

## **Exploring Gender Fluid Identity in B.P. Koirala's *Hitler ra Yahudi*: A Journey of Self-discovery**

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### **Abstract**

**Background:** This article critically examines the subversion of stereotypical gender roles in B.P. Koirala's novel *Hitler ra Yahudi*, focusing on the characters Rewa, Mrs. Macdonald, and Yakub. **Methods:** Drawing upon Butler's (2007) theory of gender performativity and Kaplan's (2015) conceptualization of travel as a metaphor for identity renegotiation, the study explores how the characters' physical and emotional journeys serve as catalysts for challenging and redefining orthodox gender norms. **Findings:** Applying the frameworks above, the paper infers that the protagonists' experiences reflect the fluidity of gender identities and their capacity to dismantle entrenched stereotypes. However, the analysis also problematizes the extent to which these subversions are sustained within the narrative, considering the sociocultural constraints that may reassert traditional gender roles. **Conclusion:** Ultimately, this study concludes that while journeys in *Hitler ra Yahudi* provide a platform for reconstructing gender identities, the persistence of normative structures complicates the realization of lasting transformation. **Novelty:** Travel helps blur the deep-rooted stereotypical gender roles in society by exposing individuals to multiple roles they can play during the journey. Therefore, travel is the means to subvert the stereotypical gender roles.

**Keywords:** fluidity, gender identity, Jews, travel

## Introduction

B.P. Koirala writes on the initiation of social issues and envisions creating a universally accepted society with equity. He began his literary career at an early age by writing essays and stories in Hindi magazines and newspapers. Later, he transitioned to the Nepali literary field, where he is involved in writing prose, stories, and novels. He writes poems and an autobiography. Nevertheless, his incredible literary skill is most prominently reflected in his stories and novels. His outstanding insights and depth in understanding the human psyche have been highly praised by both readers and critics. [Mishra \(2020\)](#) observes that “Koirala was the pioneer of psychological realism in Nepali literature. His first short story in the Nepali language, *Chandrabadana* [Moon-Faced]” (1935), is believed to have initiated the formal discourse of psychological realism in Nepali literature” (p.128). Similarly, [Dhakal \(2070BS\)](#) claims that “Koirala’s presence in Nepali literature challenged the belief of those who assumed that the human psyche could not be the subject of literature” (p.55). [Dharawasi \(2070BS\)](#) asserts that Koirala's literary contribution is evident in the very presence of his works (p.130). Dharawasi contends that Koirala’s literary creations must be viewed from multiple perspectives in an active sense. He further points out that the most fascinating aspect of Koirala’s writings is that they never feel outdated and are always filled with a profound, circular consciousness, captivating both Nepali readers and critics. In Dhakal’s perception, by depicting the human psyche in his literary creations, Koirala presents the underlying causes behind the struggles people face in tackling life’s challenges.

Koirala is a beacon of Nepali literature because he reveals multiple magnitudes of society through literature. From the beginning of his career, he presented different dynamics of human life, which later elevated him to the top among contemporary literary figures. Likewise, [Pandey \(2070BS\)](#) believes that “Koirala's literary works explicitly reflect his aspiration for social change. Through his creations, he envisions a transformation in every aspect of Nepali society in a way that aligns with the needs of the times” (p.80). [Pandey \(2070 BS\)](#) asserts that Koirala’s novels represent his philosophical thought; in fact, Koirala established himself in Nepali literature as a highly intellectual thinker because his literary creations present deep reflections on both national and international issues.

Koirala’s popularity as a literary figure rests on the distinct place in Nepali literature due to his exploration of contemporary issues such as gender and ethnicity in his writing. [Dharawasi \(2070 BS.\)](#) contends that the most powerful aspect of Koirala's writing is his focus on women's consciousness. In each of his stories, female characters emerge as the strongest figures (p.132). In Dharawasi’s observation, Koirala’s female characters do not fear shedding the burdens imposed by tradition to embrace freedom. Keshari claims that by depicting female characters as strong and intelligent individuals, Koirala appears to advocate for changing old traditions with a new progressive approach (mentioned in Koirala, [2070 BS, p.151](#)). She believes that Koirala wrote novels as a form of advocacy for social transformation. Similarly, [Dhakal \(2070 BS\)](#) claims that in his novels, “Koirala has critiqued patriarchally established values” (p.50). Dhakal points out that through his literary creations, Koirala emphasizes human

freedom. In the novel *Hitler ra Yahudi*, Koirala also highlights the importance of human freedom. He reveals that travel lays the foundation for realizing the significance of individual freedom along with its challenges. In the novel, characters feel uncomfortable adhering to conventional gender identity. In such a condition, do the major characters conform to conventional gender identities? Why and how do they dismantle stereotypical gender roles? These are the research questions that this article aims to explore.

### Review of Literature

Current study on Koirala's *Hitler ra Yahudi* derives scholars' multifaced attention that ranges from philosophic, thematic to the stylistic aspects. The novel continues to draw critical attention for its exploration of philosophical depth, freshness in subject, and powerful storytelling. Literary critic [Chalise \(2070 BS\)](#) asserts that Koirala has added a new dimension to the universally known subject of Hitler and the Jews by setting the novel in an international context. The entire novel is structured as a travelogue across Europe. Specifically, "the novel either depicts a protagonist indulging in a pleasurable sexual life, fascinated by Rewa's attractive youth on a ship named *Himal*, or it trembles with the agony of the horrific massacre of millions of Jews who were burned in Hitler's gas chambers, infamous in history for their brutality" (p.63). Chalise believes that these two major aspects form the core themes of the novel, placing it in a distinguished position within Nepali literary narratives. He further claims that presenting the novel in the style of a travelogue is a novel approach in Nepali fiction writing.

Similarly, Dahal observes that Koirala's novel is presented as a significant work from the perspective of conflict law. The novelist has successfully portrayed an international subject through Nepali novelistic craftsmanship and techniques. This novel has proven to be exceptional in highlighting issues against humanity and fostering discussions on human values and ethics. Likewise, [Dhakal \(2070 BS\)](#) asserts the novel as a reference to the second world war, "*Hitler ra Yahudi* as an experiential travel novel that references events from World War II" (p.170). According to Dhakal, the novel centers on World War II and portrays the wounds inflicted on human society by political, cultural, religious, and ethnic conflicts while strongly opposing war. Dhakal concludes that through the skillful use of characters and settings; the novel vividly depicts the horrors of war and its grotesque nature.

[Pokhrel \(2023\)](#) highlights Koirala's novelistic technique in *Hitler ra Yahudi*. He argues that, to present the horrors of war, the novel successfully expresses the local and temporal environment through the protagonist's perspective, covering mythological references from the *Mahabharata* to World War II and its aftermath (p.114). Pokhrel further claims that the protagonist's journey, which begins in Nepal, extends mentally to the *Mahabharata* and physically through India to Europe, where the novel's various interpretations exist as reflections of the psychological landscape. In a similar vein, [Chalise \(2070 BS\)](#) praises *Hitler ra Yahudi* for its compelling presentation of political philosophy. [Adhikari \(2025\)](#) points out that, though small, *Hitler ra Yahudi* carries profound philosophical weight. In [Adhikari's \(2025\)](#) view, "Koirala has strongly critiqued war and Hitler's anarchy. He observes that the

discussions and ideas presented in this novel seem to clearly convey their meaning on every page” (para 16). According to [Adhikari \(2025\)](#), as a public intellectual, B.P. Koirala appears sharp and critical in this novel. The message of the novel is also clear: regardless of the objective, Hitler’s ideology is evil and a disgrace to humanity. The primary goal of the novel is to instill this awareness in human consciousness.

[Thapa \(2025\)](#) asserts that *Hitler ra Yahudi* is a novel written in the style of a travelogue that sheds light on the negative aspects of war. Thapa observes that in the novel, the central character embarks on a journey that begins on a ship from Bombay, passing through various ports before reaching England, followed by a visit to Stratford, then Berlin, the Hanover prison camp, the gas chambers, through Paris in France, and finally concluding in Israel. [Thapa \(2025\)](#) claims that the plot of the novel focuses on two major themes: first, “the world left shattered by World War II and its impact on the Jewish people; second, the psychological analysis of the inner conflict between the spiritual philosophy inherent in Aryan culture and the harsh realities of life” (para. 2). These critical insights in *Hitler ra Yahudi* have highlighted the philosophical and psychological aspects of the novel. Nevertheless, they have left room for further analysis of the novel from the perspectives of gender and travel theory.

Scholars have scrutinized the novel, highlighting it as travel writing, philanthropic fiction, empirical writing, allusive writing of the Second World War, a novel with human values and ethics, the horrors of the Second World War, a stylistic travelogue, and war and Hitler's anarchy. However, these current studies have left the way a literary piece has functioned as a means for social awareness to establish fraternity and equity, redefining stereotypical gender roles assigned by the social constructs. Disruption of the formulaic gender roles for mainstream females is the underlying motto of this study.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This is a qualitative research study that employs gender and travel theory to scrutinize the text, justifying that travel facilitates gender identity and supports the subversion of stereotypical roles assigned to females. To explain this argument, Butler’s (2007) theory of gender performatively and Kaplan’s (2015) travel as a metaphor for identity negotiation have been employed. Using these two theories, this article analyzes B.P. Koirala’s *Hitler and Yahudi*.

### **Analysis and Interpretation**

#### ***Journey as a Catalyst for Fluid Gender Identity***

The plot of *Hitler ra Yahudi* revolves around the journey of the central characters Rewa, and Theodora, and an unnamed Nepali male narrator, which serves as a backdrop for destabilizing traditional gender roles. The narrator embarks on a journey to England for cancer treatment. During his travels, he visits several European countries, encountering various people along the way. In these unfamiliar places, surrounded by strangers, his masculine identity begins to falter repeatedly. His masculine image shatters when he witnesses the remnants of the cruel events of history. He often appears weeping in response to the harsh realities he encounters. The suffering of poor and innocent war victims, their struggle to survive in a house

on the verge of collapse, makes him weak inside. In the journey, the narrator realizes that he lacks the courage to face such painful truths about life, revealing a vulnerability that contrasts with traditional notions of masculinity. His emotional reactions throughout the journey challenge the stereotypical image of the Stoic, self-sufficient, and emotionally restrained male, illustrating how the journey exposes his true, fragile self. The novel delves into the psychological insights into the characters.

During the journey, the narrator and his fellow travelers reveal their true selves through their actions and behaviors. The characters are liberated from the social surveillance that typically governs their lives, which allows them to challenge and break free from conventional gender norms. Judith Butler's theory supports this transformation, as she argues that individuals maintain stereotypical gender images under the pressure of societal expectations. According to [Butler \(2007\)](#) social scripts play a significant role in shaping a person's gender identity. She notes, "a script survives the particular actors who make use of it" (Koirala, 2000, p.526), suggesting that these societal scripts are perpetuated by individuals who follow them. She concludes that by adhering to these scripts, individuals inadvertently reproduce gender roles. In the novel, the journey offers a freer environment where the characters are no longer bound by these restrictive social scripts. This newfound freedom enables them to challenge and dismantle the conventional gender images imposed upon them. The narrator, Rewa, Narayanan, and the Arabian woman all break away from traditional gender roles and construct more unconventional gender identities. The journey provides them with the opportunity to explore and redefine themselves outside the constraints of societal expectations, allowing for the formation of more fluid and authentic expressions of gender.

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator is in Bombay, India, for a medical trip as he battles cancer. On the first day of his visit, he breaks away from the traditional masculine image of being a daring, self-sufficient, and confident individual. Instead, he appears helpless, confused, and indecisive. He finds himself relying on a taxi driver to help him find shelter in this unfamiliar city, fearing that he might not even be able to secure a room in a hotel. At this moment of travel, his so-called masculine traits of boldness, independence, and firmness dissipate. The lack of information and accessibility exposes his vulnerability and dependence on others. [Butler \(2007\)](#) posits that gender is not an innate quality but is constituted through repeated performances, which can subvert socially imposed norms. Kaplan suggests that journeys—both literal and metaphorical—destabilize fixed notions of identity, including gender. Through a flashback, the narrator reveals how he is completely reliant on his wife for the arrangements regarding his treatment abroad. He has no plans, no money, and lacks the courage to travel abroad for his medical care. In contrast, his wife is resolute in her determination to send him to England for further treatment. She has a clear vision of what needs to be done and takes charge of everything. As a capable and resourceful manager, she organizes his journey by selling her jewelry to raise the necessary funds, applying for his visa, and booking his ticket and hotel. Throughout this process, the narrator appears as a passive recipient, following his wife's instructions and relying entirely on her to navigate the

complexities of the journey. This highlights the breakdown of traditional gender roles, as the wife assumes the active, controlling role in a situation typically expected to be managed by the husband.

Koirala presents both the physical and emotional journeys of the characters, illustrating how these journeys are the means for transformation. [Siegel \(2004\)](#) argues that “travel profoundly alters a person’s sense of self, often resulting in both a loss of identity and a deeper self-awareness” (p.7). According to [Siegel \(2004\)](#) travel has a significant impact on one's identity. During his trip to London, the narrator encounters Rewa, an Indian woman, aboard a ship. Rewa is portrayed as active, smart, assertive, and open. She confidently forms a friendship with the narrator, despite the fact that forming friendships with the opposite sex was considered highly unconventional in society at the time. The journey provides Rewa with a more open environment, allowing her to take the initiative in developing an intimate connection with the narrator. Despite being married, she fearlessly engages in a physical relationship with him, spending hours together in intimate moments well into the night. Had she not been on this journey, it is unlikely that she would have dared to act on her own desires in such a manner. Through her actions, Rewa challenges the traditional gender norms that portray women as self-sacrificing individuals who suppress their desires for the sake of family honor. By following her free will, she dismantles this restrictive gender image, embracing a more liberated and self-determined version of herself.

Through *Hitler ra Yahudi*, Koirala reveals that the journey emphasizes individuals’ capacity to blur the boundaries between masculinity and femininity. Since the journey exposes people to rapidly changing circumstances, they voluntarily cross the gender border. Hence, in the novel, characters do not stick to the traditional gender image. During his visit to Bombay, the narrator meets Margaret, a Lebanese journalist. She is a very bold and confident woman. She is assertive and knowledgeable. Her knowledge about the history and her strong advocacy for the rights of the Arabian people help to build her strong personality. She puts her argument so assertively that neither the narrator nor David, a representative of Israelis Organization, can give her a counter. Her exposure to the world and her sheer knowledge about various matters enable her to break the gender stereotype that depicts females as weak, meek, and indecisive individuals. Her activities confirm [Zackey’s \(2007\)](#) idea that in travel “the traveler experiences challenges to his/her identity when faced with other cultures and countries so s/he constructs the gender image for themselves that reversed to the conventional gender image” (p.10). The free environment of an unknown place strengthens her and instigates her to follow her free will.

Rewa is highly conscious of her identity and her sense of freedom. She constructs an image of herself as an independent woman. She embarks on a long journey alone, traveling from India to London. Despite the societal restrictions on married Indian women at the time, which Narayanan claims forbid wearing modern clothes, Rewa chooses to wear Western attire. Narayanan’s comment about her dress echoes [Butler’s \(2007\)](#) observation that “the body is a powerful symbolic form, a surface on which metaphysical commitments of culture are inscribed” (p.13). Rewa engages in several other activities typically restricted for women, such

as drinking alcohol, dancing with strangers at parties, and so on. When the narrator addresses her by her husband's surname, she objects because she feels that her identity is compromised when people refer to her using her husband's surname. Therefore, she urges the narrator to call her simply "Rewa" instead of "Miss Deshai." She states, "Women feel more honored when they receive personal value from men rather than being placed on a high pedestal of social decorum" (Koirala, 2000, p.20). In this way, Rewa dismantles the stereotypical gender image not only through her actions and behavior but also through her attire. She is unafraid to express her views clearly and challenge societal norms.

However, Rewa also exhibits what is considered her feminine self through her behavior. While her male companions, the narrator and Narayanan, engage in serious discussions about human civilization, she remains detached from these intellectual exchanges. Bird (2015) claims that travel writing serves as a privileged space for self-fashioning for men, provided they adhere to "the accepted forms of masculinity: asserting facts rather than indulging feelings, announcing heroism rather than admitting cowardice, and accumulating heterosexual conquests" (p.36). In alignment with Bird's (2015) claim, the narrator and Narayanan engage in discussions about Hindu religion, highlighting the connection between the Hindu Aryans of India and the Aryans of Germany. They delve into the discussion on historical events and wars. In contrast, Rewa shows complete disinterest in these matters. The narrator reveals her disconnection during one of these intellectual discussions, stating: "Rewa once again felt useless and began looking around in all directions, hoping to catch sight of something interesting (Koirala, 2000, p.26)." Rewa's thoughts and behaviors simultaneously reinforce both so-called masculine and feminine behaviors, which supports Kaplan's (2015) concept of travel "as a metaphor for the ideological disruption of the character's self, offering alternative modes of being" (p.55). Kaplan further asserts that the act of travel itself serves as a metaphor for this fluidity. As a result, travel allows an individual to move beyond rigid societal constructs, presenting opportunities for the exploration of identity beyond traditional boundaries.

In *Hitler ra Yahudi*, through the character of Rewa, Koirala highlights the stronger position of female travelers compared to other women, confirming Bassnett's (2022) view that female travelers differ from both non-traveling women and male travelers. Unlike socially conformist "women who remain within the domestic sphere prescribed by society, female travelers break from these norms. They also contrast with male travelers, whose journeys often serve to affirm masculinity; for women, travel is an act of independence and a challenge to traditional gender roles" (p.226). In the novel, Rewa stands out as being more different than the majority of women who either do not have the chance or do not dare to leave their homes and, as a result, remain in the same place forever. On the other hand, female travelers, like Rewa, differ from male travelers because they use travel as a means of recreating or exploring their identity. In Bassnett's (2022) observation, "the woman traveler was somehow in flight from something, seeking to escape from the constraints of her family or her society; whereas, males travel in order to "confirm their status as powerful males" (p.226). Similarly, Pokharel

(2023) asserts that “The invisible power to suppress women from the main stream and toss them to the margin exists in the mindset of the people” (p.51). In *Hitler ra Yahudi*, Rewa appears to follow her own free will, unlike other females who remain confined by societal norms. However, she does not engage in intellectual discussions or seem interested in exploring new places or ideas. This contrast reveals how Rewa navigates her journey in a way that both challenges and aligns with traditional gender expectations.

Rewa’s gender identity fluctuates throughout the novel. Initially, she appears bold and assertive, but at the same time, she also reveals her feminine side. As the journey comes to an end, she shifts back to her masculine self through her behavior and actions. For instance, she does not take the gifts given to her by the narrator, her beloved, with her. Since she does not become emotionally attached to him, she discards the gifts, throwing them in the trash. Similarly, when her husband arrives to receive her, she introduces the narrator as if he were an insignificant person. [Butler \(2007\)](#) argues that “acts, gestures, enactments, generally constructed, are performative, in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (GT 185). Rewa’s behavior reinforces this idea, as she does not display any emotion during her departure from the narrator, despite the intimate relationship they developed during the journey. In contrast, the narrator becomes very emotional. He feels lonely, misses her, and even secretly weeps. His emotional response challenges the stereotypical image of males as rational beings, further highlighting the fluid and performative nature of gender.

The characters' gender identities repeatedly wobble. Narayanan initially appears as a rational intellectual, confidently sharing his vast knowledge of religion and history. His intellectual prowess earns him the respect of everyone on the ship. The narrator reports how the passengers highly praise him: “Narayan headed towards his room. Everyone stepped aside in respect... The elderly Englishwomen commented as they passed, 'He is a learned Brahmin from Hindustan'” ([Koirala, 2000, p.57](#)). He expresses his ideas firmly, revealing his masculine self as assertive and thoughtful. However, his feminine side also frequently emerges in his behavior. When Rewa falls ill, he takes care of her selflessly. He consistently checks on her condition, bringing her medicine and offering advice on what to eat to alleviate her sickness. He insists she eat to avoid sea sickness, saying, “Rewa ji, if you have a headache on the ship, you shouldn’t keep your stomach empty. You need to have something warm in your stomach.” The journey transforms him into a caring person. In this travel context, his softer side emerges, even though males are typically expected to be harsh and indifferent in their behavior. Narayanan dismantles the stereotypical image of masculinity and exhibits his feminine traits. Connell underscores that individuals do not adhere to a fixed identity. Rather, they create multiple identities and roles depending on the circumstances. Similarly, Narayanan's gender identity appears different in various situations, reflecting the fluidity and complexity of identity formation.



The other characters Mrs. Macdonald and Yakub embark on journeys that create an environment where they can overturn traditional gender roles. Mrs. Macdonald, a wealthy businesswoman and widow, uses her wealth and powerful status to fill her loneliness. She tempts Yakub to be her boyfriend, and he fulfills her wish, believing that in order to merge his company with hers, he must keep her happy. Despite being a woman, Mrs. Macdonald holds a higher status in the social hierarchy, while Yakub is subservient to her. Even his father, Goldman, pressures him to remain submissive so that he can benefit from her help. As a result, these two characters challenge the traditional gender image of the authoritative male and the subordinate female. Mrs. Macdonald enjoys agency and uses it to her advantage, embodying a traditionally masculine trait of self-centeredness. On the other hand, Yakub sacrifices for the happiness of his father. He compromises with Mrs. Macdonald because his father desires it. This act constructs his image as a self-sacrificing person. [Bassnett \(2022\)](#) argues “Travel for some women, it seems, may have offered a means of redefining themselves, assuming a different persona and becoming someone who did not exist at home” (p.234). In this way, Mrs. Macdonald feels empowered by her newfound authority and fully exercises it.

Depicting the journey of the central character, or the narrator, *Hitler ra Yahudi* navigates the complexities of identity through his visit to Europe. While visiting historical places such as London, Stockholm, Berlin, and Hanover, the narrator's gender identity becomes increasingly unstable. On one hand, he presents himself as a rational, firm, and inquisitive male, for whom visiting new places is an opportunity to expand his knowledge. For instance, he visits Shakespeare's birthplace and, from there, demonstrates his insight by analyzing Shakespeare's dramas in a letter to his wife. In doing so, he exhibits a sense of superiority over her. His actions align with [Bassnett's \(2022\)](#) claim that the “journey provides an opportunity for the male traveler to discover more about his own masculinity”(p.226). By portraying this, Koirala reveals how the journey allows the narrator to affirm his masculinity.

The study explores the role of travel in erasing gender discrimination. Koirala suggests that travel offers males an opportunity to showcase their heroism and affirm their masculinity. [Behdad \(1994\)](#) claims that “travel writing was often defined as a masculine domain, a showcase for contemporary norms of masculinity, heroism, and virility” (p.82). Later, the narrator visits other historical places and observes the power dynamics and cultural displacement in Europe. [Behdad \(1994\)](#) notes that a male's journey is often imbued with “the exotics of adventure” (p.82). The narrator, as a Nepali male traveler in Europe, decides to visit sites marked by the horrific and cruel legacies of war, particularly the places associated with the Holocaust. His journey offers a unique perspective that initially reflects traditional masculine tropes of authority and detachment. Despite Elza's warnings, he chooses to visit these places, demonstrating the masculine side of his personality. He believes that, as a male, he will not be affected by the brutal realities of war. However, when he visits these sites and witnesses the cruelty of war firsthand, he is deeply affected. He becomes frightened and has nightmares. His fear reveals that the gender attributes used to define males are socially imposed, not natural

phenomena. As a result, the narrator repeatedly sheds these so-called masculine traits and instead explores more feminine aspects of his personality.

When the narrator meets several people on his journey, his masculinity is modified involuntarily. [Mills \(2005\)](#) argues that “individuals are constantly affirming, negotiating, and modifying their gender identity” (p.3). In Berlin, the narrator meets Thiyodora, and there he witnesses the destruction caused by the world war. The miserable conditions shake his heart and strip him of his confidence and strength. He feels that he can no longer bear the cruel remnants of the war. Similarly, his heart fills with compassion after hearing the painful story of Thiyodora’s life. His reaction to the war, along with his compassionate and kind behavior toward Thiyodora, unveils the tender aspect of his personality, dismantling the image of the “tough guy.” He admits, “The things I heard in your room, trust me, they must have helped me become an even better human” ([Koirala, 2000, p.85](#)). From the perspective of [Kantrowitz and Kalb, \(2009\)](#) due to social restrictions, men often try to “behave boldly and appear strong” (p.203). However, the narrator presents himself as a soft-hearted person. He shows immense love and care toward Thiyodora when he witnesses her misery.

Likewise, the tenderness of his heart is reflected in his love and care for Elze, a young girl he meets in Hanover. She approaches him while he is walking down the street in the city. He spends some time talking to her and appears as a very caring person. He provides her with food and even accompanies her to her house. Elze offers her body in exchange for money, hoping to get food for herself and her parents, but he rejects her offer. In doing so, he dismantles the stereotypical image of men as unfeeling. Instead, he comes across as a kindhearted person who shows selfless love to the poor girl. The journey reveals the compassionate side of his personality. As he observes the miserable condition of the citizens in a war-torn country—who have lost their homes, jobs, relatives, and sources of income—his heart fills with love and empathy for them. His transformation from a masculine to a more feminine personality confirms that the construction of one’s gender is influenced by circumstances and that these external factors play a vital role in shaping one’s gender identity.

## **Conclusion**

This study unveils how travel lays a foundation for people to destabilize traditional gender identities. Characters' gender identities oscillate between traditional and non-traditional roles because the journey inspires them to break free from socially constructed norms. During their travels, male characters frequently take on roles typically associated with femininity. Similarly, female characters do not hesitate to construct masculine identities through their thoughts and actions. Exposed to a freer environment, the narrator, Rewa, and other characters frequently shift between masculine and feminine traits. Initial submissive, weak, and dependent behavior changes to a firm adventurer. Rewa challenges the traditional image of a demure and unassertive woman. Exposed to a freer environment, she exercises her free will. She wears Western attire, which is typically restricted for Indian women, and fearlessly engages in behaviors considered restricted, such as drinking alcohol and spending intimate time with the narrator. Characters challenge conventional perceptions of gender. Furthermore, their

behaviors reinforce the idea that identities are not fixed but are instead constructed and performed based on circumstances, context, and individual choice. This study emphasizes that through the characters' journeys, travel creates a space where one can redefine oneself beyond rigid gender expectations, fostering a more flexible and dynamic sense of self. Ultimately, this article highlights the transformative power of travel in reshaping personal identities and the fluid nature of gender in an unconstrained environment.

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