

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Male Politics in Normal Mailer's *An American Dream*

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in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts in English**

By

Mr. Ganesh Prasad Poudel

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

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TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Humanities and Social Science

Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Ganesh Prasad Poudel had completed his thesis entitled **Male Politics in Normal Mailer's *An American Dream*** under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2008 (A.D) to 2009 (A.D). I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

Jiva Nath Lamsal

Supervisor

Date:.....

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Humanities and Social Science

This thesis titled **Male Politics in Normal Mailer's *An American Dream*** by Mr. Ganesh Prasad Poudel submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee:

Member of Research Committee:

(Internal Examiner)

External Examiner

Head

Central Department of English

Date:.....

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Abstract

This dissertation discusses the treatment of women characters in Norman Mailer's novel *An American Dream*. The so-called Dream of Jefferson's "Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness", become mere dreams for American women. Long history of patriarchal domination in society and its created certain truth upon women is the one and only one bar for the emancipation of the women and their prosperity. Male politics to subordinate women is the hindrance for women's 'American Dream'. So to crumble down the male politics of subordination is indispensable to attain the dream. Until and unless bias nature of social system is not altered, women are not able to dream the "American dream Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness." So, the novel *An American Dream* is true to females only by rupturing bias social construct of patriarchal domination and subordination in the existing society. So, Mailer raises the problem and hence female should go a head to encounter the male politics through there own strong notion of women's politics to overcome that.

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I. Introduction

This research paper especially lays its focus on Norman Mailer's fourth novel *An American Dream* which was published in 1965. Though the manifest side of 'American Dream' projected the notion of equality at social, political, financial and cultural level, however this dream is biased in terms of race, class and in gender. In the novel *An American Dream*, the researcher attempt to show male politics of subordination to female. Since 'American dream' itself is a patriarchal construct, it is gender biased in latent form when it comes to the domain of sex and gender. So in this context, I will use the idea from feminist theories primarily radical feminist ideas of Adrienne Rich, Elaine Showalter, Kate Millet, etc to study the novel *An American Dream*. This research will apply their notion to analyze the plight of the female characters in the novel.

This research is mainly concerned with the question of male politics to subordinate female existence, particularly the subordinated existence of the main female characters like Deborah, Ruta and Cherry who are subordinated in the novel. Stephen Richard Rojack in *An American Dream* sexually abuses, marriages and kills Deborah, the heroine of the novel. Norman Mailer also stabs her own wife in his real life. So, the novel and the so called hero particularly represent Mailer's own cruelty. The study examines the struggle of the female characters to defend themselves through individual action and social engagement. The emphasis is on the female's interpretation and active response to the world and human society. The study begins with the tentative hypothesis that the novel traces male politics to define women and represent them negatively. By highlighting infidelity, presenting as mere commodity and means of pleasure and lust, Norman Mailer wrongly represents women and plays with female. Rojack, the so-called

hero of the novel, is a playboy who plays with different women like Deborah, Ruta and Cherry. He uses all the women as if they are mere commodity. He smashes the pure love affairs of Cherry and Shago. Murdering his wife, sexually abuses his maid Ruta and sexually abusing and smashing the pure love affairs of Cherry and Shago is the visible picture of smashing the 'American dream' for women in America. American society is termed as civilized society, but in reality the so called American dream is biased toward women and see women as mere commodity and means of pleasure to whom male can easily play and if male are bored then they can kill but they are not liable for punishment.

American dream is watered by the concept of freedom, equality, justice, liberty, and opportunity but these things are not for female. The most powerful is male which dominates the female. Male holds authority who is free from legal prosecution and hence Rojack gets freedom from legal prosecution. 'American dream' for female is merely a dream because male politics cannot get them stand equally. Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony plays the vital role in the novel *An American Dream*. Characters like Deborah, Ruta and Cherry are hegemonized as the mere object of the sexual pleasure. Cherry is the means of the sexual pleasure of both Rojack and Siago. Deborah also is the means of sexual pleasure of several males including Rojack and Kelly. Ruta is also the means of sexual pleasure. They don't complain or fight legally about their pain suffering and exploitation because they are the hegemonized creature of the social construct. Foucault's concept of power, representation and truth plays well in so called civilized, patriarchal society. Deborah's sexual activity is seen negatively but Rojack's abusive nature is praised as existential hero, why? Because of domination of patriarchal ideology of society which create biased truth against women. The novelist Norman Mailer put male

politics to subordinate women and hence creates bold characters like Stephen Richard Rojack who is Harvard graduate, former congressman, Professor of existential psychology, and public intellectual who hosts his own television program. Likewise, another strong character like Barney Oswald Kelley who is millionaire but create weak stand to Deborah, Cherry and Ruta. Deborah is mere dependence of her father and later husband and Cherry dancer and bar girl. Ruta is mere housemaid. Moreover, all women characters are shown as commodity and sex objects and their importance is to satisfy their male partners.

Taking the sexual issue of the novel feminist critic Kate Millet who judges an 'American dream' from the treatment of female character received from the male protagonists, accuses Mailer of being "proto-typical male chauvinist" because of the role Mailer provides to female character as "secondary human being" [qtd. in Gerson 9]. She sees sexual relationship between Rojack and his wife Deborah as victimization.

Norman Mailer's novel *An American Dream* is analyzed from various perspectives like existentialism, shattering of American dream, money and America, etc. But none of the other has analyzed the novel in the light of feminist reading. But while raising the issue of male domination upon female, Foucault's concept of power, truth and representation is indispensable. Likewise Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony cannot be ignored because feminism is the complex tool which is beneficial by adopting the necessary idea of Foucault, Gramsci, Derrida, Marx and others. So though my tool to study the text *An American dream* is feminism, I will get help from ideas from above philosophers.

While talking about the text we should peep out his real life style. Mailer in his own real life married more than six wives and sexually abused them. In fact he himself is a playboy who used to play with the emotion of the females. So in the novel, he creates the male character which correspond him. So many readers of *An American Dream* find the novel semi-autobiographical. Cruel nature of the protagonist is similar to his own nature. Protagonist plays with the emotion of the female characters like him and also indulges in the act of strangling and killing female protagonist which corresponds to the act of Mailer who stabbed his own wife. So, Mailer's characteristic of anti-female can be vividly seen in the novel *An American Dream*. By reading the novel time and again I find that the text is biased towards females. Though the novel is named *An American Dream*, the dream of the protagonist is shattered in the collision of the women's dreams that male tried to seek the American dream for themselves. Knowingly Mailer portrays the ill figure of the female character to serve for male subordination upon female and praise the anti social performance of the male character. An incestuous relation of Kelly and Rojack's abusive natures is praised. But, he tends to create women the evil of the society. Women are used everywhere in the novel. Rojack marries Deborah initially for power and post but later kills her to gain sexual pleasure from other female charecter. Likewise Ruta and Cherry are also used up by both Kelly and Rojcak. Mailer, though knowingly puts the biased text to us but it also reflect the social cultural fact of the American women.

Mailer's *An American Dream* is somehow biased text however, it also immensely contributes to locate Mailer as the major Jewish American novelist. The novel also becomes the object of intense critical controversy. Elizabeth Hardwick describes the

novel in partisan Review “as a very dirty book- dirty and extremely ugly” [qtd. in Contemporary authors 9]. Her judgment of the novel rests on the candid sexual descriptions found in the novel. Her evaluation of the text depends on the social and moral standards of the period because Mailer was writing against the structure of 1950s censorship and propriety. But John Aldridge’s review called the novel “a major creative breakthrough”. He describes the novel as a new discovery in the same vein as the Sinclair Lewis declares Mailer, “the greatest writer to come out of his generation”(qtd. in Hart 722) and Ernest Hemmingway labels him “probably the best post- war writer” (qtd. in Glenday 2). But the difference between Aldridge and Hemmingway and Lewis is that the first comment is on the particular work of Mailer while the others are on the literary career of Mailer as a whole. Other critics have also criticized the novel in various ways owing to different perspectives because this fourth novel by Mailer has remained something of an enigma to literary critics since its publication in 1965. Mailer also remains an enigma for the contemporary world as he was breaking away from convention and norms and there may be no better example of the way the world has changed around Mailer than the recent criticism showered on his writings and his world view.

Therefore, feminist theories developed by Toril Moi, Showalter, Gilbert and Gubar, Adrinne Rich, Kate millet and other feminists with their ideas on the subject will assist the research in an attempt to show the male politics to subordinate the women in the text which reflects the biased American society toward women and to show how the ‘American dream’ for women is mere dream in male dominated society. Therefore, Mailer’s *An American Dream* can be read through the methodological tool of feminism that proves the hypothesis mentioned above. As discussed earlier existential issue of the

novel appears to be crucially thematic. McCann Sean comments about the works of Mailer thus:

Throughout his writing Mailer constantly endeavors to portray personal identity less as a given than as the product of cultural environment, political conflict, and individual struggle [. . .]. He stresses the fact that people are constituted by a wealth of a local attachment. As a good postmodernist, he suggests in fact that there no autonomous selves, only contingent identities constantly in flux. (10)

While applying this idea of cultural politics in *An American Dream* it can be said that the identity of Rojack is constantly changing and is the product of cultural forces.

Taken together *An American Dream* and *Why We are in Vietnam*, Mailer's thoughts are constantly focused on the disillusionment of the American dream of peace and harmony. When Mailer was interviewed at the time of latter's publication, he spoke of its informing vision as one dealing with the psychotic American push: "I think a civilization is created out of some kind of sublimation of violence. When violence gets too sublimated, you get a sick civilization. We are destroying everything and pretending to be the deliverer of civilization" (qtd. in Leeds 43). Today, Americans are not civilized and virtuous though they claim themselves to be the most civilized ones. . In *Why We are in Vietnam?* Mailer criticizes American intervention in Vietnam's internal matter. The whimsically titled novel *Why We are in Vietnam?* Which presents a Disc Jockey's violent, vulgar narratives of the bear hunt in Alaska in an ostentatiously inventive allegory of American foreign policy?

Mailer sees the nightmare vision of contemporary America. The dream of hope, agreement and success has turned into a nightmare of war, violence, murder, hunting, and vengeance and sex perversion. Mailer is unquestionably a social critic. Robert Lowell calls Mailer “the finest journalist in America” (qtd. in Rulaud 385). His novel *Naked and the Dead* impresses the literary public as the first important old war II novel. He presents a tragically realistic portrait of war. Orville Prescott—Pacific Theatre of the World War II publishes in 1948, New York Times, called it “the most impressive novel about war that I have ever read” (qtd. in Gale Research 6). Mailer claims “I intended it to be a parable about the moment through history I tried to explore outrageous proposition of cause and effect and recompense in sick society” (qtd. in Kaufmann 1). It is a platoon fighting both Japanese and its own army on the Pacific island during World War II. What is extraordinary about *Naked and the Dead* is its convincing integration of visceral action and reflective thought. Mailer is interested not just in how the war fought, but also in why it is being fought.

In this regard, Mailer has been identified as a Beat Generation writer who expressed dissent against mainstream American:

The new social freedom brought about by World War II had helped ease the sexual reference, sexual language, and sexual incident in literature: sex in literature was authentic and it was true to real experience and it no longer needed to be confined to the pages of underground or ‘difficult’ novels like *Ulysses*. (qtd. in Braudy 124).

Braudy further comments that “sex is no central to his work because it expresses the individual will he values so highly. Sex and language are both acts of subversion and

revenge- ways of getting back at a world that has deprived men of will.” He says *An American Dream* “sketches oedipal drama in comic book tones” and celebrates “an individual and personal voice that tries to stand against personal pattern of history.” He categorizes *An American Dream* as one among many “sexually” free novel of the post-war period.

Taking the issue of autobiography there are other critics who tried to locate the personal detail of the writer with the character presented by the writer in the novel. They are trying to find out similarities between the personal details of the writer with the character in his/her works. They judge any work as the representation of the writer’s own life. James Ginden finds the novel “full of autobiographical fantasies” (587). “The protagonist of *An American dream* Stephen Richard Rojack was loosely modeled after Mailer himself, and his strongest writing now included explicitly autobiographical element” (qtd. in contemporary authors 8). Criticism of Mailer’s fictions has been characterized by tendency to read autobiographical significance into his novels which thwarts other issues of the novel and the text as autonomous in itself.

Though Mailer a Jewish by origin expresses through counterculture the dissent against materialist American culture as America headed toward a post war corporate and institutionalized American character. After realization of the illness mainstream America suffered from, he joined his dissenting voice with others-the Beat writers, the Black writers, and the Confessionals. The American in his novels has come a long way from the literary experiment of 1920s and radical self-reassessment of the 1930s. As Mailer grows popular with the publication of his novels and stories, critics begin to interpret and reinterpret Mailer and his work variously. There are critics like Germaine Greer who

are ambivalent on whether Mailer is a successful novelist or not. Greer comments, "I like Mailer as a novelist, but not enough, I dislike him too as a man." (qtd. in Bloom 73).

Greer expects Mailer to engage in decent and refined dialogue in an old fashioned gentlemanly way. But Mailer is just the opposite of it because being refined gentleman one cannot expose the human follies, the degenerative practices and the incest relations that are prevailing in the society he depicts. As a novelist his prose is powerful but plain, complex in them yet very near to reality and vulgar but with artistic.

II Feminism

Feminist Movement against Male Politics

Feminism is the women's movement which began rejecting their own passivity and issue of women subordination in the so-called civilized society. In spite of diversity, feminism often represented as a single entity and somehow concerned with gender equality and freedom. Adrienne Rich, the American feminist and poet said:

The power to describe the world is ultimate power. In describing the world, like naming male science, male religions, male art, male history, male politics and prophecies has created or eliminated possibilities, distinguished or revealed alternative or withheld choices, determined, finally, which human option shall be visible and which shall be driven underground. (22)

This extract shows attitude toward male hegemony that has been practiced since long. Male posses power and take themselves superior. But it is just created power. It is the power that they got by creating discourse in every aspect of life and art.

Rich again claims “[. . .] not merely language, thought-patterns, intellectual models, and perception itself are organized out of the exclusion and reification of women” and further she adds “the realm of knowledge and culture we are trying to survey is a landscape partitioned everywhere with barbed-ware” (122). Therefore, male biasness and prejudice to female is the main concern of the Rich politics.

Christine Delphy offers a feministic critique of patriarchy based on Marxist principles. Delphy who coined the phrase materialistic feminism in the early 1970s, focused her analysis on the family as economic unit. She pointed out:

[A]ll contemporary “developed society [. . .] depend on the unpaid labour of women for domestic services and child bearing. These services are furnished within the framework of a particular relation to an individual (the husband). They are excluded from the realm of exchange (i.e., these service are not treated as job people do for money outside their home) and consequently have no value. They are unpaid. Whatever women receive in return is independent of the work which they perform because it is handed out in exchange for that work (i.e., a wage to which their work entitles them), but rather as a gift. (60)

The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology defines feminism as doctrine suggesting that women are systematically disadvantaged in modern society and advocating equal opportunities for man and women (qtd. in Beasley 27). *The Penguin Dictionary of Politics* considers the main common theoretical assumption as shared by all branches of the movement that they have been historical tradition of male exploitation of women (qtd. in Beasley 27). E. Porter defines feminism as a perspective that seeks to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequality and injustice women suffer because of their sex (qtd. in Beasley 28). About feminism R. Delmer says:

It is certainly possible to construct base-line definition of feminism [. . .] many should agree that at the very list of feminist is someone who holds women suffer discrimination because of their sex that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these would require a radical change [. . .] in social, economic and political order. (27-28)

Delmer asserts that the early women's liberation movement of the 1960's and 1970's largely lacked a developed theoretical approach. Therefore, the movement asserts without much detailed analysis on the notion of unity among women and regarded feminism as a framework which reflected that unity. The intention was to find the explanation for women's oppression which could express women's commonality and thus roll all women together politically. However, pluralism and diversity have perpetually occurred between women as regard the issues of women as subject and the challenge to the women's oppression. Feminist theories have in fact developed at something of a remote mainstream social and political thought. Feminist argued that mainstream thought is simply a part of three ongoing processes: excluding, marginalizing and trivializing women and their accounts of social and political life.

Recently feminism has been defined not simply as a particular frame work, set of ideas or form of critical questioning or social analysis around the focus on women and power, not also as representation a specific way of experience.

Hence it is certain that all feminists call for changes in the social, economic, cultural and political order in every way of life to reduce and finally overcome this repression and domination against womanhood. The cause of all this discrimination is the restriction which must be destroyed. Several theorists, writers and scholar have raised this issue from various perspectives. Marriage system has become one of the bondages that restrict women from realizing her freedom of self. The self of male has been defined by male as legal authority. Feminism as a whole addresses this issue to instill a sense of human existence which is devoid due to sexual biasness. In his *Glossary of Literary Terms* M.H Abrams has pointed out different issues of feminism. He opines:

Western society is pervasively patriarchal, male centered and controlled and is conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domain: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic. From the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophic writings to the present, the female tends to be defined by negative reference to male as the human norms, hence as an other, or kind of non-man, by her lack of identifying male organ, of male powers [. . .] and so are conditioned to derogate their own sex and to cooperate their own subordination. (89)

Actually feminist movement as a specific kind of political movement started in the late 1960s to raise the voice against male victimization and subordination in physical, political, economical, psychological and emotional level. Thus Cixous and Showalter propose to rupture the hierarchy between female and male. In the same decade feminist countered the old western philosophy and linguistics, led by French philosopher Jacques Derrida who challenges the western metaphysics and logocentrism. Derrida ruptures the hierarchy between primary and secondary. Feminist thinkers took advantage of this poststructuralist theory to argue against male centrism [male (centre) vs. female (margin)]. As Derrida challenged the idea of single truth, essence and existence, Poststructuralist feminists stress unity by rejecting conceptions of women as a homogeneous category. They challenged the fixity hence the very status of established categories like sex, class and race. Postmodernist feminists object the so-called fundamentalism as being constructed by masculinity and suggest this to be ruled out. They understand that the social norms are perceived from the point of view of male. So they appear true to them but no norm is universal or essentialist when it is constructed to

dominate other. Foucauldian theory is beneficial for feminist critics and see power being exercised by male who pretend to have knowledge about everything including women. Feminist movement remains indebted to the predecessors who brought and gradually helped to spread this movement for justice, equality and freedom. We cannot forget the contribution of revolutionary nineteenth and twentieth century writers and forerunners like Mary Shelly, George Eliot, Charlotte Perkins, Gilman, Virginia Wolf and Mary Wollstonecraft for the materialization and progress of feminism. Mary Wollstonecraft first raised her voice in support of women's emancipation as well as women's education. She was the first feminist writer to raise her voice in favor of women through her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). She speaks for the political and social rights of women in this book. She suggests that the equality is possible only when education is granted to women. Commenting on the male made notion that a female must be beautiful, innocent and subservient to them, she says that "females [. . .] brought back to childhood [. . .] have no sufficient strength of mind to efface the super induction of art that have smothered nature" and again added that "false notion of beauty and delicacy [. . .] produce a sickly sickness, rather than delicacy of organs."(qtd.in Adams395). She is against the constructed consciousness that grows along with the physical growth and the thought shaped by it. The tragedy is that this consciousness is the biased construction of patriarchal propaganda. Thus Mary Wollstonecraft appeal to all females to take initiation in education in order to go against the "unnatural weakness" to achieve that "perfection" which all human aspire for.

Elaine Showalter was another predecessors who divided women's literary development into three distinct phases; "feminine phase" that covers the period from

1840 to 1880 where they imitate the masculine role and internalized the dominant male aesthetic standard; the second phase is feminist (1880 to 1920) when women advocated for their equality and rights and protested against the male norms and values; and the third phase is Female Phase which is from 1920 onward, was the phase of self discovery exploration of women's experience were their main aims. Within this present phase, she describes four current models of differences taken up by many feminists around the world: cultural, psychoanalytical, linguistic and biological. The term Gynocriticism is coined and popularized by Elaine Showalter.

Though my concern in this research is to apply the concept of radical feminism, it would be relevant to have brief survey of liberal feminism. It evolved from the school of political thought and gained its classical formulation in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Right of Women* and in John Strauss Mill's "the subjection of Women". It addresses the problem of unequal rights or artificial barriers to women's participation in the public world, beyond the four walls of house and family.

Wollstonecraft wrote at a time when economic and social position of the European women was in decline. While reading *A Vindication of the Rights of woman*, we see how affluence in the industrialized Europe of 18th century, worked against the married bourgeois women of the time because they are not allowed to exercise outdoors. So what Wollstonecraft most desired for women is personhood. Although she did not use the term as "socially constructed gender role", she denied that women are by nature more pleasure seeking and pleasure giving than man. She said that "if men were confined to the same cages women find themselves locked in, they would developed the same character"(qtd.in Tong 14). If denied the chance to develop their rational powers, to

become moral persons who have concerns, causes and commitments beyond personal pleasure, man would become overly “emotional”, a term Wollstonecraft tended to associate with hypersensitivity, extreme narcissism and excessive self-indulgences. Here focus was on the equal opportunity for both sexes to develop and educate the rational faculty. John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, one hundred years later joined Wollstonecraft in elaborating rationality.

Liberal feminism does not perceive the sexes to be at war or dismissed that which associated with men. Unlike Radical feminist, they emphasized reform of society rather than revolutionary changes. Naomi Wolf who represents this school directly rejects strategies which might be less acceptable to mainstream women and dismissed critical and revolutionary agendas. they draws on welfare liberalism; though it started as a form of liberal political thought influenced by writers such as J.S Mill. They stated their main agenda as collective responsibility for the formation and development of liberal society that support equal opportunity between male and female.

Radical Feminism

Radical feminists have no interest in preserving the natural order of the society that subordinated women to men. But their main objective is to question the so-called natural order of the society. The best way to approach the school of radical feminism is to point out to their insistence that the women’s oppression is the most fundamental form of oppression in contrast to the liberal feminists view that male are also the victims of sex role conditioning, radical feminists insist that male power in societies such as ours is at the root of the social construction of gender. “It is the patriarchal system that oppresses

women, as system characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy and competition, a system that cannot be reformed but only ripped out root and branches”(22)

Radical feminism appeared in Elaine Showalter’s *Reinterpretation of Gender Studies* and developed by her followers. Feminism has been established as a feminist literary criticism, a rebellious stream which appears as hostile to patriarchy in contrast to liberal feminism. They arrogantly focused on female’s domination as social order dominated by male. Radical feminists demand in literature an expression of female sexuality which will burst through the bond of male logic with poetic power that defines the tyranny of logocentric meaning. Beside sexual oppression, radical feminists always view other forms of power, for example, unequal power relation with capitalism- as derived from patriarchy. Although radical feminists writings are as distinct as they are myriad, their frequent theme is effect of woman biology on female’s self reception, function and status in the private and public domain. Radical feminists thus eyes on the issue of biology like the mothering, reproduction or gender and sexuality. General reasoning behind this selection have direct attention to the ways in which men attempt to control women’s bodies and construct female sexuality to serve not women but men’s need, interests and wants.

Some feminists who are radical and revolutionary take reproduction the major issue of women’s subordination. Therefore, such feminists assume that if the act of reproduction is put under the control of them, then they get freedom from male oppression. Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectics of Sex* asserts that the systematic oppression of women is rooted in biological differences of the male and female. She revises the materialistic theory of history offered by Karl Marx and Engels. Communist

conflict of economic classes as the deriving forces of history became “sex classes” in her revision. For her real class in society is male and female and hence male as oppressor and female as oppressed one. Firestone believed that the roots of women’s oppression is biological, the emancipation of female from male oppression is possible only after biological revolution. According to her, technology would make it possible, further she said when male and female postponed different roles in reproductive drama, it will be possible to eliminate all sexual roles.

According to her, technology is able to perfect “artificial” ways for people to reproduce the essential for the biological family system, will vanish. However, once women no longer have to reproduce, the primary rationale for keeping that at home disappears; and with the entrance of women into the workplace, the family will be no longer exist as an economic unit. Like Firestone, Marge Piercy’s science fiction novel *Women on the Edge of Time* develops similar idea. But such ideas of Piercy’s and Firestone’s motherhood and the role of reproduction as the major cause of oppression has been challenged by another group of radical feminists who insist that reproductive technology rather liberating female from oppression but far more consolidate men’s power over women. Such radical feminists are Adrienne Rich, O’ Brien, etc. Adrienne Rich criticized firestone for condemning biological motherhood, “without taking full account of what the experience of biological pregnancy and birth might be in a wholly different political and emotional context”(174). She agreed with the biological motherhood, as it has been institutionalized under patriarchy, is definitely something from which women must be liberated. So, various arguments are involved on the issue of reproduction.

Likewise, Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics* (1969) wrote against the suppression of the women and stated “literary values and conventions have themselves been shaped by men and women have often struggled to express their own concept [. . .] and male writer addresses his readers as if they are always men” (138-139). She renamed male centered theories as patriarchal theologies for providing extreme power to men and attacked such theologies for their dominating attitude towards women and demanding more feminity from them. According to Millet, Tolan writes “relationship between men and women must be understood as deeply embedded power structure with implications” (326). Kate Millet claims that society, culture act according to sexual politics which encourage female to internalize male hegemony until it becomes psychologically rooted in patriarchal civilization. Raman Sheldon says that in political theories ideology is reduced to a complete one dimensional weapon of domination. He notes Millet as believing that ideology is the universal penile club, which men of all classes use to beat women with (138).

There are many group of feminism according to their judgment of the feminist issues which are discussed below. Feminism is related in someway or other with female’s issue that is suppression and subordination of women in society. The activity of female in nineteenth century radical and socialist movement was principally for women’s right to work and to be related fairly and paid equally to men. Karl Marx the forerunner of the communism underline that the consciousness is the product of being which is determined by the socio-economic realities. Feminism embracing Marxism was developed as Marxist feminism in the western feminist world in the 70s. This feminist thinker saw unequal distribution of the capital as the main cause of gender inequality and subordination of

women by male. Feminist raised the issue of nonparticipation in paid employment, discrimination in payment, sexual harassment of female workers by male workers at factories and limited employment of women in income generating source. Marxist feminist define the women's position in terms of socio-economic basis. Their main emphasis lies in the unanimous authority of men over property and capital is the main reason of sexual oppression of women. They place men as bourgeois and female proletariat and propose a war against inequality in distribution and disrupt the socio-economic structure and configure new which will provide equal opportunity to both male and female through which economic hierarchy would be dismantled.

Rose Bush Moss Kanter, who after a study of men and women in large corporation in the United State points to many ways in which the organizational culture of corporation hinders women's advancement. She says that the management ethic is primarily masculine. Jane Freedman refers to Mariaros Dalla Costa and Selma James's book *The Power and Subversion of the Community* and notes that women are exploited by capitalistic system as unpaid workers, undertaking all the domestic works: child bearing and caring which are necessary for the continuation of capitalistic system. By asserting that the class power and class oppression predate sexual oppression. Marxist feminist attack the prevailing capitalistic system of west and advocate a revolutionary approach in which the overthrow of capitalism is viewed as the necessary precondition to dismantling male privilege. So they combine the study of class and with that of gender. They wish to focus on class along with gender as crucial determinant of literary production in the society.

On the other hand, socialist feminist has fused Marxist and radical approach; Marxist emphasize the casual role of labor and capitalism and radical feminist emphasize the sexual hierarchy is independent of economic class hierarchy. Therefore, this theory offers a dual system of social analysis: patriarchy and capitalism. It describes sometimes a unified system referred to as capitalistic patriarchy because capitalism belongs to male.

Freud's psychoanalysis which is published in the late 19th century and discussed in the early 20th century centered on the basis of human neurosis. He has highly brought gender issue as he talks about the formation of unconscious of a woman. He further seems to discover the fundamental differences in dream image seen by man and woman and attribute egoist ambitious dreams to man and erotic dreams to woman. Freud's analysis is gender biased. He was influenced by poststructuralist terrain of thought, Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst objected to traditional Freudian concept of the repressed desire and sexual drive in human unconscious. He has hinted at the impenetrability of definiteness of psychic process in human being. His argument is framed with male bias but defy some male centric notion in psychoanalytical study. Such feminist who are psychoanalytic draw from the Freudian and Lacanian argument and argue against their depiction woman psyche as neurotic, vulnerable to slightest stimulation and lacking rational faculty. Those feminists analyze the formation of (sexed) identities (masculinity) and (femininity).

To oppose Sigmund Freud belief that "The father" shapes the psychic (unconscious) life of the child, they stress the prior importance of mother. They take a more positive conception of feminine sexual identity unlike Freud himself. Carol Gilligan in her *In a Different Voice* (1982) responds to Freud's statement that women have weaker

moral development by challenging the sexism implicit in many psychological studies of moral development- a sexism that takes male's moral development. Nancy Chodorov in her book *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) explores why women choose to become mother. She rejects the idea that mothering is an innate, natural instinct and equally the idea that it is merely the result of social conditioning. Chodorov says that men and women ought to become more alive. She believes that the share-rearing would have a dramatic effect on the organization of sexual oppression by undermining the current constitution of masculinity.

Freud pointed out that literature is a reflection of author's psyche. The image though modified or transformed are the representative of the unconscious repressed desire. Psychoanalytic feminists examine the image in literature written by both male and female writers and that the male writers have a deep seated psychological bias against women characters which are thus represented as vile or psychologically inferior. Jane Gallop considers that the application of Lacan's categories to sexual differences seems inevitably to involve a subordination of female sexuality. She opposes the concept that man is castrated by not being the total fullness promised by the phallus, while the woman is castrated by not being male. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* mentions:

French feminists who follow Lacan, particularly Helene Cixous propose a utopian place, a primeval female space which is free of symbolic order, sex roles, otherness and the law of the father and in which the self is still linked with what Cixous calls the voice of the Mother. (204)

The book further notes Kristeva as saying “A mothering is separation, a division of the very flesh” (205). Many psychoanalytical feminist have myth criticism and have transformed it for the purpose of feminist criticism. Anit Pratt criticizes Jung for his lack of understanding of female psyche. Feminist myth critics tend to centre their discussion on the Great Mother and other female images and goddesses some of them being Medusa, Cassandra, Arachne and Isis. Northrope Frye is also criticized by feminist critics for ignoring gender in his classification of myths. Helene Cixous’ pronouncement ‘sisters, write with the white milk of your mothers’ mark the importance of woman’s body not only as a subject of writing but also the energy and the instrument of writing. This statement amplifies a call for independence and necessity of rejecting male way of writing in her famous essay, “The laugh of the Medusa”, Cixous calls for women to put their ‘bodies’ into their writing. She says, “A woman’s body with its thousand and one threshold of ordour [. . .] will make the world single grooved mother tongue reverberate with more than one language.” (qtd. in Sheldon 151).

Some feminists are concerned with sexuality to define their reproductive freedom and the control of their own bodies. They believe that man characterizes women sexuality as vulnerable, erotic and always demanding male to satiate their sexual lust. They believe that heterosexuality is another way of male domination over women. For them, men treat women as sex object and usurp them without trying to understand women’s desires and needs. Those who emphasize lesbianism point out that lesbianism is not necessarily woman-woman sexual intercourse but it is the avoidance of male. Women must be sexually independent to establish their independence of their bodies because they locate the emergence of domination in female sexuality when it is defined by men. Lesbian

critics counter their marginalization some time by considering lesbianism a privileged stance and a testament to the privacy of women. Lesbians define lesbianism as the norm of female experience, seeing heterosexuality as abnormal for women. They say that only lesbian can offer an adequate feminist analysis. Bonnie Zimmerman analyzes 'lesbianism' as a kind of relationship in which two women's strongest feelings and affections are directed toward each other. There may or may not be sexual contact but preference of the women is to spend their time together and to share most aspects of their lives with each other (211). Dworkin and Mac Hinnon consider pornography as the construction of male oppression for sexual exploitation representing women as lustful, disgusting sex object presented in different postures while some others see it as an outlet of women's sexual repression and an indication of her sexual freedom.

Marry Dally challenges patriarchy's construction of gender. As Dally sees it, oppressive gender roles will be deconstructed as a result of a revolution that, she predicts, will begin with dissident women. This emphasis on women's revolutionary role eventually takes Dally far beyond the possibility of an acceptable androgyny at the end of any road that begins in patriarchy. Although Dally starts her journey in *Beyond God, the Father* with a plea for androgyny, she ends it in *Pure Lust* with a spirited defense of "wild", "lusty" and "wandering" women-women who no longer desire to be androgynous and who prefer to identify themselves as radical lesbian feminist separatists. Thus, Dally believes that the construction of the truly androgynous person can not and must not begin until women say 'no' to the values of the "morality of victimization". Out of this "no", says Dally, will come a "yes" to the values of the "ethics of personhood":

By refusing to the other, by becoming a self with needs, wants, and interests of her own, women will put an end to the game of man the master/woman the slave, a game that can not, after all, be played without slaves. Once this pernicious game is stopped- once sexism is trumped- all other “isms” will come tumbling down as well. All classifications, labels, and categories will be overcome, and a new being will come into existence: the whole person, the androgynous person (qtd. in Tong 104).

To the same degree, that culturally constructed reproductive roles and genders restricted female’s identity and behavior, socially constructed sexual roles make exceedingly difficult for a woman to identify and develop her own sexual desires and needs. As some radical feminist see it, sexuality is the prime issue in feminist study. “Aggression and the ‘need’ to subordinate form a routine part of what is accepted as [normal] male sexuality” (Conveney qtd. in Tong 110). Male’s domination against women is normalized and legitimized in sexual practice through the assumption that when it comes to sex, men are by nature aggressive and dominant, whereas women are by nature passive and submissive.

In the following chapter, this research discusses and analyses Norman Mailer’s novel *An American Dream* from the perspective of feminism, particularly with reference to the Theory of Adrienne Rich who is considered one of the radical feminist.

Chapter III: Textual Analysis

An American Dream: Male politics to Subordinate Women

Norman Mailer's novel *An American Dream*, published in 1965 is a document of contemporary American society which reflects the male chauvinism to suppress the women by various means and tries to create the false notion upon women as the mere sexual object. The whole novel works to subordinate female through the narrator and so called protagonist of the novel Stephen Richard Rojack to whom the novel centers. The protagonist of the novel is murderer of the beautiful wife Debora. Instead of realizing the mistake of his heinous crime, he engages in sexual bout with maid Ruta as if the women are the means for only sex. By his activity we can visualize the American biased society and state of women in America. Though highly talked about women rights and equality, in fact American dream for women in America is mere dream which cannot be fulfilled until and unless the radical feminist notion of reversal of canon is practiced. Though the American society seems free and equal as far as men-women relationship is concerned in manifest level but in latent level they are merely exploited through male politics and till now America too sees and judges women through body.

The novel *An American Dream* explores the sexual bout in modern American society. The novel centers on Stephen Richard Rojack, the protagonist and mouth-piece of the novelist. Rojack, television personality, professor of existential psychology, ex-congress man, and holder of the Distinguished Service Cross strangles his wife Deborah ruthlessly at her apartment and engages in extensive sexual bout with his maid, Ruta. Latter he hurls Debora's body from the window, and proceeds to counterfeit a suicide. This is enough to show the male politics in Mailer's novel in *An American Dream*. The

novel seems to be a document of the grand designing piece to subordinate women and suppress them by patriarchy. The whole adventure of the novel takes twenty-four hour's period in Manhattan and most of the action is presented in retrospective flashbacks. *An American Dream*, from the judgment of the treatment of female character in the novel, we can see Mailer's up being "prototypical male chauvinist" as Mailer treats female characters as "secondary" human being. The sexual relationship between Rojack and Deborah are the epitome of female victimization. From the inception of the novel, the male protagonist visualized powerful and dominant image in compare to the female protagonist as mere sexual object, a commodity for pleasure: "we went out one night on a double date and it turn out to be a fair evening for me. I seduced a girl who would have been bored by a diamond as big as the Ritz" (1). Male protagonist plays as the agent and female protagonist as mere object to fulfill the male sexual desire. The woman protagonist is compared with the material object which is to be used by the male as Adrienne Rich, the American feminist and poet said the power to describe the world is ultimate power and the ultimate power of the society is in male so they create women as mere object to satisfy their lust. The cruelty of killing Deborah is narrated by Rojack in horrifying manner:

I enter Deborah's room see her lying on her bed. I slap her across the face in turn; Debora rises from the bed and charges me, plunging her head into my abdomen. As the fight continues, I finally get the upper hand and Deborah surrenders. However, I remove my hand from her body falls on the ground, there was Deborah dead beside me on the flowered carpet of the floor, and there was no question of that she was dead, indeed she was dead. (35)

Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* teaches how to abuse wife, kill and live happily. Rojack, so called celebrity killed his wife cruelly after she is sexually exploited and seeks pleasure with other ladies. Here too reflection of patriarchy is clearly visible to show female weak and fragile. She is helpless in the fight with Rojack and Rojack intentionally came to kill her to whom he sexually benefited earlier. Though the male patriarchy sees Rojack as a celebrity, television personality, professor of existential psychology, politician and holder of the Distinguished Service Cross. But if we see him from feminist perspective; he is no more than a cold blooded murderer and male chauvinist to whom women are mere commodity for pleasure. Right in the same moment he kills his own wife leaving her warm dead body, enters the maid's room and engages in extensive sexual bout with her. The whole activity reflects the burning scenario of American lust and sexuality as if American male's "American Dream" is mere sex. But they don't care what the 'American Dream' of America female.

American women have to suffer and be exploited for the desire of the American male. In the name of the Americanization and fashion show women are compelled to be naked that is also the victimization of the women. Men are distinguished by brain but why women are judged through body? Because male patriarchy does so. Whether it is beauty contest or fashion show women are compelled to expose their inner body only for the pleasure of males. Capitalism at the same time uses women for advertisement by investing large amount of money, superficially individual may benefit but in real sense it is the commodification of women which is also smelled in the novel. Mailer portrays women characters sexy and sex appealing nor efficient ones who search for the women's existence because he himself is also the product of male dominated society: "she set up

now, her tricky breast lolling nicely” (47). Mr. Rojack killed his wife Deborah not from other reason rather than sex because every male finds other girl sexy regardless of his wife’s Hellenic beauty. So here also after murdering his wife Deborah, the cruel Rojack attracted to his own servant Ruta and his mind does not concentrate about his murdered wife rather sexually attracted to his maid Ruta. Sexual exploitation is only content in his mind as if “American Dream” of American male is mere sex. American dream of American equals to sexual exploitation of American female. Moreover, American women too hegemonized in this context. They also think their duty is fulfilled in being means of commodity to their male counterpart due to male dominated society. Ruta does revolt against Rojack due to same reason. She is heavily exploited by Rojack:

“How old are you?”

“Twenty Three “

She was probably Twenty-eight. “You are charming Twenty-three,” I said. (48)

Patriarchal society considers women as a commodity to use by male and female too at times consciously or unconsciously reinforce this social construction because to challenge this patriarchal constructed truth is very difficult to ordinary women like Ruta. So, though she is in her late twenties, she told a lie and said twenty-three and Rojack who is women hunter flatters her saying she is charming twenty-three because his intention is to sexually exploiting her which is possible only by flattery. Women are always victimized by male because they play with their emotion. Norman Mailer evinces the notion that “An *American Dream* is a complex fiction of reality and moral fluidity of American society”(qtd. in Kaufmaun 37). As one of the prolific and notorious writers of the late twentieth century, Mailer is both highly distinctive in his style and in many ways

representative of his time. *An American Dream* takes a disturbing look at American life and values. The novel shows how women are victimized by male and how many Deborahs, Cherrys, and Rutas are sexually abused and murdered in America in the name of 'American Dream'. Many Stephen Rojacks and Oswald Kellys exploit women and use them as commodity for their sexual pleasure. After seven years of marriage Rojack and Deborah are separated but the separated Deborah's needs are still covered by Rojack, instead get the inheritance from her millionaire father, she has to depend on small amount of money through separated husband, which is also due to the patriarchal society which subordinates women. Women are equal to men in every respect and what men can do, women are also capable enough to do and earn for their livelihood.

Moreover, Deborah is the daughter of millionaire old father but she cannot get his wealth why? It is because of male dominated society which is biased towards women. Deborah's dependence on her separated husband proves her to be sexual object of Rojack to whom he is liable to aid. This shows the American social construction against female. The 'American Dream' of Jefferson: life, liberty and pursuit of happiness do not apply to female. The social construction seeks subordination to the male partner and in the course of their 'American Dream' women should sacrifice. Deborah could not use and enjoy the father's property because she is female. Females from the higher or lower class of society have to suffer because patriarchal society constructs male chauvinistic truth which is practiced even in America:

But her breast came out of the open shirt, and slipped into my hand, and that breast was looking for no women's touch, no, it made its quick pert way toward what was hard and certain in my hand. It was as if I had never felt a breast before now with the fierce rhythm

of a child, but her breast was independent of her. That little lit in my hand was nosing like a puppy for its reward, impertinent with its promise of the sly life it could give to me, and so keen to pull in a life for itself that I was taken with a helpless lust. (55-56)

So, Ruta cries in the death of Deborah but Mr. Rojack's mind is rolling in the physical appearance of Ruta. Rojack is a women hunter and the evil of the society whose intention is to exploit women sexually and kill them. He plays with many women in his life. After the act of murder and the purging of his hatred, Rojack says "the calm eye contended seemed delicate. It was enough to stand near her body and look about the room" (42).

When he goes to the mirror and looks into it searching for the riddle of his face, he finds his rejuvenated after the act as if he has been reborn again with more confidence and energy:

I had never seen more handsome. It was the truth. It was exactly the sort of truth one discovers by turning a corner and colliding with stranger. My hair was alive and my eyes had the blue of a mirror held between the ocean and the sky [. . .] I looked deeper into the eyes into the mirror as if they were keyhole to a gate which gave on a palace. (42)

After the murder of the poor Deborah, Rojack rejoices the new life. What does it mean? It means, for male female is just a commodity which is to be extremely used up and throw.

Rojack is the emblem to modern American male who's one and only intention is to sexually exploit women and leave her or kill her and search for another one. Helen

Weinberg stated in the new novel in America: the Kafkan mode in contemporary fiction:

The mystical awareness of death, of sex, and of god is what Mailer [. . .] describes as the American existentialist experience. How can myriad awareness be programmatically described one wonders. It cannot, however , Mailer proposes a creed of activitism as an

opposing counterpart to a modern European brand of existentialism with its rationalistic aesthetic, pessimistic bias, and through the atavistic creed proposed may seem extreme, it is not without its relevance to the American scene, the good and bad of that scene the abundance and energy in American life which might go either way toward perversion, total madness and collective death, or through madness and violence toward new possibilities. (qtd. in Leeds 137)

Postwar American society is full of violence, cruelty, murder and female has to suffer a lot. In fact post war society though called as civilized but with the female issue it becomes more problematic. Male chauvinism plays a politics to subordinate female. Even the so called scholars of the society, writers, dramatists and directors of the films produce texts by doing male politics and always give women subordinate role. Rojack is regarded as the spoke-person for the post war generation. He is neither thinking about his prestige nor his responsibility when he murders his wife. Rojack never takes Deborah, Cherry, and Ruta equal to him. He doesn't care they are also American and about their "American Dream"-life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. He is bounded in his vested interest.

American nation is built on a foundation built upon the idea of individual freedom. Each person is permitted to make his or her own decisions, within legal limits. However, each citizen must be held accountable for the choices he or she made because their decision affects the lives of others, for example; if a man chooses to kill someone he must be trial and convicted, whereupon he would be sent to jail and thus held responsible for his actions. This is rather the literal interpretation of the notion of freedom and responsibility. But in postwar America, there is no such kind of limitation. The society itself is corrupt as Mailer presents in the novel that people are violating the moral norms and values. The

novel is the gallery of sexual freak and lust. Both male character Stephen Richard Rojack and Oswald Kelly subordinate female and exploit them as mere sexual object. Kelly even sexually exploits his own daughter at the age of fifteen and Rojack kills her. Mailer presents, in the novel, all the male characters as addicted and violators of norms and moral values. The most consistent pattern of parallel sexual involvement of that between Rojack and Kelly is that both men have had sexually exploited Deborah, Ruta and Cherry.

Mailer presents the vulgar culture developed within white liberalism. Sexual desire are not negative in themselves; both male and female bear this, but male use it for their subordination women and practice as if the female are material object for their purpose. Leigh said:

The central image of society cultivated by *An American Dream* is that of an establishment. Through a system of interlocking metaphors of copulation and incest, centering on Rojack's father-in-law Barney Kelly, and related metaphors system concerns with espionage centering on Rojack's wife Deborah, Mailer creates a considers but highly suggestive picture of capitalistic culture controlled by a sophisticated network that forms C. Wright Mills labeled the power elite: "an intricate set of overlapping cliques (sharing) decision having at least national consequences". (88)

Mailer has strived to visualize a sense of inhumanity and male politics to subordinate women in the sexual activity. Kelly reveals his own incestuous attachment to Deborah along with complex tangles of sexual, financial and mystical dealings to exploit women. Kelly sexually abused Ruta and sent to Rojack's house as a maid and he has impregnated Cherry twice in the past.

Miller presents the views that, this kind of perverse sexual exploitation are degenerative follies in a civilized culture. For the progress and prosperity of any society both male and female should get equal opportunity to gain “American Dream of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness”. By dominating female, abusing and subordinating them no one gets the peak of dream. In each and every chapter of *An American Dream*, male characters always intend to subordinate female and extremely abuse them. All the characters are American and they are barbaric in their relation to female partner. Rojack, the so called protagonist who supposes himself as inheritor of civilized manner became the most barbaric. A.O. Scott observes:

Mailer’s worst novel-the novel whose place in his canon is therefore absolutely– the incredible to the incomprehensible. Yet the book’s chaos seems new to be a vivid and indelible reflection of the disordered of its time and place. It is a work of sublime bravery. (qtd. in Kich 4)

Mailer’s purpose in the novel is to show how the ‘American Dream’ leads to Nightmare especially to the female, to whom society does not act as a human being and always patriarchy plays with them. Sex is natural but gender is social construct to subordinate women .In a nightclub, Rojack meets and sexually abuses Cheery. She comes from a small southern town, move northwest to Las Vegas, and then east to New York, becoming involved with men who are contently corrupted. Women have no any other way out. In their conversation Rojack freely admitted to Deborah’s murder and Cherry paints a frightening sordid picture of her youth in a home without parents in which her elder brother sexually abused her sister and engaged in incest. The sexual exploitation of Kelly to her own daughter Deborah and Cherry’s brother behavior shows how barbaric

the American males are toward women. . Even inside the four walls of the houses, women are not safe. Males always dominate them and use as sexual object. Mailer places Stephen Richard Rojack in intimate relationship with society which is male dominated and see female as the mere sexual object. Mailer examines the sickness at the heart of American society. There is no mutual relation among characters because male politics do not provide such scenario. Male always tries to subordinate women and suppress them sexually. Male does not find anything in female more than sex. So they look at female as sexual object to abuse. Lack of sufficient love and inability to find satisfactory release for their erotic tension is the responsible factor for sexual exploitation in the novel *An American Dream*.

Mailer in the novel tries to show women as passive, empty mirror, a frail, decorated, mindless animal, Incapable of a voice in her own existence. This is also itself a tool of male politics to subordinate female. Are all American females weak and empty in real sense? No, but why Mailer shows all female character mere commodity for sex?. This is also noticeable point to be comprehended. Kaufmann said: "*An American Dream* is the departure from practically anything I have done before."-contain vestiges of the old, and Mailer's fourth novel can be read as sardonic social criticism (35). In the novel, Rojack says us of three historic days during which his lethargy and his feeling of entrapment by murdering his wife. Rojack describes how he thereafter manages to cope with both the police and his father in law, the powerful, wealthy, and demonic Barney Kelly. He relates how during three days he feels in love with a night club singer named Cherry and sexually abuses her and later confronted by the sudden and violent death of Cherry and her former lover, Shago Martin. Both males are fighting to sexually exploit

Cherry as the Cherry is nothing but the sexual product that can win, can use her. Rojack says: “god, I want to pray’ let me love that girl and become a father, and try to be good man, and do some decent work” (47). By the subordination and commodification of women even males also should suffer. Stephen Richard Rojack also suffers. Exploitation of the female for the time being may give pleasure to male but for the long terms males should also suffer. Mutual relation among male and female is the sweet fruit of life which enables both sexes contentment. Male politics neither provide ‘American Dream’ to American males nor to the females. Though American males try to grasp American Dream by subordinating women but it cannot be the pure path. Pure path is to believe the potentiality of the female and respect them. The novel tries to present false illustration to subordinate women by commodification. In fact the novel tries to prove women as a sexual material and male only the rational human being who can earn money and gain name and fame when Rojack killed his wife “I open my eyes. I was weary with a most honorable fatigue and my flesh seems new. I had not felt so nice since I was twelve (32). Again he says “if Deborah dying had given me new life I must be all of eight hours old by now” (63). All the above illustration is the false notion of male. Earlier too Rojack sexually abuses and marries Deborah not because he loved her but for name and fame. Later he kills her and thinks he is renewals which is his short sightedness because sowing evil good cannot be harvested.

In *An American Dream* Mailer’s politics is to dominate female and intend to create the false notion against women. By studying the whole novel one may create false notion against women rather reflecting the social scenario. Moreover, politics is to subordinate female instead of adding the bricks in the correlation of both sexes. Mailer’s

contention is to suppress women and rule them. Though in the final phase Rojack regrets his misconduct but the regret is not for the welfare of female. Mailer is himself in his real life a notorious person who married more than six wives and stabbed his own wife too, as similar to protagonist of the novel, Stephen Richard Rojack. So, the novel is somehow the semi-autobiographical. Mailer also could not love the single wife but he was the playboy who used to sexually abuse many women. So the novel *An American Dream's* politics is to subordinate female and suppress them for the sake of American males 'American Dream'. For the sake of male's personal freedom and integrity female should sacrifice. The male characters like Stephen Richard Rojack and Kelly time and again sexually abused female and even Rojack killed but none of them get punishment. It shows the naked picture of American law. Rojack is saved because he is a television personality, professor of existential psychology, ex- congressman, holder of the distinguish service cross. Many Deborahs, Cherrys, and Rutas are sexually abuse and killed but they cannot get justice because so called American Dream is not applied for women as if American society does not see women as human being.

The corrupt American system becomes more evident when we examine the case of Deborah, Kelly, Ruta and others. Deborah, one of her friends reveals, was a double agent. And Kelly had sent his own mistress Ruta as a servant of Deborah in order to spy on the secret life of Deborah. Kelly was leader of mafia and earned enough money but he is corrupt economically and emotionally. Being the father of Deborah, sexually abuses her and sent his mistress to spy her, shows how deteriorating the American society,` is reflected. Before murdering Deborah, Rojack had the idea that, without the connection she had, which was mostly corrupt the gateway to success would be obstructed and he

would be alone but later he thinks to his self definition he should kill Deborah. But he does not think what should be done for the definition of Deborah. Stephen Rojack never thinks Deborah as the co-partner rather sexual object for his self defining act. Earlier she is his self defining agent, later her absence is his self defining condition. Patriarchy creates its own truth to subordinate female. Earlier Rojack uses Deborah for his post and prestige because she is from rich family. Later he feels burden and strangles her. In both the cases Deborah is victimized.

The name of the novel *An American Dream*, especially in the case of female is ironic. If Mailer's understanding is only for male that can be okay. But for the women and through women's perspective *An American Dream* as a title of the novel is ironic. It might be true Mailer himself is male chauvinist and never and ever respected women's emotion and tries to find *An American Dream* by suppressing females. But he should know male politics to subordinate women cannot attain, 'American Dream' to male too. America valorizes the male chauvinism and does not punish the female hunters like Rojack and Kelly. But it is ironic to desire for 'American Dream in such a lawless state. To gain the 'American Dream' male and female should attain equal opportunity. In such a condition the American can conceive a dream that can be beneficial for all American people, be they male or female. To attain such scenario subordination and suppression of the women should be stopped. If male hegemony and suppression continue, strong revolt should face the American society and rest of the world. Male made truth cannot be tolerable to the womanhood. Mailer himself is the male chauvinist and tries to assert the male created truth that female is the mere sexual object. Male constructed truth perceives female as the passive, emotional.. Even different religion gives women's subordinate role

to male. Karl Marx refers religion as 'Opium'. For feminist he is correct because each and every religion contain biased attitude towards female. This is why? The answer is simple. Like the authority is governed by males each and every religion is controlled and interpreted by male. So, the equal status of females like Cherry, Deborah and Ruta is indispensable. In *An American Dream* Mailer shows female as mere sexual object to a large extent. Till now female cannot get rid of the male politics. Only difference is the procedure. Even today in the name of advertisement, beauty contest and fashion show, male-dominated society exploits female sexually. Many Deborahs are killed and Cherry and Ruta are raped in the plot of male politics.

Mailer's *An American Dream* ignores the American female's 'American Dream' because the text emphasizes male existence whether sexually exploiting many women killing them, the existence of the hero is emphasized. Mailer's mind is full of male chauvinism so that his female characters in the novel are submissive and passive recipients. Mailer as the male chauvinist creates female character weak, seeking male protection and made them believe that it is necessary for them. Though Ruta, Cherry and Deborah are massively exploited by male like Kelly and Rojack, they don't complain to the authority because male constructed society prevents them to revolt. Instead of developing independent self like that of Rojack, they seek fine life partner and become happy to identify themselves with male. But male, on the other hand, always intend to play with their emotion and don't perceive them as the mutual partner rather as a sexual object and mere commodity for sexual pleasure. So, though negatively, this novel aware female to fight and revolt against male constructed truth of the society and patriarchal hegemony. Until and unless stern step against this biased society is launched, women are

always subordinated and suppressed by patriarchal politics. Stephen Richard Rojack and Oswald Kelly are the icons of the modern political and business world who use and abuse women for their private benefit through terror and pressure. To them women are mere sexual commodity so women should understand such male politics of their suppression and subordination. Women should apply more rational mind against male politics and should advance steps to gain authentic existence. To achieve such goal women should prepare to act against patriarchy because it, by its created truth is the hindrance against female's authentic existence. In fact Mailer's *An American Dream* is the obstacle to female existence because it tends to construct male existence by sexually exploiting and murdering female's soul and body. Male characters Kelly, Rojack and Cherry's brother play with female's body and emotion.

There was just one tiny flaw," said Cherry. "Brother was sticking it into sister every night." She shook her head. "I used to hear my mother and father talking to me on the way from school. "Tell big brother to stop his illness,' they would say. And when I got to be eight or ten, I came to know what people in town were on to what was going on.[. . .] He sorts of dislike us. But he knew what it could do to impress a town with six hundred churchgoers. If he accepted his burden at eighteen, I mean he thought that way: even before he was eighteen, he had big jaws, and a cigar stuck in them. (168)

So Mailer's *An American Dream* reflects how demonic the male nature is upon women, even inside four walls of the houses female are not secure. Stephan Richard Rojack said, "Yes I killed her," "but I didn't seduced her when she was fifteen, and never leave her

alone, and never end the affairs” (253). Here, Rojack anger related to Oswald Kelly, the father of Deborah to whom her own father sexually abused her. The male dominated society freely celebrates the suppression and misbehaves with female. The society and legal authority shows blind eyes and deaf ear upon the case of women’s exploitation: In this silence, Cheery was singing: when the deep purple falls over sleepy garden walls. On sleepy gardens walls she stuck five perfect notes, five like the five bells of an angle come to the wake of a bomb, clear, a cluster of the loveliest consecutive sounds I ever heard. A rare movement of balm in this battered room to hear the song of a lovely women’s body. (99)

The above lines point nothing but sensuousness of women’s body. In other words, novelist intends to commodify female’s body as the male’s notion to dominate women. Male dominated society’s main weapon to subordinate women is to compare them with angelic beauty and in the same time tries to prove they are mere beauty without brain. Rojack further said:

I was watching her foot beat the rhythm. She was wearing sandals which exposed her toes, and she had painted her nail. I was taken with this vanity, I was absorbed with it, for the most attractive women, her toes were the ugliest part of her body. Not ugly exactly, not deformed, but certainly too large. Her big toes was round, round as a half dollar, and larger than a quarter- it was one round greedy self-satisfied digit, and the four little toes were not so little either, each of them round balls, each of them much larger to peek at five sensuous, even piggish, but must complacent little melons of flesh surrounding five relatively tiny toenails, each broader than they were long, which depressed me. (99)

The male dominated society accepts women as the sexual object and shows keen interest about female body. Patriarchal society ignores female's creativity and rationality merely, describe about their superficial beauty. In the novel, *An American Dream*, there is no physical description of male characters be it Rojack or Oswald Kelly. But for women even sandal and toes are in discussion. Is this why? Because society is not fair for women. Male, in the course of hegemonization of female, doesn't talk about women's capacity but merely talks about their body. Male find each and every part of the female sensual even to the toes of their feet. In fact, male conception is full of bias attitude over women. Though male and female both equally capable in their individual talent, but male doesn't accept female's capacity but only give priority in women's body. Actually sexual pleasure is the natural gift and both male and female enjoy it. But male use it for mere subordination of women. Until and unless male take it as natural and doesn't use it for women's subordination, society doesn't go for equality and hence rape case doesn't end. So to attain 'American Dream' for women, male's contaminated mind should be emptied. Rojack says:

There was a tension in me like the taste of the bit in the jaws of a horse who wanted to gallop. Put it simply, I was the equal of a cigarette smoker who has been three days with out a butt- underneath every thing. I wanted sex now, not for pleasure, not for love, but to work this tension: ignore the leaden, almost sensuous fatigue I felt in my heart as I climbed the stairs, I needed sex, I wanted it very much. (124)

Male dominated society compares women to animals; moreover, wrongly uses sexual activity to the animal's feed. Male's subordination and suppression of women clearly

shows in the above description. Though in developed country like America women are mere object for male's pleasure but males hesitate to accept this also. Moreover, they compare it with addiction like smoking cigarette. Though negatively compared with cigarette, we can analyze it positively. As smoking destroys both smoker and cigarette, male also destroys himself and women. But we should keep in mind that male's such analysis to subordinate and suppress women indicate the inevitability of radical revolution of women. Are the women sexual objects to be used up? Until and unless male dominated society sees and treats women as subhuman and sexual object, and use from commercial perspective, society based in equality can not be imagined. Time has come to revolt against male hegemony.

To come up with this notion, capitalism may appear as an obstacle in smooth path because capitalism lures female with money. So, in spite of stern feminist's voice, women can not boycott fashion show and various beauty contests. They accept naked dance in front of male due to greed of money. Many Deborahs, Rutas and Cherrys are shown in blue films sucking male's sexual organs, but why? Because capitalism creates the notion that money is every thing. Even ex-president Bill Clinton sexually abused Monika Levenskey in his own office like Rojack and Kelly do because capitalism is the furnished tool to subordinate female in modern era. So , to tackle this furnished tool, liberal feminist perspective is worthless to get rid of this spider webs of male's politics, rather radical feminism is essential. Today's need is to destroy the spider web of male hegemony and steps toward the real and pure American dream of "Life, liberty and pursuit of happiness." Females are neither the sexual objects nor the cigarette that male easily can smoke. Women are as potential and efficient as male. Though America and

Americans shout loud about American dream, they ignore women and their American dream which is clearly reflected in the novel *An American Dream*.

This novel *An American Dream* is the product of Norman Mailer's psyche of subordination over women, moreover, the psyche of American people who regard women as mere sexual object. In fact, the novel itself is product of male politics to subordinate and suppress women. In their ideas, women are mere sexual object like Cherry, Debora and Ruta who do not bear brain but mere sex organs for male's assumption like cigarette. Cherry says:

You see, baby, she said, "dig: my sister was just one six girls Shago had waiting for him every time he passed through New York." And I decided she was too dedicated to him; she was just a kid. So I got together with her and Shago to shame him. Out of it, and crash! I became one of the six girls he had waiting for him in New York. I mean Shago's stud, Mr. Rojack.

(126)

Mailer's attitude toward women is biased so he shows women as mere recipient. Shago is stud who plays with many women including Cherry. Cherry's sister committed suicide because she was excluded by Shago. It shows her weak mental attitude. Mailer, to subordinate females, uses such characters to represent woman which is biased. No women commit suicide for the sake of stud. On the other hand, six girls are not attracted to the single individual but to show men superior, Mailer portrait biased scene in his text. The scene tries to show women as a sexual object whose utility is more than sex. Though Cherry's sister is dedicated to Shago, Shago ignores her because male politics is to sexually exploit women and turn off his eyes from her which is done by Shago. Latter his

eagled eyes attracted to Charry and sexually exploit her too. In fact males are demons whose mere intention is to sexually exploit women, which can be analyzed through this text. Like Rojack, Kelly, Shago is also a black women hunter whose only intention is to sexually abuse women. Shago at the same time exploits women sexually which is the miserable condition for women.

Male politics to exploit women is always the obstacle in the progress and prosperity of women. Mailer's novel *An American Dream*, in fact, is essential to study to get rid of women's subordination and suppression because male politics to subordinate women is clearly visible in the text. To struggle against male subordination and oppressive behavior, feminism should go against the sub-humanistic depiction of women characters like in the novel *An American Dream*. Since manifest side of 'American Dream' projected the notion of equality at financial, social, political and cultural level however, this 'Dream' is biased in terms of sex and gender.

IV. Conclusion

After the meticulous discussion and analysis of Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*, which is heavily guided by the patriarchal norms and values reflects the present socio-cultural status of females in the society. Even in the so-called developed and civilized society like America, this text evinces women are neglected and exploited sexually. Male even does not think that he came from the womb of the mother and through the same sexual organ. American male take women as mere sexual object and ignores their wants. They are never tired of chanting the mantra's of "American Dream of Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness" but all the vibration of the mantra's are muted in the case of women. Emancipation of women does not come in America until and unless patriarchal constructed truth is not ruptured. 'American dream' is a satire to them. Actually, topic of the novel itself *An American Dream* is ironic from the perspective of females. Because in the whole novel there is no any trace of "life, liberty nor happiness" in the face of female characters. They are cheated, sexually exploited or strangled to death.

So, Norman Mailer, while writing the novel might have thought about the American male and their dreams. Actually novelist is also the product of same patriarchal society where man born from the same women's womb but look down afterward because patriarchy constructed certain truth to subordinate women. Even authority shows deaf ears and blind eyes for women. Kelly sexually abuses her own daughter; Cherry's brother exploited her own sister. Moreover, Deborah does not get justice though strangled to death by Rojack. Post and position are for male in patriarchal society, Rojack celebrity and congressman, Kelly businessman but female characters are mere sex partners and

sexual commodity for male. They think women don't bear brain, mere body. Even female support it due to male constructed truth of society. Ruta is sex partner of Oswald Kelly but Kelly sends her to Rojack's house to spy Debora but Ruta doesn't oppose it because she is hagemonized to male's superiority and social construct that women are not supposed to use there brain. Male dominated society put brain in the domain of males.

In fact women are equally efficient to cope with the huddles of the life and viable to achieve the responsible position in the society but long run history of male domination in society deprive them from attaining social figure through knowledge. Due to the biased social norms women are deprived of higher social status. In *An American Dream*, male characters got strong social status but female characters are submissive and live for the sake of male's pleasure. Time and again male characters play with female's emotion and cheat them. Is the female mere sexual object? This serious question arises time and again while analyzing the novel *An American Dream*. It reflects the deplorable plight of the American women who deprived to exercise their capacity and caliber to gain the figure of individuality that is free to achieve her "American Dream of Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness".

Male politics in order to subordinate female is the obstacle to achieve women's 'American Dream' because male reign female through patriarchal constructed truth which exist till now.

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