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Resisting the Stigma of Femininity in Taslima Nasrin's *Shodh*

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled **Resisting the Stigma of Femininity in Taslima Nasrin's *Shodh***, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by **Miss. Harikala Acharya** has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

Taslima Nasrin's *Shodh* is an effort to depict how the patriarchal social system has become an obstacle in the path of women's progress. This patriarchal society gives negative attributes to femininity and thus stigmatizes it in order to subdue women. Jhumur, a well-educated woman, is forced to be a typical feminine person at first. However, she, who is aware of the strategy of patriarchy to suppress women, uses her body to challenge patriarchy. Jhumur, by giving birth to a child out of extramarital relationship and establishing herself as a teacher, resists the stigma attached to her gender. Even if the suture of stigma never erases completely.

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I. Introduction

This research paper analyzes the novel, *Shodh* (2003) by Taslima Nasrin, from the feministic perspective in relation to gender stigma to figure out the reversal of gender roles that are assigned to the male and female characters. On the basis of gender role, women are stigmatized by the patriarchal society giving them negative stereotypes. But these gender roles and stereotypes can be challenged and subverted at any time and space since they have been just constructed by society as 'masculinity' and 'femininity' rather than by nature. After the close examination and critical reading of the novel, it is hypothesized that by giving birth to her lover's son rather than that of her husband, Jhumur, in Nasrin's *Shodh*, resists the stigma of femininity. Even if the suture of stigma never erases completely. Nasrin has highlighted the female character Jhumur's rebellious actions and characteristics to subvert this gender binarism and to defy her stigmatized position.

To advocate for women's issues, Taslima Nasrin lays emphasis on the female characters. The female characters, in her writings, are courageous and educated who are able to resist all the negative image of women created by men, saying that all kinds of images are myths and misconceptions. To resist the stigma of femininity Nasrin casts Jhumur with attributes like courage, dauntlessness and qualification. She has strong spirit. Jhumur's language is thoughtful and logical. She has her own vision about her life. She is able to take decision about her future life. She chooses love marriage, which is against to the desire of her society. In her marriage, she does not bring any dowry from her parents' house. After marriage, she is compelled to live only within the four walls of her in-laws' house. This patriarchal society does not allow her to go outside from domestic affair. In such a context, Jhumur appears as a passive, timid, emotional and inefficient despite her qualification, whereas Haroon thinks of

himself as an active, dominating, rational and creative, and superior to Jhumur in every respect. But educated Jhumur is aware of the strategy of this patriarchal society. Though this society tries to keep her in stigmatized situation, she defies it resisting this society by giving birth to illegitimate son and becoming a teacher. She is an independent woman, who has her own identity as a teacher.

No two human beings are exactly alike. Similarly men and women are different in nature. In specific culture or within particular social groups, some human differences are valued and other human differences are devalued or stigmatized. Those possessing power, the dominant group, can determine which human differences are desired or undesired. This society is male dominated society. So, men define which is desired or which is stigmatized/undesired. Men have created different stereotypes about men and women on the basis of gender discrimination/role and they give good attributes to men and negative to women. On the basis of this categorization, they stigmatize womanliness/femininity. By defining women as passive, dependent, emotional, men stigmatize women. The patriarchy has created hierarchy between men and women. Male should be economically independent because male is considered as provider. This patriarchal gender role, in the same way, expects women to be fragile, emotional and submissive. But Nasrin, in her novel *Shodh*, tries to go against the patriarchal definition of femininity. Her character Jhumur is revolutionary and bold. Thus she is able to establish her own distinct identity showing masculine features while celebrating the femininity.

In patriarchal society, virginity and chastity are the defining qualities of a good woman, and she can preserve her honour only under the guardianship of a man. The father is in charge of protecting her virginity, and the husband her chastity. That is the strategy of patriarchy to dominate women. Similarly, Jhumur's desires are

paralyzed by this society when she gets marriage. Haroon thinks her as a sexual object. Haroon does not allow her to go outside. She is forced to break her relationship with friends. She is capable to do job but Haroon considers himself as a provider and does not allow her to take a job. She is confined within domestic affair. Haroon sees her as a weak, passive, emotional and dependent woman. There is no respect to Jhumur's intelligence. She is even accused of having pre-marital relationship with other boys. So, Haroon forces her to abort their first child. In order to make Jhumur weak and submissive, all these things are done. But the well-educated Jhumur can not endure all these inhuman behaviours and takes decision to take revenge. She tries to go against those patriarchal norms and values and at last she becomes successful. She starts making love to another person Afzal, breaking the socio-cultural norms. She carries Afzal's child in her womb. But Haroon and his family believe that the child belongs to Haroon.

Though Jhumur suffers at the hand of this patriarchal society, she finally gets liberation from the oppressive gender roles. Jhumur is tortured physically and mentally at first. She wants to take revenge for hurting her femininity. When her first child is aborted by Haroon she became courageous and bold to go against this oppressive society. She was qualified and educated, and was motivated to be independent from early age to feel and decide anything independently. She is independent and strong enough to make decisions on her own. She takes decision to be pregnant by Afzal in second time and she becomes success. At last, she becomes an independent teacher, a reformer of society. She becomes able to establish her own identity as Zeenat Sultan, Jhumur, a teacher in society after a great struggle.

A woman is viewed and judged in terms of masculine value system. She is identified in relation to men. It is the men, who define her according to their needs

and beneficiaries. She has no rights to make decision about herself. She is trained to internalize the masculine truth as and absolute reality or unalienable aspect of her life. Then she is kept in stigmatized position. She is feared to resist against her position. But Nasrin's works raise voice against such domination. In *Shodh*, Jhumur is well-known about male domination. She is well-known about male strategy that men create different myths and images about women. And these myths place impossible burdens on women, denying them their own freedom and requiring them to maintain public morality. Though, there is not difference between man and woman in human term but out society, culture and systems being male centred, interprets women as inferior, passive, and inactive. Men are taken as intelligent, powerful, creative, independent and superior. There are so many lies about women. Men say that women are incompetent, petty and submissive. But Jhumur, a well educated woman, has inner power to resist all these myths about femininity and she defies the stigma of femininity by giving birth to her lover's son rather than of her husband.

This novel *Shodh* has been analyzed from various perspectives. This novel has drawn the attention of a number of critics.

Rani Ray reviews this novel having the concept of love and marriage.

Commenting on it, Rani Ray remarks:

In *Shodh* [...], Taslima Nasrin seeks to revolutionize the concept of love and marriage in the so-called elite yet tradition – bound societies. She effects this through a transformation roles assigned to women – as lover, wife, mother and daughter-in-law. The story of Jhumur's marriage to Haroon, therefore goes beyond the study of a marriage or the fate of a person and raises issues such as: Is love possible without

self-respect, what is the relationship among love, desire and marriage.

(np)

For Rani there is difference between love and marriage. This society is tradition bound society. So, this patriarchal society has assigned different roles to women, as lover when she falls in love with someone, a wife after marriage and mother and daughter-in-law. She must fulfil her duties being a lover, mother, wife and daughter-in-law. Her identity is changed. She does not have a fixed identity. Her identity is related with other person. Jhumur also fulfils her duty as a lover, a wife, a daughter-in-law and a mother. Rani questions about Jhumur's position. There is not any respect on Jhumur's interest and desires. Haroon hurts on her femininity. There is not self-respect. So love will not be possible without self-respect. Love does not mean that one must efface his/her self-respect.

Another critic Ranjit Das has offered an interesting analysis. Das concedes that Taslima has largely been successful in identifying the problems of gender discrimination in Bangladeshi society. But simultaneously, he views:

The nature of the resolution of these (gender) problems as demonstrated by the heroines of Taslima's novels is unethical and morally degrading [...] the central female character of the novel through her choice of having a child outside the marital bond with her husband, violates the ethics of the family. Her ethical responsibility is towards her husband. Taslima's female characters fail to uplift the reader's moral sense through their failure to follow the ideology of 'ethical motherhood'. (75)

Das argues that Taslima's female characters fail to follow the ideology of 'ethical motherhood'. But what Das fails to acknowledge is that ethical motherhood and

morality defined by patriarchy are pillars to perpetuate female subjugation. While he agrees that there are some problems of gender inequality. He ignores that these problems are systematic. According to the patriarchal view of morality, women have to live a spiritual life and give over the material world for men to negotiate. But Jhumur challenges such type of notion of patriarchy by using her body/sexuality. Supporting Jhumur's action, Fatima Mernissi adds, "The pivotal importance of Taslima's novels is the heroine's ability to reclaim the power over her body, tearing apart the ethnical cover-up of the subordinating practices of Bangladeshi patriarchy" (60).

Focusing on Taslima's first person technique, Ali Riaz remarks:

Nasrin feels comfortable in writing in the first person Most of the time she deals with issues pertaining to oppression, harassment, and the like [...]. By reconstructing and rearticulating her own and other women's experiences of humiliation, abuse, and discrimination

Nasrin connects the persona (or social) identity on the larger context of social relations. (82)

As Ali Riaz has pointed out Taslima clearly violates the dominant narrative tradition by using the first person in talking about her sexual and family problems in public. Jhumur becomes the spokesperson of the author, Taslima, in the first person narrative of *Shodh*. In Bangladesh, a social critique is usually launched in third person objective style. But Taslima uses the first person narrative. The first person narrative enables women to come out and speak in the first person about their shame, their experiences of male oppression. Focusing on her first person technique, Taslima explains, "Time and again, I come back to my stories, and I intend to because I'm a woman. I speak to every woman through my experience, my awareness and my vision" (102). Taslima

observes that Bangladeshi women who submit to male domination live a deceitful life. It is that very self-deception that she strikes against by writing stories in personal terms. While Bangladeshi women might share their life stories in private, public articulation is not a choice. But Taslima's narratives might motivate others to make that choice.

In this regard, it becomes clear that though the text has been analyzed through various perspectives, the gender stigma issue has not been applied yet. There exists a strong need to carry out research on this novel from a new perspective. Without a proper study on this issue, the meaning of the text will remain incomplete. Having taken this fact into consideration, the present researcher proposes to carry out research from feministic issue relevant to gender stigma approach.

In this novel *Shodh*, Nasrin tries to dig out the social evils which compel women to live only within the domestic affairs. Nasrin's educated heroine, Jhumur, is also compelled to engage herself in domestic affairs at first. But courageous and bold Jhumur, wants to see women free from patriarchal chains of this society. She is defined as passive, dependent and not able to do job though she is degree holder. But she chooses to be pregnant, keeping relationship with her lover Afzal, and gives birth to the Afzal's child. To subvert these patriarchal rules, she uses 'Afzal' (male) as a weapon. She does not bring any dowry in marriage, which is against the rule of this society. Instead of timid heroine, we find intellectually daring woman, who becomes a teacher, a social reformer. After a great struggle Jhumur establishes her own distinct identity as a teacher. So, at last, Jhumur by giving birth to lover's son rather than that of her husband, and becoming a teacher overcomes the stigma of femininity. She does not leave her home and family. Staying with family and celebrating the female's nature by exploiting her body, she resists the stigma of femininity.

This research work is divided into four chapters. This running chapter is introduction (first chapter) in which the researcher comprises the significance of her study, what's the problem in this novel and to resolve this problem there is hypothesis. The first chapter comprises the significance of the study and the hypothesis. In this chapter, the researcher also discusses the review of this novel. And this researcher is trying to justify her hypothesis bringing novel's important events.

The researcher discusses theoretical tool in second chapter. In the second, an attempt is made to highlight the nature methods employed during the study. For the explication and analysis of the novel on the basis of Taslima Nasrin's resistance of gender stigma, a theoretical modality has been developed depending on the books, essays, articles, criticisms and feminist literary theories. There is discussion on femininity, masculinity, and stigma.

In the third chapter, there will be the analysis of the text, which justifies the hypothesis of the researcher. This chapter examines, analyzes and studies the novel on the basis of gender relation between principle characters. Moreover, it will support the main issue of the thesis by providing textual evidences.

The fourth chapter draws concludes the whole thesis.

II. Gender and Stigma

Our culture practices different values. Gender discrimination is the value which refers to the activities and behaviours in which male and female are treated differently. It is constructed on the basis of male and female. In our culture on the basis of gender discrimination men and women are treated differently. This society is patriarchal so femininity and masculinity are defined as opposite poles. Femininity refers to qualities and behaviours judged by a particular culture to be ideally associated with or especially appropriate to women or girls. Femininity principally refers to secondary sex characteristics and other behaviours and features generally regarded as being more prevalent and better suited to women, whatever in born or socialized. Femininity is constructed around adaptation to male's power. Its central feature is attractiveness to men, which include physical appearance, ego-massaging, suppression of "power" emotions such as anger, nurturance of children, exclusive heterosexuality, sexual availability without sexual assertiveness, and sociability (men like women who smile). Now we can say that masculinity and femininity are societal euphemisms for male dominance and female subordination.

Masculinity is manly character. Cicero says that man's chief quality is courage, is a near-synonym for masculinity. As Janet Saltzman Chafetz comments, "In patriarchal society positive attributes are given to the male/masculinity. The words used to describe the masculine role are positive, 'practical', 'logical', 'experience', 'brave', 'adventure some', 'confident', 'trustworthy', and so on" (41). Femininity and masculinity are divided in many characteristics and society has given different traits to them such as physical, functional, sexual, emotional, intellectual, interpersonal and others. In the physical characteristics, masculine traits are: virile, athletic, strong, carefree about appearance and aging and brave. But the feminine traits are weak,

helpless, dainty, no athletic, worry about appearance and aging, sensual and graceful.

In these traits masculine traits are positive but feminine traits are negative.

The functional characteristics of masculine traits are bread winner and provider where as feminine traits are domestic, maternal, involved with children, etc. Masculine traits are characterized as sexually aggressive, experienced, single status acceptable; whereas feminine traits are virginal, in experienced, double standard, sexually passive, seductive and flirtations. Positive connotative words are used to describe masculinity but negative connotative words are used to describe femininity. Emotional characteristic is also different in male and female. The masculine emotional traits are, unemotional, stoic and don't cry but feminine traits are emotional, sentimental, romantic, can cry, expressive, compassionate, nervous, insecure and fearful. In the field of knowledge or intellectual masculine traits are logical, intellectual, rational, objective, scientific, practical, mechanical, public awareness, activity, contributor to society and dogmatic. In the field of intellectual female are scatterbrained, sensitive, idealistic and humanistic. Interpersonal masculine traits are leader, dominating independent, free and individualistic but feminine traits are petty, flirty, gossipy, dependent and responsive. Besides these characteristics, masculine traits are also given as success oriented, moral, trustworthy, proud, competitive and adventurous.

The positive attributes are given to masculinity but the negative attributes are given to femininity. The attributes which are given to femininity and masculinity may differ from culture to culture but most of the society and culture share the same attributes in which masculinity as positive and femininity as negative. Cultural representation of female portrays her as inferior to males. In the same way, Sigmund Freud, discussing the nature of female psychology, says:

Women's lives and personalities are prescribed by their biological and reproductive nature; that women are not only fundamentally different from men in character but inferior to them physically (in sexual capacity and equipment), emotional (instability and control) and ethnically (in the sense of honest and justice). (125)

Freud as a male has the same view. Women by nature are passive and biologically they are different from men. Women are not only fundamentally different from men in character but women are inferior to men. Men are superior. Binary is created there. Women are physically weak and even in sexual capacity they are weak than men. Men are not emotional but women are emotional. They can not control their emotion. Even ethnically men are in higher position than women.

Patriarchal society defines masculine means active and feminine means passive. But we must be aware in this matter that the influence of social customs, which force women into passive situation. Society imposes its values and norms upon women and it forces to control aggressiveness of women. Then society says that masochism is truly feminine. But most men and women in a given time in a particular culture support a hegemonic masculinity. Hegemony is a sociological term describing the processes which keep dominant groups in power by ensuring that subordinate groups support or at last accept "the way things are". Hegemonic masculinity is the socially dominant form of masculinity in a particular culture. Basically masculinity is defined by physical strength and bravado, exclusive heterosexuality, suppression of vulnerable emotions such as remorse and uncertainty, economic independence, authority over women and other men. Standards of masculinity vary from time to time, from culture to culture. However, masculinity always defines itself as different from and superior to femininity because our society is patriarchal. So our society

expects men to dominate women and women to be subordinate to men. Therefore, Sheila Ruth says:

From infancy onward, women's lives are suffused with the affective (that is, feeling, experiential, non cognitive) aspects of living. [...] beauty, tenderness, warmth, compassion, and love have been prescribed to be the special province of women [...] Society's motivation was not make woman humane, but to make us excellent servants. (12)

She says that this patriarchal society is biased towards women. From infancy onwards, women are taught to be dependent upon men. Women's mind is covered up with the belief that woman should be beautiful, warm, and lovely. This society prescribes that women should be attractive and kind-hearted. Saying so, this society wants to make women an excellent servant of men. But this society does not think that women are human who are equal to men.

It is striking that patriarchal society always says that woman is mystery for man. When man makes woman the other, he then expects her to manifest deep-seated tendencies toward complicity. Thus women may fall to lay claim to the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the 'other'. In the real world, a man's world, the best of the feminine value which are more humane values are considered nice but unrealistic. But the male system of values becomes the masculine system of realities. Our society is male oriented. Even education becomes less female conducted the more the status and income increase. Status and income are external rewards which men have learned to

associate with their masculine role as bread winner. The social system reinforces the male values but not of women.

In the late 18th century, emphasis was given to the perfectibility of the male body, which became an outward sign of a moral superiority and inner strength of character. The ideal of masculinity requires intense effort: a man must struggle against himself, even conceiving of his own body as a sort of enemy; and also against others. For early Victorians, "maleness" is the potent physical power that is thought to be the basic essence of man. Even in 20th century, femininity is defined as a set of attributes ascribed to biologically sexed females, but what exactly those attributes are and the extent to which any given version of femininity is natural or cultural have been debated. Charlotte Bronte's heroine, Jane Eyre, speaks passionately to the reader of the gendered division of emotions as she argues that "women are supposed to be very calm generally, but women feel just as men feel" (96). She is challenging the commonsense understanding of femininity in the 1840s.

In the earlier society, people established some rules and regulations about the hierarchy between male and female. Then man showing leadership and imposing authority over female began to put women in lower rank. This ideology created by male becomes permanent in society. Aristotle, a great philosopher defined women as incomplete men. He also said that female is female by the virtue of a certain lack of qualities. Freud says, "We attribute a large amount of narcissism to femininity, which also affects women's choice of object. So that to be loved is a stronger need for them than to love" (137). Women have the habit to admire themselves. So this habit effects in the choice of object. Women have not desire to love but they desire to be loved by others.

In the basis of gender discrimination society has given negative attributes to femininity. Jean-Jacques Rousseau also claims that femininity is an instinctive set of sexed traits. Rousseau believes that the feminine was innate. But Simon de Beauvoir in her essay *Second Sex* says that "womanhood as we know is a social construct, that is the subordination of female to male" (64). She also argues that "one is not born but rather becomes a woman" (64). So she argues that it is cultural and therefore women should reform to this. M.H. Abraham in his book, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, expresses his view:

Marxist and diverse poststructuralist theories, and its vitality is signaled by the vigour of the debates within the ranks of professed feminists themselves. The various feminisms, however, shared certain assumptions and concepts that underlie the diverse ways that individual critics explore the factor of sexual difference and privilege in the production, the form and content, the reception, and the critical analysis and evaluation of works of literature. (89)

He opines that the central essence of all feminists is to explore female role and space whether in society or in literature. All of them reject western patriarchal thoughts and advocate equality. A concept of feminism called Gyno-criticism propounded by Sandra Gibert, Susan Gubar and Elaine Showalter analyzes literature from the female perspective. Gyno-Criticism means the study of women as writers and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genre and structure of writing by women.

There are some women, who play vital role in their family and even in society. They overcome from the womanliness. They even play the role of women and men. Basically men are defined as person who have great role in the society. The women who are active are defined by the male writer in negative way. So, Riviere says:

Women who seem to every criterion of complete feminine development. They are excellent wives and mothers, capable housewives; they maintain social life and assist culture; they have no lack of feminine interests, e.g. in their personal appearance, and when called upon they can still find time to play the part of devoted and disinterested mother-substitutes among a wide circle of relatives and friends. (36)

She opines that gender is a conservative term. Women who are active and who have their profession they care their house. These women are excellent mothers and capable housewives. They are maintaining their social life. When they go outside they pay attention to their appearance also. But along with their house they are maintaining social life and are devoted to the relatives and friends also. But male defines that when women give attention in their appearance that is feminine traits. This activity is defined in negative way by this society.

From primitive time to the present femininity often measures the distance or decline from the human ideal. In the time of mid-Victorian, femininity is defined as natural and instinctive habits of women, love, tenderness and affectionate solicitude for children, spouses and parents. That is defined as the daily use of business of maternity, marriage and domestic life. In comparison with femininity, masculinity has given positive attributes by this society. So to maintain their social life most men feel pressured to act masculine. These men feel that they have to prevail in situations that require physical strength and fitness. To appear weak, emotional, or sexually inefficient are major threat to their self-esteem. To be content, these men must feel that they are self assured and rational. Thus the masculine value system is a series of characteristics and behaviours which men more than women in our society are

socialized to adopt. Majority of the people in the society adopt masculine values. These values are the most rewarded values of this society. Warren Farrell, in this regard, views the masculine values which are superior to feminine values: "Male as a good talker and articulator rather than a good listener, logic as opposed to emotion, adventurous, self confidence in place of humility, quick decisive making rather than thoughtful pondering and a hard and aggressive approach instead of soft, persuasive approach" (56).

The feminine is most often associated with nurturing, life giving qualities and creativity. Men and women are human beings. So they have equal rights in this world and society. This patriarchal society behaves differently to both of them. This society has given different attributes to male and female. Then masculine attributes are preferred by this society and feminine attributes are turned on the corner. There are many more blatantly negative connotative words used to describe femininity than masculinity and some what fewer positive terms. The tone of the words to describe femininity is considerably different from masculinity. Such terms as "petty", "fickle", "coy", "sneaky", "shallow" and vain are very negatively charged in most of the society. Janet Saltzman Chafez comments that "Females are said to be 'idealistic, humanistic' rather than a 'contributor to society'; 'innocent' rather than 'adventurous', 'patient' rather than 'ambitions', and 'gentle, tender, soft' rather than 'moral trustworthy'" (41).

In the history of western civilization women were taken as seductive, flirts just like the wicked Eve tempting poor innocent Adam. On the basis of gender role stereotypes male and females have given different stereotypes. American I.K. Broverman et. al. in 1970s report that a study of 79 psychotherapists, 46 males and 33 females revealed the following description of the 'mentally healthy adult female',

submissive, emotional, easily influenced, sensitive to being hurt, excitable, dependent, not very adventurous, less competitive. Moreover, she dislikes math and science.

Clinicians have different standards of mental health for men. They have opinion that only men, not women can be healthy. Freud also opines that the nature of women is determined by their sexual function. And he also adds that "An individual woman may be a human being in other respects as well" (169). In his saying way find vagueness of 'other respects' and the conditional tense of 'may be a human being' underline how provisional and problematic a women's identity as a 'human being' might be.

Different media like television, newspaper and textbooks represent female as passive. These media are representatives of our culture where women are depicted as dominated, subordinated. This cultural representation of female is not on the basis of equality. In the magazines by female writers before world War IInd were presented women as happily, proudly, adventurously, attractively career women. But after world war IInd the heroines of articles and stories are changed. House wives were changed occupation. The heroines of earlier stories changed in later days. During the fifties virtually all of the stories and articles centred on the housewife. Literary works focus on male protagonists, who embody masculine traits and ways of feeling and pursue masculine interests in masculine fields of action. M.H. Abrams argues that "To these males, the female characters, when they play a role, are marginal and subordinate" (90). Such works have of lack autonomous female role models. But in later days role changed and women played the role of a business manager, cook, nurse, dress maker, accountant, teacher and even private secretary. During the early 1970s, only a few women are portrayed in a responsible job, such as in a police. But these women characters are controlled or helped by male. However there are only few woman

writers who portray women as a good character. But male writers portray women as passive character.

Virginia Woolf, an important precursor in feminist criticism, wrote *A Room of One's Own*. She says that "a patriarchal society that has hindered or prevented women from realizing their productive and creative possibilities" (Abram, 88). In the field of cultural, economic and educational fields, women are rendered disabled because this patriarchal society does not give them any opportunities to show their creativity. Even in the field of sports men are ahead than women. In every sphere, the facilities, coaching, and training for girls continue to be inferior. So, Walum says, "These are few actual differences in strength, endurance, or body composition (ratio of fat to lean) between girl and boy athletes; their performance differences are primarily due to differences in training programs" (64-5).

Gender divides human beings into two categories: male and female. Not only does the system of gender divide the human race into two categories, it also privileges the male over the female. Anne Cranny Francis comments that "gender operates as a set of hierarchically arranged roles in modern society which makes the masculine half of the equation positive and the feminine negative" (1-2).

This society is male centred, therefore, women's position is discriminated, or displaced by male on the basis of gender. Woman is defined as "other", "second" because man is the "self" and "first". Similarly femininity is always associated with femaleness, which is defined as inferior, weak and dependent. By giving negative attributes to women, this society stigmatizes femininity. Women, as a result, are forced to be busy in their domestic works.

Stigma mirrors culture and society. Lerita M. Coleman says that "Stigma represents a view of life; a set of personal and social constructs, a set of social

relations and social relationship, a form of social reality. It is a form of social categorization”(216). The Greeks, who originated the term stigma to refer to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier. The signs were cut or burnt into the body and advertised that the bearer was a slave, a criminal, or a traitor a blemished person, ritually polluted, to be avoided, especially in public places. In Christian time metaphorically that is defined in two ways: first referred to bodily signs of holy grace that took the form of eruptive blossoms on the skin; the second, bodily signs of physical disorder. Today the term is applied more to the disgrace itself than to the bodily evidence of it. Barbarin considers "stigma as a form of negative stereotyping has a way of neutralizing positive qualities and undermining the identity of stigmatized individuals" (222).

What is undesired or stigmatized is heavily dependent on the social context and to some extent arbitrarily defined. Goffman states that "Stigma is equivalent to an undesired differentness" (217). All human differences are potentially stigmatizable: "As we move out of one social context where a difference is desired, into another context where the difference is undesired, we begin to feel the effects of stigma" (217). Those possessing power, the dominant group, can determine which human differences are desired and undesired. Any "non-stigmatized" person can easily become "stigmatized". Human differences serve as the basis for stigma. Feeling stigmatized is virtually an inescapable fate because stigmas differ depending upon the cultural and the historical period. When we make comparison then we can feel different. Stigmatization or feeling stigmatized is a consequence of social comparison. So, stigma depends upon many factors, e.g. geographical location, culture, etc. There are some stigmatized conditions appear escapable or may be temporary. Being a new

professor, being 7 feet tall, having cancer, being black or being physical disfigured or mentally retarded and being a woman can all lead to feelings of stigmatization.

Within particular social group or in specific culture, some human differences are valued and designed and other differences are devalued, feared or stigmatized. Society establishes the means of categorizing person and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories. While the stranger is present before us, his possessing attributes make him different from others. Because our society desires different attributes than his. Then, this person becomes bad, or dangerous or weak. He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such attribute is a stigma. Its discrediting effect is very extensive; it is sometimes called a handicap. It constitutes a discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity.

In the 1960s Erving Goffman proposed a taxonomy of stigma with three dimensions:

First there are abominations of the body the various physical deformities. Next there are blemishes of individual character perceived as weak will, unnatural passions, dishonesty and treacherous. For example, mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, unemployment and suicidal attempt. Finally there are the tribal stigma of race, nation, gender, age and religion" (205)

By these definitions, of course, we come to learn that the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption, society exercises varieties of discrimination.

Unthinkingly society changes one's life. Society constructs stigma theory, an ideology to explain his/her inferiority and account for the danger he/she represents, sometimes

rationalizing an animosity based on other differences. Describing the situation of a stigmatized person, Erving Goffman says:

In some cases it will be possible for him to make a direct attempt to correct what he sees as the objective basis of his failing, as when a physically deformed person undergoes plastic surgery, a blind person eye treatment, an illiterate remedial education, a homosexual psychotherapy where such repair is possible. (207)

Identity of stigmatized persons is also denied by the society. Society gives negative attributes to those people and later those attributes stigmatized. Then that person who feels inferior and weak wants to go to repair centre. Physically crippled person undergoes plastic surgery. A blind person wants to go to eye treatment. Illiterate and homosexual persons are also stigmatized in this society. So, they are also in search for their treatment. To be accepted by this society, the stigmatized individual attempts to correct his condition.

One stigmatized (physically deformed) person even can't get human love. That is more tragedy than physical deformity. There are some people who are not crippled but think themselves as inferior than others. Such as women who felt inferior and different because of ugliness, or inability to bear children, or helplessness in contacting people, many other reasons. These stigmatized individual may find that s/he feels unsure of how the normal will identify him and receive him. Uncertainty of status for the disabled person obtains over a wide range of social interactions in addition to that of employment. The blind, the ill, the deaf, the crippled can never be sure what the attitude of a new acquaintance will be until the contact has been made. This is exactly the position of the adolescent, the light-skinned Negro, the second generation immigrant, the socially mobile person and the woman who has entered a

predominantly masculine occupation. This uncertainty arises not merely from the stigmatized individual's not knowing which of several s/he will be placed in, but also, where the placement is favourable, from his/her knowing that in their hearts the others may be defining him in terms of his stigma.

Minor failings or incidental impropriety may be interpreted as a direct expression of his/her stigmatized differentness. Ex-mental patients are sometimes afraid to engage in sharp interchange with employer because of what a show of emotion might be taken as a sign of mental defectives. Erving Goffman adds a further insight to this point: "It also happens that of a low intellectual ability gets into some sort of trouble the difficulty is more or less automatically attributed to 'mental defect' whereas if a person of 'normal intelligence' gets into a similar difficulty, it is not regarded as symptomatic of anything in particular" (211). There is respect for normal. But in contrast, there is no place and position for stigmatized persons in our society. These stigmatized persons get no respect from others. It is because of discrimination between normal and stigmatized person. Minor failings may be interpreted as a direct expression of his/her stigmatized 'differentness'.

Stigma is typically a social process, experienced or anticipated, characterized by exclusion, rejection, blame, or devaluation that results from experience or reasonable anticipation of an adverse social judgement about a person or group. Leritam M. Coleman claims, "The degree of stigmatization might depend on how undesired the difference is in a particular social group" (217). A white American could feel temporarily stigmatized when visiting Japan due to difference in height. Karnali people could feel stigmatized with Kathmandu living people when they come in Kathmandu. Because there is difference in manner among those Karnali and Kathmandu living people. But the Karnali people in Karnali don't feel the effects of

stigma. Thus, the sense of being stigmatized or having a stigma is inextricably tied to social context. Moving from one social or cultural context to another can change the definitions and the consequences of stigma.

People who are stigmatized or acquire a stigma lose their place in the social hierarchy. Consequently, most people want to ensure that they are counted in the non stigmatized "majority". Stigma allows some individuals to feel superior to others. In order for one person to feel superior, there must be another person who is perceived to be or who actually feels inferior. So, some people's attributes are stigmatized in order for the many non stigmatized people to feel good about them. Stigma is constructed by cultures, by social groups, and by individuals to designate some human differences as discrediting. The stigmatization process becomes a powerful social tool in which one group becomes powerful and starts dominating other group.

Some categories of stigmatized people (e.g., woman) cannot easily alter their stigmas in the patriarchal society. For example, women feel permanently stigmatized in contexts, where their differentness is undesired and in social environments they cannot easily escape. Hence, "Power, social influence, and social control play a major role in the stigmatization process" (219). In patriarchal society, men give different and negative attributes to women. Men become dominant group and women become dominated group. Men, the dominant group who have power in their hand make rules and they impose those rules upon women. Women are excluded in every aspect. Patriarchy is a social system in which maleness and masculinity confer a privileged position of power and authority, where man is the self to which woman is other. In the society who have power in their hand especially men, create negative images about women and give negative stereotypes/attributes to femininity. Then they produce speeches, write books and newspaper and they create truth.

When men produce a discourse, it provides knowledge. This discourse creates knowledge about something and this knowledge helps to create the truth. The power is generated in society by producing the discourses and by constructing the truths. Michel Foucault, in his *Truth and Power*, says that "Effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false" (1139). Truth, then, is itself a product of relations of power and of the systems in which it flows, and it changes when systems change. History is written to maintain power. History is a record of male leadership, has been used, perhaps subconsciously to reinforce the idea that women are insignificant and subordinate, therefore they belong to the private sphere. In this patriarchal society in the name of gender discrimination men always dominate over women and they stigmatize the femininity.

On the basis of gender discrimination, patriarchy stigmatizes the activities and attributes of feminine traits. Gender is a social construction of sex. Sex is biological but gender is a social construct. Gender is the culturally variable elaboration of sex, as a hierarchical pair where male is coded superior, positive and female inferior and negative. Even, Aristotle, as discussed by Anne Cranny-Francis in her *Gender Studies: Terms and Debates*, takes curious set of binary oppositions in his *Economics*. Aristotle, as cited by Francis, argues that "men are stronger, women weaker, men courageous, women cautious, men the out doors type, women domestic; men educate children, women nurture them (2). Certain negative attributes are attached to femininity such as woman is emotional, dependent, needful, capricious and timid. Women are morally inferior, bad, sinful, dirty, and even they are physically, intellectually and spiritually inferior. So, stigma helps to maintain the existing social hierarchy.

Stigma emerges from three important aspects. They are fear, stigma's primary affective component; stereotyping, it's primary cognitive component, and social control; is primary behavioural component. It is difficult to eliminate the stigma from society. But changing political and economic climates are important to the stigmatization and destigmatization process. Stigmatization or stereotyping is not automatic. In some historical instances, society appears to have recognized full human potential when it was required, while ignoring certain devalued traits. Terry describes one event in which stereotype or stigmatized individual/group is modified. He comments, "When women were needed to occupy traditionally male occupations in the United States during World War II, gender differences were ignored as they have been ignored in other societies when women were needed for combat" (222).

Stigmas will disappear when the society no longer legitimizes social exclusion and segregation. No stigmatized and stigmatized people play an important role in the destigmatization process. Stigmatized people have choices to accept their stigmatized condition or continue to fight for more integration into non stigmatized communities. Women can counter with patriarchal tendency. Women can choose to ignore social norms regarding stigma. Women can raise their voice against patriarchy and can resist with the stigmatization process. Feminist Philosopher Judith Butler argues that gender was not an essence but a performance. It was a set of mandatory practices imposed from birth and repeated again and again in doomed effort to get it right. Showalter proposes to rupture the hierarchy of male/female. Black feminists have challenged white women's ability and eurocentric nature of some feminisms because black women are stigmatized by the white women and men. Black feminists like Alice Walker, Toni Morrison celebrate black culture, tradition and their genesis and believe that they possess rich cultural and sexual properties as black and as female. Even third

world feminists, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Sarojini Sahoo criticize western feminism as the grounds that it is ethnocentric and does not take into account the unique experiences of women from third-world countries or the existence of feminists indigenous to third world countries.

Resistance is a way of revolution to achieve the right and value of women. The education, knowledge and conscious make women resist. The education and knowledge teach to be conscious to the equal right and to be self-dependent. So, women resist for the justification of right and want to change the unjust rule which has snatched the rights of females. The women who have strong spirit can not endure all the domination and do resist against injustice. When women become conscious to the right of them, they resist breaking the traditional norms and rules of patriarchy. Women want to change the mythical rules of patriarchy. Only with the power of resistance of female, female finds right in the society.

To fight with the ill thoughts of society is the work of a social rebel. This patriarchal society giving negative attributes to femininity, tries to dominate women. Defining woman as passive, timid and dependent, patriarchy stigmatizes femininity. But women who are conscious about their condition in this society are fighting with this ill thought of patriarchy. This patriarchal society has dominated female voice. So, female are compelled to resist against the bad thought of this society. Kathleen Gough argues, "Male tries to use them as objects in male transactions" (69). Male considered that women are weaker in their power of reasoning, narrow in their vision, intellectually short sighted, and no sense of justice. So, this ill thought of society should be changed. Femininity is a set of culturally defined characteristics. Male power is a myth that makes itself true. Beauvoir writes, "The work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth"

(41). Power, to create the world from one's point of view is power in its male form. Woman through male eyes is sex object, and male as subject.

Socially, femaleness means femininity, which means attractiveness to men, which means sexual attractiveness. Good girls are "attractive", bad girls are "provocative". Women are defined by their powerlessness and sexual objectification. But through their awareness on these matters, women analyze their experience and understand their condition. Those who are powerful and brave can dig out the established codes of society. The women who are brave can oppose the established unjust rules. So, women raised their voice against cruelty of patriarchy. When women became conscious, then they try to reject all the negative mages of femininity as: passive, repressed and victimized. Woolf struggles to advance women's rights and to challenge restrictive and misogynistic representations of women. In these days, female masculinities have adopted the strategy to neglect the notion of male masculinity. The female masculinities have confirmed to a newer understanding of the self and this new affirmation is achieved not only by subverting the masculine power by neglecting it and refusing to engage.

In *A Doll's House*, Henrik Ibsen's concern is with the independence of woman. Nora, a devoted wife to her husband tries to do good things. To save her husband's life she takes loan putting her in danger. On the one hand, she saves her husband's life and on the other hand, saves his reputation of 'male ego' by hiding the secrecy of loan. She is a sacrificing woman, at first. But at last, when she knows the real nature of her husband she does not agree to live with Helmer her husband becoming his 'doll wife'. Helmer thinks himself as the ruler of his wife. He forces her to follow his rules. His 'superiority feeling' works in his mind that he is her husband. So, he should be a ruler. But Nara, when her expectation is shattered, becomes bold

and decides to break, her marital relationship with Helmer. And she leaves her "doll house" and family for quest of her identity. She violates patriarchy and searches her identity. Nora, until the self realization, has accepted and recognized everything from male's point of view. But at last, she realizes that the world, she thought to be real is fake and artificial where no woman enjoys in her right. She realizes that this patriarchal society stigmatizes the femininity and takes profit from this. She has been handicapped earlier by her father and husband. By giving her a name, making her like a doll and an object they play with her. They think that she is an object which can be played according to their desire. But leaving her husband and children she steps her foot for her self identify. She challenged this patriarchal society saying that women are able to live independently and alone without men's help.

Aparpokkho (meaning the opponent) is a work of Taslima Nasrin, which traces the life of Jamuna who is divorced from her husband Saber, for allegedly having an illicit relationship with Saber's friend. Jamuna remarries with her second husband. But Jamuna, in the absence of second husband, experiences ecstatic pleasure with Pasha, and she decides to be pregnant with Pasha. She refuses to abort this child. During her first marriage, Jamuna wanted to have solved entitlement to her income. But such a proposal determines Saber's authority, becomes counter to Jamuna's dependent status. Later, her relationship with Pasha becomes problematic to society. So, neighbours forced her to abort her child. But she saying " I want a child over whom man has no entitlement ... like me, my child will be free of the offensive control of patriarchy" (63) boldly rejects patriarchal values and norms. She becomes bold and decides to give birth to this child. Against this patriarchal society, she says that "I'm not anybody's land for cultivation, nor can a man use me as he wishes ..." (66). Deciding to give birth to her child Jamuna resists this society. Though she is undesired by this

society, she becomes ready to struggle. And she becomes ready to establish her own distinct identity showing her boldness in this society. Even in *Shodh*, we find the resistance of Jhumur, who rebels against the established rules and thoughts of society.

The above discussed discourse has helped this researcher to justify the Nasrin's *Shodh*'s protagonist's behaviours in male dominated society. On the basis of gender role Jhumur is stigmatized by this patriarchal society. Haroon, husband of Jhumur, always identifies Jhumur as passive, dependent, emotional and unable to do job. Even he forced her to abort her first child .Because Haroon who thinks himself superior and able to know everything what is right and wrong. To make Jhumur weak, Haroon confines her only within four walls of his house. But Jhumur educated woman, after knowing the domination of male over female becomes bold and courageous. So, to subvert this patriarchal gender role and to defy her stigmatized position, she takes decision to make love affair with another artist Afzal and gives birth to his son. Being a teacher she establishes her own distinct identity in the society. At this time Haroon is unable to control Jhumur's activities. Thus, this study seeks to prove that Jhumur, by celebrating the femininity, giving birth to her lover's son rather than that of her husband and becoming a teacher, resists the stigma of femininity. Even if the suture of stigma never erases completely. But Thumur through her resistance defies it.

This discourse has given this researcher a perspective to observe and analyze the novel in a fastidious manner. It has enabled to understand the psyche, the intellect and the feelings of female and their rebellion to defy from the stigmatized position. It also helped this researcher understand women's urge to bring about significant changes in the society so that they can live as independent human beings.

III. Resisting the Gender Stigma in *Shodh*

The patriarchal society expects women to wash, cook, clean, bear children, and be confined within domestic affairs only. But, now women are questioning convention, rebelling, refusing their appointed labours. Women are challenging the old images and building new ones. The major requirement of traditional femininity: beauty, self-effacement, fragility, and domesticity are undermined by women. So, some feminist writers play important role to demystifying the image, translating myth in to reality, through introspection and analysis. Taslima Nasrin, who emerges on the scene of Bangladeshi literature, raises her voice against the male domination. The major requirement of traditional femininity like beauty, self-effacement, fragility, and domesticity are undermined by women. Some feminist writers play important role to demystify the image, translating myth into reality, through introspection and analysis.

Taslima, in *Shodh*, represents the reality of patriarchy that the male codes are embedded within the society. So, it should be replaced by the intellect of female values. The text goes to focus on the female framework regarding the position of woman and opposes the male values. Taslima has composed the rational, reasonable and thoughtful dialogues to be spoken by Jumur so that Jhumur gets highlighted.

Jhumur, a well educated (degree holder in physics) girl and Haroon's love culminates into marriage. In Haroon's house, Jhumr is expected to live with family members like any other Bangladeshi woman. But life with her in-laws is claustrophobic. She is expected to do all household works and even not allowed to go anywhere unveiled and alone. Jhumur's independent streak does not take kindly to this and the last straw is when she is forced by her husband to abort her first child because he insists that it couldn't be his own (he finds it impossible that Jhumur could have conceived within 6 weeks of marriage). Then she begins to realize that she is an

individual. After this realization, Jhumur changes and wants to take revenge for hurting her femininity. So, Thumur conceives for the second time from Afzal in order to subvert patriarchy. But she doesn't open her secret that this child was of Afzal not of Haroon. She was qualified and educated, and was motivated to be independent from early age to feel and decide anything independently. She was strong enough to make decisions on her own. At first her intellect has been suppressed by the strategy of male dominant society but later she shows her intellect and her courage to go against this cruel strategy. She struggles alone and she becomes success. She gives birth to son not from Haroon but Haroon says that this is his own son and she becomes a teacher who has her own identity as Zeenat Sultan.

Taslina Narin always talks in favour of women's freedom and rights. She calls women to rise against their subordination. She challenges women saying if you are human being, you should break the chain which always wants to keep you in narrow space. You have strong hands/knowledge which can break the traditional patriarchal rules and values which are imposed upon you. If you are really human beings, you should go ahead crossing many obstacles. Taslima says that women must struggle to break such inhuman patriarchal milieu. Women should be able to explore their potentiality to prove themselves qualified and competent ones.

Taslina Nasrin relates her matter to the female values. The traditional society seeks to embed the male values and they treat rudely and cruelly. Nasrin gives conscious to female character Jhumur who is able to raise the questions blaming the male values. Jhumur is capable to go against the male definition of women as passive, weak and silent. Jhumur and other female characters in the novel are victimized by the socio-economic realities of this society. At first Jhumur a revolutionary and well-educated woman who appears happy to live with her family. She cannot go away

from the responsibility and social norms so easily. But later she realizes that individual impulse is more important than social one for her. So, she struggles to free herself from obligations in order to develop her strength. Jhumur, a well-educated woman resists violently to overcome from her stigmatized situation.

Our society is rooted in male values and the values of female are suppressed. Though Jhumur is well educated, she cannot easily resist against these male values. So, she is forced to trap according to their desires. Marriage alters her life and effaces her female subjectivity/identity. She is not even allowed to speak loudly:

I was there (on balcony) once when I was still new to the household. Mother-in-law remarked. 'It doesn't behave a housewife to stare at people. The neighbours would surely disapprove'. She had reported the incident to Haroon at once. "Jhumur, you have no sense at all Most of the time you seem to forget you are the bou of this house! He said.

(7)

How pitiable situation of women in society is where patriarchal values are deeply rooted. Patriarchy determines certain criteria for woman and thus easily stigmatise them. Jhumur's attributes are also stigmatised by the patriarchy. Ma-in-law conceptualized that bou (daughter-in-law) should not go to balcony because she has fear that neighbours would surely disapprove. Haroon (representative of patriarchy) cannot digest individual thinking of women. In response, Jhumur, in her low voice, remarks:

I knew I was the bou of the house only too well, hadn't dared to think otherwise even for a second, not since the time I had come to the house. I knew I had to lower my voice, reduce it to a murmur, and keep

my eyes fixed on the ground so that they didn't catch the eyes of any other person. (7)

The patriarchal society starts criticizing those females, who have fearless character. They try to keep those women under their desire. She wants to get rid of these cultural values which have plagued women so long. Though she is well educated, she cannot resist at first. But in lower voice she resists to Haroon and mother-in-law's remarks. Women are not supposed to show any dissatisfaction directly. So Jhumur, in slow voice, expresses her dissatisfaction.

The patriarchal society thinks marriage is everything. Through the use of this discourse the patriarchy puts women under its control and stigmatises femininity. It is the first need of females. Marriage transforms the woman's life. Naila Kabeer has very nicely summed up the itinerary of a new bride as programmed by the patriarchal agenda. She remarks, "[In marriage] she is sent as a young and inexperienced bride into a stranger's household where her behaviour is viewed with suspicion until she has been successfully integrated into the new household and has learnt to identify with its interests" (102). Jhumur finds after her marriage that her relationship to her parents has suddenly altered. According to the patriarchal norm, she is called not by her name, but bou (bride) of a certain man, a certain family. Thus Haroon says with complacency: "You no longer carry your old name. You are now Mrs. Haroon Ur Rashid. You are Hasan, Habib and Dolon's Bhabi. Your address is Dhanmundi, not Wari. You can't gad about the whole day, you are the bou of the house, and you can't hang around the city as before" (9). Marriage for Jhumur takes on the characteristic of penance for being a woman. In return, patriarchy will legitimize her position as a good wife. After marriage, a woman doesn't have her own self identity in society. The daily business of maternity: marriage and domestic life are the defining features

ascribed by patriarchy to femininity, which in turn enables the patriarchy to stigmatise it. One woman has her various identities, but not one identity. She is known as wife, daughter-in-law and bhabi after marriage. Here earlier identity is lost. Society questions on her creativity. She is bound only within the four walls of her house. This society does not give any chance to women. Then women is stigmatized giving different stereotypes as passive, inferior, emotional, dependent, cunning, and engaged in domestic affair.

Taslina, in her denunciatory discourse, has named such practices sangsarthantra/domesticism. Jhumur's subordination in the Haroon family becomes representative of this system. Jhumur's self respect is doomed in this society. Women's identity, subjectivity and specific role have been subjected to their performances within the domestic arena. Women are forced on the domestic labour force and reproduction. Man thinks that woman is the property of his own. Women's rights of freedom have been snatched by this society. Haroon thinks that Jhumur is his property. She is not allowed to go out. She is not even allowed to meet with her friends and to call her friends. In the male dominated society, woman is not supposed to develop her own interest. Jhumur's duty is to fulfill her husband's lust and to care his family. She spends her time to make Haroon's family happy. In traditional South Asian and Muslim culture, women are expected to be self-sacrificing for her family. Personal desires and dreams become subordinate to the good of the family. But nobody asks about her interest, desire, and cares her health. She tries to say her problem with Haroon but he never gives attention to her problem. She has interest to sing but Haroon warns her not to sing. Haroon has only one opinion that girls are good only for student union activities and singing.

Though her Baba teaches her (master degree) has not confidence on his daughter Jhumur. When there was love affair between Jhumur and Haroon, Jhumur's Baba forces her to marry immediately with Haroon. At this time she does not go against her father's decision but she challenges her father doing marriage with Haroon. In this situation, Jhumur remarks:

I wondered what made Baba insist I marry Haroon straightway. He didn't want me to be humiliated. But Babu had hurt my feelings. I felt insulted that he couldn't see me as an attractive and intelligent woman men would covet. He had offended my self-worth. So marrying Haroon in a hurry because for me, at that time, my assertion of *amour proper*. I wanted to show Baba I was not having a fling with a good for nothing fellow. I had sense satisfaction in adopting that attitude. (37)

This patriarchal society never gives respect for women's intellect and it always suspects on women's strength. Even Jhumur's Baba is not confidence in his daughter's inner intelligence and strength. Man gives emphasis only to outer appearance and attractiveness. Parents don't want to see their children to be insulted by others. But they should have faith upon their children. But this society has not faith upon their daughter. They always suspect them. But Jhumur, by marrying with Haroon, challenges her father's lack of confidence in her.

Women are always kept in suffocative situation by men. Men and women are born equally free and independent members of the human race; equally endowed with intelligence and ability. So women should have equal opportunity to exercise their rights and liberty. Nature gives equal rights but this patriarchal society always discriminates between man and woman. This society imposes male values upon women and this forces women only to live within the four walls of a house. There is

domestic violence. The wife is not allowed to call her husband by his name. Marriage alters woman's life. Her strength, courage and intellect are subdued by her in-laws. Only some women dare to go against the patriarchal values. Most of the females remain silence saying that this is our Karma (fate) of being women. But educated women resist this notion of 'Karma' and go ahead. Only educated women go against such type of fate, saying it as a male strategy for stigmatising femininity. This society also says that one should have son to be proud. But Jhumur's mother remarks:

Neighbours and relatives said 'It's not that you can't have another child. Try for a boy. After all, sons are our only hope!' Ma retorted, will a boy solve all the problems? He will take to smoking at thirteen; ogle at girls, standing in front of schools, at fourteen; take to alcohol at fifteen and carry sharp knives around his waist at sixteen. Girls are less trouble sense'. (43)

She raises question even in the nature of male. Social surrounding shapes the mind of the people. Most of the members of the society are overwhelmed by the old contentions. So they have one type of thinking that only the sons are our hope. Son can fulfil our desires but not daughter. If some couple have not their son they will be the sympathetic character. Jhumur's Ma is also pitied upon by neighbours. But she boldly rejects that she has daughter who is similar to son. Sons are destructive but daughters can fulfil her parents' dream if she gets equal opportunity.

Jhumur is the hope of her parents. They give her education thinking that Jhumur can stand on her own feet. She will be able to establish her own identity in this society. She is strong, courageous but she is trapped by this patriarchal values and norms. She tries to resist but she is confined only in house. All the responsibilities of her in-law's house is upon her head except economic responsibility. Making the in-

law family happy is instrumental in gaining the affection of a husband. Jhumur does all things demanded by this society. But she has strong desire to be independent so that could establish her own distinct identity. She has a desire to get engaged in job. She boldly argues with Haroon in this regard:

Have I collected university degrees to say at house and twiddle my thumbs? I worked so hard, stayed up whole nights, to pass those exams – difficult ones, to say the least. Was all that for the benefit of running a home?’ [...] I think it were better I had a job.’ I had studied. So that I could work. Is it right for an educated person to sit idle at house? (51-2)

Jhumur is talent and qualified. So, she wants to join job. She, therefore, is confined within Haroon’s household work. Her activities are suppressed by the patriarchy capitalising on the baseless notion of women as passive. Jhumur counters this notion of patriarchy by involving in argument with Haroon. Though she is suppressed in her house she has confidence that one day she will be independent and able to come out from her suppressed situation. She has duty to fulfil her own desires.

This society portrayed different stereotypes about women. Men say angel to women or their wife if they are in happy mood but when they are in bad mood they say devil to their wife. A wife's duty is to please her husband. In this patriarchal society a woman's place is at her husband's feet. So, a woman is not allowed to scold her husband. Jhumur's Ma-in-law always advised her to cook food as he liked, to keep him happy. There is nothing more important in a woman's life than her husband. Jhumur's Ma-in-law is also victimized by this patriarchal society. So she conceptualized that to keep her husband and son happy is her duty.

When girl does marriage, she loses her identity. Her identity is attached with her husband. She loses her virginity after marriage. But when she becomes pregnant within a short period, husband puts question marks on her character. When Jhumur says to Haroon about her pregnancy Haroon angrily remarks:

... I am not the father, how would I know ... how can I tell whose baby you had in your womb when you stepped into our house. You were in such a hurry to get married, gave me no time to think. Now everything has become clear. (74)

Haroon becomes upset when Jhumur becomes pregnant within six weeks of their marriage. Haroon who well knows that Jhumur is not allowed to go anywhere. She is accused of having marital relationship. So, you was in hurry to marry with me, Haroon told. Jhumur who is always veiled, tolerated all the cruelties of Haroon. Women are compelled to veil/to cover her face in Muslim society. It is also a way of exerting domination upon females.

Patriarchy does not give chance to know the outer world to women. So they always want to keep them in ignorant position. Jhumur who has to cross this limitation because of her desires and intentions are suppressed in her house. Even Haroon forces her to abort their first child. She raises voice against this abortion but Haroon does not listen to her voice. She is tied with the tradition and cultural belief that a woman should not interrupt the decisions made by male members of the family. So, she does not boldly resist earlier against his desire to abort their first baby. She loses her baby but the pain remains. This action of Haroon leads her to go against her husband to Jhumur at last.

Haroon considers Jhumur as an object/his own property. So, he uses her as he likes. He doesn't pay attention about her pain but he only thinks her as a sexual object. In this situation Jhumur can not go against his desire. But she satirically remarks:

Haroon had started making love to me four days after the abortion, ignoring medical advice. I did not discourage him or try to put him off. How could I, a wanton woman, stand in the way of the legitimate desire of a successful and morally correct person? My husband had purified me, rid my womb of contamination. I was polluted free! (91)

This is satirical remark of Jhumur to this male dominated society. Though she directly can't resist to this society, she is making plan to resist with this patriarchal norms and values. She is psychologically pinched many times by her family members and Haroon. Haroon who thinks himself as morally correct person makes love with Jhumur after aborting child. He purifies her from contamination Jhumur ironically says that Haroon behave with her like a wanton but he starts making love with her. She wonders what type of male he is.

Jhumur does love marriage which is against social practices. According to Muslim and Hindu culture, marriage is arranged by parents. In marriage parents give a lot of dowry to their daughter. But Jhumur brings nothing as dowry. Jhumur goes against the traditional belief of/practice of marriage. Jhumur is well educated/literate. So, she has her own view about her life. She is educated and able to think herself. She is pinched by Ma-in-law saying that as she did not bring any dowry in marriage with Haroon. But she remains quite thinking that one day she will do something to challenge this society.

The suppression of woman in patriarchal society has developed as culture and tradition. Men think themselves superior to the women. Women are made a prisoner

inside the four walls. Jhumur also becomes a prisoner in her own house. She is powerless to step outside to visit her relatives and friends. She does not hold a job though she is qualified. But one day, Anis' (son-in-law) questions calling her by name 'Jhumur' wakes up to her. Then she contemplates:

Anis then threw me a pointed question, breaking into my uncommunicativeness. 'Why do you look so abstracted all the time Jhumur Bhabi?' I woke up with a start. No one in the house mentioned me by my name, every one called me Bhabi. It gave me such a thrill! I realized I had a name, an identity. His calling me Jhumur bhabi made me feel I was a distinct person who had gone to the university and had collected so many degrees [...] he asked why I was not looking for a job. What's the use of a university degree if all you do is sit at home and cook? (95)

In patriarchal society, women are confined only within domestic affair, though she is well educated. Women are compelled to sit only within home. But Jhumur does not want to remain silent. She is capable of establishing her own identity. She always wants to be free from this cage of domesticity. So, she most of the time opens window and looks at flying birds and the open sky.

After abortion, driven by pain and anger, she is determined to take revenge. The rebellious Jhumur knows that this patriarchal society always wants to stigmatize femininity. Men take benefit from women defining them as passive, inactive and dependent. So, the well-educated women should take revenge to men and should defy it. Her body has undergone a transformation. Her emotion has become totally paralysed. So she begins to hate Haroon for being so cruel. She never can forgive him.

Haroon has destroyed her faith in the truth and the purity of her love. So, she secretly makes love to an artist named Afzal and appropriates the right to body.

This patriarchal society demands women to be gentle, submissive, coy and morally upright. Women's development is blocked by the strict moral code of patriarchy. Society imposes restriction upon Jhumur's freedom. Though she is devoted to her husband, her husband doubts her chastity. Haroon's brutality and distrust make her life more miserable. It is law of nature that if there is repression, revolt will follow back. Thus, Jhumur to overcome by this suppression and to take revenge falls in love with Afzal. She uses female sexuality to subvert this patriarchal (values and norms) system. Jhumur becomes furious and makes her mind to be pregnant not by Haroon, but by Afzal. She takes this rigid decision. At this time she directly refuses to keep sexual relationship with Haroon. In this situation in lower voice she remarks:

Take care Haroon. Don't dare touch me. My body carries the signature of another man. Don't try to blot it out. Your bride is an adulteress now; she has become what you had taken her to be and what you don't think her as Thus, one afternoon, washing away all my bodily impurities under a stream of cool water I made up my mind to be pregnant with Afzal and not with Haroon. (146-147)

Jhumur's endurance power crosses limitation. So, she takes her life's decision by herself. She rejects for sometime to do sex with her husband and does sex with Afzal secretly. She keeps relationship with Afzal secretly because she even cannot go directly against this society. She has certain bondages. She becomes pregnant second time by Afzal but Haroon considers that it is his child.

Thus patriarchal society behaves differently with men and women. Society identifies female as housewife. Men think that women are child bearing machine. This

cultural representation of female is not on the basis of equality but on the basis of gender discrimination. So, education is the powerful weapon to fight against this patriarchy and injustice of this society.

She destroys her own innocent foetus in the womb, but later she becomes courageous and goes against the patriarchy. Jhumur wants to live an independent life. Neither does she expect any support from her husband nor seeks any help from any male figure around her. In this context, she declines the helping hand of Afzal, who proposes her to go to Australia.

Jhumur, at first, abandons her intellectual pursuits. Her head is veiled like someone who does not have an ounce of intelligence. Haroon has shattered her aspirations, destroyed her dreams. He violates her life. He has destroyed his child with his own hand. But later he shows his love and attention on something that does not belong to him, in whose conception he has played no part. Jhumur is compelled to reach him in this situation unknowingly. Haroon who only thinks himself as superior and active and Jhumur is passive and inactive. But Jhumur repeatedly through her rebellion defies it.

Jhumur establishes her legitimacy by giving birth to a son. She has not desire to bear a child. But to take revenge with Haroon, she gives birth to a son by Afzal.

Jhumur remarks:

I had become totally indifferent to what the future held out for me. The child was not the fruit of my desire. The foetus had not been conceived in the rainbow of my dreams. I was not happy. I had no sense of peace. The child was my way of registering a protest, of taking revenge. The foetus of pain and agony. (193)

That son is not her desired child because her first desired child was aborted by Haroon. So, only to take revenge she gives birth to the second child. This child reflects her pain and agony. It is equally a baby of protest. Women cannot do anything to protest themselves. This kind of femininity as defined by patriarchy is resisted by Jhumur as she takes the decision to be pregnant by Afzal and giving birth to this child. In this situation she says that "Haroon had violated the very truth of my being unwarranted suspicions. My anger, my infidelity, was the expression of my utter loyalty to my own integrity" (166). She loves Haroon but she wants to take revenge with him because he hurts her femininity.

Jhumur is a representative of social transformer. Her parents have sent her to schools and colleges and encouraged her to be a qualified person. They give her opportunity to be educated by her parents. They give her opportunity to empower herself. Jhumur's Baba says, "Expensive clothes made one look nice ... your distinctiveness lies within yourself, in your wisdom and learning – it is revealed in your attitude and behaviour and not in your outside appearance" (198). She has not interest on material things. She is worried about women's identity. Women in the society go by their husband's introduction, even an independent minded like Dr. Sebati (Jhumur's friend) is referred as Mrs. Anwar. Jhumur is also known as the wife of Haroon Ur Rashid not Jhumur.

Jhumur a well educated woman does not remain silence. She does not want to live only within four walls of house. She has desire to overcome by this caged life and overcome by her stigmatized situation. Therefore, she slowly starts to walk alone outside of the house to visit her friends without covering her face. She does not keep her head covered. She starts to sing a song of freedom. She is so conscious of her

situation that without giving any information to the family members, she searches a teaching job. She challenges Haroon by the following expression:

It's a copy of a letter. I have written accepting a job offer. The job is that of school teaching, Bhikharunniza Noon's school [...]. You didn't allow me to work after we got married. For me it was like a slap on my face. Now after an interval of a few years I have given you this surprise of taking up a job. I have given you the proof of my capabilities. It's like slapping you twice over. (223-4)

This patriarchal society does not allow to express desire and to be free from domestic bondage to women. Creating stereotypical images about women wants to trap women only in their hand and domestic affair. This society gives negative attributes to femininity and it forces to conceptualize that femininity is the true nature of women. Women are inferior, passive; domestic minded and can't go outside from home. The patriarchal society stigmatizes to femininity. But Taslima Nasrin is successful in creating an ideal woman who is able to fulfil her desire and she resists to defy her stigmatized situation. She shows her masculine character by doing the job of a teacher. She becomes able to establish her own identity by breaking the borderline of patriarchy and showing female masculinity.

Taslima has challenged the unassailability of Bangladeshi patriarchy by introducing terminologies of revenge and opposition in the realm of domestic relationships. This patriarchal society says that virginity and chastity are the defining qualities of a good man, and she can preserve her honour only under the guardianship of a man; the father is in charge of protecting her virginity, the husband her chastity. Saying that Jhumur's Baba also forced her to marry in hurry and after marriage

Haroon always tries to put under his command. To make Jhumur inferior Haroon does not allow her to do job, and to know the outer world without domestic affair.

Haroon has a fear that a well educated Jhumur is capable of doing anything. So, she must be kept under his command. He stigmatizes her with all the negative attributes the patriarchy generally gives to women. But the rebellious Jhumur waits her days and goes against her husbands' desire. Haroon is not able to save her chastity. Jhumur crosses this bondage and makes love affair with another artist Afzal. She gives birth to a child who is not from Haroon but from Afzal. Not only that, she takes a job of a school teacher. Now she has her own individual distinct identity as Zeenat Sultana. Suppression at first for her just becomes an episode in her life. Her bold walk out is a great success and revolt against patriarchal society and her courage to outcome from her stigmatized situation. She doesn't pay any attention man made rules and lives her life as per her wishes. And she gives subordinate role to Haroon at last. Haroon is unable to stop Jhumur from gaining freedom she deserves. Even if the suture of stigma never erases completely, Jhumur through her resistance defies it.

Jhumur wants to see women free from patriarchal chains of the society. Patriarchal society requires that men should take care of women. But the female for her is not the weaker sex but the stronger sex. We find Jhumur is stronger than Haroon at last. Haroon represents male domination, cruelty and injustice towards women. Jhumur does not leave her home, but sitting in her home she makes her own distinct identity in the society as a teacher. Though the femininity is defined in negative way by this society, the heroine Jhumur not only resists this false notion about femininity but she becomes happy and gets freedom sitting and caring her family.

Jhumur's relentless effort in resisting the stigma of femininity establishes her as a symbol of hope for breaking the shackles of patriarchy and defying the stigmatized situation of women.

IV. Conclusion

Taslima Nasrin initiates a break with the tradition of Bangladeshi literature and foregrounds emancipatory possibilities for Bangladeshi women. This patriarchal society tries to put women under its control giving negative attributes to women. Society ignores women's voice and desires. However, Jhumur, in *Shodh*, adopts unconventional styles to go against these patriarchal rules. On the basis of gender discrimination, patriarchy stigmatizes femininity, which defined as passive, timid, domestic, sentimental and petty. But Nasrin's educated heroine Jhumur is able to resist these false notions about femininity.

Within particular social group or in specific culture, some human differences are valued and designed and other differences are devalued, or stigmatized. This society is patriarchal. So, femininity and masculinity are defined as opposite poles. Femininity and masculinity are defined by this society. Femininity is defined in negative way and masculinity in positive. Who acquires masculine quality/attributes is good. Femininity is constructed around adaptation to male's power. It demands women to be attractive to men, emotional, helpless, weak and passive. Contrarily, masculinity is defined as brave, logical, practical, confident, strong and intellectual. By giving negative attributes to femininity, this patriarchal society stigmatizes women to subdue them. The educated women, who are conscious about their position in this biased society, resist the social evils. In *Shodh*, Jhumur is an educated woman/character who is aware of the male domination in this society. So, she rebels against the cruelty of patriarchy.

In *Shodh* Jhumur's voice and desires are confined only within the four walls of her husband's house. Haroon, Jhumur's husband defined her as a passive character. Though Jhumur is capable of doing job, she is compelled to be busy in domestic affair

covering her face all the time. She is not allowed to go anywhere. She is forced to abort her child by Haroon. Her dreams and creativity are neglected by this patriarchal society. So, to establish her own distinct identity, she boldly resists conventional gender roles which are assigned to women. She takes decision to be pregnant keeping relationship with her lover Afzal. The husband is in charge to save his wife's chastity. But Haroon is unable to save his wife Jhumur's chastity. Jhumur breaks these patriarchal norms and gives birth to her love's son. She is a courageous character. So she refuses to go with Afzal in Australia. She is capable of leading an independent life. Jhumur becomes a teacher struggling hard in the society. Thus she is able to establish her own distinct identity in this patriarchal society. All these rebellious activities manifest how she undermines femininity as defined by patriarchy.

Thus, Jhumur is a courageous character, who undermines the patriarchal definition of femininity and establishes her own identity in the society. Even if the suture of stigma never erases completely, Jhumur, in *Shodh*, through her courage defies the stigma of femininity by giving birth to her lover's son rather than that of her husband and becoming an independent teacher Zeenat Sultan, Jhumur.

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