

## Chapter 1

### Third World Society and the Issues of Gender Equalities

#### New Nepalese Context and Women's Endeavors

This research is a descriptive study of Sheeba Shah's novel *Facing My Phantoms* from third world feminist perspective. It attempts to explore the struggle of the central character Sanjeevani's search for identity in Nepali society. The novel takes the readers into the heart of women's life in contemporary Nepal, revealing the dilemmas that women face in their relationship with husbands, mothers, families, friends, employees and children. It brings into focus the issue of the women struggle for social space and identity in a patriarchal society. It is set in the Nepali context, during the transition period of Maoist insurgency (1996-2006). It was a social and political movement bringing consciousness in people; therefore, it brought certain changes for the social transformation in the Nepali context. The writer has exposed the reality of the country's hidden darkness as well as the growing consciousness and their conflictual relationship with tradition from feminist point of view.

Nepalese society is shaped mostly by a patriarchal Hindu cultural set up. The social norms and values are constituted by patriarchal codes dictated by Hindu cultural values. So as to resist the patriarchal culture codes, the writer has brought Sanjeevani as a bold character. The experiences how the third world women have to compromise social boundaries, limitation and restrictions and their struggle for identity are brought to the light in the novel. The present study attempts to analyse the third world women's desires for having social identity. It observes how a woman looks at herself and her problems. It tries to explore changes in society where women have started to live for their identity and their rights rather than following their socially mandated roles. Along with the establishment of democracy, women have

found much freedom. The study also attempts to explore how women's identity is addressed in a new social context. The author through a woman character, Sanjeevani opposes the patriarchal ideology opening up the way for the female identity.

The issues presented in the novel are the common issues of Nepalese society. The novel is the cry for independence of women from the long rooted feudalistic patriarchal society. The main objective of the research is to explore the identity of women in the patriarchal society. The study analyzes the rebellion character of Sanjeevani and the changing consciousness of the Nepali women after the Maoist movement and its undercurrent so as to present the voices of the powerless people. Representing the bewildered minds of the Nepalese youths during the Maoist insurgency period in Nepal, this sensational and intriguing novel voices the sentiments of a nation in transitional chaotic fearful but ever hopeful situation.

Shah presents women characters in her novels with full of enormous courage. It provides a poignant and a realistic description of continuous efforts of women for their recognition in the society. This is a perfect example of contemporary women's identities with traditional gender discrimination, class and caste constraints. In it fiction merges with reality. It presents authentic women voices. Through examples of women characters, Shah tries to demonstrate what women should do for their liberation and how their society can become aware of their predicament. These women character have not only exhorted an exposition of the patriarchal towards feminist growth and expression, but have also envisioned the ways of counteracting those attitudes. They analyze their varying ideals of feminist emancipation in relation to their roles.

The resistance to the socio-cultural structure is crucial for the third world woman like Sanjeevani so as to create her identity and generate the social space for

women. Chandra Mohanty points out the potential commonality among the Third World Women:

What seems to constitute "Women Color" or Third World Women" as a viable oppositional alliance is a common context of struggle rather than color or racial identifications. Similarly, it is Third World Women's oppositional political relation to sexist, racist, and imperialist structures that constitutes our potential commonality. (49)

In an attempt to create their social space and identity, the third world women do not form an alliance on the basis of their color but they find a context of their domination and resist them. Their challenge to the social structure creates commonality in them. Sanjeevani, through her rebellious attitude to the social structures seeks her identity and social space in the novel.

The patriarchal third world society has preoccupied concepts about the women's position both at home and outside. Male ideology is commonly prevalent; therefore, women either accept the male notions, or challenge patriarchal discourses. Men do have sense of superiority because of patriarchal ideology which promotes monopoly of the men to dominate women. A woman is not born but made by the patriarchal society with its concept of all do's and don'ts for women ensuring subordinate status for them. The root of the problem is the system of patriarchy which leads to all kinds of discrimination against and devaluation of women. Patriarchal society creates discourse for dominating women and its ultimate aim is to show men's superiority over women. Thus, resisting the patriarchal ideology is the major feminist project in any patriarchal society as their distinct identity. Besides, going beyond this simplistic form of

resistance, the third world feminist interventions that there could be the plurality of female experiences and ways of resistance according to the local contexts are to be kept in the mind while assessing the novel.

The novel focuses on women's condition in Nepalese society. The protagonist experiences that women have to compromise social boundaries, limitations and restrictions. The social norms and values are constituted by patriarchal ideologies. The novel discusses about social transformation in the Nepali society as well. It is the most significant phase in Nepal when there is a consciousness that every women should ensure her position in the patriarchally dominated society. In this respect, the novel presents the main character, Sanjeevani, with new consciousness as she challenges to the existing patriarchal social assumptions.

The novel focuses on the transitional period when elite groups are challenged because of social upheals. The new social surrounding and new insight among people lead towards new ground. Along with end of autocratic reign, democracy prevailed and it gave a new insight to the people. This new context of political and social ideologies seed freedom of marginalized voices and empower them to speak for their voices.

During this transitional phase, marginalized people realized their suppressed position in society and this favorable situation encouraged them to speak against repressive power. Like despotic ruling system, patriarchal society had repressed the female voice. But, the political changes have provided space for women to fight against suppressive patriarchy. Though, Sanjeevani's family does not support her, she dares to take risk against them therefore, she has got a determination for ensuring her position in society.

This novel is analyzed from third world feminist perspective that raises questions about women's independence in third world society. Sanjeevani is a representative character who rebels against the gender based ideologies that hinder women's freedom. The story of Sanjeevani begins novel as she questions what it is to be a 'woman' independent of the roles placed on her, and 'self' with desires of her own. She challenges the traditional gender roles. She redefines her roles unlike what traditional society places her. For this reason, she seeks her social role, place and position even though the traditional society does not accept woman freedom and independence.

As a rebellious and revolutionary character Sajeewani shows her embodiment of social-cultural progressive spirit to all women. She thus becomes an allusion to all women kind repressed as they are in the patriarchal construction of the space in society. She seeks an evolution of gender equality in society where freedom and social progress should be ensured. There are always contradictions between old values and new values in society, in which the protagonist finds herself to be extremely driven by creative sense of awakening and awareness.

The text presents transformation of the Nepalese society from domination to freedom. Sanat and Sanjeevani are major characters who represent two different ideologies. Sanjeevani represents a modern ideology whereas Sanat represents traditional one. Both of these characters have contradictions in ideology. It shows that there is conflict between different ideologies in the society. Sanat is from traditional norms and values by which her thought has been trained whereas Sajeewani is from a new social atmosphere; so her thoughts are rebellious.

Though Sajeewani was born in the aristocratic family, she is not happy

because she cannot find her identity in the society. The social structure is shaped by patriarchal thoughts. Women are discouraged from their own and individual choices and accept only submissive and docile roles. Therefore, she goes out of those familial norms and leaves her family and seeks her own desired life and freedom in the outside world. After she leaves her home, she has to face different challenges and social criticism which make her bolder and stronger. As a result, she gets her social space in a patriarchal social structure. The patriarchal structure positions women as a monolithic group and subordinate to men as well as in the community. Men generally have the control over economic resources and provide personal security to women within religious societies. Women are kept powerless. Therefore, women have occupied the inferior position for a longtime. As women are undermined under the patriarchal restrictions for centuries, they identify themselves as recovered patriarchal women in the sense that they have internalized the norms and values of patriarchy.

Shah has written this novel portraying the condition of Nepali women. She has created a powerful character to dig out the pinch of Nepali women where Sanjeevani has to limit within familial circles. Society has given her certain women's roles, but she aims to be free from any social obstacles and limits. For instance, Sanjeevani disagrees with everything that is given to her in each and every respect. Breaking the existing norms and values, she adopts a modern way of life values, she adopts a modern way of life even if she is from a well cultured family. Grandma, Sanat represents traditional and patriarchal oriented woman who wants everybody to respect traditional cultures, norms and values. Sajeewani has great experiences being a party worker, a freedom fighter as well as a breadwinner for her family. So, she has manifold experiences of different aspects

of human life.

Sanjeevani wants to adopt a modern independent way of life, in which she finds comfort but she is discouraged due to her familial values. Her grandmother tries to fit her into their familial structures. Every individual is a unique entity and is incomparable with the rest. In Sanjeevani's case, her life is guided by her own insight, innate power and self-motivation, which become her strong inspiration to move ahead independently.

At the same time, Sanjeevani is a freedom fighter who is aware of the fact that how women are deprived of freedom in a particular society. She is keen to live her respectful life; she seems to be a self-seeking women who is able to establish her own position in the society. She wants to be free from old trend and social boundaries. She tries to posit her position into society as a freedom fighter.

Sanjeevani is aware that a woman has a subordinate position in the society who is defined as a worker, a sexual partner, a child bearer and an emotional nurturer. She is defined within a small periphery of a house. The society does not provide any access for her. This kind of unequal distribution between women and men is maintained in the society. In a male-dominated society, being a man means not being like a woman. As a result, the behaviors appropriate to each gender become servely restricted. The primary identity of women remains relational throughout life, and girls have to form the gender identity that defines them as women easily, seriously and permanently, relative to their male counterparts.

Sanjeevani belongs to the modern generation. Therefore, she redefines her role differently than it is defined by traditional society. The traditional society has given narrow space for women, but she rejects this narrow world, which has

abandoned the equal power to men whereas she wants to create an open space for them. She goes against male ideologies and tries to find out her own identity. She is guided by her own insight and thoughts; therefore, she has a sense of freedom for fighting against opposing forces. Being the protagonist of the fiction along with other female characters, she becomes a radical figure who dares to challenge the patriarchal code of conduct. The patriarchal code of conduct confines woman as submissive, docile, innocent and weak figure. She challenges her home for the identity of strength, self-discovery and independence that deals to her cultivate victory.

A revolutionary and challenging spirit is deeply embedded in Sanjeevani. She has made a bold attempt to give voice to the frustration and development of women in a patriarchal society. After she decides to live her own, she does not depend on any other person. She defines her as an independent woman. She empowers herself and proves to the society that she can lead a good life. The impact of this all obviously bring awareness among women. As a result, more and more able women come to the forefront. Indeed, it is a kind of women consciousness.

Being victimized by the male dominated society, Shah tries to discuss for the right of women. She not only opens the pain of Nepali women, but also flashes out how women are limited within four walls with their domestic work. She tries to encourage the Nepali women to revolt as Sanjeevani does to have freedom in the Nepali community. Shah traces the declining fortunes of the feudal family, from absolute authority in their village to relative decrepitude Kathmandu. The patriarchal society does not allow women to go outside from domestic affair. In such a context, she appears as active, fearless and rational. She



thinks of herself as a creative and superior in every aspect. Even she is aware of the strategy of this patriarchal society that tries to bound women according to their own interests. Though the society tries to keep her in stigmatized situation, she resists this society by taking different occupations and becoming a heroine of that society.

This novel becomes part of the socialization process. By presenting such a dynamic character, the author tries to uplift the position of Nepali women, free from suppression and repression of patriarchal ideology. She has brought to our kind notice the issue of gender injustice which is quite predominant in a country like Nepal where women are not completely emancipated from the bond walls of place called home. The discussion of women characters in the novel aims at creating feminist awareness of women's suffering in a patriarchal society. The novel questions patriarchal authority and the shift of power from male to female to attain freedom.

This research is purely library based. Chapter 1 introduces the main issue and context of the novel. It highlights the protagonist's attempts to redefine her position and search for a new woman identity in changed socio-political context. Chapter 2 presents an overview of third world feminism as the theoretical tool for the analysis of the novel. Chapter 3 is a detailed analysis of how the protagonist, Sanjeevani challenges the traditional patriarchal roles and ways of life and how she attempts to establish a new identity for women in backdrop of Maoist insurgency period of Nepal.

This chapter presents an overall view, about feminist movement in general and specifically rises of feministic writings in English literature. It operates as an inter-disciplinary tool for social and cultural analysis and as a political practice.

## Literature Review

After the publication of this novel, it has achieved various remarks and the issue of the text that is raised in the novel. The novel has lots of critical analysis and it has been studied from different point of view. This book has been taken from different angles and many critics debate regarding the issue of women in Nepali society and the presentation of Shah. The novel can be rated one of the best Nepali novels written in English language both for its content and form.

The novel presents Nepali women's condition outside the domestic world. It deals with the dream of Sajeevani Shah bestows unexpected experiences and action of modern Nepali women. It tempts the feminist critics. The novel explores the condition of women, which may be shocking for readers. Krita Raut writes:

*Facing My Phantoms* is a story of an affluent family of Western Nepali who had to leave their house due to the Maoist uprising. And the story has been told as seen by the daughter of the family, Sanjeevani. Shah shares that she had been editing on this topic for long with her second book loyal of the crown but many people told me those more political changes are yet to come, so I finished my second book first. (5)

Krita has analyzed this novel as the story of Maoist insurgent in Nepal. In that time there was the conflict between the government and Maoist. She has focused on the Maoist ideology that was working during that period.

The background of the novel depicts the socio-cultural situation of Nepali society in which it focuses on women's vulnerable position. The concept of female identity is simply ignored and neglected. Women's voices are not heard even though the voices are logical and true. Patriarchy leaves no room for women to practice their

freedom and to live life of their own choice. Women are very systematically deprived of their rights in the society. Patriarchal society marginalizes women in every walk of life in the name of culture, religion, ethnicity, caste and class. Silvia Flavia write:

In "*Facing My Phantoms*", Sheeba Shah deals with the concepts of patriarchy and signifies a relationship, of inequality. This story is an attempt to show in life, suppression and oppression do not always come in recognizable forms, but often under the assurance of security through patriarchy is a common concept in every woman's life. Sheeba Shah depicts carefully the diversity within each woman as she did not want to put the lives of women to the one ideal. Though Sanjeevani consciousness, the novel depicts characters whose lives history has thrown completely out of year. (1)

It is clearly stated in the above lines that the issues are relayed with the issue of gender domination. Inequality is the main problem that exists in the Nepali society. The story of Sanjeevani shows that to what extent women are oppressed in the society. It draws up on the painful transformation from a feudal society into a hopefully more egalitarian one. The researcher likes to explore how Sanjeevani struggled throughout her life and how she resists norms and values created by patriarchal society.

Similarly, Narendra K Sing states that the conflict between self and society is the main issue in the novel. Participation of self and society is the main source to find out the truth. This is exactly what is mentioned in the novel through Sanjeevani and her co-protagonists. He states:

The subtle by play between society and individual develops a

sense of self through Participation in social interrelation, and yet possesses a feeling of separation from others, is a fundamental social process which perpetuates culture and society. Literature of all ethnic groups around the world deal with the issues of relationship between self and society in many ways, this becomes part of socialization process. (35)

Sing evaluates that Sanjeevani and other characters are participating in the process of social interrelation. The entire active relationship between self and society is the part of socialization process he evaluates.

Similarly, V. Chandra has minutely analyzed the novel, "In those days, they were merely portrayed as the souls of dependence and this dependent can be identified with a couplet from man, the ancient codifier of Hindu law, dutious girl obeys her father, husband sways the wife, son control the widowed mother, hover, free is a women's life" (25). Chandra argues that this novel is the vibrant representation of Hindu mythology and law where women have to follow the rules and regulations strictly according on religious ground.

S. Suresh Kumar and Leema have linked male and female with the colonizer and colonized. They say, "Women continue to be colonized and subjected to the oppressions put into place by colonialism and consolidated by patriarchy" (49). It is obvious that the decolonized man asserted his mastery by his unjust treatment of women. Another critic Sunita Sinha says, "Shah's Nepal suffers from a patriarchal system which has tried in many ways to repress, humiliate and debase women. The questions she poses in the novel not only Shakes the ideological society but also imply the existence of an alternative reality" (49). She discusses not only about the patriarchal norms and values that has long been rotted but Shan's effort is to take the

issue in the society through the medium of literature.

Regarding the multiple experience that Sanjeevani has in this novel, Govinda Raj Bhattarai notes:

"The novel is a departure from political idealism to practical life a journey from high idealism to practically. It is full of tension a divided mentality and so of personality, should one be a mother or party worker, a bread earner or freedom fighter? There are innumerable crevices and chasms in the journey life.

(ix)

Bhattari, in these lines, advocates the story and experiences of the main character Sanjeevani, who is bold and dynamic. The novel is all about her experiences of childhood to adulthood in which she encounters lots of upheaval in her life.

Sanjeevani has great experiences being a party worker, a freedom fighter and a breadwinner for her family. So, she has multiple experiences of different aspects of human life. In this sense too, she lives very practical life. Every individual is a unique entity and is in comparable with the rest. Her life is guided by her own insight, innate power and self-motivation which becomes her strong inspiration to move ahead independently into a unit of social life.

Although, various attempts have been made to analyze the novel, the present research is new and fresh. Nobody has studied how the women characters' challenge patriarchy domination and how they struggle for identity. This project makes a significant contribution in three areas of critical concern. First, this study brings the situation of women in the society. Second, this study makes a significant theoretical concern between women and society and lastly, the study shows the changes of women after the resistance against domination. The view that the researcher is

proposing here is clearly different from other critics because the novel provides women with a "safe place" from which they not only explore a wide range of experience of women but also identify themselves with a range of women characters and variety of their existence.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Overview of Third World Feminism**

Feminism refers to an intense awareness of identity as a woman and interest in feminine problems. It is seen as the struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist aggression, such as oppositional definition projects. It refers to a period of feminist activity during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early twentieth century. It focuses on the inequalities, primarily on gaining women's suffrage. Third world feminism claims that it allows women to define feminism for them by incorporating their own identity into the belief system of what feminism is and what it can become through one's own perspective.

To understand and sympathize with the sensibility of feminism it is important to observe the feminist present altogether different picture sequence. Women are deprived of the right to natural expression of psychological and physiological to live up to the image men have conjured about them. This all eventually creates a diseased and unnatural personality in women. The influence of stereotypes and the need to live destroys the humanity in females. In these writing woman author has not only exhorted an exposition of the patriarchal ideologies and their oppressive tendencies to words feminist growth and expression, but have also envisioned ways of counteracting those afflictions. They analyse their rare ideals of feminist emancipation in relation to the roles, the communities play in obstructing feminist freedom.

Though patriarchy is same in its basic assumption about the women all over the world, it is experienced and resisted according to local experiences of the women. Feminism need not reduce all the women around the world as equally dominated rather it has to accept the differences in female experiences. Since western feminism

tends to regard all the women similar and dominated in same way, there is no room for the diversity of the experiences the women of the third world. This led to the third world feminism's intervention in the western feminism. The third world feminism is a criticism that deals with the unique experiences of the women in the non-western countries. The feminists who are engaged in such activities are known as third world feminists. They see the loopholes of western feminism in its inability to address the history and heritage of the third world cultures. It is fuel to such inability to address the history and heritage of the third world cultures. It is due to such inability of the western feminism to understand the cultures of the third world countries; they fail to address different forms of suppression and marginalization of women in different scenarios of global and local patriarchy. It also sees the vicious functioning of patriarchy that functions as a unique experience of those cultures. Third world feminism commenced as a response to perceived failures of western feminism in the early 1900s. It seeks to challenge the essentialist definitions of femininity of western feminism, which are overemphasized and generalized versions of the experiences of upper middle-class white women.

The image of a "Third world woman", that was created by western society and used by western feminist, casts a large net over very different socio-economic backgrounds, as women who are oppressed and powerless. Since they are women who are also oppressed, they should also fall under the same western feminist agenda, but this agenda does not account for the form of oppression these women experience. This assumption in itself is a form of oppressing these "Third world women" who are the oppressed where the western feminist movement falls short in that it makes an assumption and in order to simplify their movement and bring what they think is solidarity. In reality, their own feminist movement and western feminist can help by



sparkling such movement and not grouping them into the same agenda.

Different third world feminist theorists like Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ketu Katrak, Gayatri. Spivak and Uma Narayan have criticized Western feminism because of its ethnocentric orientation and neglect of the unique experiences of women from third world countries or the existence of feminism (s) indigenous to third world countries. According to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, the experiences of the women on "internal racism, classism and homophobia" are demined and marginalized. (49)

Chandra Talpade Mohanty recognizes a deep belief in the power and significance of the third world feminist thinking in struggle for economic and social justice. It emphasizes a project that embodies the international commitment for best feminist practices. Through this commitment, she is urging the possibility of the border-less feminism:

Feminism without borders is not the same as "border-less"  
Feminism. It acknowledges the fault lines, conflicts,  
differences, fears, and the containment that borders represent.  
It acknowledges that there is no one sense of a border, that the  
lines between and through nations, races, classes, sexualities  
religious, and disabilities... a feminism without borders must  
envision change and social justice work across these line of  
demarcation and division. (2)

In her analysis, the speaking of plurality and crossing the narrowness of borders avoiding the silences and exclusions is evidential. For her feminism without borders stresses the most expansive and inclusive visions of feminism there by transcending the most expansive and inclusive vision of feminism there by transcending the very borders of feminism established by the western feminists.

There is an important difference between western and third world feminism in terms of conceptualization of women as a subject of struggle. Western feminism makes the issue of equality between men and women as the center of their struggle. According to Saunders, third world feminism stresses on the "satisfaction of basic material needs as a pressing issue in the context of disadvantageous international economic order" (qtd. in Monanty 6). The principle struggle of women of the third world should have been centered on the satisfaction of basic needs and basic rights. They believe that women should attain freedom not only from gender related equalities, but also from those related to race, class and national asymmetries.

Gayatri Chakarvorty Spivak examines the effects of political independence of subaltern, inferior women, blacks, and other marginalized women or female subjects by dialogue between male dominated subjects. She argues:

In subaltern studies, because of the violence of imperialist epistemic, social and disciplinary inscription, a project understood in essentialist terms must traffic in a radical textual practice of difference ... subaltern historiography must confront the impossibility of such gestures. The narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives us the imperfect allegory the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme. ("Can the subaltern speak?" 27-28)

Spivak questions the very role of power and authority in the mechanism of silencing the 'other' in postcolonial literary discourse. She even takes the same tool to strike back to imperial thinking and behavior. Her critiques are rather academic because she sees epistemic violence as a naughty face of colonial stigma and violence. Therefore, she despises the essentializing, dominating, and coercive western male and female

tendency there by valorizing the subalternity of the then so called colonized countries.

The subaltern have now started speaking and the margin has occupied the center. Their writing has to some extent changed the mentality of males; the result is that many seminars and symposia are being organized on woman literature. Feminism is a political perception based on the fundamental premises that gender difference is the foundation of a structural inequality between woman and men, injustice and that the inequality between the sexes is not the result of the biological necessity but is produced by the cultural contradiction of gender differences.

Ketu Katrak another prominent theorist, defines third world women's body under the title "Theorizing a politics of female body" and says that women's body has been colonized by patriarchy. Therefore, third world women writers try to decolonize their body in their writing and resist the patriarchy through internal and external exile. Mostly women have been dominated through language and their sexuality in so called patriarchal society. By using the English language, colonizers impose hegemonic dominance in racial the native languages and culture. Ketu Katrak argues that, "The uses of English over indigenous languages, imposed by colonialism and how linguistic choices encode cultural belonging or alienation and second the female body and generated inequalities in patriarchal post-colonial society" (1).

Uma Narayan aims at the related notion of nation, identity and tradition to show how western and third world scholars have misrepresented third world cultures and such as nationalism, post-colonial studies and the cultural politics of debates over traditional and westernization in third world context. According to her, since western feminism cannot locate the unique experience of third world cultural designations, it is invalid in such context. She argues, "[T]hird world Feminism is not mindless mimicking of western agendas" (13). She further sees:

[W]omen in western contexts might be unfamiliar with the violence against women connected to the contemporary functioning of the institution of dowry and arranged Marriages. They have no strangers to battery and violence prevalent within their own various forms of marriage and family arrangements. They are no strangers either to the sense of shame that accompanies admitting victimization, or to a multiplicity of material, social, and cultural structures that pose serious impediments to women seeking assistance of their leaving abusive relationships. (13)

She observes the vast differences between western feminist discourse and eastern issues.

Recent form of feminism that came to existence has become an evolving socio-political movement. It is a theoretical project, which aims at understanding the power structures in the society, male domination, social practices and social institutions, which are instrumental in assigning a marginalized position to women. Feminist theory also devises the strategies to transform the social structures, which can help in the emancipation. It operates as an interdisciplinary tool for social and cultural analysis and as a political practice. Feminism has transformed the perception of life and literature. The feminism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries focused on the acquisition of a few political rights and liberty for women, such as right of the married woman to own the property and enter into the contracts, the right of defendants to have woman on juries and the crucial right to vote.

In such designation, it shows that western feminism cannot address different and so-called unique experience of patriarchal domination, body politics, caste and

racial hegemony of the third world women. Their continual ignorance to address the cause of dowry murders, dowry related harassment, issues relating to women's poetry, work, health and reproduction shows that they are unable to address the social cultural experiences of third world societies.

The following chapter analyses the third world feminist issues in facing my phantoms focusing on the uniqueness of experience and resistance of experience and resistance of Sanjeevani as the main character. Sanjeevani endeavours to discover her identity by overthrowing the unjust stereotypes as the morally, socially and culturally inferior and strive to define their self by establishing for themselves a new stratagem for survival. She achieves a new identity by discovering an ingrained bond connecting women and providing them the will-power to participate in their collective struggle.

## Chapter 3

### Suffering and Struggle for Identity

The novel projects the women's struggle and efforts in conforming their new position in the new context. Old patriarchal values and codes are challenged through the role of the protagonist and her economic and social independence. The woman characters in the novel seem to be the personifications of new women who have been trying to throw off the burden of inhibitions they have carried for ages. They go through the grueling experiences of domestic oppression at the hands of the repressive forces of society but finally they revolt against the oppressions and are determined to discover them and establish them in society. The author presents Sanjeevani as the central character to voice her ideas.

Sanjeevani realizes sense of woman liberation. She thinks that women should ensure their own identity and position in the society. So, she practices her understanding of the modern women in practicality for this reason. By presenting such a dynamic character, Shah tries to uplift the position of Nepali women, free from suppression and repression of patriarchal ideology.

Sanjeevani's defiance is outstanding and her words instill a strong desire to live of her choice. Shah portrays her as one who courageously breaks the large frame work of patriarchy that dories personal to women. She decides that she has to live for her not for others. Ultimately, she breaks the chain of patriarchy. Her personal strength, consciousness and awareness are not taken separately but they are taken as usual. She ruminates up on her circumstances and raises questions about her identity. The author narrates:

Sanjeevani, the one mounded into an acceptable from?

Sanjeevani the gagged one, the unaroused, compressed.

Harnessed, the socially conscious and socially accepted one? or am I Sanju, the wild one? Am I Sanju, the one who carries the stories, the dreams, the songs and the memories of the absolute, undeniable and irrevocable bond with the wild? (2)

Sanjeevani searches her place that keeps her safe and comfortable. This thinking and reality make her individual self very complex. She always thinks about asking questions to her about her life. She is treated as a weak and docile female character. She wants to establish her own bold identity as an independent woman.

Observing the rebellion spirit of Sanjeevani, Shubhojit Kumar states:

Sanjeevani, the protagonist in the novel, is driven by the spirit of getting beyond patriarchy: first to liberate herself from the patriarchal of domination, and there by the women of her society. Sanjeevani is Called Sanju in the paternal Language of her society. She understands the patriarchal definition of a woman from her family's setup, and abhors it. She feels pity on the docile and submissive role of her own mother in the family. (6)

The two main protagonists Sanat and Sanjeevani are female representative character in the novel. Sanat plays the major role to represent the women's suffering of the patriarchal domination where as Sanjeevani always wants to be free from such type of patriarchal boundaries.

Sanjeevani is not satisfied with the people in the society naming her as "Sanju". The naming itself indicates of oppression and control. Naming as the form of control has clearly been emphasized in the novel. Sanjeevani gets problems with using derogatory term 'Sanju' which saddens her because it is a word for dominations,

twist and hegemony for female, by the males. The beginning of the novel clearly announces patriarchal discourse:

Jijumaua concluded her stories with the phrase each night telling my fatigued body to sleep and awakening there is my innate self. My grandmother's stories released me, allowed me to think, ponder, questions, understand, long for and even wander off. More than anything else her stories kept the truth of my being alive; submerged yet allies somewhere inside of me. (1)

It presents how patriarchy forms its own discourse. In the process of forming patriarch's norms, she internalizes the discourse as truth. Similarly, a woman living in the patriarchal society internalizes male discourse as truth and being handed over by one generation to another. In case of Sanjeevani, her grandmother has handed down her family norms and values and teaches her about responsibilities that a female should do. Sanat represents the traditional generation, where she is defined, categorized and fixed within herself. She could not go outside from the male defined boundary. In this respect, she is limited by societal values.

Shah has employed Sanjeevani, as a self-conscious and a radical female character by resisting all sorts of norms and values she does not easily surrender to the traditional gender role. She agrees her selfish nature and says "Rajat's words did not pinch me then for I agree that I am indeed selfish person and live for myself alone, (2). She thinks very differently as she admits that self-happiness is the regulator of one's life. She dares to break her engagement with Nabin, the man selected by her parents as her husband, knowing that this act would shatter the happiness and honor of her family. Because she knows that she is in love with Rajat



and she can be happy only in his company. That is why unlike a traditional dutiful daughter she thinks only about her happiness but not for her family.

Sanjeevani finds difficulty in her house as in the well as society because it accuses her of being a dishonest woman. She does not follow her tradition, but she has a different ambition than what society thinks. Denying marriage is more revolutionary decision as the modern women do. For Sanjeevani, marriage does not bring happiness but it is a trap made by the society to end the women's freedom.

As an educated modern girl, Sanjeevani is inspired from her inner feelings and wants to come out from the narrow boundary of household duties and involve in the outside world. She keeps her view, "I cannot breathe. The room around me reeks of sympathizes of relatives and friend who have come to comfort and console"(13). She observes this male dominated world where she has been imprisoned by strict values of society. She wants to be a fighter and live in the society. Her parents want her to get married but she has no wish of marriage. She finds conflict in society; however, she ignores marriage that has been planned by her family. She does not want to be a submissive woman into family life. Karlence Faith writes about the resistance of the society from the perspective of gender as "resistance to power relations are patterned. Gendered power relations are specifically organized according to the interplay among the traditional discourses which have controlled women's bodies" (58). Marriage is an institution that maintains gendered power relationship. As Sanjeevani resists marriage, she resists the whole discourse of patriarchy.

Normally, women have narrow world who get married and settle down within four walls world detached from the outer world, it is taken as a moral character of woman in the patriarchal society. Females are not known by their own self-existence because that is created only for male. Unlike such a traditional woman, she views the

world differently. She puts forward her views:

I am filled with venom that begins to spread through my body and sting my conscience. Yet I fucked him his skin seeking for a reprieve. Why Sanjeevani? perhaps it is the hatred that I feel for his kind for everyone around me and even for myself. I want it out I want to feel this hatred for real and perhaps even vanquish it for good. (135)

Sex is normal and having sexual affairs need not result in domination. Sanjeevani hates the whole of the male sex. This life of Sanjeevani is quite freed from her social ties because she does not limit herself as a docile woman. She is a defiant, independent, non-compromising and non-submissive. She challenges the traditional concept of gender and their roles. Sanjeevani breaks the marriage that was arranged by her family. Sanjeevani is radical; she does not accept such traditional values.

As Sanjeevani steps outside of her home, she does not like to live in her house. She says, "I started rebelling for being a girl and most my teenage years were spent girl and most my teenage years were spent in forcing myself to believes as I would want others to think"(32). She also disregards women social values of maturity having extra affair with other boys. She observes her life for her perspective instead of social perspective.

Sanjeevani challenges the social norms and values which restricted the girl to have alcohol and stay out of home late night. Likewise, she does not wait to be proposed by a desirable person like a see girl but she herself seduces him. Similarly, in the case of Chandra too, she herself takes an initiation to starts a relationship. She keeps relation with the two men Rajat and Chandra at the same time and breaks the rules made by patriarchal society which demands loyalty for women towards their

husbands or lover. In fact, she constantly invites the challenges in her life, always battling against social and sexual taboos. She is disinterested in getting married with Chandra either. Rebelling against the rigid norms of society, Sanjeevani finds herself equally aggressive towards patriarchal discourse over the female existence. She opposes their forces and ignores the male existence. She attempts to discover herself within the chaotic conflicts of her conscience. Her approaches over society are rebellious. While going against patriarchal rules she has to face challenges. Because of established male norms and values, her rebellion action cannot shake the male empire. Sanjeevani's rebellion nature is engulfed by male power and she became helpless and hopeless.

Sanjeevani's thinking is always guided with the formation of her new social world where she can live freely. She has such dream that where she can get freedom, as she thinks:

I think that is why my parents never showed any keen interest in my academic skills. My mother had this silly notion stuck in her brain somewhere that good girls with the nuns for nine month in a year and the three month that I was home, I ravaged the fields and jungles around my home as though looking for something lost my should perhaps. (32)

She argues that she has freedom to choose her own way of life, though her family restricts her. They create discourse upon her as good girl and good family but she immediately rejects it because they want to impose their beliefs. Sanjeevani must face several obstacles that trigger her suicidal notes on her long way to the final destination.

Sanjeevani knows that she is going against family. She never surrenders with

traditional values. So, she expresses, "I knew this was an unexpected blow on my father's hopes and that the king's death would affect him as would a tragedy of his own my father had placed all his hopes upon the king. It was an innocent child like wish. It was as though the king would waive his wand one day"(64). She disagrees with families' norms and values, but she is educated and she closely knows about present changes of the society. She has decided to leave house for her freedom.

Sanjeevani has difficult existence with society and her thinking is disordered with anger and injustice. Time and again she becomes wild because of heavy pressure of anger. However, it is reality that is undeniable at present. She lives with her grandmother who seems worried for the life because she has to learn a Hindu woman role, which is supposed as mere service provider of men and also should maintain family prestige.

There are so many responsibilities in women's life. But, Sanjeevani does not want to follow the traditional norms and values. Therefore, she strongly disagrees with such existing norms and values:

I rebel and contradict my own self I try focusing on my priorities Razat, my parents, my job my volunteering with Rashtriya Prajatantra party saving the monarchy Helping to improve the country, writing my novel who am I fooling? I do not care as hit about any of these. (46)

It shows her divided self into various roles. Confusion about her life is accompanying with herself; she goes with many desires and roles side by side but fighting against society. She cannot decide anything ahead into her running life so a chaotic and disordered Situation she ever discovers into any mode of her life. An unstable mental order allows her to seek a kind of full and complete self but it is already fragmented

from her. Sanat always pushes her into used existence as she has been because she is pursuing her real existence.

Normally, woman's image is observed from two angles: what she is (Biologically) and what she has to be [socially constructed]. A woman cannot escape the fact that she is woman. Society has constructed rigid model role for her constructed rigid model role for her and has labeled woman variously. Feminists have recognized the factor of gender differentiation as the root cause of women's derogatory status in the hierarchical order of most of the societies. Sanjeevani assumes, "Being born a female, I would not say I was a disappointment to my parents, as they already had Dada by then and were quite content with their male heir. I could surely be accommodated into their lives until I was ready to be given away" (31). Though there are lots of obstacles in her life she moves ahead. Being born as a female she ignores the society and accepts the challenges. She argues about men and even professes equality between them that, "A man tills his land sweating in the sun and gets barely enough to eat at the end of the day and a man drives to office in a Mercedes Benz sits in a revolving chair in his air conditioned office and has much more than he needs?" (155).

Sanjeevani always tries to grasp the essence of her being. From the beginning she comes up with a question about the partiality between her brother Sanjaya and her. She resists patriarchy. It is not such that she gets an easy access to get out of patriarchal domination, but, every time she tries to get out of it and thus she enjoys her freedom with her deviant attitude. Even she is restricted by her grandmother to dress in her way. Sant follows the patriarchal conventions and she deviates herself from the definition of patriarchy about women. Jijumua warns her, "Learn some decency Sanju. You are a big girl how you cannot go around the house walking and

talking like a man. Look at the way you dress disgusting. Those pants clearly outline your crotch” (33). Jijumua is not satisfied with the way Sanjeevani behaves and lives in the family and society.

Sanjeevani gets irritated with traditional values. She tries to come out from such narrower thinking in society. As her mother has internalized the patriarchal norms and how those norms control the sexuality of the girls, she wants to control her daughter that she could appear respectable before the society. Being feminine, the woman like Sanat cannot break the patriarchal confinement in the name of culture, tradition and religion. But Sanjeevani are conscious about their right and freedom. She knows very well to ignore the rules and regulations made by patriarchy and seizes the happiness that belongs to her.

The control is also seen with the demand of chastity and virginity in girls before Marriage. The control is seen in the codes of woman's dress up as the women are not allowed to show their body parts. Nepali patriarchal society regards woman as impure and whore if she has the sexual relationship with anybody in her choice before or after the marriage or she dresses up exposing her body. Unlike women, men are free from the concerns of virginity, chastity and being untouched Sanjeevani resists such patriarchal codes by keeping sexual relation with two men at the same time.

Sanjeevani is a bold and fearless woman; she is ready to face any challenges anywhere. As per her wish, she does anything in the society but she never observes the society from male perspective. It is because she wants to establish her own social identity. Sanjeevani supports Maoist ideologies because she wants something that can revolt and change the society. When their land is confiscated by the Maoists, she processes to refund their land. She freely talks to the local representative of Maoists about her right to live the dignified life as a free citizen. However, she does not

become so much sad, she wants to talk with them. The following narrative explores her boldness:

She is so daring that she visits to the area controlled by Maoists and confronts with the Maoists without hesitation and fear. She dislikes every kind of restriction and she wants freedom at any cost. She says to Chandra her lover and a Maoist rebellion, unlike you, Chandra, I am open to new possibilities. I try new options some may work out for me, and some may not. Yet I keep myself open to new and varied experiences. I have not tied my hands and feet to one thought or ideology. (272)

Though, patriarchy regards women unreasonable and unintelligent, she is very clear about her ideology and she can take her stand. She herself admits that she is selfish.

Sanjeevani is a responsible human being since she provides a shelter to her aunt in her apartment of Dhangad; she sorts out the problems of her property that is in Maoist control for her auntie's sake she even visits the Maoist to release her auntie's property. Even Chandra appreciates this effort of her. He says "But since you have made such an effort and came down all this way, your request, if submitted in writing to the Jana Adalat, could be considered" (153). Her job as program coordinator in a NGO and her capability of tackling every problem responsibly and effortlessly further highlights her strength which proves that she called Sharmila who has been abused and tortured by husband. She faces the situation boldly and manages her to start a new, respected and independent life. This act of Sanjeevani upgrades her as a social leader and proves that how a woman can support another woman to provide her right as well as redemption.

In traditional assumptions, everything is understood by singular insight but it does not mean in the modern time because it is so complex that same thing has several meanings and interpretations. Sanjeevani expresses her anger over her traditional role as a woman:

Am I content with my work? Is this all that I am capable of or it that I know I am not content. My job does not satisfy me. I want to do something different, something that really touches my innermost being... something my like going back to my village, feeling its earth and becoming a part of it. (124)

She wants something newer than the traditional one. She has been tired from her family and the society. Her family has imposed traditional family cultures but she has her own for such view for life. After being aware of her society, she tries to search her position in the world. In fact, she is happy being away from that society.

Sanat represents a woman who is shaped by traditional norms and values. The society has muted her voices. Male constructed ideology trains her. Sanjeevani is escaping from such fate and going to construct her own fate. But in course of making her own fate, she has to fight with society and existing ideological restriction. She thinks about herself, world and events one way but she generally experiences the extremely opposite circumstances in reality.

However, she develops her character even if the society is hostile to her. She makes her desire practical avoiding such norms and values of society. Sanjeevani has arranged to marry with Nabin but she breaks relation without reason. She has had relation with Rajat. Because of her rebellious nature, she denies her proposed marriage suitor.

Sanjeevani does not have constant helms in herself. She always asks herself



question and seeks proper basement. She is also much confused with her own self that means she has confluxes in her mind or she has amassed heavy anger against traditional beliefs, so she says here " What am angry? I have asked myself often times the reason for my own vendetta against the world around me has always escaped me and shifty, disconnected, disappointing and extremely unfulfilled of all times" (46). These lines height light her real problem which has become her present testing of life.

Sanjeevani is everywhere keeping opposite views with what society thinks, she has a strong sense of opposition to the male dominated society. She searches her meaning of life within herself. In fact, she has tension within herself and outside reality. By observing this reality, she seeks her proper existence. She claims, "I rebel and contradict own self. I try focusing on my priorities" (53). She goes with these so many desires and roles side by side, fighting with her society. She cannot decide anything ahead into her running life. So a chaotic and disorder that she ever discovers into any mode of life. An unstable mental order allows her to seek a kind of full and complete self but it is already fragmented from her.

Sanjeevani always engages in party and dance bar to be free from suffocated life. She empowers herself and proves to the world that she can lead a good life. It is so much easier and simpler to accept one's situation in life and live accordingly. "I need witty, smart, intelligent, pretty even take along with myself when invited to the palace dinners. Not someone dull and ignorant as Durga, she would not know now to raise her glass of champagne when the queen felicitates" (189). Sajeevani is practicing such cultures in her society, which has multiplied her desires and she is pursuing such places where she can feel relaxed and free from suffocating life. She desires of having such a consuming life.

It is not merely a resistance against stereotyped image and male ideology but

into the reverse order. She is pursuing her identity as real but it is different. She is living a truncate and stereotyped life of a third world woman. She resists patriarchy but feels that she is losing herself into such a complex world. She always finds lapses and lacks with herself. She defines herself in her own worlds, "I think that is exactly what is happening to me now... this gap that Data left behind is growing into me... I can see myself slowly blend into its emptiness, becoming a non-entity, with no feeling, no dreams and no passions" (37). The writer has clearly shown her central character unstable even if she is determined to struggle against the society for her distinct completeness because she is swinging between here and there.

Sanjeevani resists the unjust and unnecessary restrictions and evilness of patriarchy which are forcefully imposed upon women. This is why feminism can be pronounced as the foundation for women's right, liberty and independent identity. It shows the right path to women in order to go for resistance against patriarchal ideology and on the other hand it brings self-consciences and awareness in women for their rights and autonomous identity. So, in a nutshell, feminism focuses on women values and authority in proposition to men as well as it discards and ignores male constructed ideology. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify inequalities where women are excluded from equal access to leadership and decision making position.

## Chapter 4

### Ultimate Liberation

Shah opens the window to the feminist world where a woman can stroll around with nestle panorama of feminine life with its beauty, charm, caginess, pathos, aspirations, pride, flaw, hypocrisy and reality in flesh and blood. The novel gives the reader in depth view of the vulnerability, the power, the deviousness, the haplessness and courage of women. The viewers can enjoy, analyze, learn, experiment and identify themselves with the characters. Shah's appeal for the assertion of woman's independence echoes throughout. At the same time she leaves option for the viewers to the predicaments of those living women characters. So, a healthy analysis of the various plights and solution for their oppressed condition has been left to the viewers.

The novel is an assertion of not only the independent existence of women but also the independence of its readers to draw solutions for the feminine issues and to save a better future for women.

The modern society has experienced different changes. Modern society is materialistic society where capitalism delimits human desires. These human desires have direct relation with material object; it is because material prosperity can occupy human desires. Unlike spiritual and moral beliefs, they interpret life from the material point of views. Human society always understands women as submissive and housewife, and the society has given such a role to them. As they define in patriarchal society, still males dominate them but Sanjeevani is enough conscious about her existence. She has defined her identity as an independent female.

Thus, female identity is more readily affected by powers that are not entirely rational. Their identity is put under by using the power of man but not rationally judged. Myth, religion and cyclical time demand collective identity of women.

Although women do have more consciousness for their self, there are many obstacles in the society. It will be a strong step for women to oppose such rotted values in society. All women cannot do it and they accept hegemony. The long-established social structure is reformulated from the old structure where new marginal groups are addressed. In fact, the social war is fought to change for people who have been suffocated from domination. These common people lived their lives with scarcity, lacks and poverty.

However, female identity questions the very role of power and authority in the mechanism of silencing the 'other' in literary discourse. The problem is that it will be the voice mediate by the elitist vice. As in this novel's Sanju adopts the patriarchal culture as self. She believes, that her own culture made herself to do what she has to. Though Sanjeevani is from the aristocratic family, she does not have space outside the society. Being a marginal woman she does not want to live in society. For this reason, she moves ahead for the sake of freedom and social positions. She has consciousness of women existence and of how society dominates. Therefore, her level of conscious drives her to move ahead.

Sanjeevani refuses to be stereotyped third world woman with her unique and natural experience and resistance to the social codes. Like the western women, she exhibits the qualities of being educated, having willingness to gain control over her own body and sexuality and the freedom to make her own decision. Shah's work ultimately sparks of the new, liberated women by the end of the novel, ready to go face the world on her own terms and given to her by society. Such an image, however, only remains as framework of freedom that the novel propagates without ever affording women and any opportunity it creates the sense of liberation feminism aims at.

Thus, the novel's end comes as a welcome addition to feminist writing and forms another step in the move towards articulating the female experience. It is seen to reject social roles much more effectively, thereby making Sanjeevani her a true feminist in the sense of wanting and independent life for herself. She is above to live for her selves rather than their socially man dated roles. This average third world self-representation of western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the freedom to make their own decisions.

Sanjeevani, has transformed into the fullness of a feminist without sacrificing her independence as a woman, she has been able to make a life with a man. She thus represents the image of new Nepalese women who could enter into successful and harmonious relationship with men, anchored in natural freedom and respect without allowing mates and glorified house keepers. Hence, it could be rightly said that Shah's novel is not only a very potent novel about the womanish discourse but also a humanist discourse.

To sum up, Sanjeevani resists the social structures that dominate the women of the third world in her rejection of the marriage. At the same time, she rejects to be labeled as an average third world woman stereotype. Fighting against the social structure of the patriarchal Hindu society proves that Sanjeevani is longing to create her own identity. Her resistance comes as a response to patriarchal stereotypes to making her a phenomenon of the growing consciousness as an ordinary woman in Nepali society.

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