

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Subversion of Traditional Gender Roles: A Study of Taslima Nasrin's *Shodh*

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U. in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in English**

By

Najma Maharjan

Central Department of English

Kritipur, Kathmandu

September 2012

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Central Department of English
Kirtipur

Letter of Recommendation

Najma Maharjan has completed her thesis entitled "Subversion of Traditional Gender Roles: A study of Taslima Nasrin's *Shodh*" under my supervision. She carried out her research from February 22, 2012 to September 2, 2012. I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for viva voce.

(Jiva Nath Lamsal)

Supervisor

September 2012

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Central Department of English
Kirtipur

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Subversion of Traditional Gender Roles: A study of Taslima Nasrin's *Shodh*" by Najma Maharjan submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

Members of Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head of the Department

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

My heartfelt sincere gratitude and indebtedness goes to my respected teacher and supervisor Jiva Nath Lamsal for his scholarly supervision and encouragement which helped this thesis come in this complete shape.

I am very much grateful to Dr. Amma Raj Joshi, Head of Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University for granting me such an opportunity to carry out this research.

Similarly, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my respected teachers Rebati Prasad Neupane, Badri Prasad Acharya, Saroj Sharma Ghimire, Hemlal Pandey, Raj Kumar Baral, Sankar Subedi and all the other professors and lectures for providing me enough suggestions and reference materials to carry out my dissertation. I am equally indebted to all my teachers and respected personalities for their invaluable suggestions, schooling and comments from very beginning of life.

I owe my highest level of gratefulness to my father, Hira Kaji Maharjan and my mother Nanichori Maharjan who are my source of inspiration. Moreover, I am equally thankful to my uncle Suresh Man Maharjan, aunt, brother, sister and all relatives, whose support and inspiration made possible to achieve this success.

Najma Maharjan

September 2012

Abstract

Taslima Nasrin's phenomenal novel *Shodh* subverts and disrupts patriarchal normativity in order to highlight female agency. The novel projects the dynamic and courageous female characters who defy the traditional gender roles in Islam, based on patriarchal ideology which is conventional, destructive and biased. The gendered ideology is operating as the hegemony, which is the internalized concept of man as superior and woman as inferior. So, to disrupt the conservative, biased and patriarchal norms, consciousness of females and their rebellious activities are valorized in the novel through revolutionary female character: Jhumur who conceives a child outside of her marriage and passes him off as her husband's legitimate son. Thus, she revolts against traditional gender roles and liberates herself from the patriarchal domination so as to establish her identity and asserts her female agency and independence.

Table of Contents

	Page No.
Acknowledgements	
Abstract	
I. Taslima Nasrin and the Issues of Feminism- an Introduction	1
II. Subversion of Gender Roles: A Study of Taslima Nasrin's <i>Shodh</i> .	16
III. Conclusion: Disruption of Gender roles and Patriarchal normativity in Taslima Nasrin's <i>Shodh</i> .	40
Works Cited	

I: Taslima Nasrin and the Issues of Feminism: An Introduction

This research entitled "Subversion of Traditional Gender Roles: A Study of Taslima Nasrin's *Shodh*" is an attempt to probe into the issues of how the females are suppressed and undermined in Islamic society, particularly with reference to Taslima Nasrin's *Shodh*. Nasrin has depicted in her phenomenal novel *Shodh* the issues of females and the patriarchal norms and values. Her contention is that they should not be treated like "second class citizens". Women are deprived of their rights to marriage, divorce, civil rights, legal status, dress code and education.

This research hypothesizes that traditional gender normativity is subverted through the rising consciousness in female characters. The female character Jhumur subverts the gender rules by conceiving a child outside of marriage and passing him off as her husband's legitimate son. Through her potentiality, caliber and qualification, she dismantles the rules and becomes conscious about her problem and dignity as well as gender equality. Considering these facts, we can say that Nasrin has tried to subvert the gender roles of Islamic society that treats feminine gender in an inhuman way.

Nasrin was born in Mymensingh, Bangladesh in 1962. After completing her MBBS degree in Dhaka Medical College, she turned her hand to writing. She has published several volumes of poetry and non-fiction. Nasrin connects the personal identity to the larger context of social relations by reconstructing and rearticulating her own and other women's experience of humiliation, abuse and discrimination. In this novel too as much as in her other non-fictional works, Nasrin's personal experience breathes life into the narratives. In her phenomenal work *Shodh*, Nasrin has presented the complex revenge taken by the female characters. Nasrin is known

for being a fiery feminist, whose works deal mostly with oppression of females by males in general and in Islamic society in particular.

Nasrin is best known for her fictional works. *Shodh* is one of her most famous work. In Nasrin's *Shodh*, it can be seen that the females are bound to surrender their lives within their household boundaries. So, they don't have easy access to education, job and voting. Overall they are restricted to explore and nurture their qualities. Otherwise who knows they can discover themselves in more wonderful way and far better way than males can do. In this novel too she has brought the issue of the women of Islam who are compelled to live and breathe for men literally. Nasrin seems to take great delight in painting the south Asian men as ignorant boors. While highlighting the issues of women, she has raised some questions like what are the actual roles of females. Why are different roles assigned to masculine and feminine gender so that the males can treat them as handmaiden, so that their life would be claustrophobic? They are deprived of voting, deprived of taking their own decision and deprived of knowing about socio cultural transformation. Through the novel she has tried to give the message that "If you are human you will smash your chain to stand tall. Smash the chains with your hands; these hands are yours." (book blurb). It proves that one has to fight for her right. She should have the guts and take a step ahead. Even God won't help us until and unless we don't help ourselves. One has to revolt and protest against wrong happenings. These show that Nasrin's voice is the voice of humanism everywhere.

Nasrin's *Shodh* which means "getting even", tells a rather complex revenge tale. It starts with Jhumur, a young woman with a good education, marrying the first man she falls in love with. She becomes pregnant and tells her husband, hoping to make him happy, but he instead in confusion starts accusing her of cheating on him

before they got married, since they have only been married for six weeks and it was not possible to become pregnant in six weeks time as per her husband. Since Jhumur has had male friends, her husband assumes she has had an affair with one of them. He takes her to an abortion clinic and forces her to take an abortion. The incident leaves deep mental wounds, especially since she has allowed herself to become a housewife, not be in touch with her old friends and family, and lets his mother boss her around. She has done everything for him and he in return humiliates her. The incident haunts her and drives her having an affair, in attempt to get even, for the society she lives in doesn't give women any other chance but to serve men and be housewives, while men can do as they please.

Shodh is told in an angry and bitter, but not self-pitying voice. Jhumur takes out her revenge only to see that it ultimately is useless. She, as all women around her, is chained to the home. Jhumur makes sharp examinations of the women around her. She envies Afzal, the man she has an affair with, for his freedom to paint and travel. She sadly realizes that her husband doesn't really care much about her; he just wants children (mostly a son). Jhumur states that he is a business man and that he goes to "the office" every morning, yet refuses to tell her what he does, since she wouldn't understand it. It is also easy to sympathize with Jhumur when she describes how her husband keeps reminding her of the abortion by saying that soon they will have a child of their own. You can't help but understand why Jhumur does what she does to get even; she has no other way to get back for the cruelty she receives. Lastly Afzal cannot be ignored, the man Jhumur has an affair with. Nasrin shows him as being in love with Jhumur and wanting to be with her, asking her to run away with him. Jhumur says no since she doesn't love him, which leaves Afzal heartbroken.

Thus, this research investigates into the issues of how patriarchal normativity is dismantled with particular reference to Nasrin's *Shodh*. She has shown how the main character of the novel Jhumur subverted the marriage rules of the society. The society where female's life is not merely their own, the society which treats woman like a show piece, in such a society what Juhumur dared to do is worth praising. Thus the study shows how the masculine gender cannot digest and welcome the powerful existence of females because they want the female to live and breathe for them.

Nasrin who is a medical officer, turned into writing. Her major issues have always been the unequal treatment of males to the females in general and muslim females in particular. Being a fiery feminist, her works deal mostly with oppression of females by males. She was born to a Muslim family in Mymensingh. In a highly restrictive and conservative environment, Nasrin was fond of literature. She was president of a literary orthodox while studying in a medical college. Her book of poetry was huge success in 1986 and 1989 respectively. She then started writing columns about women's oppression. She never hesitated and neither thought of the consequences and whatsoever she criticized religion, tradition, and the oppressive cultures and customs that discriminate against women with her uncompromising attitude against male domination.

In 1992, she was the first writer from Bangladesh to receive the prestigious literary award Ananda from West Bengal in India for her selected columns. In the early 1990's she began writing novels, for which she has won significant acclaim. Overall she has written more than thirty books of poetry, essays, novels, short stories and memoirs. Her books have been translated into twenty different languages. Her own experience of sexual abuse during adolescence and her work as a gynecologist influenced her a great deal in writing about the treatment of women in Islam and

against discrimination based on religion in general. Nasrin has received a number of international awards in recognition of her uncompromising demand for freedom of expression. Her famous books like *Shodh*, *Lajja*, *French Lover*, *Amar Meyebela* were loved by lots of readers worldwide and at the mean time she too became a controversial writer. *Lajja* deals with the story of a young girl in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India who is demolished but she is denied and deprived of justice. This is the story of a Hindu girl who becomes the victim of religious violence. By the end the girl is reduced to just a bundle of flesh. The novel is an example of what religious fanaticism can do.

Like wise in *Amar Meyebela* she tells the story of her childhood. It deals with the physical assaults her parents had given her and the sexual harassment she had faced from her own uncles. She has expressed her bitter experience of being raped from her own uncles. Though she belonged to an educated family, she was not in safe hands.

Her famous book *The French Lover* again is the story of a young girl who is in search of love, freedom, independence and self identity in foreign land. This is the story of a woman who is made an object of sex by her husband. This is the story of a woman who is in search of independence in foreign land where she finds herself companionless. By the end of the novel she breaks the chain and frees herself. Her every work deals with the problems the society has hipped on a woman in different ways. It is crystal clear that the character subverts the marriage and sex rules of Islamic society. These marriage and sex rules are the rooted orthodox rules of Islamic society that creates barrier on the way of women. How much the rule is applicable to women that much it is not applicable to males.

Nasrin has targeted the political scenario and the government. She has portrayed the real status of Islamic women through her writing. She has published volumes of poetries, novels and essays which somewhere or the other deals with the sexual abuse and unfair treatment toward the Islamic women by males in Islamic society. She was exiled from Bangladesh but she didn't stop writing. By reconstructing and rearticulating her own and other women's experience of humiliation, abuse and discrimination, Nasrin connects the personal identity to the larger context of social relations. This has created awareness in the women, mostly the Islamic women. She has demanded for the socio cultural transformation which is must to uplift the status of the muslim women. Nasrin has great contribution to create awareness in women. She made thousand of Islamic women realize that they had been merely living for men. She has been able to educate them because of which they learnt to question their identity and demanded for their rights. Thus her writings, article and books are banned. She herself is exiled and the government has issued an order to kill her if she would be found in Bangladesh. The religious parties demanded that she is to be hung all because her writings included the reality of Islamic society. In one sense the Islamic law, government and religion could not accept her guts that she was presenting the real scenario of the Islamic society.

The publication of *Lajja* (Shame) in 1993, in which a Hindu family is persecuted by Muslim changed her life and career dramatically. Nasrin suffered a number of physical and other attacks with the publication of *Lajja*. The Islamic fundamentalist started a campaign against her. There were violent demonstrations in the streets. Several times she was publicly assaulted by fundamentalist mobs. The government banned *Lajja* (Shame), in which she documented the atrocities against the Hindu minority community by the Muslim fundamentalist. Her main message was

that humanism should be the other name of religions. But the government, instead of taking action against the fundamentalists, took action against her. A case was filed charging that she had hurt the religious feelings of the people. An Islamic fundamentalist pronounced a fatwa against her and demanded for her death. A fatwa was issued by All India Ibtihad Council against Nasrin. The President of the All India Ibtihad Council, Taqi Razan Khan declared the reward who carried out the “qatal” or “extermination” and according to him Nasrin had put Muslims to shame in her writing. The fundamentalist accused her for she claimed *Quran* has to be revised. But she claimed she only called for revision of the Sharia, the Islamic religious book which was an unbearable insult on muslim Islamic religion. Some of her supporters appealed to all the democratic minded people to appeal to the Government to grant citizenship of India to Nasrin and ensure safety of her life and punish the culprit for issuing illegal and inhuman fatwa immediately. Some anti- fundamentalist political groups protested against fundamentalists, and demanded that Nasrin as every normal human being should have the freedom to express her own views. Nasrin was forced to leave her country towards the end of 1994.

The religious political parties of Banglades hold powerful position in politics and government as well as is highly influenced by it. This is the reason because of which Nasrin was exiled from her nation. The law of Bangladesh does not support her for disobedience of her religion. She questions the dignity of women and revolts against the culture of Islamic society. Her major issues was if Allah created all the humans equal who were these men to think themselves a superior creature then women. Thus, the major contention of Nasrin’s *Shodh* is on gender issues and the inhuman treatment given to females by males in Islamic society. The issues of gender

roles, personal feelings, women's emotions and women's desire are also raised by Nasrin in equal spirit her book.

Nasrin's writing have been approached differently by different critics and intellectuals. Saiyeda Khatun says that Nasrin's presentation of female body and her desires in her writings are not welcomed in the patriarchal society of Islam. The delinking of motherhood from the ideal of self-sacrifice can be seen in her novel *Shodh*. At the mean time, Riaz Ali in his book *(Re) Reading Taslima Nasrin: Contexts, Contents & Construction: Collection of Essay*, clarifies that the subject matter included in the writing of Nasrin are not easily digested by Bangladeshi tradition. However he has also said that her personal experience breathes through the characters of her novels and he has praised her guts. Similarly Islam Nurul Meer in his review has stated that Taslima's rage is very crucial to transform society. He points out that the crucial gender problem in Bangladesh is that women are constantly objectified and sexualized. According to him, Nasrin is sailing against the tide with extraordinary boldness – the boldness that most people lack.

Taj ul- Islam Hashmi in his book *Women and Islam* stated that Taslima Nareen's article *Women and Islam* has presented how women's positions are inferior socially, politically and economically. The law pertaining to marriage, divorce and inheritance are not up to the levels of acceptance and expectation of modern individuals.

Ranjit Das offered an interesting analysis. In *Shodh* the central female character Jhumur conceived a child outside of marriage and passed him off as her husband's legitimate son which has violated the ethic of the family and failed to follow the ideology of ethical motherhood.

Syed Shamsual Haq accused Nasrin of bringing personal issues in her writing. He further declared that she was after fame and wanted to earn it by any means. He described that her books were written with the business aspect in mind. He has further said that Tasleema has axed social position. She has attacked many important people with a motive and a deep rooted evil objectives. Her intention was to use the experienced and senior male writers as ladder of her success towards fame. Several poets and writers both in Dhaka and Kolkata argues that she has written a “fictious and fantasy” about sexual encounters. They even claimed that Taslima has gone too far and has become crazy.

Various critics have expressed their views on her books. Some have supported her with open heart and praised her guts. Nasrin has enjoyed support of Bengali writers and intellectuals like Annada Shankar Ray, Sibhnarayan Ray and Amlan Dutta. At the mean time she is accused of insulting Muslim. This issue of subversion of traditional gender role is ignored. Though many critics have analyzed Nasrin’s *Shodh* from different perspective from the time of its publication in 1992. This critical gap is what this researcher wants to fill in through this research

This research is divided into three chapters. The first part attempts to unravel the condition of female character in Islamic society from the perspective of gender roles and issues. The second chapter deals with in depth analysis of *Shodh*, and has tried to prove how traditional gender role is dismantled and subverted by foregrounding the activities of Jhumur. Jhumur subverts the strict gender rules which favors males and undermine the females. The major argument of the researcher is that due to the gender biasness that still exists in Islam, the feminine gender are not treated like humans. It is the females themselves who should break the chain and boundary and reach within themselves and nurture their won spiritual life inspite of

physical and emotional pain that men and traditional bound societies can inflict upon them. Finally the third chapter concludes the entire research by highlighting the findings of the researcher.

Gender Roles in Islamic Society: A Methodological Overview in brief.

The study of women in Islam investigates the role of women, traditional gender role in Islamic society within the religion of Islam. The relationship between women and Islam is complex which is defined by Islamic texts, the history and culture of the Muslim world. The *Quran* states that both men and women are equal. *Quran* does not support patriarchy. This issue has become matter of discussion whenever an issue of feminism is raised, most specifically muslim feminism. In this regard we can talk about Sharia and Islamic Law. As per this law there is difference between women's and men's roles, rights and obligations. Neither the *Quran* nor Hadith limits the role of women merely as housewives.

Majority Muslim countries give women varying of rights with regards to marriage, divorce, civil rights, legal status, dress code, and education. But these do not seem to be applied in right manners everywhere. Specifically in countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh; women are deprived of their freedom. So, this chapter explains the issues of Gender Roles, Female education, Female employment, Sharia Law, Marriage and Sexuality, Divorce, Dress Code, Women and Politics and Liberal Islam, Islamic feminism and other progressive criticism.

According to *Quran* both women and men possess equal religious duties in front of God. It states that men are the maintainer and protector of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other. Further the *Quran* explains that men and women are equal in creation and in the afterlife, but not identical. Men and women are created from a single soul. One person doesn't come before the other.

One is not superior to their other. A woman is not something derived from men. So, one is not the derivative of the other. The gist is a woman is not created for the purpose of a man. Both are created for the mutual benefit of each other. However somewhere or the other these gender roles seem to be limited within the *Quran* only. In practical life there are so many issues raised regarding gender problem in Islamic society. In this sense what written in *Quran* doesn't seem to be followed sincerely.

Women played an important role in the foundation of many Islamic educational institutions, such as Fatima al-Fihri's founding of the University of Al-karaowine in 859 CE – Around 160 mosque and madrasahs were established in Damascus, 26 of which were founded by women through the Waqf (charitable trust or trust law). In the 12th century, there were various opportunities for female education in what is known as the medieval Islamic world. In this, it is stated that women could study, earn ijazahs (academic degrees) and qualify as scholars (ulama) and teachers. This was especially the case for learned and scholarly families, who wanted to ensure the highest possible education for both their sons and daughters. Female education in the Islamic world was inspired by Muhammad's wives: Khadijah, a successful businesswoman and Aisha a renowned hadith scholar and military leader. According to a hadith attributed to Muhammad, he praised the women of Medina because of their desire for religious knowledge.

Since the history women's education are give priority but they focus to get the females educated in separate institution where male students are not allowed. Women were employed in a wide range of commercial activities and diverse occupations in the primary sector, secondary sector and tertiary sectors. Muslim women also held a monopoly over certain brands of the textile industry. In the 12th century, the famous Islamic philosopher and qadi (judge) Ibn Rushd known to the

west as Averroes claimed that women were equal to men in all respects and possessed equal capacities to shine in peace and in war. Likewise Nusaybah Bint K'ab Al Maziniyyah, Umm Amarah, Aisha were some of the notable female Muslims who fought during the Muslim conquests and Fitna (civil war).

As muslim females were involved in industries, business and military forces in the same way they have the history of serving patients in hospital. Medieval Muslim hospital employed female nurses. This was necessary due to the segregation between male and female patients in Islamic hospitals. Accordingly in 15th century, female surgeons were illustrated for the first time.

Women are allowed to work in Islam under certain conditions such as if a woman is in financial need and her employment does not harm her role as a mother and a wife. Due to cultural and not religious beliefs in some cases, though women have the right to work and are educated women's job opportunities women in practice may be unequal to those of men.

Sharia Law is body of law derived from the *Quran*, the Hadith of the Suna (teaching of Muhammad) and fatwa (religious rulings) has very important place in Islamic culture and Islamic schools of thoughts. This moral code and religious law of Islam deals with many topics addressed by secular law, including crime, politics economics as well as personal matters such as sexual intercourse hygiene, diet, prayer and fasting. Various rules come under this Sharia law like birth rituals, marriage, divorce, customs and behaviors, liquor and gambling, contemporary issues like democracy and human rights and dress code. In Saudi Arabia there is fully use of Sharia and have no constitution of legal code. Others such as Pakistan and Iran have constitutions but they reflect the principles of Sharia.

Under Sharia law women are required to cover all of their bodies except hand and face. Covering the face is the subject of some divergence of opinion amongst the scholars. Some consider it to be compulsory since the face is the major source of attraction. The reason behind this rule is that men and women are not to be viewed as sexual objects. This legal framework has resulted in human rights and women's rights' groups worldwide condemning and protesting convictions and sentences of women under Sharia law.

According to Sharia (Islamic Law) marriage is not something done in pressure and force. Islamic jurists have traditionally held the Muslim women only enter into marriage with muslim men. On the other hand the *Quran* allows Muslim men to marry women of the People of Book that is a term which includes Jews and Christians, but they must be chaste. However notable scholar Bilal Philips has said the verse that permits Muslim men to marry non- Muslim women is not valid anymore today due to several reasons including its misunderstood interpretation. Women are not allowed to engage in polyandry whereas men are allowed to engage in polygyny.

However, it is strongly discouraged in the *Quran* to marry multiple wives as they won't be able to do justice to them. This was actually a restriction on the number of wives men of the Islam can take.

In Islam in some circumstances, women can initiate a divorce. According to Sharia Law, a woman can file a case in the court for a divorce in a process called *Khal'a* meaning "releaser from". Both partners must agree to get divorced in order for it to be granted to prevent irrational decisions and for the sake of the family's stability. In actual practice and outside of Islamic judicial theory a woman's right to divorce is often extremely limited compared with that of men in the Middle East

while men can divorce their wives easily. Women face many legal and financial obstacles. In practice in most of the muslim world today divorce can be quite involved as there may be separate secular procedures to follow as well. Likewise muslim communities in rural India generally make use of the Sharia judicial system rather than the secular one.

As per *Quran* requirement Muslims both male and female should dress up in well cultured and should behave modestly. There is specific dress code for the females which include Hijab, Chador, Shayla, Burkha etc. These dress codes were made compulsory so that the women would be conscious about not being exposed. But wearing of the hijab (a scarf covering the hair) has become controversial in some of the muslim countries and there is opinion regarding hijab as violating women's freedom. Those dresses are usually worn by muslim women that covers one's body from head to toe. Dress codes were made compulsory so that they could safeguard themselves.

Muhammad one of the political leader had said people with a female ruler would never be successful. However many classical Islamic scholars, such as al-Tabari, supported female leadership. In early Islamic history, women including Sisha, Uma Wsrqa and Samla Binte Wahaib took part in political activities. Other historical muslim female leaders included Razia Dultana who ruled the Sultante of Felhi from 1236 to 1239 and Shajarat ad- Dure who ruled Egypt from 1250 to 1257.

According to Sheikh Zoubir Burchikhi Imam of the Islamic society of Greater Houston's southeast Mosque, nothing in Islam specifically allows or disallows voting by women. Until recently most muslim nations were non- democratic but most today allow their citizens to have some level of voting and control over their government. Since 2002, Afghanistan is one of the muslim states with the highest number of

female position. Saudi women have been allowed to vote in some election. At present there are numbers of female leaders in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India leading as prime minister and president.

Islamic feminists have advocated for women's rights, gender equality and social justice grounded in an Islamic framework. These feminists have tried to include Islamic feminism in larger global feminist movement. Islamic feminists have highlighted the teaching of equality in Islam. They have even focused in the patriarchal interpretation in *Quran*. *Quran* and Hadith nowhere support patriarchy but then the feminism issues are undermined. The international attention was focused on the condition of women in the Muslim. Most of the critics asserted that women are not treated as equal members of Muslim societies and criticized Muslim societies for condoning this treatment. Today when feminism is taken as important phenomena and is discussed globally, there the Muslim Feminism and plight of Muslim women is ignored. This does not seem to be powerful in comparison to western feminism as well as the voice of Gender equality in Islamic countries are undermined.

The Indonesian Islamic professor Nasaruddin Umar is at the forefront of a reform movement from within Islam that aims at giving women equal status. One of his books "The *Quran* for women" provides a new feminist interpretation. Some Muslim women exposed to the growth in civil rights accessible to secular a non-muslim women have protested to strengthen their own rights within Islamic communities.

In the following chapters, the researcher mobilizes the theoretical insights of radical feminism developed in the above chapter in order to justify the claim that disruption and subversion of patriarchal norms and values are the major contention of

Taslima Nasrin in *Shodh*. It provides ample evidence from the text in connection with the claim to make it more analytical and argumentative.

II: Subversion of Gender Roles: A Study of Taslima Nasrin's *Shodh*.

Taslima Nasrin subverts and disrupts traditional gender roles, especially of modern Islamic society in her phenomenal novel *Shodh*. Through this novel, Nasrin has portrayed the fact that the world has moved forward and voices of gender equality is being raised worldwide where females are moving forward hand in hand with the males. In such scenario, there is still great gender biasness in Islamic society. They are the victim of war, religious violence and ultimately the victim of the orthodox rules of society. Woman's empowerment, dignity and justice are undermined. Women are victimized when they take over the idiom of their oppressors and limit their freedom of dress and movement, simplify reality and exalt their domestic activities. Due to the cruelty backed by the deeply rooted religious and cultural values of Islamic society, women are destined to live a life of alienation in their own home. The account of dos and don'ts for women presented by Islamic groups are more scary. It makes us imagine an orthodox society, loyal to religious extremism where a woman who laughs in public will be beaten, who paints her nails will lose her fingers, and when found guilty of adultery will be stoned to death. The author has kept gender- based treatment toward women in the center while developing the plots to describe the struggle for power marked by unequal gender roles.

Jhumur can be taken as a subversive character of the novel whose revolutionary attitude subverts the gender role of Islamic society. However, she limits it within herself and never reveals it to outer world. Jhumur marries the guy whom she loves. Throughout the novel, she is in search of love, affection, respect and identity. The dialogues and content in the novel proves that she has lost her self- identity and she is in search of it. When she was first pregnant, she was accused of carrying someone else's baby in her womb and not of her husband. The matter became so

serious that it ultimately led to abortion. She promised to herself that she would take revenge against her husband who disrespected her feelings and murdered her child.

This is not particularly only Jhumur's story. But this also is the story of most of the women of muslim society who are the victim of gender biasness. Due to gender biasness they are forced to live a claustrophobic life. Jhumur's mother-in-law says "It doesn't behove (be appropriate or necessary) of housewife to stare at people. The neighbour would surely disapprove" (7). Even her husband Haroon says, "Jhumur, you have no sense at all ... most of the time you seem to forget you are the bou of this house!" (7). The moment Haroon feels that Jhumur is a step back keeping up to date the rules of family he would complain. Jhumur didn't commit a crime. She was looking around and was trying to kill her boredom. But time and again he would keep on reminding that she was no more an unmarried lady. Now she is somebody's wife. She is now a bou of a family. Jhumur says to herself.

I know I was the bou of this house too well time, hadn't dared to think otherwise even for a second, not since the time I had come in the house. I know I had to reduce my voice to murmur, keep my eyes fixed on the ground so that it didn't catch the eyes of any other person. How else could I become Haroon's bashful wife? I had known it in my bones, what it was to be a daughter-in-law, a self-effacing, shrinking creature. (7)

This means that after marriage a woman's life becomes claustrophobic. She has to keep her head bow down and covered in order to hide herself from other men. She has to be very careful that the veil would not slip from her head. Now her life is not her own but it's on the control of her husband, after all she is somebody's bou.

The Islamic gender role strictly claims that women should be shy and weak like every time she needs a man's protection. When she is somebody's bou, she is not allowed to give a proud look all because this is the gender rules assigned to females. Her freedom is snatched and she is breathing in suffocation. She has no life of her own but she has merely become a puppet who has to keep update the reputations of her husband and family. This is her life. She can only share this to herself. She cries within but her voice has not been able to reach out. Her husband complains about her laughter and says, "Do you have to make such a racket so that the people next door can hear you. Housewives should stay in door. The bous of the house remain unconstructive; the more they keep themselves hidden the better their reputation" (8). It clearly proves that women should behave very submissive, shy and docile. Only then they would be called a responsible and a good bou. When Jhumur was unmarried and both of them had been lovers, Haroon never complained of her singing, dancing or giggling. He would say "I like you because there's so much joy in you" (8). But after marriage her roles has changed drastically. Haroon could not permit her to express herself. All because now Jhumur is not her lover but a wife and bou of his house. This shows that a woman needs to seek permission to laugh, to talk and to express herself. She is not supposed to flock around brazenly. They should remain unobtrusive because there is a threat of losing one's family prestige and reputation. It directly hints that females are not human beings but merely an object whose remote control is completely on a man's hand. She is forced to leave her past and the memories behind. Haroon says:

"Why can't you make out the difference? You are no longer carrying your old name. You are now Mrs. Haroon Ur Rashid. Your address is

Dhanmundi not Wari. You can't gad about the whole day, you are the bou of the house. (9)

Jhumur feels that Haroon is trying to change her identity. He is trying to snatch her memories and joyful moments of childhood which she had spent with her parent and her sister. Jhumur feels that Haroon wants to have all his control over his imagination and memories.

Jhumur manages to adjust with her new life and new people but she feels more humiliated when no one values her higher degree and qualification. When she was only a daughter and a student, she had active involvement in many extracurricular activities. Now, she was only limited to the four walls of her husband's house. She compares herself with her maid and says, "Have I collected the university degree to stay within the four walls of the house and to cook food. Well, if that is so, the illiterate maid can do it better than a degree holder" (12). She has received masters degree in Physics which is infact a great achievement at least in such a society where women are deprived of perceiving higher degrees.

She further complains, "I was a parasite with all the learning stashes inside my head. I had become putty in other's hands, had no life of my own. Parasites didn't have any" (197). She wants to make use of her education. She always dreamt of being an independent lady, independent enough to take decisions herself. But did any one even bothered to care. In fact she is forced to feel that it was more important to be a good bou in a muslim society but not an educated woman. She desperately missed her past. She was very much active and outgoing. She says "The sight of a tree would make me soar, a pool of water make me want to dive" (40). She would suffer from nostalgia. She remembers how she use to involve in games and as well as in politics. She was a talented student and her father was always proud of her. Her

father says “I don’t need a son. This girl will become a judge or a barrister one day and safeguard the family honor” (41). The way her father had brought them up, it had taught her to have self respect and lead a confident, independent and proud life.

Jhumur’s parents never had regrets about giving birth to two daughters. Her mother had always taught her to stand tall. Jhumur says “I couldn’t fathom why parents felt less happy about a girl child. Didn’t she merit the same amount of emotional investment as a boy ?” (41). She wanted to express that her parents were very concerned and caring about them. Her father was very proud of her. She further says:

I ran to the doctor, procured the medicine if any member of the family fell ill. I forced my way into the crowded market place to shop for vegetables. A boy called Basu used to whistle as soon as Nupur approached on the scene. I went to Basu’s house in the company of other boys of my age, collared him, gave him a few hard blows. Basu had learnt his lesson and after that didn’t dare misbehave. (41)

As a child she was brave and knew that if anything was going wrong one should revolt. She had learnt that being a girl or a woman does not mean she should be docile. According to her, every parents should feel proud of having a daughter. But she is aware enough about the treatment a daughter and a daughter – in – law would get in a society.

She feels extremely humiliated and says, “Wives and daughter! Pay heed! Academic skills don’t count with the in laws!” (44). All these things were killing her and on top of that she was crest fallen when her husband reacted in an unexpected way with the matter of her pregnancy. Rather than being happy he suspected her. He said “How can you conceive in six weeks time” (57). For Haroon this was impossible to believe. He didn’t want to believe that Jhumur was pregnant. He

suspected her pregnancy and told Jhumur, "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 behaved so skeptical. She couldn't bear it that her husband didn't trust her. She was in a state of shock. Haroon suspected that Jhumur married him only to legitimize a pregnancy. Jhumur talks within and says:

My body went limp hearing these words and I stumbled onto the floor. I was in a state of shock. Haroon didn't trust me. He thought I had pushed him into marriage because I had become pregnant. He had smelled a rat! (74)

Jhumur always wanted Haroon the be- all and end –all of her life. She further says, "My arms hung heavily down my side and I felt horrinly weak. A storm was blowing within me turning my heart into a veritable dust- bolw, bereft of any feelings" (74). Haroons words turned her upside down, her home her structure and existence in the family. She felt she had been thrown back on an empty sandbank, totally abandoned. Haroon even suspected that Jhumur wasn't virgin.

Jhumur was completely broken when Haroon wanted to abort her child. What could be more humiliating then this. He suspected that Jhumur have had affairs with other and therefore got pregnant. Haroon said, "You were lying then, weren't you, taking all those painkillers to make or show of your virginity" (75). The way Haroon was blaming her, for a moment she thought that might be she has commit the mistake intentionally. She says, "I was the low, despicable creature, who had double – crossed him and had sat on the wedding piri already in the family way" (76). Jhumur

didn't feel it herself but Haroon forced her to imagine such nonsense. Jhumur feels very bad about all these. She is not able to understand herself. She says:

How I had forced my reluctant body out of bed in order to cook for his family. How I had kept my head covered and stood for his family. I had done all for his sake. I wanted Haroon, the be all and end all of my life, to be glad. (77)

If she had sacrificed her dreams and desires, at least Haroon should have paid little respect. But all those abuses were what she had to face. None of this emotion seemed to affect Haroon. By the end of the day Haroon took the decision to abort the child. Jhumur tried to put some sense into Haroon's head and said "Look, it's our first baby, we can't do this t it ... how can you be wrong about your won flesh and blood: you are mistaken, and you are humiliating me by entertaining such thoughts" (83). She had cried a lot and pleaded with Haroon to take his decision back. She was warning that Haroon was killing her own child. But her words seemed to fall on deaf ear. Haroon forced her to clinic and finished all the formality for abortion. Jhumur said:

It was as if I was shrouded in a fog of silence, my sinews suspended and I had turned into a stone, my body toneless beneath the skin and the bones. As if I no longer existed but had escaped from this prison of physicality of some unknown realm, beyond human reach. (84)

Jhumur was all senseless. She could not believe and accept that Haroon for whom she had been sacrificing herself was doing all that to her. Later she said, "I belonged to them now, they knew best what was good for me. "I realized with finality that my future lay among Haroon and his kin" (93). She was no more a free woman. She was a daughter- in – law and that is why she had no right upon herself.

Jhumur's subversive role starts when Jhumur gets pregnant with another male. Jhumur fell for a guy who lived down stairs in her house. She intentionally wanted to break the rules. She was married and a married woman in muslim society should not even look at a stranger. She knew the consequences very well. But then she willingly took this step. She describes how unknowingly her heart had been already pierced by Cupid's bow. She says:

The veil had slipped off my head and I let it be, allowing Afzal, sitting facing me, to look deeply into my jet- black eyes. I had never in my dreams imagined I would contemplate his looks within touching distance. His eyes were merry today, a faint smile of pleasure had lit up the corner of his nose. (113)

A married muslim woman is describing about a stranger. This is the stranger whom she likes and now she has made up her mind to fall in love without caring about the world. She says, "I set Afzal's natural stubbly cheeks against Haroon's blurish hard clean shaven ones. I compared Afzal's poetic eyes with Haroons hawk like ones" (113). She was very depressed and disappointed with Haroon. She was behaving like she had met her long lost love. She knows what she is doing is against the rules of society. If her family would come to know about her affair with Afzal then her life could be a living hell. But her falling for another man intentionally can be taken as subversive action. Here she decides to get pregnant with Afzal, her lover. By doing this she could pay her husband back. She promised herself that she won't carry Haroon sperm in her womb. She would get pregnant with Afzal and that was for sure. She admits:

I didn't want to offer Haroon a body ready to receive his sperm. I wanted him to sow his seed in fallow land and wait foolishly, day after

day, to see it sprout. I didn't have any sense of guilt about it. I wasn't a loose woman. I wasn't deceiving him, I was merely paying him back ... I had followed all the rules of society, had kept him and his family happy while living a desolate, loveless, friendless existence. (147)

Why would any woman want to deceive her husband? But Jhumur felt that Haroon's behavior and his words had insulted her soul. So, she promised that she would silently pay him back. This would give her peace. These are the words of daring, words of guts and words of revenge. A muslim woman breaks the orthodox rules of the society. Where it is crime to think of other male except one's husband, there she conceived a child out of marriage.

She knows it well that her child is illegitimate and would be called a "harami". She was forced to do this because her husband never gave respect to her. She too had dreams. She too had feelings because she is a human being and not a living object. She further expresses how her dreams are shattered. "I had a dream, a dream of life under an open sky. Imprisoned in this hell hole, I have forgotten all that, forgotten even what the sky looks like" (189). Being a normal human being, she too had dreams. But her dreams had no respect in her husband's house. She felt her husband heaped mental torture on her. She felt that she was given mental and physical torture to abort her first child and says:

How could I forgive him ever? How could I forget the agonies I had undergone during the abortion? Or silently submit to the insults he heaped on me? And how could he presume that I wouldn't pay him back for humiliating me, or that I wouldn't want to get even with him? He had shattered my aspirations destroyed my dreams. (172)

She feels that she has taken revenge against her husband by conceiving child out of marriage. She has succeeded in subverting the marriage rule. She further says:

Haroon had crushed my spirit. Why should I not retaliate, why should I not get my own back? I had gone to school and college in order to become an independent person and not to remain enslaved to household chores or act as a sop to his relatives. Because of my pregnancy I had ceased to be the object of his anger or his spite after days of unbearable suffering. (173)

At the mean time the issues of sexual dissatisfaction is brought. Sebati who is a doctor complains with Jhumur that her husband is impotent. " Sometimes I feel like leaving Anwar (Sebati's husband) abandoning him and sleeping into Afzal's (Sebati's brother- in- law) bed. Sebati describes Anwar's anguish at not being able to satisfy his wife and expresses with Jhumur how she had discovered that her husband Anwar was impotent on the wedding night itself. Sebati had consulted sexologists, even psychiatrists, regarding Anwar's problem but hadn't succeeded in making him virile. She describes her brother- in- law and says, "Look at all the nudes he paints ... I feel so strange when I gaze at them. Feel like stripping and standing naked in front of him. I want his eyes to roam over my body. I want him to make love to me" (152). The gist is she is a woman that is why she has to kill her desire and spend her entire life with someone who cannot fulfill her sexual satisfaction. Here the important question is would a man remain passive if his hunger wasn't fulfilled. No, he would definitely search for alternative to quench his thirst. After all, he is a man and moreover he needs no body's permission to take this step.

Jhumur gives birth to a baby boy. Haroon is very proud and happy to hold the baby on his arm. When he seems to be a proud father, Jhumur talks to herself.

Why are you so amused? It isn't your child I'm carrying in my womb ... you've destroyed with your own hands what was yours. Now you are showering your love and attention on something that doesn't belong to you in whose conception you've played no part. (204)

She now feels relieved that Haroon is pouring his affection and love to somebody else son when the same Haroon forced her to murder his own baby. When it seems that her family is giving her much priority she says:

All the fuss about me is because I'm with a child who will carry on the family tradition. My words don't matter. The child was not the fruit of my desire. The foetus had not been concerned in the rainbow of my dreams. The child was my way of registry a protest, of taking revenge. To my sorrowing mind it insinuated all the pains afflicting this earth. (193)

It shows that her family and her husband are happy and are taking care of her because she has given birth to a son who is going to continue the generation. Jhumur knew it very well that the treatment which she is getting now would not have been the same if she had given birth to a daughter. The patriarchal society has always emphasized a son rather than a daughter. Haroon himself knew very well what it feels like being a male especially in the Islamic male oriented society. Jhumur talks within and says:

In my mind I knew Haroon hoped for a boy. He understood the advantages of being born a male. Men enjoyed unlimited freedom and opportunity and Haroon had shared that luck being a man. But he was also aware of the limitations imposed on woman. (193)

Furthermore her decision to work as a teacher can be taken as another subversive action. It is still believed that females should remain indoor. They don't

have any contribution to support the family financially. But Haroon will less understand that Jhumur has taken a job for a pride. She has proved that she too has self dignity and potentials. After all she is a qualified woman. Jhumur says to Haroon:

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. (224)

She wants to teach Haroon a lesson who thinks that women are merely to fulfill male's desires. "Perhaps he (Haroon) had thought wives were also there to be tamed" (225). Jhumur wasn't among one to surrender her intelligence. She always wanted to educate Haroon that wife or husband, no one is no one's personal property. Both have different thinking and ideas and one should learnt to respect it. But Haroon would never want to understand that.

At the mean time she expresses that not every male has dominating attitude towards females. Because Jhumur's father had completely a different perception towards his daughters. Jhumur's father expresses to Jhumur that, "Your distinctiveness lies within yourself, in your wisdom and learning. It is revealed in your attitude and behavior and not in your outside appearance" (198). Where her husband would never support her in terms of her taking job, there her father gives priority to her education, wisdom and learning. It was because of her father that she gave priority to education. She learnt that stepping outside of house and taking job is not only for the financial support. It is for the self respect and one's overall development. This inspired her to take a job. By the end of the novel she says:

I feel I'm strong. That I am someone distinct from me as somebody's wife, mother, bou and daughter. No. I'm Zeenat Sultana, Jhumur a teacher. I am not something to be flung away. I'm not a thing, something, anything to add grace to a house, to embellish a family. I am a human being who has the inner power to give to civic society." "I took recourse to that to avenge the indignity I suffered .I'm not so insignificant or of no account that I'll swallow my utter humiliation in the hand of my husband and remain forever beholden to Haroon. (227)

Jhumur says to oneself "My life is that which I choose for myself- a life of my own liking" (226). This is the point where she dismantles the gender roles and rules of the society. She takes revenge against the society which treats a woman as a second sex and as an object. She proved that she was an intellectual muslim woman.

These were the words of revenge and expression of relief after she felt she had taken revenge against someone who had murdered her child and insulted her. She had paid well to the society who does not respect the existence of a woman. By the end, she proved that she is the master of her own desires, dreams and destiny. No one can rule over her.

In relation to Nasrin's *Shodh* where she has tried to raise the issues of gender biasness and weak status of women, some views of authors (feminists) can be discussed. Simone de Beavoire in her writing *The Second Sex* has brought issues of woman and she has said "One wonders if women still exist". "What has become of women?" Though it is said that woman is a womb. They make up about one half of humanity. But yet it is told that feminity is in danger. She further clears out "The issues of women is stoutly affirmed by these who hold to the philosophy of the

enlightenment, of rationalism, of nationalism, woman to them are merely the human being arbitrarily designated by the word woman.

According to Beauvoire, the society describes a woman as a living object and “a second sex”. This concept to a great degree matches with the character Jhumur in the novel *Shodh*. She complains in time beings that she is treated as an object, an object of sex. Jhumur becomes so confused at times that is she her husband’s wife or a puppet. Or, her husband married her so that he could fulfill his need, desires or satisfy the hunger. Jhumur feels to great extent that in her muslim society a woman’s status is nothing more than an object. Jhumur’s issues of dissatisfaction for society’s treatment towards female is so much related to what Beauvoire has described in this book.

Beauvoire further claims that female are treated as a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities, an imperfect man and an incidental being. The overall gist is she is called “the sex” which means that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex an absolute sex, no less. Man is the subject he is the absolute she is the “Other”. Even today women are treated like a living object. An object whose purpose is to satisfy male no matter if she is good or bad at it. If one object fails, male search for other alternatives and accordingly they change the object. After all women are “the second sex” a living object. Further Beauvoire claims that almost nowhere is her legal status the same as man’s and frequently it is much to her disadvantage her rights are legally recognized in the abstract. It is still a world that belongs to men. It has yet not brought about an equal sharing of the world between men and women.

As mentioned above by Beauvoire and perceived by Jhumur, it is till the world that belongs to men. A woman doesn’t hold equal legal status like that of men. Still

women's basic requirement and their rights are not taken into consideration. Jhumur complains that why is it that rules and orders for her is set by Haroon? Why is it that Haroon has problem with her talking in loud voice, singing in her mood and laughing when she is in good mood? Haroon has problem when the veil of her sari falls from her head and is not covered all the time. This is all because man is absolute and a woman is the "other" as said by Beauvoire. Men set rules for women and they have to follow it by hook or crook. They don't even bother to take women's permission before they hip the rules on their head. Rules, laws and orders are so much unequal and far from a woman's reach that they are denied and deprived of justice. Jhumur is forced to abort her baby. But there is nothing she can do. Nor she can take any legal action nor she can deny it. If there had been strong legal rules for woman, Jhumur would have taken legal action against her husband's wrong doing. But no, Jhumur keeps quiet and bare all the tortures. The males have proved and displayed their satisfaction in feeling that they are the lords of creation.

The religious too reflect their wish for domination. Men have taken up arms against women. Since ancient and in history women are proved weaker object of which men takes the honor of dominating women. Men make rules and orders for women. They don't bother to consult women. Simone de Beauvoire further claims that women are not in the wrong when they decline to accept the rules laid down for them. Simone de Beauvoire further argues that women are treated as "Other". She would describe the world from women's point of view in which women must live.

Judith Butler's theoretical insights are highly applicable to analyze Nasrin's *Shodh*. Thus, this research draws upon *Gender Trouble*. Female and the subversion of Identity" to read the text. Her article is an attack on one of the central assumptions of feminist theory. She begins her assumptions about the distinction often made

between sex and gender. In this distinction, sex is biological while gender is culturally constructed. This is an influenced acts. Then, there exists no solid, universal gender constituted through the practice of performance.

The same gender biasness can be seen in Nasrin's *Shodh* as Jhumur has said, "Men enjoyed unlimited freedom and opportunity and Haroon had shared that luck being a man" (193). Men enjoy the freedom not because they are men but because this is the gender roles assigned to the males. Females should live under restriction and fulfill the roles that are assigned to them. Males can enjoy unlimited freedom but females lack opportunity all because there are so much restriction that female faces. Jhumur is an educated woman. But as per gender roles in Islam a bou does not go out to work. So she should stay home and serve her in laws. According to Butler gender is culturally constructed only to make situation complex for women.

In the novel Haroon says to Jhumur, "Housewives stay indoor" (8). Why is it that a married woman stays indoor or even if she works or earns then she has to face numbers of dos and don'ts that makes her life a living hell. Because the gender roles assigned to a woman doesn't allow working out. She should stay within the four walls of a house, give birth, raise and fulfill husband's need. Butler provides an opinion for subversive action. She calls for people to trouble the categories of gender through performance. According to her gender is created. Because of this, there is discrimination in roles and power. Males are supreme because they are allocated more power. Hence this is created to trouble people according to Butler.

In this regard Kate Millet, an American feminist, writer and activist who is best known for her 1970 book *Sexual Politics* cannot be ignored. In this book Millet offers a comprehensive critique of patriarchy in Western society and literature. It's an essential piece of twentieth century history and politics that deals with women's

liberation. It's a classic feminist text. She argued that authors like D. H Lawrence, Henry Miller and Norman Mailer viewed and discussed sex in a patriarchal and sexist way. Her book *Sexual Politics* was an important theoretical touchstone for the second wave feminism of the 1970, giving voice to the anger of a generation while documenting the inequalities neatly packaged in revered works of literature and art. Second wave feminism which is also known as the feminist movement or the women's liberation movement is a period of feminist activity. Second wave feminism broadened the debate of first wave feminism to a wide range of issues, sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights and official legal inequalities. Second wave feminism focused on a battle against violence with proposal for marital rape laws, establishment of rape crisis and battered women's shelters and changes in custody and divorce law.

Kate Millet has raised an issue of sexuality, family, the workplace and reproductive rights. Taking decision on reproduction is a full right of a woman. After all she is the one who goes through so much pain and agony for giving birth to a baby. Jhumur is not given the permission to take decision about her child. She does not get authority to work. In this sense Jhumur is deprived of her right to work and to think independent.

Millet has further argues about the patriarchal domination in the society. If a male wants to marry more than one wife in this case, there is no restriction. If he is not satisfied and happy with his first marriage or if a woman cannot bear a child in that case, a man can marry number of wives. But the case is completely different with a woman. Dr. Sebati who is Jhumur's friend complains that her husband is an impotent. Sebati is so much frustrated with her married life that she feels like leaving

her husband. She only feels like living but she cannot leave her husband because the patriarchal society does not allow a woman to take such a step.

In this way by focusing in second wave feminism as well as patriarchy, she showed how cultural exploited women discourse. Millet has demonstrated in details how its attitudes and systems penetrate literature, philosophy, psychology and politics. Her work rocked the foundation of the literary women especially to honored authors who used sex to degrade and undermine women.

Anitta Kynsilento in her book *Islamic Feminism Current Perception* has comprised ideas of feminist specially focused on Islam. The issue of Islamic feminism does not relate only in certain Muslim countries but Islamic feminism is discussed globally. Anita Kynsilento discusses about Quran and the Hadith that contains principles of gender equality and wider issues of social justice. There is no where mentioned about the domination of patriarchy in these religious books. This very article on Islamic feminism explicitly focuses on the process of unmasking the different axis of domination in an Islamic framework.

Asma Barlas has given her view regarding Islamic feminism and feminist discourse and practice grounded in an Islamic periphery. She has spoken about the Quran's libratory stance in the face of muslim misogyny (qtd in Anitta Kynsilento's *Islamic Feminism Current Perception* 15- 23). Misogyny is a cultural attitude of hatred for females because they are females. It is a cultural attitude of dislike and mistrust of women in a society. These feminist have manifested misogyny in numerous way in which sexual discrimination, denigration of women, violence against women and sexual objection of women. She has raised the concept of sexual equality which is at the core of feminist theory. She further claims that muslim feminist believe that Islam is a sexist and patriarchal religion that puts a sacred stamp

onto females- subservience. She has further claimed that she found *Quran* subverting the concept of father- right and father rule and further says that *Quran* is anti-patriarchal. This means *Quran* treated both males and females equally and further more, males are believed by the *Quran* as the protector of females. According to her, Islamic feminism should be firmly claimed and repeatedly explained. The very process of defining it also gives it a particular shape.

Asma Barlas has talked about muslim misogyny. Society which is heavily guided by patriarchal norms and values hates women because they are born women. This is a complete shame on the name of humanity. Muslims are known to be very faithful towards *Quran* and Haidith. As Asma Barlas has focused her claims on *Quran* that *Quran* doesn't support patriarchy. It has no where mentioned to torture women let that be physically or mentally (35). We find this so clear in Jhumur's small world. She just wanted little respect and love from her husband, who in return abuses her and insults her. *Quran* states that a man is a protector of a woman. But no one is derivation of no one. Here Jhumur's own baby was murdered by her husband. What protection would a woman expect from her husband who accused her of carrying others baby? In Jhumur's case she is given mental torture. At least when she gives birth to a son, she is given love, care and affection. But still there are hundreds of cases of violence where women are victimized by society. Asma Barlas further says Islamic feminism should be firmly claimed and repeatedly explained. Feminism should be made mandatory to be discussed specially in Islamic countries. This can create awareness regarding women's rights and empowerment to some extent.

Likewise, according to Margot Badran in her book *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences*, Islamic feminism deals with issues of women's right, liberation and gender equality as a part of the rights liberation and equality. Muslim's

feminist included space and respect for religion in a religiously pluralistic society. The Islamic modernism, an Islamic feminism together helped to expose the patriarchal intrusion into Islam and in the lives of muslim women because the Muslim women were under the domination of patriarchal restriction imposed in the name of religious prescription.

She further insists that every individual and society to be modern and muslim which would help muslim shape the dynamic culture, religion along with individual development within a renewed understanding of Islam. Though West believes that muslims were incapable of producing feminism, and “Islam” itself would not allow it. The feminism that muslim women have created is feminism of their own. Muslim women have generated two major feminist paradigms: “secular feminism” and “Islamic feminism”. Here Islamic feminism refers in global sense. There are lots of western countries where people are followers of Islam. They have broad thinking about Islamic feminism. But in specific Islamic countries these seems weaker and not in much favor of muslim women. Likewise, Secular feminists used Islamic modernist argument to demand equal access for women to the public sphere in the domains of secular education and work and political rights. It demands the muslim personal status code should be revised. Comparison to Islamic feminism globally, the specific muslim feminism is still in grass root level. The rise of women’s “feminist consciousness” and organized feminist movement is must for the upbringing and development of women in Islam. These are the views presented by Margot Badron.

Haideh Moghissi in her book, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism*, has described about pathetic condition of women in Taliban and other countries. She has described that women lose much more than men as a result of war and social conservatism from Afganistan to Algeria to Sudan, Pakistan and Iran indeed.

Everywhere in the Islamic Societies women are systematically brutalized and caught in a deadly crossfire between the secular and fundamentalist forces. Whenever there is conflict regarding the issues of religion mixed with the political issues, and when these results in war, women suffer the most. The solution of which to far extent doesn't seem possible easily. Life for the people of Afghanistan under the iron fist of Taliban is a nightmarish experience. This is the inevitable result of a devastating war in one of the world's poorest countries. Women have suffered terribly since the outbreak of civil strike in Afghanistan. The situation has deteriorated further. Women are banned from attending schools. They cannot work outside of house. They cannot leave their homes except in the company of a male relative.

These issues raised by Moghissi can be found in Nasrin's *Shodh*. In *Shodh* Jhumur complains to her husband that why she is not allowed go out for shopping alone. Her husband Haroon would not let her go out without any male's company. If not male, at least any elderly female member's company. Here she complains that she is not an illiterate woman and neither she is a child. Then why is there so much restriction for a woman. She has to keep a distance relation with her parents after her marriage. Jhumur is not allowed to travel alone. Moghissi's issues regarding the treatment of woman in Islam can be found on Nasrin's *Shodh*.

Further there had been debates in the West concerning its role in "empowering" muslim women. This seems possible only when they are provided protected space. There is extreme lack of women's rights, lack of democracy and lack of freedom of expression in Islamic societies. In comparison to other internationally recognized countries, the treatment of women in Iran, Afghanistan, Sudan is quite the opposite. The cultural belief, gender roles and practices and way of doing things are very different from western countries.

The issues of feminism is taken as an important and must discuss phenomena. There are Islamic religion in many western countries. But these women are well known about their rights and power. There are lots of cultural practices which are normal for westerners at the mean time, they are highly restricted in Islamic countries. As told earlier countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Iran comes in highlighted list. There is a complex web of class, gender, ethnic, religious and regional differences which separate rather than unite the ways of life. Moreover these orthodox cultures create barrier in overall development of women.

Moghissi further argues that men's need and scripts have circumscribed women's lives and the extent of their participation in public affairs. Women's sexuality and moral conduct has pre-occupied muslim men. Women throughout the Middle East and north Africa are challenging Islamization policies. They are still struggling against the fundamentalization . They are deprived of every basic rights that women enjoy in the west. Women don't have authority to take decisions on matter of works, family and reproduction. The very issue is discussed as major problem in *Shodh* as well. The fundamental project and the Islamic orthodox is more discussed in her book. It demands that the voices should be raised for women's emancipation. The subjects like women's empowerment should be raised.

The theoretical insights of Simone de Beavoire developed in her book *The Second Sex*, Judith Butler and that of other critics developed above can be mobilized to study Nasrin's *Shodh*. *Shodh* has raised the subject matter of role of women in Islam as well as has demanded for the full equality of Muslim women regardless of gender in public and private life.

Thus Jhumur's subversive action has questioned women's right, gender equality and social justice ground in an Islamic framework. Her action has subverted

the sexuality and marriage rules of Islam. Otherwise what she has attempted to do is taken as a crime and her child would be named “Harami” by the Islamic society. This is because only females are bound to follow the dogmatic social rules and at the mean time they are deprived of their right even in this twentieth century.

III. Disruption of Gender roles and Patriarchal Normativity in Taslima Nasrin's

Shodh

After the discussion and analysis of Taslima Nasrin's *Shodh*, the researcher comes to the conclusions that disrupting and subverting the patriarchal normativity is the major contention of the novel. Jhumur, the main character of the novel subverts and disrupts the gender roles of the society. She takes her own decision upon giving birth to a child and working as a teacher. In the society which is heavily guided by patriarchal norms and values, women are not given authority to take decisions for themselves. Their voices are not heard. But she proves that she is the master of her own destiny, desires and dreams. Jhumur conceives a child out of marriage and handovers it to her husband as a legitimate child. Haroon, her husband is unknown about it. Her act, thus, evinces her to be quite revolutionary and rebellious in nature. Later she steps out of the four walls of her house and works as a teacher and proves that females can do much more besides taking the sole responsibility of household chores. Her journey from private sphere to public sphere is her journey from a subservient status to a self-empowered one. Housewives as per feminine gender roles assigned in Islamic society should stay indoors as a part of muslim culture. But this was a tight slap on every male's face who would think that women are weak and docile. Jhumur's broad thinking, clear vision and guts are worth praising. This proves the fact that her attitude itself is quite subversive.

Jhumur finds great difference in Haroon's behavior before and after marriage. Haroon used to praise her talent and loved her singing. But the same fellow would not permit her to step out of her house. He would alert her time and again to reduce her voice to murmur. She feels that life after marriage has become claustrophobic. Jhumur's act of breaking the territory set forth by her husband proves that she has

been able to dismantle the gender roles of Islamic society in a macro level. By the end of the novel, she sets herself free from the chain of the dogmatic society. She achieves the state of self- aggrandizement.

The novel has presented the dynamic and courageous female characters to defy the traditional gender roles in Islam, based on patriarchal ideology. The gender roles treat man as superior and woman as inferior. Thus, by the end of the novel we can see how Jhumur has disrupted the conservative norms and biased gender roles. Moreover, she has valorized the women consciousness and their resisting activities. She subverts the gender roles and patriarchal domination in order to establish her identity. When the novel ends, Jhumur is able to transform herself into an independent and empowered woman breaking the territory set by patriarchal norms and values.

Works Cited

- Badron, Margot. *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergence*. Oneworld Publication: London, 2009.
- Beavoire, Simone de: "The Second Sex" Ed. Hazard Adams. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College : New York 1992.
- Butler, Judith: *Gender Trouble: Female and the subversion of Identity*. Routledge : New York, 1990.
- Hashmi, Taj ul- Islam. "Women and Islam: Taslima Nasreen, society and politics in Bangladesh South Asia" *Journal of South Asia Studies* (1995): 23-48
- Joseph, Gibaldi: *MLA Handbook for Writhers of Research Papers*. Affiliated East-West Press: New Delhi, 2009.
- Khatun, Saiyeda. "A Site of Subaltern Articulation- The Ecstatic Female Body in the Contemporary Bangladeshi Novels of Taslima Nasrin" *Genders Online Journal* (1999): 22- 30
- Kynsilento, Anitta. *Islamic Feminism: Current Perspective Tampere Peace Research Institute*. University of Tampere: Finland 2008.
- Millet, Kate. *Sexual Politics: Women and Marxism Archive*. Rupert Hart Davis: London, 1970.
- Moghissi, Haideh. *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The limits of postmodern analysis*. Zed Books: Washington, 1999.
- Riaz, Ali. *(Re) Reading Taslima Nasrin: Contexts, Contents & Construction: Collection of Essay*. Shrabon Prokashani: Dhaka, 2009.