on earth that segregation of caste is vicious. On the allegation of having committed a mutiny against her own husband by leaving him, she justifies her decision on the ground that he proved to be weak creature who failed to preserve her self-respect and nominal human right. When she is denigrated to a position of sonless woman ineligible to the purgation in heaven, she answers that begetting a son or daughter is determined by male semen, as science has already proved. The condemnation of her relation with Parimal beyond her marriage is refuted by her argument that humans are programmed for promiscuity; her relation with men in her life had been obvious, natural, and comfortable without offending anyone. Her voice in the royal court of *Dharmaraja* resounds bringing a tremor. Hence, these female characters hold their independent value audaciously challenging the unfair practice of central power.

Exit from Home

Leaving home, though a physical departure, brings all kinds of possibilities- hope, fear, despair and uncertainty. Arun Gupto(2006) deciphers the act of leaving home as:

Leaving home can be understood as performing acts: acts on streets, roads, journeys, multiplicities of places and peoples, carnivals, celebrations, loneliness, meeting the unknown, the fear and joys of knowing the unknown. . . there is a hope that outside is different in terms of problems and conflicts, there are expectations that there would be a different world beyond the walls of this home, this city. (p. 41)

Indramaya and Chitrangada's readiness to leave home is the implied journey with no one to fall over. The journey of their self- struggle begins as Gupto(2006, p. 41) sees moving out as an archetype desire to leave the familiar for the adventurous unfamiliar with the energetic potential and their journey outside is their journey inside. Indramaya's exit from Pitambar's life has been her own decision as she had exited her paternal home, but this time with aching heart and uncertain future. Pitambar cannot accept Indramaya's illicit relation with Ramesh; it batters his



male ego. When two male characters, Pitambar and Ramesh, behold her relation as sin and shame for trespassing the forced chastity, she rises beyond the prevalent manners and morals to argue and despise the awkward meaning of virtues and questions their false consciousness. She contends that virtue of a husband is not to be a provider only. Pitamber, a suspicious tyrant does not reckon himself as a sprightly lover, instead he contemptuously taunts and insults the weakness he himself fosters. She does not exit home in rage and agitation but admits her love and proclivity towards Pitambar through a letter before moving out of the home. When she realizes that her arguments and efforts cannot win back Pitambar's love, she releases him from burden by leaving home. She is well aware that a longer and tough course of life of a single mother lays ahead for her.

On the other hand, Chitranggada leaves her home in a sudden decision and her reaction is the accumulation of her aggression against the malice and maltreatment from her mother-in-law. What hurts her more is Rajbabu's silence to his mother's atrocities under his own eyes. Excluded and berated by her own family inside the home, Chitranggada finally trespasses all the bonds. Her death, the final exit from this world does not end the story, instead the narrative takes a flight with Chitranggada's journey to transcendental world. Breaking the boundaries of hypocrisy, abuses, and tyranny her struggle in mortal world is complimented by her journey in ethereal world for salvation and justice.

Narrative

The narratives of these two novels expose the irreconcilability of autonomy and female sexuality in the lived experience of two female protagonists. One can identify the voice of the novels enforcing the cultural change, transforming status quo and claiming autonomy of femaleness. Both the writers have shunned the subversive representation of adult female protagonist and have raised different but collective set of problems. Tin Ghumti's narrative construction is built on interpretive and extraordinarily discursive style. As Frye(1986) quotes Reed regarding the feature of language used in novels that it differs from the everyday use of language to employ the conventional form of literature because, "The novel is a type of literature suspicious of its own literariness; it is inherently anti-traditional in its literary code" (p. 64). The discourse and literariness of *Tin Ghumti*(2004) is permeable to almost all other cultural codes of gender and feminine consciousness. Koirala's weight of words effectively communicates the significance of Indramaya's selfhood. Indramaya's stream of thought, arguments and speech belongs to high level of intelligence. The discourse on the part of Indramaya is worth of invoking wisdom. Indramaya's dialogues and monologues trace her mental processes and her private exploration of identity. Her present involves a middle-aged woman and her aging process emphasizes the continuity of a selfhood in memory, intelligence, and experience that life has offered and that she has acquired. Though in third person omniscient narrative, Koirala is capable to seek new interpretation of Indramaya's living experience. Her evolving self-awareness with her experience and gradual realization that love alone cannot illuminate Pitamber's battered phallogocentric ego makes her take the third different avenue in her life.

In leiu, Sharma's narrative paradigm includes the dynamic definition of femaleness; it is open ended as Chitranggada openly expresses her resentment and assessment not only in the personal affair but the existing political and social evils and corruptions. She is narrating the



events of our lives, the daily intrigues and complexities of personal relationship through three narrators, Heratata, Chitranggada and the third person narrator. In terms of giving narrative explanation of female experience, Sharma explores the possibility of hope and justice. As Bakhtin (qtd.in Frye 1986) has contended that dialogic capacity of language to interact with its contemporary surrounding is “an indeterminacy, a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact with unfinished, self-evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present)” (p.7). So as the dialogues and discourse of *Kampa*(2016) interact with the social realities of women’s lives, their submission and confrontation, awareness and defense. Chitranggada’s rational perception of humanity is further radiated by spiritual awakening; her radical and just outlook resonates throughout from the early childhood to her after-death journey. The opening sentence of the opening chapter begins in self- assertive tone of Chitranggada’s first person narration introducing herself, “I am Chitranggada Kapali”(Sharma 2016 p.18), though rest of the narrative is in third person omniscient point of view. The story of every character, as Chitranggada comes across during her transcendental journey, envisions the social reality of everyday corruption, lawlessness, impunity, moral degeneration, discrimination, deprivation and all these social evils rampant in mortal world.

Sharma, though adopting the conventional way of narrative, has freed the female protagonist from traditional expectations. Chitranggada has been defined through her action, choice, and perception. The narrator is speaking through her, a powerful characterization of modern female experience and complex female selfhood. Her arduous journey in the ethereal world is the pastiche of *Garuda Purana* but revisiting of the chaotic situation of mortal world. She is a woman powered by intellectual and moral passion who is engrossed to create order in chaotic world through her own personal battle. At times she is almost exhausted when harsh physical ordeals befall her, but like a bird “Phoenix” she rises up with hope and new vigour.

The initial third person omniscient narrative relates how Indramaya chooses Pitamber. “She” is contained within the love story, and “I” lives in a complex world. The subtle but unaware shift of “she” to “I” doesn’t bring split but rather evidently signals Indramaya’s self-projection and intellectual growth. This “I” of Indramaya seeks new interpretive process to assess her lived experience as an actor.

Both writers have shunned the subversive representation of adult female protagonists and raised different but collective set of problems. These women characters shape their life and selfhood beyond the expectation and conventions of their culture. Koirala’s narrative is evident to Indramaya and the readers are embedded in her sense of present reality which reflects back on the past events leading up to it. Memory serves to analyze herself as a struggling human being for self- esteem and existential angst, seasoned by experience and laden with stoicism. Koirala has not provided the solution to paradoxes in life than prioritizing personal choices which in turn bring complexities. Indramaya continues to seek possible answers in relationship of past and present. Her present self recognizes the strength and necessity of decisions made in the past. Though she has not acquired unprecedented position, she is given the capacity to be the subject of her own destiny that is renewed by each new choice.

Indramaya is fighting her own personal battle whereas Chitranggada is fighting openly for justice. She is forced to confront a chaotic reality since Chitranggada’s life is shaped by



external forces. In the course of structuring her life she falls for the wrong person, a person with inert personality. The caste system, almost exterminating her at home is akin to the struggle and injustice she undergoes with her ethereal body.

Indramaya and Chitrangada, holistic embodiment

Koirala and Sharma, both the writers have displayed active female sexuality and women as body and mind. Sex has become a powerful biological urgency, which is acquired with momentous quality of ecstasy and bliss. Indramaya dissolves herself in physical and emotional experience with Ramesh. When she loves his “that part of personality” she never lets it overshadow by his trivialities. Similarly, Chitrangada also yields to Parimal’s physical desire with total devotion. These female characters are subjects rather than objects, who are capable of self-definition and autonomous action. Their selfhood is not a fixed entity but dynamic to make decisions and act accordingly. They reformulate the concept of morality, sexuality, and survival without abstaining from the feminine responsibility and inherent quality. Body seems to be the source of sexual passion, but Indramaya yields to her desire not out of inability to gain control over her lives and her sexuality. She doesn’t seem to be in captivity of sensory receptivity. Her orgasm confirms the power and pleasure. Once she is gratified, she feels elevated. Her sensual enactment bears the fruit of maternity, which she strongly awaits. Neither she abhors Ramesh nor does she eschew Pitambar. Indramaya and Chitrangada claim their voice and discard the female-is-body-is-passive equation and assert the subjective complexity.

Chrisler and Robledo (2018) consider body and sense of self as “Without a body there is no self. In the most basic sense, a living body provides a home for the self, and the brain creates the mind which produces the sense of self” (p. 4). Love and sexual expression are not chosen passively in the drugged quality of immersion. Neither Indramaya, nor Chitrangada is without a self. They succumb to their physical yearning without withdrawal from external connection. Both of them do not burden themselves with remorse as sex is grasped with the insight of biological and emotional urgency. Indramaya’s dissolution in sexuality is a way of finding herself, exploring herself as “A world of searching, the elaboration of knowledge, on the basis of a systematic experimentation with the bodily functions, a passionate and precise interrogation of her erotogeneity” (Cixous, 1976, p. 876). After becoming a mother of a daughter, Indramaya and Chitrangada both experience total reorientations as they re-find the centre of gravity. They become the outward and inward in one, finally choosing to become a single parent of their daughter, to entrain a whole caravan of complications.

These two characters do not let themselves overwhelmed by any force and they never lose their self-outside of relationship. They do not choose to exist only within their love story but are more rational to sustain their consciousness beyond this microcosm. Initially they seem to remain in inclusion of their first love story, but as they sense the strong probability of banishment of their dissenting consciousness they choose autonomy to live in macrocosm.

Conclusion

This article made the analysis of the two female characters of *Tin Ghumti*(2004) and *Kampa*(2016) employing the feminist theories as the modality. These two characters Indramaya and Chitrangada represent female wholeness, the agencies growing up against cultural



expectations and shaping the adult selfhood. The narratives, in both novels draw the initial freedom that gives some measures of open alternatives to the characters' choice and decision. Their representation is not totally constricted by the convention of femininity. They have not enclosed their own self-definition within the cultural grid. In fact, the narrative process includes the women's experiences which are not a part of cultural matrix. These novels are grounded in the shared awareness of gender raising ontological concerns insisting on epistemological queries. Female experiences characterized extend beyond the novel's boundaries to the extra-literary world of the reader. The novels create a dialogue between realism and modernism inspiring the readers to examine their own lives without being programmed. Indramaya and Chitrangada illuminate possibilities and processes without compelling ideological solutions. The voices of these characters inherit a power beyond the mirroring of life, a vibration to open the eyes and to participate to bring changes. They undertake the challenges for altering the constraints of their lives, the possibilities for claiming the rightfulness. Chitrangada sternly chooses collective humanity speaking and screaming for justice against all discriminatory and slanted system. Her voice reverberates in the court of Dharmaraja enough to bring the tremor, the transformation. Indramaya's solitude and monologues reflects vivid moments of past, once again connecting herself to her own core. Her inner spring can be best found in her solitude. Both of these characters relocate their domesticity announcing a dissonance to save their soul from any kind of choking compromise.

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