

Awakening Female Agency in B. P. Koirala's *Teen Ghumti*

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Abstract

Background: Modern Nepali novelist B. P. Koirala (1914-1982) infuses his 1968 Nepali novella *Teen Ghumti* [Three Bends] with a progressive vision of women's self. Literally meaning three bends, the text highlights three critical turning points in Indramaya's life as she gradually grows into a mature soul. Koirala places his protagonist in the midst of the hardships of social imagination in Nepal in the 1960s. He shows Indramaya's decision to reject caste boundaries by choosing to marry outside her Newar community.

Method: This paper gives a contextual reading of Koirala's novella *Teen Ghumti* as a challenge that the new woman takes up for her liberation by taking into account the historical factors contributing to the novelist's understanding of his age and the relevance to creating the bold woman to fight against the political tyranny in the 1960s in Nepal. This paper draws on the theoretical insights of [Simone de Beauvoir](#) and [Judith Butler](#) to interpret the protagonist's refusal to abide by the prevailing rules of her society.

Conclusion: Rewriting social conformity, Koirala's women search for a secular self that defies the authority of larger social structures such as casteism and patriarchy. Koirala sets the protagonist in the backdrop of the political movement of the 1960s, when the Panchayat promoted the oppressive forces.

Novelty: Koirala's politically awakened women exercise agency, enabling them to make their own decisions. Such women have rejected the dictates of the social codes, traditions, and patriarchal order. Facing multiple bends in their life, such women have been crafted in modern Nepali fiction to challenge the prevailing order and propose a new order for the new age.

Keywords: Female Agency, new woman, social critique, rewriting self, Nepali modernity

Introduction

The issue of female agency has been central to feminist criticism, particularly in texts written within patriarchal and transitional societies. In the 1960s, Nepal was undergoing significant social and political transformation as King Mahendra (1920-1972) and [B. P. Koirala](#) (1914-1982) were actively working towards it. However, the King assumed the power of the state upon himself through a military coup on December 15, 1960, and imprisoned all the democratic leaders in Sundarimal Jail in Kathmandu. As a prisoner, Koirala reviews the course of history from inside the prison and weaves a narrative of a rebel through Indramaya in his 1968 novella, [Teen Ghunti](#) [Three Bends]. The novella stands as an important Nepali text that situates the protagonist against the backdrop of the 1960s political movement, when the Panchayat promoted oppressive forces. It presents various complexities of contemporary time through Indramaya, who expresses herself through motherhood and ideological conflict.

The novel centers on the life and quest of a modern Nepali woman, Indramaya, whose inner world and its conflicts form the core of the fiction. She finds herself amid life's complexities and swiftly steers herself out. For instance, she falls in love with Pitambar, a man from a different social and caste background. Despite her family's restrictions, she marries him and accepts him as her husband. After King Mahendra's Coup d'état in 1960, Pitambar was arrested along with other Nepali Congress party workers. Indramaya chooses to produce a child with her husband's friend, Ramesh. She has taken very critical decisions and lived her life in her own way.

The novel has often been read as political or psychological fiction. Indramaya has frequently been interpreted either as a passive sufferer or as a moral counterpoint to her politically driven husband, Pitambar. Such reading is not only sufficient to cover the novel's various aspects but also to discern the ethical and existential dimensions of her choices. We have interpreted the protagonist of the novella in the backdrop of Nepal's historical transition, listening to the call for rebellion. Indramaya's choices stand out as the conscious path to her liberation: she knows she must make them to win her freedom. As a freedom fighter, she struggles for her own independence by rejecting the dictates of the established order. Koirala rewrites the rules of gender to help Indramaya realize her worth in her own society. Drawing on key critical and theoretical insights from French feminist thinker Simone de Beauvoir's [The Second Sex \(1949\)](#) and American critical thinker Judith Butler's [Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity \(1990\)](#), this paper offers a reading of female agency in the novel. Indramaya transforms herself from a socially defined woman to an autonomous individual. This transformation is significant because it allows her to express herself and highlight her agency. The paper seeks

to contribute to the expansion of Nepali literary scholarship by reading Nepali novellas through a feminist existential lens.

Critical Responses to Koirala's *Teen Ghumti*

B. P. Koirala's novella, [*Teen Ghumti*](#) (1968), has been analyzed from different perspectives. Most critics have approached the novella from a feminist standpoint. Similarly, critics have offered psychoanalytic and existentialist readings of the text. [Adhikari \(2014\)](#) analyzes the novel through a feminist lens. He surveys key feminist theories, such as liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, existential feminism, and Postmodern feminism, and applies these theories to the novel's protagonist, Indramaya. The study concludes that the novel's strength lies in its creation of a woman "capable of making independent decisions against social norms" (p. 9). He argues that after leaving home, Indramaya becomes capable of making her own decisions, defying social norms. Indramaya is a courageous female character who does not surrender to male authority. Likewise, [Sharma \(1992\)](#) argues that [*Teen Ghumti*](#) is influenced by existentialism. "The Three Bends mainly stands for existence... like the existentialists, Koirala points out in his novels that worn-out values are inadequate, and the individual's quest for freedom of choice and identity is significant" (p. 215). Indramaya chooses to lead her life, and these choices define her existence.

Along the same lines, [Shakya \(2017\)](#) offers a feminist reading of borders and the concept of nation by examining transborder humanism in the works of Parijat and Koirala. She organizes the discussion around border crossing in Nepali literature. Besides, [Shakya \(2017\)](#) writes that literary writings do not demarcate nationalist borders but rather rework the formation of borders within the human soul. The social agency serves to resize its own border. As the critic further notes, "Sakambari combines a lived psyche with the public imagination of cross-border trajectory. This combined genre also defines Koirala's work, even though his borders are not divisive or protective like Parijat's literary characters but transcendental" ([Shakya, 2017, p.59](#)). Her discussion on Indramaya reveals that "Indramaya is honest about her feelings as a fiercely independent young woman brought up in a well-to-do family, politically aligned with the monarchy" (p. 53). Shakya views Indramaya as enabling her to reconfigure the inner structure of her being, drawing on her inner strengths. Similarly, [Luitel \(2022\)](#) studies the novel through the lens of psychoanalysis. Her study aims to identify the psychology of motherhood through the lens of sexual psychology. Her paper argues that the protagonist, Indramaya, begins to feel for Ramesh when she is dissatisfied with her husband, Pitamber ([Luitel, 2021, p. 90](#)). The study concludes that Indramaya is a courageous, fearless, and intellectually astute character who rebels against the conventional, male-centered Nepali society.

The feminist reading of the text continues, as critics center on the protagonist as a speaking woman who fights for her own rights. For instance, [Atom & Baral \(1999/2000\)](#) assert that [*Teen Ghumti*](#) is a significant novel in the feminist framework. They claim that Indramaya, the protagonist of the novel, powerfully establishes that women should speak for themselves. They conclude that Koirala's *Teen Ghumti* is "a feminist novel that advocates female existence and female freedom" (p. 120). They discuss how Indramaya makes conscious choices at three phases of a woman's life: beloved, wife, and mother. She is determined to face the crises she

has caused herself. Moreover, they have also discussed the novel as an existential novel. In the novel, Indramaya has made vital decisions by going against the contemporary social norms and values.

Freedom of speech is intricately embedded in the issue of existence, which attempts to derive meaning in a new way. Offering an existentialist reading, [Rai \(2001/2002\)](#) analyzes *Teen Ghumti* as a work centered on individual decision, self- definition, and existential choice. He explores the inner lives of women who open up to see their own being within the larger web of social entanglements. Rai asserts:

Indramaya makes three difficult decisions in her life at the ages of 16, 25, and 27, which set her apart from the ordinary lives of other women. If these decisions were not counted, her life would be no more than a single drop in the ocean of female existence. (2001/2002, p. 252)

Rai points out key issues in his interpretation, including an existential emphasis on individual choice, on decisions as life modes, on freedom versus social norms, and on self-creation. Moreover, his analysis also includes freedom and responsibility, authentic existence, and agency within constraint. He further discusses, "Indramaya has chosen only a few desired results through the eyes of her own created truth. She has walked with individual idealism. She is ultimately fragmented but is relatively attached to the greatest and most important value" (2001/2002, p. 268). Her choices have given her a distinct self, placing her in the limelight of Koirala's fictional world.

Often, Koirala's writings are interpreted in the light of Freudian psychoanalysis. Koirala weaves his narratives by borrowing the energy from the id. [Pradhan \(2004/2005\)](#) discusses the novel from multiple perspectives and argues that Koirala holds a unique status as a psychoanalytic novelist. He asserts that Koirala remains unforgettable as a psychoanalytic novelist in Nepali literature. He concludes that Indramaya emerges to us as a woman with self and sexual impulse. She makes different decisions in her life, and when she has to choose between her beloved and motherhood, she chooses motherhood. In this context, if she had no ego, she would not have been able to make such a decision. Furthermore, [Dixit \(2017\)](#) begins by discussing Freud and argues that Koirala's prominent use of sexual themes in some of the stories does not make him a Freudian writer. "Koirala should not be understood as a Freudian writer based on his few short stories" (p. 1). He also criticizes Koirala's depiction of women. However, he praises his technical literary style, the authentic, simple use of the Nepali language, and his mastery of character development. He concludes that even if he wrote well in India, his stories do not meet the standard of contemporary Hindi short stories.

The brief survey on scholarly engagements with *Teen Ghumti* highlights that the novel has been studied through the lenses of feminism, gender, motherhood, existentialism, and psychoanalysis. Despite Indramaya's portrayal as a woman capable of acting independently, making choices, and shaping her life rather than merely a passive subject of social and patriarchal forces, the novel has not been approached through a lens of awakening political sensibility in a woman, resulting in the birth of agency. Methodologically, this study develops

the theoretical framework, drawing on the critical insights of feminist critical theory and linking them to the historical transformation of Nepal in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Agency: Autonomy of Self

In the humanities, agency has remained a contested concept that rests on autonomy, self-reflexivity, and choice. As the human subject employs reason to address a particular adverse situation in her life, she recognizes the power embedded in her own being. However, American philosopher Judith Butler (b.1956) dismisses that self-reflexivity, autonomy, intentionality, or choice are irrelevant parameters as “all of these presuppose political and social support systems, they do not serve as foundations of subjectivity” ([Magnus, 2006, p. 82](#)). Butler does not deny the ability to question and challenge the prevailing codes as the power embedded in agency. [Magnus \(2006\)](#) further analyzes Butler's understanding of agency in rewriting the social codes in the feminist discourses. As he writes, “Agency consists in acts of performative resistance such that the subject can do nothing but resist. This negative notion of agency nonetheless harbors a politically liberating potential within it, and despite appearances, it requires a certain degree of creativity” ([2006, p. 83](#)). Butler entangles the freedom of the subject within the postmodernist labyrinth of language and self, where the possibility of locating the contours of a rebellious self fades into the distant horizon. However, the idea of freedom is intricately related to an understanding of agency. French philosopher and writer, Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), locates agency at the heart of situated freedom. “Beauvoir's ethics of ambiguity describes how, despite their ambiguity, humans can give meaning to their lives and how they can live together ethically, each respecting the unique freedom and embeddedness of every other” ([Morgan, 2008, p. 75](#)). For de Beauvoir, human beings make sense of the world and derive their perceptions in order to exercise their freedom.

Beauvoir's 1949 treatise *The Second Sex* presents her ideas on female freedom and agency. She argues that in a patriarchal society, a woman is confined to certain roles. She claims that a woman regains her transcendence through action and responsibility. [de Beauvoir \(2015\)](#) maintains, “When she is productive, active, she regains her transcendence; in her projects she concretely affirms her status as subject; in connection with the aims she pursues ... she makes trial of and senses or responsibility” ([2015, p. 641](#)). She believes that acting purposefully and taking responsibility for one's actions helps reclaim one's status as a subject. As she further writes, “The emancipated woman, on the contrary, wants to be active, a taker, and refuses the passivity man means to impose on her...she prides herself on taking action, thinking... she declares herself equal to men” (p. 675). She introduces the figure of emancipated women. An emancipated woman is the one who actively resists confinement to immanence and asserts herself as a thinking subject. She argues that emancipation involves activity, agency, and thinking. Butler builds on de Beauvoir's ideas, taking them further, arguing that gender itself is not real in the way people think it is. She argues that because gender is performative, it can also be changed. If people stop acting according to traditional gender roles, they can challenge and even break the system that keeps them in place. Both Beauvoir and Butler argue that gender is not something people are born with but something society creates.

While analyzing Koirala's 1968 novella, *Teen Ghumti*, this study primarily focuses on the theme of a woman's awakening to agency in 1960s Nepal. Dwelling on two key notions of autonomy and self-reflexivity as foundational markers of agency, this study assumes that human beings secure their freedom through reason within the complex web of social dictates. The actively thinking, rational subjects invent new ways of dealing with the situation at every complex juncture of their lives and take responsibility for their conscious choices later in life. Koirala's portrayal of his protagonist highlights her as a model of Nepal's historical transition. Similarly, it also implies a parallel case of the national quest for modernity that requires reasoning through the historical complexities of its own. By indicating the underlying social reconfiguration through Indramaya, Koirala makes a bold statement about the changing nature of Nepali society of the 1960s in the novella. As this study relies heavily on the data produced in Nepali, we have translated the sections quoted and cited throughout the paper. Also, the present reading draws on the theoretical insights from French feminist critic, Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), and American critical theorist and philosopher [Judith Butler](#) (b. 1956) to interpret the behavior of the protagonist.

Awakening Female Agency

Koirala (1914–1982), who founded and served as president of the Nepali Congress during the democratic struggle against Rana rule at the beginning, and later against the partyless Panchayat system in Nepal, was a prolific writer. [Sharma \(1992\)](#) writes that Koirala "had distinguished himself in his literary works early in his life, and in the process added a new dimension to contemporary Nepali literature by introducing an altogether new element of psychological realism into his literary works" ([1992, p. 209](#)). As a trailblazer in the psychoanalytic presentation of events in Nepali fiction, he has envisioned the grey space between the political and the literary in *Teen Ghumti* by bringing them together in a single woman in 1960s Nepal. Indramaya's rebellious instincts put her in a position to make any decision in pursuit of her personal quest for freedom. Koirala's *Teen Ghumti* [Three Bends] (1968) advocates female agency through its protagonist, Indramaya, who demonstrates self-determination and decision-making, making her a symbol of resistance and promoting female agency. The novella presents various pieces of evidence that provide sufficient grounds to prove the awakening of female agency. The text constitutes three sections, based on Indramaya's three decisive turning points and the choices she made for her own life, each decision serving as an example of resistance to the societal norms imposed on women, whether through casteism or patriarchy. Each decision, supported by textual evidence, is analyzed here to demonstrate the novel's strong advocacy of female agency.

Indramaya is an educated girl from a Newar community. Her family is well-reputed in society. They also share a good bond with the King. Pitamber, on the other hand, is a Brahmin man active in a political party that is revolting against the King and the prevailing system. When Indramaya's mother talks about her marriage, she remarks without hesitation, "There is Pitamber! Why don't you marry me with him?" (p. 3). At this point, she realizes her love for Pitamber. She does not understand when she began to like him. This sudden realization leads her to make her first decision against her family, society, and the long-standing tradition of

marriage. Like Butler's reflection on the notion of moral agency, Indramaya rises against the dictates of moral codes. [Magnus \(2006\)](#) states that Butler "reflects a notion of moral agency that is not the mere effect of oppressive political or social power, but which also bears a liberating, transformative potential within it" (p. 91). As a subject of reason, the protagonist knows the weakest points in the moral system. She stands firm about her position even when her mother tries to convince her to change her decision. "Indramaya! How could this happen? He is a Brahmin; we are Newar. We belong to the Baishya Caste" (p. 3). There is a struggle within her. She has to decide whether to choose Pitamber or her family. However, she defies her parents and the norms of society, choosing Pitamber and breaking the taboos of intercaste marriage. Her decision to side with love over family and society, knowing the consequences of her act, directly challenges the rigid caste system and the caste-based hierarchy of that time, marking her journey towards autonomy and strengthening female agency. These evidences of her choice and voice reflect what [de Beauvoir \(2015\)](#) believes "she concretely affirms her status as subject" (p. 675). As a thinking human being, Indramaya relies on her rational choices. Despite her family's disapproval, she marries Pitambar, thereby violating social norms and her community's principles. She opts for her personal autonomy over social decorum, for she knows what matters in her life.

As a party worker, Pitambar struggles to transform society by securing the nation's freedom. Other workers regularly visit him at his residence and discuss the political course of society. Indramaya also equally contributes to such political discussions. As an educated woman, she identifies the challenges of her time and society, knows how to address them, and, finally, has confidence in her approach to resolving them. After some time, Pitamber started to feel insecure and jealous, and he once said, "You quite enjoy my friends' gathering, don't you?" This remark suggests Pitamber as a representative of patriarchal society, where a husband does not like his wife to interact with them as part of their discussion. Slowly, Pitamber's behavior towards Indramaya changed. She also realizes his indifference towards her. Later, Pitamber was caught and imprisoned for his political activities. Indramaya all of a sudden became alone, not knowing what to do or how to contact Pitamber. At that time, Ramesh entered her life, and his constant effort, care, and affection compelled her to surrender to him. Before making the decision, she struggled with herself. "But in life, there are decisions that have to be made- even to sustain life, in which one has to declare war on some part of oneself" (p. 24). Ramesh confessed his love for her. "Indramaya, I can't see you acting like a widow. I love you, do you understand?" (p. 40). Indramaya resisted his proposal. However, his behavior indicated that he wanted to persuade Indramaya. [de Beauvoir](#) states that consensual relationships enhance the sense of freedom for both parties, writing, "... physical love draws its strength and dignity from the joy lovers give each other and take in the reciprocal consciousness of their freedom..." (2015, p. 530). Indramaya understands the implied sense of freedom as she consciously takes her second decision: "I will not be stubborn anymore" (p. 44). In her relation with Ramesh, she experienced delight, and her body felt warm pleasure. She was content with her relationship with him, as she stated, "My time with Ramesh was filled with joy and happiness, day and night" (p. 45). The decision was not easy for her as the relationship between Indramaya and

Ramesh was taboo in society. She went against society. She had a sexual relationship with Ramesh and also got pregnant with his child, which separated her from what society expects from a woman as a loyal wife and her fidelity towards her husband. Her relationship with Ramesh can be taken as a sexual and emotional autonomy that prioritizes her individual desires and physical needs.

Pitambar's release from prison sets in motion the consequences that lead Indramaya to her third decision. She was pregnant with Ramesh's child and gave birth to a daughter. She wanted Pitambar to accept her with her daughter, but Pitambar, as a representative of patriarchal society, could not accept her with her daughter, Rama. She put effort into normalizing their lives, but Pitambar was quite indifferent towards her. He went to the hospital, but he thought it was his duty. He was a politically driven person and only wanted to avoid society's criticism and prove himself as a responsible husband. "I have my own duty that I must consider- we men cannot be irresponsible like you- you women" (p. 60). Pitambar's remarks clearly indicate that he accepts Indramaya only to fulfill his duty as a husband. She could not accept Pitambar's behavior towards her and time, and again she tried to convince him, making him realize the depth of their relationship. He was not ready to accept the truth that Indramaya, as he thought, was not loyal to him. Indramaya attempts to evaluate her love for Pitambar and asks herself why Pitambar could not break the societal boundaries and norms as she feels Pitambar is not ready to defy the societal norms as she believes, "...Pitambar is still in shallow water, his feet firmly planted on the foundation of the society, and he doesn't dare to enter the boundless ocean of his life" (p. 64). His rude behavior towards Rama compels her to confront him. Finally, Pitambar asks Indramaya to send her daughter to Ramesh if she wants to normalize their marriage. For her, it was not about a simple choice between Pitambar and Rama, but about the two fundamental needs of her female existence: the simultaneous protection of a woman's love and motherhood (p. 71). At that point, Indramaya takes the third decision of her life: to accept her child, abandon Pitambar, and embrace motherhood. She prefers her own integrity over her love for Pitambar. She prioritizes her own self-esteem over patriarchal acceptance, which solidifies her autonomy.

Moreover, Indramaya demonstrates agency by defying Pitambar's expectations. Pitambar wishes for her to be a dutiful wife, but she rejects the performative role of the loyal, dutiful wife. According to Butler, gender is not an internal essence but a series of acts performed to satisfy societal expectations. Instead of playing the gendered roles expected of her, she raises her voice. Her intellectual discussions on morality and duty are also noteworthy. She challenges the male-centric definition of morality and duty. "Look, Pitambar, what you call duty, I don't wish to ignore that. However, those boundaries are not extended beyond this society. So, that can also be labeled as public appearance" (89). For her, what Pitambar has pointed out is not fair. She argues that internal loyalty and spiritual satisfaction are far higher in position than only performing "duty" to show the public.

Similarly, Indramaya resists Pitambar's attempts to judge her as a sinner. She strongly opines that the only true sin is the fragmentation of one's own self. Her participation in discourse also plays a special role in discussions of her agency. In the company of Pitambar's friends, she

participates in political discussions as she is equally educated as they are. When they hold armed revolutionary opinions, she holds firm to her beliefs about nonviolence. "...and she expressed her opinion that terrorism and murder are never positive means of politics" (p. 14). Being able to express her thoughts and opinions openly, even when she is the only woman in the discussion, suggests her refusal to conform to society's expectations. Society expects females to perform assigned gender roles, as Butler maintains. Indramaya's agency is deeply tied to her opinion and understanding of her own body and desire. She does not find the relationship with Ramesh a mistake, but rather a conscious act of self-surrender. Her understanding is contrasted with the rule-based or ownership-based love often displayed in conventional relationships.

Indramaya's challenge to Pitamber's obsession with her sexual history is closely associated with her agency. "Indramaya answered, 'I did not show it to the public. I did not fulfill my duty to society. But I gave the essence of life by following my internal conscience. I followed the spiritual duty continuously'" (p. 90). She argues that physical relations do not define a woman's entire existence or her loyalty. The final act of agency lies in Indramaya's pursuit of economic independence, which supports her decision to become a mother. At the end of the novel, Indramaya leaves home. She does so, realizing that staying with Pitamber under his conditions would turn her into a helpless person. She does not demand anything from him; she simply leaves with only a small bundle of clothes. "She carried her daughter, held the small bundle of clothes, and stood in the empty room of Pitamber for some time. The bed was messy. She put the bundle on the floor, arranged it, put the letter on the pillow, and went out of the room carrying the bundle" (p. 106). These lines suggest her expression of agency through economic independence. Her consciousness of herself as a free woman, as asserted by [de Beauvoir \(2015\)](#): "The emancipated woman, on the contrary, wants to be active, a taker, and refuses the passivity man means to impose on her...she prides herself on taking action, thinking... she declares herself equal to men" (p.675). She would not like to make her life pathetic by staying with Pitamber, who understands her feelings differently. Female agency is also evident when Indramaya sustains herself and her daughter by taking various jobs. She wishes to be independent; she takes pride in her actions (de Beauvoir, p. 675). She is happy now. She is able to make her own life by taking action. Moreover, Indramaya reflects on her life with a sense of peace, believing she managed to raise her daughter and maintain her self-respect through her own efforts. It can be supported by de Beauvoir's powerful statement, "The free woman is just being born" ([2015, p. 671](#)). Indramaya maintains her identity through a series of extraordinary decisions. These decisions have helped her to maintain her being. She carves her own path through the difficulties.

Rise of Rebel

Koirala's 1968 *Teen Ghumti* [Three Bends] dramatizes the specific situation through certain effects and play in the narrative. Indramaya's existential choices are determined in the backdrop of a certain political and historical context. Koirala observes the interplay of Indramaya, Pitambar, and Ramesh in the narrative from a vantage point of Nepali history. Koirala guides her protagonist through social defiance as the first turn, moral defiance as the second, and

maternal independence as the final stroke in her rise to rebellion in a conservative society. Koirala critiques the quest for liberation in Nepali society through his protagonist, arguing that people must question the rules that dictate social, moral, and political life. At the historical juncture of Nepal's transition, Koirala finds a suitable rebel in Indiramaya, who rises to prominence through her three choices in life.

As a rebel, Indramaya goes against the norms of her Newar society by deciding to marry Pitambar. Her choice specifically cuts her off from her family and community roots. Gradually, she resists the traditional social setup and moves towards autonomy. After Pitambar is arrested for his political affiliations and activities, she accepts his friend Ramesh as her new partner. By entering into a romantic relationship with Ramesh, she completely departs from society's moral standards. Her first turn only defies the social codes that allow her to make decisions against her kith and kin. However, the second turn morally challenges societal authority, which does not expect a woman to choose any partner she wants while she is still married to Pitambar. Indramaya does not view her relationship with Ramesh as a betrayal of Pitambar. Rather, she addresses her biological and emotional needs in the absence of her husband. The choice of instinct challenges the regular perceptions of her society. She is aware of the duties of a 'faithful wife'; however, she listens to the call of her biological body. The third turn transcends the quotidian expectations: she chooses motherhood. Through her wise decision, she wins maternal independence after Pitambar is released from jail. Her child, Rama, is perceived as an obstacle in the conjugal relationship between Pitambar and Indramaya. The 1960s rebel leaves her house and her husband to rear her child independently. The third bend completes her journey to independence.

Koirala's rebellion initially fights against the rigidity of her family and society. She does not compromise with them. She asserts her choices and decisions as bold statements that run counter to core social values. Pitambar fascinates Indramaya as a man in quest of freedom. After the imprisonment, Indramaya realizes that he is just another conservative moralist of society. She instantly rejects him, as he rejects Rama, seeing him as a hurdle in their conjugal life. On the other hand, Ramesh could have been a choice for Indramaya's marital life. He appears in the narrative, handling her domestic life and helping her address the biological and emotional needs. However, he does not rise beyond the level of a catalyst of instinct, who just takes chances in the absence of her husband. Koirala designs multiple encounters with men in Indamaya's life, during which she closely observes the personal, political, and social tensions. When the inner and the outer produce tension in the protagonist's life, she chooses the path to her liberation. Koirala's woman rises as a social agent who can move beyond the manifest to address structural errors and make her own decision to win her independence. In her pursuit of freedom, she effectively challenges the course of history within a tyrannical system: the singularity of social vision rules the entire political and civil life. Koirala forces society to accept that multiplicity and alternative ways of life reflect the true essence of Nepali society.

Conclusion

This paper has examined Koirala's *Teen Ghumti* through the lens of female agency. It has drawn on feminist and existential ideas from de Beauvoir and Butler. The analysis reveals that

female agency is rooted in Indramaya's refusal to be seen as a passive, dutiful wife. The novel has presented female agency through Indramaya's rebellion. Indramaya makes several difficult choices, such as marrying across caste lines, surrendering to her desires with Ramesh, and choosing her daughter when there is a misunderstanding. She makes a journey of life from a dependent woman to an autonomous, self-reliant woman. Indramaya's actions in the novel demonstrate that she has struggled to secure her right to freedom. Koirala's protagonist embodies the spirit of the changing society that envisions rebels like Indramaya in its quest for freedom. Such political agency can rewrite itself by challenging the rigid traditional structures that block its path to liberation. Instead of constructing herself as a victim, Koirala's rebel woman stands out as a distinctly rational being: she knows she can make her own decisions; she can defend her ways; and, finally, she can win her autonomy and political freedom through her own genuine efforts. The social agency awakens in Indramaya through her attempt to challenge and rewrite the social dictations that hinder her path to freedom. The study is significant in the context of Nepali literary scholarship as women's inner conflicts and existential dilemmas have often remained unexplored. Such a reading allows *Teen Ghumti* to be recognized as an important text that informs about women's struggle for autonomy.

CRedit Author Statement

Komal Prasad Phuyal: Conceptualization, Framing the Design, Finding Resources, Devising Methodology, Analysis and Conclusion, Editing, and Final Manuscript. **Yuba Raj Subedi:** Sifting through Previous Research, Writing Review, and Preparing the First Draft. **Rama Shrestha:** Making Reading Notes from the Primary Text, Writing Methodology, and Preparing the List of Works Cited.

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