

I. Projection of Women in *21st Century Sumnima*

This research has analyzed the novel, *21st Century's Sumnima*, published in 2058 B.S by Pradeep Nepal, through the gender perspective where the resisting voice of traditional gender roles is figured out through the character portrayal of Sumnima. Gender role can be challenged and dismantled in any time and space because it is not a permanent category rather a social constructed ideas about man and woman. In the novel, Sumnima is the main character who is quite strong and practical. She is no more like traditional kinds of woman who silently accepts masculine value systems that always positions man in power position and controlling figure. Traditional social structure is based on such masculine value system which creates biased attitudes about masculinity and femininity. It has figured out masculine characteristics of aggression, power, and competition as good and desirable where as feminine characteristics of compassion, tenderness and compromise as weak and ridiculous. In such a way, traditional social structure supports hegemonic masculinity where man posses power in order to dominate and rule over to women. Here, in the case of Sumnima, she is a revolutionary character having self-determination. She is no more concerned about the so called patriarchal value systems so she reacts against it through her bold activities and revolutionary behaviors. In this sense, she alters all the stereotypical images of gender roles as well as the so called traditional conservative beliefs and values; and at the same time she struggles and faces lots of hardships in order to achieve self-confidence as well as independence in her life. Most importantly, Sumnima challenges and subverts the gendered roles that are assigned to man and woman, which lead her to refuse to succumb to the traditional gender roles by questioning on patriarchal ideology.

Primitive society established certain restrictions and dictated certain rules over sexes as a result male started showing their supremacy and imposing his authority over female. In such a way they established unanimous rules and regulations in every aspect of humanity. Such masculine value system always taught female to believe that they are less valuable and physically, mentally and spiritually inferior and unequal to men. In another sense, such male created rules and assumptions reinforce male supremacy which can be called patriarchal ideology. Patriarchy or sexism always promotes the discriminating gender role which marks man as superior and women as inferior. It believes that women are innately inferior to men. So in this sense, patriarchy has created the notion of biological essentialism where the notion of inborn inferiority of women is promoted because it is based on biological differences between the sexes that are considered part of our unchanging essence as men and women. Sigmund Freud commented that "women are not only fundamentally different from men in character but inferior to them physically (in sexual capacity and equipment), emotionally (in stability and control), and ethnically (in the sense of honesty and justice)" (qtd. in Ruth 125). Similarly, patriarchy has set the discriminating notion of gender roles that are internalized as a natural concept although it is a social programming role as masculine and feminine.

In patriarchal social system, for the justification and maintenance of male monopoly of positions of economic, political, and social power, women are made powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political and social power. Therefore, women have occupied the inferior position for a long time. As the women are undermined under the patriarchal restrictions for centuries then they identify themselves as recovered patriarchal women in the sense that they have internalized the norms and values of patriarchy

which can be called as culture that privileges man by promoting traditional gender roles. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify inequalities where women are excluded from equal access to leadership and decision making position (in the family as well as in politics, academic, and the corporate world). In nutshell, "[P]atriarchy continually exerts forces that undermine women's self-confidence and assertiveness, then points to the absence of these qualities as proof the women are naturally, and therefore correctly, self-effacing and submissive" (Tyson 86-87). In this way, women have been victim of gender discrimination of patriarchy and male ideology which ultimately cause them to suffer from repression, suppression and mental torture. Sheila Ruth notes:

masculine is not only the cause of misinterpretations of women's nature, it is also the reflection, the expression of an almost universal abhorrence for women themselves and for a whole set of characteristics historically ascribed to women in western culture: sensitivity, acquiescence, compassion, compromise aesthetic sensibility. These qualities, though officially regarded with respect are actually considered appropriate only in women. (10)

Masculine value system considers women as passive, submissive, intuitive and brainwashed creatures; and accordingly, women's images is distorted by the suppressed ideology of patriarchy. Such distorted images about women are deeply embedded in the society, as a result, women have to face many inequalities and gender discrimination through out the history. In this sense patriarchal ideology is biased masculine value system which is one-sided and creates false assumptions about women's nature. It is an assumptions designed to dominate women, and it always assigns to them subordinate and peripheral position in the society. In this regard,

women for centuries have been mistreated, repressed, deprived and tortured by the males.

But when the time is passed on, women start becoming conscious of their position in the society and existing discrimination between men and women. The rapid changing socio-political atmosphere results in unimaginable development of information technology and human consciousness which have resulted unforeseen changes in spheres of various activities. The impact of this all obviously brought awareness among women. As a result, more and more able women came to the forefront. Most of the women were conscious towards their life, liberty and started to question over the traditional conservative society and challenged to reform it. When women were conscious towards their rights and freedom then they raised their sharp voice against the oppressed and suppressed masculine values system. Similarly, they understood that such so called masculine value system is not truth at all rather a strong weapon to dominate and suppress women by man. In such a way, they rejected an uncritical adoption of male values and devaluated the traditional discriminating gender roles. Besides challenging the traditional social structure, women were also very much conscious about their individual identity and independent life style.

Such revolutionary and challenging spirit is deeply embedded in the character portrayal of Sumnima. In the novel, Sumnima is a rebellious character who goes against all patriarchal rules and regulations and longs for her autonomous identity. Regarding this novel, Dr Govinda Raj Bhattraai notes:

The novel is a departure from political idealism to practical life- a journey from high idealism to practicality. It is full of tension a divided mentality and so of personality, should one be a mother or party

worker, a bread earner or freedom fighter? There are innumerable crevices and chasms in the journey life. (ix)

Bhattarai, in these lines advocates the story and experiences of the main character, Sumnima who is bold and dynamic. The novel is all about her experiences of childhood to adulthood where she encounters lots of upheaval in her life. Sumnima has great experiences being a party worker, freedom fighter as well as a breadwinner for her family. So, she has multi experiences of different aspects of human life. In this sense too, Sumnima lives very practical life. Every individual is a unique entity and is incomparable with the rest. Here in Sumnima's case, her life is guided by her own insight, innate power and self motivation which become her strong inspiration to move ahead independently into a unit of social life. At the same time, Sumnima is a freedom fighter who is aware of the fact that how women are deprived of freedom in particular society. She is keen to live her respectful life, she seems to be self-seeking women who is able to establish her own position in the society showing that women are equally capable to exist themselves and they can create their autonomous identity. Similarly the translator of this novel, Subhash Ghimire says:

[. . .] this novel can be an experimental writing. The writing has let the novel go naturally. In the novel he has not tried to establish that politics is the supreme profession, nor has he tried to cover up the prevision of politics [. . .]. This story looks even more real in our contemporary context. The story of Nepal cannot only be the story of the kings or some elite people, the story of Nepal is in fact the story of all of us, the story of you and me, it should be even more the story of those, who have not been heard and written about. (xiv - xv)

In the novel, though we find political issue as well but writer's intention is not to promote it as the supreme profession rather he brings such political subject matter in order to compare the life of a politician and life of a great freedom. Sumnima chooses a life of freedom, a life of a school teacher; on the other hand, her husband is a politician. In comparison to the life of great freedom, the life of a politician can never enjoy freedom. So the writer admires the life of great freedom where Sumnima is confidently living. Similarly, the writer has presented the character not from elite group but from a middle class group in order to break the traditional ways of creating story. Anyway, the writer, in this novel has presented an energetic and courageous woman character and the whole story is all about her life experiences.

In the novel, Sumnima revolts against patriarchy by rejecting the traditional marriage system and its evil practices where girls are denied their freedom of choice and fundamental rights in their life. Similarly, she opposes every evil aspects of patriarchal ideology in order to achieve equal status of women and the life of complete freedom. On the one hand, Sumnima longs for freedom at the same time; she is much concerned about the equal statues of women in relation to men in the society. For it she insists on women awareness, active participation in every field as well as autonomous identity in the society.

While talking about this novel, Sajha Prakashan further writes:

Pradeep Nepal's new novel, *21st century's Sumnima* has brought something newness in Nepali literature esp. in the field of novel. It gives new glimpses in literacy field with interesting contemporary subject matter which is based on practical and factual events. This novel is written in biographical style which is narrated in first person point of view. Through this novel, Nepal has tried to uplift the position

of Nepalese women who are marginalized, violated and suppressed throughout the history. Most importantly, this novel has brought tremendous change in women's consciousness and self awareness. (My Trans vii)

Regarding this novel, many critics have analyzed it through different perspectives. Most of them have emphasized women empowerment in order to overcome from the chain of social norms and values which are based on patriarchal order. According to the rapid change of time, when women have acquired mature conception of freedom, self awareness as well as self determination; as a result, they react against the suppressed male dominated society which formulate wrong conception about gender discrimination. In this novel too, Sumnima has acquired mature conception about women's rights and liberty so she utilizes such great knowledge in her practical life as a result, she is able to establish her separate niche in the society. By presenting such dynamic character the writer tries to uplift the position of Nepali women high above the depth of suppression and repression of patriarchal ideology.

Although many critics have focused on different issues related to this novel but this research paper is quite distinct in the sense that it has studied this novel through the feminist perspective with reference to gender studies. In the novel, Pradeep Nepal has presented rebellious woman character who discards the traditional concept of gender roles and tries to be independent by challenging the outdated patriarchal social structure. In order to analyze the novel, research paper has included its sub division divided into four chapters.

This first chapter mainly focuses on the overall structure of the novel which is the main target of this research work. Similarly, the chapter also presents reviews

regarding this novel given by different critics and justifies the purpose of researcher which is its significance and the point of departure.

Similarly, theoretical modality is presented in the second chapter in order to support and justify the hypotheses. For theoretical modality, feminist perspective is applied which is mainly based on gender studies and women's studies. The traditional social structure has defined gender hierarchically that creates negative images about women and they were heavily handicapped by such rule of patriarchy. So such patriarchal ideology has a pervasive influence on the way we think, speak, see ourselves and view the world in which we live. Pervasiveness of patriarchal ideology raises some important question for feminist theory that how can we ever get beyond from it? how can we ever think or speak differently if our modes of thinking is patriarchal or as a whole how can we ever become non patriarchal. Thus, in order to solve these questions and resist against patriarchy, a critical theory is developed called feminism. So, the patriarchal system gives birth to feminism because for centuries, women are made as an object where they are highly exploited, suppressed and subjugated from the masculine value system. In this way, we can say that feminism is a critical stance that deconstructs and dismantles biased attitude of masculine value system, and it has the purpose of eliminating the oppression of women in all forms of traditional restrictions and superstitions as well as it encourages to women to challenge against the outdated assumptions of female inferiority and strive to articulate their equal status with men for creating their own autonomous identity in the society.

At the same time, feminism gives value to women group identifies as women and try to avoid using men (the masculine) as the standard of comparison. It means to say that women should be considered in their own terms. Moreover, feminism sharply

advocates about women empowerment, their right to equality in each field or full legal equality with men in each and every field. Similarly, it resists against the unjust and unnecessary restrictions and evilness of patriarchy which are forcefully imposed upon women. This is why feminism can be pronounced as foundation and spring of women's right, liberty and self independent identity. It shows the right path to women in order to go for resistance against patriarchal ideology and on the other hand it brings self consciousness and awareness in women for their rights and autonomous identity. So, in nutshell, feminism focuses on women values and authority in proposition to men as well as it discards and ignores male constructed ideology.

In this way chapter two is all about theoretical information in which the researcher has used the tool 'feminism' for the justification of hypothesis. Likewise, the textual analysis of this novel is given in third chapter where the researcher has applied theoretical modality in order to prove and make clear the hypothesis. On the other side this research work reflects the strong resistance of woman against traditional beliefs of gender roles which shows the challenging and rebellious spirit of woman against traditional gender roles. In the text (novel) the character Sumnima is an energetic and rebellious character who dismantles the boundaries created by traditional gender roles. In this sense, this chapter helps to prove the goal of the research.

Then, the last chapter or chapter four contains conclusion of the study in which theoretical modality, textual analysis and other some recommendation are followed which are based on the findings of the study. In conclusion part, the researcher has concluded that the traditional gendered roles about masculine and feminine are challenged over here by projecting the revolutionary female character, Sumnima in the novel.

II. Feminist Approach in Gender Studies and Its Questioning to the Traditional Gender Roles

Gender is a kind of constructed term where the two distinct and separate categories: masculine and feminine are put as oppositional. These two categories are regarded as the opposite gender in the sense that gender divides the human beings and social practices along the lines of 'gender identities'. These two categories are not only regarded as opposite but also they are put into a hierarchy in which male is typically considered as primary and female as secondary. The gender roles have been used very successfully to justify inequities between male and female where men are kept in power position and women are excluded from equal access to leadership and position of power. In this regard, gender is basically defined on the basis of dichotomy between men and women where men are figured as strong, aggressive, rational and independent and women as weak, passive, emotional and dependent.

Moreover, the term gender is social construction. It is not inborn concept, neither is predetermined fact instead it is artificial and constructed idea. Regarding this issue, Simon De Beauvoir says that "[o]ne is not born but rather becomes a woman" (203). By articulating this statement, Beauvoir argues that the category of women is not the inborn concept but a cultural construction. She insists that the concepts of masculine and feminine are culturally and socially defined categories. Beauvoir further insists that no one is born with gender because it is social civilization that produces a dichotomy between men and women. While talking about this issue, one of the famous feminist critics Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick views that gender is a kind of detailed discourse which defines male and female identities hierarchically. As he notes:

Gender [. . .] is the far more elaborated, more fully and rigidly dichotomized social production and reproduction of male and female identities and behaviors- of female and male person - in a cultural system for which "male - female" functions as a primary and perhaps model binarism affecting the structure and meaning of man other binarisms whose apparent connection to chromosomal sex may often be exiguous or non-existent. (273)

Here, Sedgwick asserts gender as a kind of 'social production' which functions on the basis of dichotomy between masculine and feminine gender roles in a particular society.

Similarly, gender is defined in relation to sex and sexuality. Some people consider that sex and gender are similar. Foucault says that "the category of sex is constructed in the service of a system regulatory and reproductive sexuality" (qtd. in Butler 140). He insists that sex is as similar to gender which is social construction but we may not agree with this notion because all human beings are potentially sexed by their birth. So, sex can be defined as an anatomical category whereas gender is a social construction. About it, Anne Cranny Francis Views:

This idea of sex, of a natural biological coupling and equivalence, is part and parcel of the establishment in certain western cultures of a battle of the sexes, of a binary opposition, which makes this distinction and mutual exclusiveness between men and women appear natural. (4)

Here, the term sex refers to certain biological categories of female and male. So the identification of sex is based on a variety of factors including chromosomal patterns, hormonal make up, and genital structure. In this regard, we find quite different senses

between the terms sex and gender where sex indicates to our biological constitution as female or male, and the word gender refers to our cultural programming as feminine or masculine. So, the definition of sex refers to a person's biological femaleness or maleness. In this way, sex reveals how our bodies are rigorously policed into two sexes: male or female. Here sex is dependent on biology which is not changeable; it is permanent whereas gender is later on attributed to the sexed bodies which have psychological and cultural connotations. As Sedgwick views that:

Compared with chromosomal sex, which is seen as tending to be immutable, immanent in the individual and biologically based, gender is seen as culturally mutable and variable, highly relational, and inextricable from a history of power differentials between genders. (273-274)

Sex is seen as tending to be immutable, immanent, natural and biological which also refers to the physical difference of the body whereas gender is seen as culturally mutable and variable roles and responsibilities assigned to males and females that is based on the perceived differences of the sex themselves.

While discussing gender and sex, the idea of sexuality is also intimately tied up with sex and gender. The term sexuality is also socially and historically constructed term where our sexual orientation is based on social and cultural factors. Our sexuality may be different at different times over the course of our lives because sexuality is a dynamic range of desire. So according to the sexual desires and activities, human sexuality is defined as gay sexuality, lesbian sexuality, bisexuality and heterosexuality. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes that "the definition of one's sexuality might be based on such oppositions as "orgasmic/nonorgasmic, commercial, using bodies only/using manufactured objects, in private/in public,

spontaneous/ scripted" (57). Here Sedgwick argues that human sexuality is defined in terms of paired opposites other than same-sex or different-sex object choice. He further insists that the definition of one's sexuality might be based on one's preference for particular acts, sensations, or physical types.

The genders male and female are themselves constructed by reference to socially, historically constituted definitions of heterosexuality which is taken as the positively coded sexuality. It means male behaviors equates with heterosexual masculine behaviors, female with heterosexual feminine behaviors. Moreover, gender and heterosexuality can be seen as categories which regulate individual subjects according to how they are prepared to perform their sexuality. In this sense heterosexuality is a socially constructed category which has the power to regulate and reinforce not only particular kinds of sexual practice but also the gender categories based on them. As Judith Butler says that "masculine and feminine, male or female exist only within the heterosexual matrix" (141). Here Butler uses the phrase 'heterosexual matrix' in order to refer to heterosexuality which is cultural construction and through with bodies, genders and desires seem to appear naturally heterosexual.

Furthermore, on the basis of the idea of sexuality, the concept of gender is constituted. Basically, on the basis of individuals sexual act itself, the category of gender or moreover the concept of male and female similarly the masculine role and feminine role can be defined. As similar as gender, sexuality also functions hierarchically that marks female sexuality as naturally masochistic, narcissistic and passive whereas male sexuality inscribes as naturally aggressive, sadistic and active. According to traditional gender assumptions, female sexuality is considered as abnormal, unnatural and submissive sexual objects whereas male as normal, natural,

active and rational sexual subject. In such a way, gender and sexuality are defined in terms of binarism which always position men as positive subject and women as negative object or the term 'otherness' is coined to women's identity. In this sense the terms gender and sexuality are quite similar since both are socially and historically constituted.

When gender defines in term of binary opposition between masculinity and femininity, and it operates according to assigned different social roles to be performed by them. It means gender is a construction because gender identity is performatively constituted. While talking about gender as performance, Judith Butler says that "the regulatory practices of gender formation and division constitute identity" (23). She argues that identity is a social construction which is created out of the stabilizing concept of sex, gender and sexuality. Gender identity is repeatedly practiced through stylized repetitions of acts. As Butler further comments:

Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movement, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gender self. (179)

Here, Butler suggests that gender is a ritualized form of repetitive acts where the performance is required by the action of different gender roles which are assigned to male and female. She further insists that men and women are two different categories of gender and they are assigned different social roles to be performed. She argues that "gender is the process of embodiment which results from the repeated performance of acts of gendering" (4). In this sense gender can be taken as normative discourse

because it is created out of the repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame. In this way, gender seems to be natural and inevitable but actually it is not, it is social construction. This very concept of gender is ideology in Althusserian sense which operates in such a way that they appear natural and inevitable. As Althusser says, "ideology is the system of the ideas and representation which dominate the mind of a man or a social group" (qtd. in Žižek 120).

While talking about the concept of femininity and masculinity, it is developed in such a way that it seems natural but actually it is not so instead it is internalized ideas which are socially and culturally constructed and this construction of gender is regularly practiced within a normative discourse.

As it is already clear that gender defines human beings into two categories: masculine and feminine then it casts masculinist idea of man as self or normative and women as 'other' or deviant. All the positive qualities are attributed to man whereas negative and evil qualities to woman. As Aristotle says that "[a] woman was an unfinished man" (qtd. in Gaarder 116). He inferiorizes women by saying that females are female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities. Generally, the words used to be described the masculine role are quite positive. They are thought to be active, practical, logical, brave adventurous and trustworthy whereas the negative terms are used to be described for women. "Female are said to be idealistic humanistic rather than a contributor to society, innocent rather than adventurous, patient rather than ambitious and gentle, tender, soft rather than moral trustworthy" (qtd. in Francis 41). Thus the idea of gender is created hierarchically in which man is considered as positive and women as negative or passive. This concept of gender makes discrimination between man and woman. Women are discriminated on the basis of gender that they are socially, culturally, economically, legally and even biologically

differentiated from man. Women are undermined under the male domination so they are treated as an 'object' which has no identity of their own but on contrary, men are considered as 'subject', the 'self' having independent identity. Women are always defined as subordinate being to man. As Simon De Beauvoir notes:

Woman has been assigned the role of parasite-and every parasite is an exploiter. Women has need of the male in order to gain human dignity, to eat, to enjoy life, to procreate; it is through the service of sex that she gets these benefits; because she is confined to that function, she is wholly an instrumentality of exploitation. (626)

Beauvoir further insists that since the human civilization, women are nicely treated as the subordinate to men. Women are taken as 'parasite', which is dependent on others body just for its living life. So in such a way women are objectified, instrumental zed and colonized by men in order to exploit and dominate them. In this way, women are suppressed, slaved and chained without social historical and cultural facts. Hence, women are defined in relation to male standards and needs. They are evaluated in terms of masculine value system and their identity is constructed in relation to men. So a woman is expected to fulfill the men's need physically and sexually. It is the men who defined her according to their needs and beneficiaries. She has no right to make decision of herself. So her identity is undererased in the male dominated society. In such a way, the prejudice ideology is created by the male in order to maintain their supremacy, which is internalized in such a way that it seems to be permanent in society. Women are trained to internalize such masculine truth as an absolute and transcendent reality or as an unalienable aspect of her life. Althusser claims, "Individual can never be outside ideology, since it is through interaction with ideology that the individual subject comes into being" (Francis 48). So women cannot

escape from the trap of male created ideology and can never resist against it though they are highly suppressed and depressed from it. Regarding this issue, Beauvoir says:

She has been taught to accept masculine authority. So she gives up criticizing, investigating and judging for herself and leaves all this to the superior cost. Therefore the masculine seems to her a transcendent reality, an absolute. 'Men make the god, says Frazer, 'women worship them'. Men cannot kneel with complete conviction before the idols they have made; but when women encounter these mighty statues along the roads, they think they are not made with hands, and obediently bow down. (611)

Beauvoir further assumes that the prejudice ideology is constructed in such a way that women feel it as immutable and immanent ideas so they internalize and follow it without any reaction. They neither criticize it nor evaluate it critically rather they accept it silently as truth. Even if they reject such one sided assumption of male ideology then they are either punished or pressure to follow it. In such a way women's experiences have been shaped by male centered value system which defines the women as static, passive and helpless victim in the hand of man and in opposition to it, man are figured as dynamic, aggressive and 'will' to dominate and do violence to others.

While talking about male domination, patriarchy is a kind of system where males are put at the power position. It is a "social system in which maleness and masculinity confer a privileged position of power and authority; where man is the 'self' to which women is other" (Francis 14). So patriarchy is a male centered social system where women are excluded from the position of power and authority. All socio-economic, legal judicial and cultural systems are constructed in favor of male. Regarding patriarchy, Iris Marion young argues that "the nature of institutions of

domination is determined by the self -other dichotomy of masculine personality because men design and control all institutions in patriarchal societies and make them in their own image" (T. Meyers 32). He insists that the institution of male dominated society reflects only masculine personality. So patriarchy benefits on by to the father's side or male patriarchy does not benefit female. In patriarchal system, women have been forced to occupy a secondary place in relation to men. Men perceive themselves as 'self' and women as 'other'. Similarly, the concept of 'subject' and 'object' is constructed under patriarchal regime, where men identify themselves as 'subject' or 'self' whereas women as 'object' like dead things. Her identity is subordinate with male's identity. Women's fundamental rights are cut off so they are excluded, exiled, distorted and deviated due to male supremacy. "Women are shut up in a kitchen or in boudoir, and astonishment is expressed that her horizon is limited. Her wings are clipped and it is found deplorable that she cannot fly" (Beauvior 616). Therefore, women are heavily handicapped that their identity is undermined in the patriarchal system where her legal status is not as same as men.

In addition, in patriarchy, social stratifications are studied of male samples. In other words, males develop a vested interest in the maintenance of the basic structure and their own advantaged status. In order to maintenance the gender roles status quo, they attached negative attributes of feminine role than to the masculine one. The men feel themselves as superior and women as inferior. More importantly, the interest of males or the leaders of political, legal, economic and cultural institutions are best served by maintaining and reinforcing traditional gander roles. "Males in our society have been encouraged to view themselves as active, responsible one endowed with both brains and brawn superior to those of females, which most certainly entitles them to better jobs with better pay" (Francis 124-125). On contrary, women are provided to

be supportive role to man or esp. to her husband. It is said that husband has wife for the fulfillment of his needs and desires. She is supposed to be slave or helper to her husband's need. As Judy Syfers notes:

I want a wife who will come for my physical needs. [. . .] I want a wife who will take care of the details of my social life. [. . .] when I meet people at school that I like and want to entertain, I want a wife who will have the house clean, will prepare a special meal, serve it to me and my friends, and not interrupt when I talk about the things that interest me and my friends. (165-166)

Syfers argues that woman is highly exploited and subjugated by the man in the mask of her husband. She is merely treated as the means of fulfilling his physical desire. She is only regarded as a lump of flesh where her interest, desires and voice are subjugated by the man. She is considered as subordinate to her husband, and just serves what her husband wants from her.

Similarly, women are limited and trapped through myths and stereotypes. In order to perpetuate the superiority, males have tightly woven stereotypes about women which reinforce dichotomous notions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity'. The traditional gender role considers men as powerful, independent, intelligent, and active creature whereas women as supportive, dependent, unintelligent and passive one. In this way, historically women are viewed as man's subordinate and someone different and inferior from men. Similarly, to make inferior to women, men compare women to evil images like siren, the curve of a hill, sphinx, docile and Madonna/ whore. Female evil has been presented as deceitful, dangerous and sinful. As Martin Luther views that "God made Adam master over all creatures, to rule over all living things, but when Eve persuaded him that he was lord even over God she spoiled every thing [. . .] with

tricks and cunning women deceive men" (qtd. in Ruth 158). In this regard, the concept of femininity gives the sense of woman as calm, passive, delicate, pure and selfless as female virtue whereas on the other hand, the female evil has been presented as deceitful, dangerous and sinful. So, femininity is defined in terms of prevailing set of ideas, myths, stereotypes, norms and standards that affect the lives of all women in variety of ways. "[a] woman is described as 'sexually passive, uninterested' (the Virgin Mary images) and 'Seductive flirtatious (the wicked Eve tempting poor innocent Adam)" (Francis 41).

Moreover, emotional sensibility and sentimentality are the key terms for defining femininity of female. By describing these terms, women are supposed to be weak, submissive, easily influenced, sensitive to being hurt, less adventurous and passive creature. As Virginia Woolf says:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel, they need exercise for their faculties and field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraints, to absolute a stagnation precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow - minded in their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting, stocking, to playing on the piano and embroide ring bags. (822)

Here, Woolf suggests that women are thought to be calm and silent which are the false notions of understanding femininity. Patriarchy assumes that female voice must be soft, slow and low pitched. If she honestly obeys it than she is considered as a 'good' woman but if she violates it or speaks in high pitch then she is regarded as monster or she is criticized as 'shrill'. In male dominated society, she is regarded as a disabled woman who cannot have self determination. Furthermore, Virginia Woolf

talks about women's situation in her essay *A Room of One's Own* where she presents the privileged inequalities between male and female. She views that women are imprisoned and chained in a 'Comfortable concentration camp' which refers to the domestic confinement. "[w]omen's position in society or at least their traditional view of their position, puts them under social and psychological pressures that continually undermine their ability to band" (Heilbrun 39). While talking about women's situation that placed by society, Conrad Phillip Kottak says:

Gender stratification describes an unequal distribution of resources between men and women sometimes a distinction between women's domestic work and men's extra domestic productive labor can reinforce a contrast between men as public and valuable and women as domestic men less valuable. (276)

Gender inequality is heavily practiced that women are made disable for extra-domestic work. They are compelled only in domestic works and excluded from other opportunities of productive work. In contrast, men are let free for extra domestic works. In such a way, this cultural construction of gender discrimination defects female and compelled to be busy at only domestic and less valuable works. Therefore, female's position is complex, poor and miserable due to patriarchy intermingled with gender discrimination. In this sense, gender discrimination is highly patriarchal.

Regarding gender discrimination, patriarchy has created certain norms and values in which males are figured out in the superior position and female as inferior. So we can define patriarchal norms and values as misogynist ideology. In misogynist ideology, women are inferior in two ways: women are morally inferior, evil, bad, sinful and harmful, at the same time women we inferior in competence- physically, intellectually and spiritually. Sheila Ruth views:

Women are simply not as able as men, not as competent in any task except those traditionally designated 'women's work'. It is said that women are less capable than men of doing any kind of work requiring a high degree of rationality, abstraction and intelligence because women are intellectually inferior and are characteristically not given to rationality and logic. (159)

Sheila Ruth asserts that women have not the intelligence, the instincts, grit, the motivation, the stamina or the strength of men. It is claimed that the great scientists, inventors, legislators, entrepreneurs, artists, humanists, authors, sportsmen and warriors have always been men. Moreover in business, industry, politics, in the professions and professional schools, it is men who have the superiority and authority over women. Because of the lack of intellectual competency, women cannot do the things what men do therefore, they are obviously inferior. In such a way, the false concept is developed by male supremacy, which is quite circular, superficial and fallacious but also it has the tremendous power in society which is accepted by a majority both female and male.

While commenting on the patriarchal norms and values, Simon De Beauvoir writes:

[. . .] patriarchal society for purposes of self – Justification; through the myths, this society imposed its laws and custom upon individual also in a picturesque, effective manner; it is under a mythical form that the group - imperative is indoctrinated into each conscience. (999)

Under patriarchal regime, women are forced to accept the laws and customs that always make them inferior in various ways. Such patriarchal ideology or misogynist ideology is spread all over the world that advocates the supreme power of male; and

it seems to be natural because of its long time used. Such power controls over women by locking them within four walls of the kitchen, giving the role of child minders and providing works which do not have any surplus. When patriarchy creates stereotypical images about girls and women then, it serves a powerful function in our society; and when such patriarchal norms and values are long time used, then those exaggerated ideas of inferiority and weakness of women are internalized by the women and ultimately, they feel themselves powerless and inferior. Then they face the inferior complex. So the idea about what it means to be a woman is powerfully shaping the way that women are perceived and treated through the subtle uses of language, the images and ideas about women are transmitted through the media, advertisement and heavily practiced through institutions like family, schools, courts, work place and so on. More importantly, media has great influences to promote sexist ideas of patriarchy that emphasizes women's sexuality negatively. When women are constantly exposed to message of male superiority, then they inevitably feel themselves powerless and insignificant and later on she accepts herself as 'other' and insignificant one.

The concept of 'goodgirlism' is articulated if a woman accepts the exaggerated imposed patriarchal norms and values. In patriarchal sexist society women should exhibit a well defined pattern of beliefs and behavior centered on popular acceptance as a stereotype of the ideal women. In order to gain social acceptance and to be so called ideal woman, she should act according to the traditional gender roles and stereotypical beliefs that are assigned to her. If she learned to behave according to these rules, which she would be praised as a good and adorable girl. Regarding this notion of goodgirlism, Elisa Davila views:

Being a good girl meant denying big chunks of myself such as the freedom to choose a career over a husband, to work and live away

from home, or the basic right to know my feelings and to experience my own body. [. . .] a woman is expected to conform to a set of rules that dictate that manner by which she can act, dress, talk, have sex, even think. A woman is supposed to accept domesticity and motherhood as the two guiding forces of her life. (61)

Davila, in these lines suggests that in order to survive under goodgirlism, a woman undergoes a major displacement or disconnection inside her own self. She has to sacrifice all her individual needs and desires; she cannot achieve freedom of choice regarding her basic right to know herself, her feelings and experiences as well. In such a way, patriarchy always denies independency and freedom of choice of women. Similarly, Davila further assumes that feminine ideas, images, models, constraints and circumstances are imposed on women in a good manner. Her way to dress up, act, talk, have sex and even to think all represent the ideals of women which are powerfully constructed in such a way that they themselves are heavily interested to pick up those behaviors and manners. On the one hand, women are confined within the ideas of goodgirlism whereas on the other they have to carry on dual roles as domesticity and motherhood. In this sense, a woman is responsible being both homemaker as well as a mother.

Normally women who are homemaker paid nothing for their work. She is assigned to do unpaid household work at the same time; she has to be responsible towards her husband and children being as a dutiful wife and a mother as well as towards her whole family. “[I]t was considered ‘legitimate’ and ‘Feminine’ to be employed teaching children, nursing the sick and caring for the needy all activities female normally do for free as homemaker” (Francis 135). Even if she is a jobholder outside domesticity, then she has to do all the household work beside her outside

work. So a woman should handle two guiding forces in her life: domesticity and motherhood simultaneously. By the way, if she would be unable to run both duties, then she has to quit outside productive work due to family related reasons. In this sense she is primarily to be responsible as a homemaker and a mother rather than an outside worker.

Likewise the men subordinate the women by exploiting them as workers, sexual partners, child bearers and emotional nurturers in the market place and in the household. So the unequal distribution of power, property and prestige between women and men is now the part of this structure of the modern societies. There is not now nor has there ever been equality of opportunities for women regarding business, education, professions and so many other fields. In the economic sphere, men and women are not equally treated. Men hold the better jobs, get higher wages and have more opportunities for success whereas a woman is neither paid higher wages nor got more opportunities for success. She is not equally paid/waged as men; rather she is paid low salaries. In industry and politics, men have a great many more positions and they monopolize the most important posts. Generally, women workers are not treated as the male workers because their biological differences are considered as disabilities; but actually these biological differences are not their faults. As Judith Lorber notes:

Women are subordinated in all industrial societies not because they are child bearers or child minders but because owners, managers and governments depend on them as low paid, accessible responsible workers. They are the primary child care workers not because of their procreative capabilities but because they are economically

disadvantaged and have little choice but to do unwaged work of social reproduction. (287-88)

Lorber asserts that women are not provided equal opportunities of work and salaries. A woman is considered as disable and economically disadvantaged. Women are only said to be fit for household responsibilities and child bearer task. Because of such false notion, a woman has to face economic obstacles and financial dependency that hinder her from being creative, educated and intellectual like men. In this regard, men have the approach in most of the property, Medias, literary fields, jobs and laws. The out come of this inequality is man's double exploitation to the women in outside the home and inside the home.

As we have seen that traditional gender stereotypes creates false notion about masculine and feminine roles in which subordination of women is deeply embedded in social institutions such as the legal system, the work place, the family, the health care system and so many other fields. Such traditional gender roles create hierarchy between male and female though there is no natural law which subordinate and put women in lower rank. Therefore, various gender inequalities and discrimination are heavily practiced throughout the beginning of the human civilization where women are dominated, invisible, insignificant and worthless being to male chauvinism and supremacy. The marginalization of women role itself becomes the crucial issue for females and they try to raise voice against patriarchy; and in order to subvert the traditional gender roles and stereotypes, the theory of feminism is emerged in western civilization.

Feminism is a social movement whose goal is to eliminate the oppression of women in all forms or constrains and it seeks equal rights for women, giving them equal status with men; and freedom to decide their own careers and the life patterns.

Moreover, it "[. . .] refuses what it describes as the masculine bias of mainstream western thinking on the basis of that this bias renders women invisible/marginal to understanding of humanity and distorts understanding of men" (Beasley 16). So feminism is a critical stance that decenters the misogynist assumptions of male superiority and centrality; and it largely focuses on limiting gender inequality and promoting women's rights, interest and issues in society.

Regarding feminism, it is divided into two waves: first wave feminist which is also known as liberal feminism and the second wave feminist also known as radical feminism. The so called first wave feminism was coined in late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which were marked by its critique of dominant western philosophy that is based on masculine norms and values. Liberal feminists advocate for the absolute equality with men and the erasure of difference. They demands for women's right to education, employment, political participation, property and full legal equality with men. They insists that "woman as subject, on equal pay for equal work, on the necessity for women to be better represented in political life, the media, history books etc" (Snitow 18). Moreover, liberal feminism had an emancipator orientation. As Chris Beasley notes:

On a compensatory reversal which masculine bias was exposed and women's theorizing and activities were rescued from obscurity. The aim for the most part was to emancipate women from their past neglect and marginalization, to make women part of the social landscape, to assimilate women into society, which would necessarily transform that society. (19)

Here, Beasley argues that the first wave feminist rebels against the marginalization of women and demands access to positions that require knowledge and confer power.

Furthermore, liberal feminists assert a commonality between men and women which requires women to become the same as men.

On the other hand, radical feminism was introduced in the 1960s and 1970s which aims to redefine power relationships between male and female in a patriarchal society. The aim of this theory is to overthrow power, to overthrow men's authority. They "[. . .] give value to women's group identity as women and try to avoid using men/ the masculine as the standards of comparison" (46). They suggest that women should be considered in their own terms but not in male's standard. Similarly, radical feminists see the creation and maintenance of gender difference as the means by which patriarchy control women. We can advocate radical feminism as women - centered feminism since their focus is on women's difference from men. "[t]he focus specially is upon a system of oppression based upon a lower social status than men as a sex class" (48). Such women center radical feminists see patriarchy as the means of dominating women as the mule of the world. So they search for ways to subvert and destroy the traditional notion of patriarchy that always views women as their (Patriarchs) supporting rod and the mule of the world. Furthermore, radical feminist advocates for women's liberation that means they fight for the separate position and status in the society. They believe that women should struggle together to achieve their own liberation by transcending the narrow walls of class and race. They assert for their separate independent identity or 'self' by overthrowing male defined culture.

In such a way, the overall feminists want to change the social world, so they cannot have too much respect for past description of social institutions which means the masculine norms and values. All feminist critics believe that the concept of patriarchy or sexism is deeply rooted in our cultural spectrum where woman is made to be subjugated and inferior by male; the female values are in negation to the male.

In this sense, women challenge the masculinist assumptions, its insufficiency and one-sidedness. In order to enhance women's rights and to secure women's liberation, women need to fight against the oppressed and suppressed system of patriarchy. Since the masculine norms and values are social construction which are based on the dichotomy created between femininity and masculinity, it can be challenged and subverted in any time as the "[f]eminists have asserted that the essential differences between women and men does not lie in biology but rather in the roles that patriarchal societies (men) have required each sex to play" (Snitow 15).

In nutshell, traditional gender roles and stereotypes can be challenged over time and space since it is not a natural and biological category rather it is just a cultural programming as masculine and feminine that are the categories created by society. Therefore, in respect to feminists, they challenge those conventional gender roles by a through revision of the feminine stereotypes and destabilizing of the masculine values.

III. Challenging the Traditional Gender Role in *21st Century's Sumnima*

The novel, *21st Century's Sumnima* deals with women's predicament where the women's position and their emancipation as well as the argumentative and intellectual potentialities are presented through the character portrayal of Sumnima. In the novel, Pradeep Nepal has demonstrated the strength of women with reasonable and energetic spirit having strong physical, intellectual and spiritual power. The title of the novel itself refers that the novel is all about a woman character where Sumnima can be the mirror of 21st century's women for being quite dynamic, powerful and rebellious towards traditional norms and values. In this regard, this novel can be called feminist novel which advocates the woman's position, their own insight, innate power and self-motivation.

The novel has sketched such a dynamic woman character who has the sharp spirit with honesty and intellectual power. Though, Sumnima is a girl from marginalized ethnic tribe but she is a forward lady with strong spirit. She has strong self-determination and self-motivation which become her powerful weapons to move forward in the society. Sumnima's nature is quite distinct from traditional types of women. Due to her open manner, innate power and self-confidence, she is able to move forwards in the society with her distinct identity. In her life, she has faced lots of hardship, hindrances and difficulties but because of her strong will power, patience, sincerity and honesty towards her work, she becomes a successful woman having great pride in the society.

At the same time, Sumnima is much more conscious about her self identity. She views that one is shaped by her own karma and faith and love for action or vibrancy. She believes that work is life and the labor is greatness. As she says that "work is a scared thing. Labor is greatness [. . .] We all should accept is that if one is

not lazy and respects all kinds of jobs, you can see the lands of happiness lying flat in front of him/her" (39). To her one should be sincere and honest towards her work and labor. She further insists that one should be self-confident and hard laborious towards their works in order to achieve the goal in the life. In the novel, Sumnima is filled with strong self-determination who is quite strict and stable towards her quest. As she notes that "after I.E.d. I decided to stand on my own feet. My conviction was that one should learn to live alone in the world" (46). Since her college life, Sumnima has implanted the idea of independency which becomes her source of succession in the future. Sumnima's such convictions sound quite masculine and unpatriotic for traditional gender roles which shows her resistance against it. Because traditional gender roles posit women as passive, unintelligent, meek and silent as their feminine qualities but here Sumnima's activities seem quite opposite to the projection of traditional feminine gender role. In this way, Sumnima's such bold and intellectual ideas about the quest for autonomous identity reinforce the challenging attitudes of traditional patriarchal definition of gender roles.

Traditionally gender roles advocate women as inferior creature which is the internalized patriarchal programming. It is said that "traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing and submissive" (Tyson 85). For centuries, women have been confined within false or wrong-headed imposed set of requirements of patriarchal ideology which is completely based on myth and ignorance. But such traditionally accepted assumption about the gender roles does not apply in the case of Sumnima in the novel, *21st Century's Sumnima*. She redraws and overthrows such all false sets of patriarchal stereotypes by refusing to be stuck in traditional kinds of gender roles.

Being critical towards patriarchal ideology, Sumnima does not accept the cultural images of women as incompetent, petty, irresponsible and weak. She rejects the attitudes that regard the traditionally masculine characteristics of aggression, power and competition as good and desirable; and the traditionally feminine characteristics of compassion, tenderness and compromise as weak and ridiculous. Rather she affirms her capacities to be strong, capable, intelligent, successful and ethical human being. As she claims that "to free myself from the mentality-the mentality without the full support of a man, a woman can't do anything I was trying deliberately not to bring up his matter" (99). Sumnima does not want to remain as submissive and weak woman as traditional gender role defined women. Rather she intends to be free from such oppressive mentality that always undermines women as the muted mule of world.

Traditional gender roles dictate that men are supposed to be strong having essential subjects (independent selves with free will) and women are considered as emotional, weak and contingent beings (dependent being controlled by circumstance). In other words, dominance/submission is a biological (sexual) characteristic that account for the gender perception of passivity in women and aggressiveness in men. Thus, the traditional gender role is a patriarchal programming where the inferiority of woman is constructed in terms of man's standard. As Lois Tyson claims:

Men can act upon the world, change it, give it meaning while woman have meaning only in relation to men. [. . .] the word women, therefore, have the same implications as the word other. A woman is not a person in her own right. She is man's other: she is less than a man; she is a kind of alien in a man's world; she is not a fully developed human being the way a man is. (96)

Patriarchy has defined women not just in terms of their different from men, but in term of their inadequacy in comparison to men. Similarly, patriarchy has objectified women like and objects of sexual and sexist oppression and dominance on the part of the males in the society. Patriarchy treats women whatever their role like objects and they exist according to patriarchy without any consideration of their own opinions and perspectives. Thus, traditional gender roles are the cultural programming of patriarchy where women are objectified, less valued and made powerless. In another sense, women are programmed to fail in order to prove that they are biologically ill-suited and less logical than males. It means patriarchy creates the failure that it then uses to justify its assumptions about women.

Gender is a cultural construct programming as feminine or masculine, produced by patriarchal society. Actually, women are not born feminine, and men are not masculine by their birth rather these gender categories are constructed by the society. This constructed notion of so called truth can be seen even in Sumnima's belief that "[n]ot everything you see as truth s true in reality. The truth for once is not the truth forever. The truth is attached with the situation. That's why there is no such thing as permanent truth" (80). For Sumnima, nothing can be truth for permanently since it depends on the situation where the truth is guided by the power. Similarly, the term gender is also not the truth and permanent ideas at all because it is constructed out of the power where the males are dominant and they formalized their authoritative power upon women. So, to overcome from it, Sumnima ignores and reacts against it by questioning on it.

In the novel, it advocates women's experiences and feelings which are ignored by the patriarchy. That is why, in the novel, *21st Century's Sumnima*, the women's experiences and life style is narrated by the central character, Sumnima. As Govind

Raj Bhattai comments that "Sumnima is a real woman who lives practical life and presents how it is contrasting, complex, challenging and all difficult" (vii). In this statement Bhattraai insists that Sumnima is demonstrating as a dynamic character who struggles and challenges the patriarchal norms and values for her separate niche in the society. In the novel, Sumnima narrates her experiences and activism against traditional value system. By presenting a single woman's story, all about her life experiences, it is intended to focus on women value. Moreover, it aims to dismantle the tradition where men's position is up heightened. Thus, as a whole, this novel is a kind of activism or challenge to dismantle the traditional gender roles.

Sumnima is depicted as a daring figure in the novel who refuses to confirm to society's expectations for women. She reacts by going against the traditional social norms and values that always compel to women to accept patriarchal orders. In the novel, Sumnima revolts against traditional social structure by rejecting traditional kinds of marriage system where girls are forcefully got married without their interest and desires. She narrates that:

It's another misfortune for girls to be grown up [. . .] without our notice we started hearing that it's time for us to get married. When we were weaving the dream of doing so many things in life, we knew from somewhere else that it's time for us to play with the children of our own like that of the pigs [. . .] we were not worried about the marriage, but the parents had already started feeling joy in the imagination of their grand children of their daughters. (42)

Sumnima pinpoints the evil practices of patriarchy regarding the marriage system. She strongly reacts against such imposed marriage system. She further says that without being physically and mentally matured, girls are forcefully made ready for marriage

by their parents who are guided by the patriarchal ideology. In such a way girls are denied their freedom of choice regarding their marriage.

In the context of Nepalese society, women's condition is very much critical and fragile in this sense that Nepalese society is very rigid in its culture and cultural norms and values; where the laws and restrictions are heavily imposed upon women. Therefore, because of such rigid social culture, women have to hold secondary position and become silent victim of masculine authority. In such a way, for their marriage too, they have to show their muteness and undesirable acceptance towards their marriage.

But on the contrary, Sumnima doesn't seem as a traditional kind of lady who silently accepts the traditional kinds of marriage system. When Sumnima was just studying in intermediate level, her parents had decided about her marriage. As she says that "the decision about marriage was already taken. I came to know about it very late. Or when the preparation for marriage started getting underway, I learned that the preparation was for my own marriage. I was shocked. First, I was not interested in getting marriage" (52). Without giving any information Sumnima's parents have decided her marriage. It shows the imposed marriage system where girls are forcefully made ready to accept their parent's decision about the marriage. Such imposed marriage system reinforces the patriarchal ideology because the marriage is the constructions of the patriarchy where their ideology is imposed upon women in order to establish their authority over women. But Sumnima resists against such outdated marriage system with her revolutionary steps.

Whenever Sumnima comes to know about her marriage very late but also she dares to refuse the marriage where she is not interested at all. Though she is shocked at first when she hears about her marriage but she recollects all her strength

in order to discard it. For it she decides to escape from her parent's house. As

Sumnima says:

Right after hearing the news about my marriage, I told my younger sister and close friends about it. I told them that I was not ready to get married with any guy yet. [. . .] I started thinking about the alternatives. [. . .] nobody had even imagined that I would leave like that. I sent the clothes with my younger sister to my friends and left home in a pair of clothes as if I was just leaving for hanging out that afternoon. (55)

The decision of marriage is unbearable for her because it is declared without concerning her feelings and interest. Thus, she revolts against it through her bold step of escaping from home. Sumnima compels to escape from her home because her rejection in words and crying could do nothing for her. The patriarchal society never gives the freedom of choice to women as a result; they compel to remain as a silent victim of patriarchal ideology.

Sumnima's escapement from home is taken as revolutionary and great resistance against the patriarchal marriage system. For patriarchal society, women's abandon of marriage is considered as the matter of great Shame and humiliation. As Sumnima notes that "after the engagement the practices like not to leave home, not to go out with the guy that one is engaged with might be in the traditional Brahmin - Chattri families" (55). Here, it reinforces about the patriarchal social structure that creates a kind of ban where women are confined within an unnecessary restriction of patriarchal values. For traditional society, woman's footstep outside the house is taken as the matter of great shame. In traditional society, women are not allowed to go wherever they want to go and whatever they want to do because the society is

based on patriarchal norms and values where women are only limited within a narrow domestic confinement; and their feelings, desires and interests are suppressed and subjugated by the hands of men. Even if a woman dares to overcome from such confinement, then her activities are taken as shameful and humiliating matters in the society.

But on the contrary, Sumnima alters all these patriarchal norms and values through her strong revolutionary activities. In the novel, she dares to escape from the domestic confinement in order to challenge the traditional marriage system as well as to prove herself as a strong and dynamic figure. In the novel, one of Sumnima's friends suggests that "sister, the path is long, it is hard too. But if you dare to walk on it, it is the brightest as well" (54). Here her friend encourages us to be strong and bold in order to discard and challenge the patriarchal norms and values.

Similarly, Sumnima's inter-cast marriage also can be taken as a great challenge for the traditional society. At first, she rejects her parent's decision about her marriage because it is not her interest and desires. Similarly it is imposed upon her because her parents do not care about her freedom of choice. So in order to discard it she escapes from her home. But on the other hand she gets inter-cast love marriage which is taken as the matter of great shame in the traditional society. The patriarchal society considers such women's bold step of elopement as the matter of humiliation and shame. But in the novel, Sumnima dares to go against patriarchal society by accepting forbidden marriage system.

Moreover, Sumnima is portrayed as a versatile character in the novel, who has great experiences of the multifaceted sides of life. While she was studying in campus level, she took the membership of a party worker. When she was working

as an active party member, then she used to raise the burning social issues about gender discrimination, women emancipation and equality in relation to men.

Traditionally, it is believed that women shouldn't involve in politics and other social activities as a result, women should have to accept domestic confinement. But on the contrary, Sumnima crosses the patriarchal beliefs by involving in the politics. She says that "I went close to the then underground party" (49). She argues that it is the order of patriarchy that always imposes its rules and regulations upon women in order to dominate and suppress them. It is said that the politics and woman are the two separate things which can never become together. Such patriarchal narrow thinking further claims that women do not know much about politics because politics is not the relevant subject matter for them since they don't have wider knowledge about it. By spreading such false rumor, patriarchy always controls and suppresses women. In fact, women are not provided good chance and opportunities for politics so that they are unknown about it. But in the novel, Sumnima puts her bold step against the so called traditional beliefs by involving in the field of politics. She has good experiences being an active member of party worker and conducts lots of good programs in order to reform the social evils and dead habits. In this regard, Sumnima deconstructs the patriarchal ideology and involves in politics as an active and dynamic party worker. While talking about her experiences, she notes:

I got the taste of politics ever since I started studying in Illam. [. . .]
 Since I was friendly, fearless and hard working, the friends made me committee member; they also had me contest the free student union election. Before knowing much about politics, I got the chance to become the representative of the students' national conference. This

was a very fast progress within a year and I this fastness our fearlessness and the nature to work hard ere mainly responsible. (47-48)

Sumnima expresses her experiences of her college life where she has started her political career. Since then, she moves forward in her life with her delighted ideas of fearlessness, clarity and activeness which are the sources of fast progress in her life.

Similarly, Sumnima is demonstrated as the woman of social reformer in the novel. She is well known about the patriarchal confinement and its imposed value system that makes women illiterate, ignorance and intellectually disable. She says that "there was no awareness" (57). Whenever Suminima meets to the village women then she finds them quite illiterate and conservative. Moreover they are quite unknown about their right and freedom. Therefore, to make them intellectually socially, politically and economically aware and independent women awareness and education is must in the present time. So in the novel, Sumnima is able to understand the spirit of the present time and situation. She works as a social reformer who focuses on women's issues regarding their education, awareness and freedom in order to challenge the traditional norms and values as well as to change the social structure as a whole. She says:

I dared myself. I asked the party for the permission to conduct the night classes. I gathered the women of the village. There we would talk about the revolution and would talk about changing the system. There we would read the biography of world famous women leaders. Along with it, I would try to teach my friends our living style also. I would teach them about social awareness and health awareness. (57-58)

To make aware and conscious about the rights and freedom of women, as well as the suppressive and oppressive patriarchal system, Sumnima has conducted the social awareness programmes by running the night classes for women. In the classes, she used to talk about the altering values premises where she wants to change the social system which is only based on patriarchal ideology. She is more concerned about the predicament of women and around the world. So she tries to over-come with social reformation by going beyond the patriarchal rules and regulation as well as including women in the mainstream of social system.

Furthermore, she gives emphasis on women leading role in present society. For it, women's leading position and active participation in each field is necessary in the society. By thinking about it, Sumnima has conducted the social awareness programmes where she discusses about the world famous women leaders and their resisting ideas against patriarchal norms and values which are the cause of women's suppression and repression in the society. Likewise, by instructing to the village women about the existing gender inequalities between women and men, Sumnima tries to arouse revolutionary spirit within them in order to dismantle the evil practices and the dead habits of the patriarchal society.

Sumnima tries to make aware and conscious to the women about their equal status in the every sphere of the society as men have. In such a way, Sumnima motivates all the village woman to move forward according to the changing socio-political atmosphere where the representation of women in every sphere of social activities is must in current situation. Thus, because of her great contribution in village, she is respected as the social reformer. As she says, "I turned into a village women from a lahure's daughter" (58).

Sumnima's struggle to achieve the independent life is also a kind of challenge for traditional patriarchal society. Traditionally, it is believed that woman should be depended on man because they are the subordinate creature to man. In this sense, women are made inferior as the subordinate of man who are assigned the role of parasite to be dependent on other's body just for the living life. But in the novel, she raises a big question against such patriarchal ideology that considers women as object and an instrument of exploitation. She insists that:

Don't the women love their self-respect? Does a woman have to live only with the identity of a man? If there is no identity of a man, does a woman's identity finish? Does a woman get herself purified by just closing her character in a box just to save her husband's identity? Can't a woman be complete in herself in livelihood, character, pride and all? (98)

By questioning against such unjust social system of traditional society, she further insists that the patriarchy doesn't care about women's self-respect; for them women's feelings, desires and self-respect are not important rather they only give importance to their own needs and desires. In such a way males are only guided by their selfish ideas and one sided principles of their own. They think that women's identity is existed if only there is the man. They further claims that men's identity determines women about who they are and what the position they are occupied in the society. It is believed that husband's identity becomes the identification of a wife; so there is no possibility of women's separate identity at all in the society if there is not a man. Suminima expresses her rage against such patriarchal belief by raising a big question, "is it necessary to bring him up in every place, in every matter? Aren't I a complete person myself?" (99). She further insists that women can

exist and establish their autonomous identity in the society in the absence of men's identity. Women do have capabilities, abilities and strong will power in order to architect their own fate as well as to establish their self-autonomous identity. But the misfortune to them is that, their capabilities, abilities and deeds are not valorized and praised by the society. It is because the society is based on patriarchal norms and values and we know well that patriarchy never can see women's improvement and independency as a result, they don't support the women's succession and their good deeds.

Sumnima proves herself as a leading woman who is much conscious about her separate niche in the society as well as the equal status of women in the society. The patriarchal mentality about the saying 'women can't do anything' should be undererased because a woman can be complete on herself by creating her self autonomous identity without concerning to men. As Sumnima says:

You have been struggling your own victory and you are struggling by yourself. In such a situation, a small storm should not be the reason to let you down. A literature has written in a big hurricane, only satal tree can stand unmoved. May that satal be you! [. . .] therefore move ahead with patience. You might be at loss for a year, two, three or four. But one day for sure, you will get your investment back, [. . .] that's why do stand up. Stand up with determination. (100)

She emphasises that one should struggle and fight against the restrictions and constrains of the society in order to live the life of freedom and satisfactions. For it, one should be patience and honest then no doubt, one day s/he would be able to stand on their feet. Similarly, self-confidences, self-motivation and self-determination should be there in each person for their achievement of independent identity.

Sumnima further insists that weather the hurricane of patriarchal ideology and its evil habits are come as an obstacles on the way, but women should not knell down in front of it instead, we should tackle all those difficulties and throw such dead habits with our strong resisting voice and behaviors then it is sure that we will be success in our life. In such a way, Sumnima becomes the source of inspiration to all of us who focuses on the women values and empowerment by ignoring the male constructed history.

Sumnima can be recognized as the source of strength and the source of inspiration for all the women because of her good deeds and strong will power which encourage us to find our path of righteousness in order to establish our distinct identity in the society. We find her strong self determination whenever she narrates her life struggle. As she says that "I decided to build the base of support for myself" (90). Whenever, Suminma is much conscious about her self identity, and then she first wants to complete her studies. For it, she asks her husband, but her husband denies her go for further studies. She says that "he would once again talk about the same old story of selfishness and sacrifice" (90). We find patriarchal hypocrisy on her husband since he denies her talent, activeness and freedom of choice or as a whole independent identity in the society.

But we know that Sumima does not easily accept her defeat, so without her husband's permission too, she decides to go for her further studies. She is quite strict towards her determination so anything cannot stop her even if it is the patriarchal hurricane. [t]his is the proposal of a woman to stand on her own feet [. . .] this the proposal of a professional worker for the self dependence and help to the family" (91). Due to her strong will power and self determination, she is able to move on the right path of her destination. As she arrives in Kathmandu for study then she has faced lots

of hardships and sufferings. As she says that “the life is getting really tough” (89). She finds everything really tough in Kathmandu. She faces economic crisis in this death valley. But also because of her strict determination and patience, she tolerates whatever comes into her life. After her long struggle over there, she is able to find a job of a school teacher. Sumnima starts her career as a school teacher at first but later on she is able to found a school. As she proudly says that "I am running a school" (137). In such a way, Sumnima challenges the traditional patriarchal society being a capable, intelligent and bold woman which is quite opposite to the traditional gender definition of women.

When Sumnima is able to establish her identity by founding a school, then her efficiency and ability becomes a great challenge against traditional gender role. Because traditional gender roles define women as unintelligent creature who lack the intellectual competency. In such a way, traditional feminine gender role considers women as intellectual inferior who are characteristically not given to rationality and logic. But in the novel, we find Sumnima just opposite to what the traditional gender defines about women. At the same time, women's active behaviors and resisting voice can be taken as a challenge for the patriarchal society in order to maintain their superiority and establish their authority in the society. Because of it, when Sumnima establishes a school, then her husband does not support her instead, he gives back force pressures to her. As Sumnima describes in the novel:

But when the school started earning, when I started saving money and especially when I started wishing to live a life as that of rich people, he started discouraging me. The fourth of the school running in profit he opened his mouth and let me hear his decision, 'You should not run this

school any more'. He did not only tell me about his decision, he also brought many customers to buy the school. (100)

These lines, make us clear that how the patriarchy denies the independency of women life like as Sumnima's husband denies her to run the school. Here, Sumnima's husband is representing the hypocrisy of patriarchal ideology in which women are denied the independent identity in the society. Patriarchy never can see the improvement, talent and independency of women. They think that patriarchal ideology might not operate properly if they let women to be free and capable on themselves. So in order to rule over women and establish their monopoly in the society, patriarchy denies the leading position of women in the society. In the novel also, in order to keep his superiority in the society, Sumnima's husband marks her not to run the school. In this sense Sumnima's husband is the representation of hypocrisy of patriarchal ideology who is quite passive and weak in comparison to Sumnima. In the novel, we find revolutionary spirit in Sumnima because of her aggressive attitude towards traditional gender roles. Her resisting behaviors and aggressiveness indicates her refusal to stick on traditional gender roles, which become her great challenge against patriarchal ideology.

Here, we find Sumnima quite different from other women in the novel. She is not the woman who can be expected to be weak, just, subordination and emotional. She is filled with feminist spirit of 21st century so she can face the society with bold expression. As she expresses:

Why can't I oppose something being more aggressive than him?

[. . .] It's all male ego inside you. You ask my husband. He will also say so, because I haven't seen him being shy to stay under my security.

Yes, he is afraid a little bit. He is afraid that my aggressive approach

will have a negative impact on his social life. [. . .] I am not trying to put forward the principle what a male should do or what he should not. I am just trying to touch the distance between us two, who are tied to the same family. (131-132)

Here, Sumnima strongly opposes the traditional social structure that brings unequal gender behaviors between woman and man, though both are human beings. She further aggressively exposes the male ego inside them which makes them proud of being men but it has negative impact on them. Because of their ego inside them, they become blind and they feel themselves as powerful and superior creature in the earth. So, Sumnima opposes such male ego centric nature of aggressiveness by raising a big question against it. In such a way, Sumnima is presented as a powerful woman having masculine qualities. But the misfortune is that her activities and boldness is not easily accepted in the traditional society.

Furthermore, women's leading position and personality is not digested in patriarchal society. It always marks women by calling them a 'vulnerable Kukri' if they present their aggressiveness and revolutionary attitude towards patriarchy.

But, Sumnima is never concerned about the values of patriarchal society. As she says that one should not be afraid of the society in order to overcome from the constraints of patriarchy; instead she should move ahead for her separate identity in the society. She further comments:

I don't care about the society. I always think what has the society given to me? If I did not make my own position, would the society that scolds me today recognize me? If I did not work hard causing pain on my ankle, would there be any society in front of me? Why should I listen to the society's scolding in my good time when it does not even recognize

me on my bad time? Therefore I don't care about the society that I don't need. (132)

In these lines Sumnima expresses her rage against society because society and its unjust behaviors are the main cause of women's backwardness and domination. Due to the unnecessary social restriction and constraints, women are not allowed to express their feelings and desires freely, as a result they always have to suppress their individuality and keep in silence. Therefore to live the life of freedom and establish independent identity, one should not care about society as Sumnima does in the novel. Sumnima faces lots of tackles and challenges of the society but also she does not kneel down in front of it. Rather she solves all the problems with her revolutionary activities.

Besides her revolutionary attitudes and challenge spirit against traditional society, Sumnima is quite conscious about the position and equal status of women in the society. For it, she emphasizes on women's independent identity and their equal social status in the society in relation to men. For it, she encourages women to live the dignity of life. As she suggests that "don't stay idle and don't let yourself feel that you have free time in your hand, do what ever you like" (146). Sumnima articulates the freedom of life and the dignity of life over here. As she is more conscious about her standing position in the society and her separate identity, she struggles and bears lots of hardships and difficulties in her life time. Sumnima believes on work rather than fate. So, she moves forward with her self-motivating principles as a result, she is able to establish her independent identity by founding a school. In order to being a perfect and independent woman, she never bothers others rather she moves with her will power alone and finally, she achieves her destination. As she says, "[. . .] I would like to build a house for the school. I would like to build without bothering the friends and

without asking for donation with any organization" (118). In these lines we find Sumnima's idea of independency where she does not want to depend on any body else. She prefers to do her work herself without others guidelines. Thus, she valorizes the dignity of life which becomes the source of inspiration to all of us.

Furthermore, Sumnima revolts against the contemporary social definition of modernization that always keeps women in the narrow concept of gender construction and its constraints of gender feminine qualities in the name of modernization. As she says:

Today's moderation puts sindoor on the forehead, puts Mangalsutra around the neck, puts handcuffs like bangles, fasts Mondays (Days may be different) and worships Sai Baba (the idols or Gods to be worshipped many different too). [. . .] Really tight sleeveless blouse and the lines of bra seen inside it, bright and shining sari, the stumbling legs on pencil hill, a glass filled with red wine (or some other liquor), and the filter cigarette that is held by the pink colored nail polish and looks like its head getting on the glass. (135)

Here, Sumnima insists that today's society in the name of modernization confines women in the narrow concept of feminine qualities of soft, delicate beautiful women that aims to demoralize and dominate to them. It is patriarchal norms for women to accept sindoor, mangalsutra, and hand cuffs as their jewellerys and gift which aim to dominate them in the society. In such a way women are mistreated as dolls for the entertainment of men. In fact, it is not the weakness of women to wear tight sleeveless and short clothes, pencil hill in their legs, and other fashionable dresses that gives the glamorous images of women but it is the patriarchal society that encourages them to do so because the intention of male gaze upon women is to suppress and dominate

them by blaming them as vulgar and morally corrupted creature. Sumnima pinpoints the biased attitudes of male authority and their intervention in every aspect of women's life. So she violently raises the question, "Am I in chain? [. . .] Am I free?" (135) in order to present the identity crisis of women. By raising such issues, Sumnima tries to revolt against the existing gender inequalities of patriarchal ideology. In this way, Sumnima marks well to the evil and unjust patriarchal social norms and values in order to get emancipation from it and try to establish equal status of women in the society.

Thus, Sumnima identifies herself as a good career woman who believes on the dignity of life and struggles for the achievement of autonomous identity in the society. Moreover, she becomes the source of inspiration to all women in order to get way from the biased patriarchal ideology and women's liberation as whole. Sumnima's idea of independent living is reinforcing through these lines, "I just want this much, may I live the active life with satisfaction in this vary life, may I not have to live at anybody's support; instead may I be able to support others" (156). Here she is intended to live the life of freedom and satisfaction which is only possible through the independent identity in the society.

To sum up, Sumnima is a rebellious lady with feminist sensibility who subverts and disapproves the binarism of traditional gender roles based on patriarchal ideology by showing her resistance against it. In such a way, on the one hand, she is raising the questions and revolutionary attitudes towards the traditional gender constructions of masculine and feminine gender roles whereas at the same time, she is also encouraging all women towards their liberation and autonomous identity. Therefore, Sumnima is the symbol of women's emancipation and source of inspiration to all of us.

IV. Conclusion

This research paper has analyzed the novel, *21st century's Sumnima* through the perspective of Gender Studies. Specially focusing on the feminist approach of questioning the traditional gender stereotypes imposed upon women. In the novel, Pradeep Nepal has portrayed a subversive woman character who discards and dismantles the social barriers and boundaries based on patriarchal norms and values that have always kept masculine ethos at the center. Such biased and unequal norms and values are constructed by the patriarchal society where women are expected to perform certain roles and responsibilities that are imposed by them. But on the contrary, men are taken as controlling figures who have been authoritative towards women. In this regard, the patriarchy has constructed the hierarchy between men and women where women are considered as silent victims of masculine authority in the name of sex, gender, race and class. Thus, to challenge and undercut such biased patriarchal ideology, Pradeep Nepal has presented Sumnima as the sharp weapon with feminist spirits.

When we move through the novel, we find unique presentation of woman character, Sumnima with her own female aspirations and hopes. She possesses the strong female spirit who undercuts all the traditional and conventional ideas and beliefs. In the novel, she refuses the patriarchal imposed marriage system where women are denied the freedom of choice. Similarly, she resists it by getting inter-cast love marriage which is a great challenge for old tradition. In such a way, she refuses to stick on traditional definition of feminine gender roles where women are considered as meek, docile, emotional and illiterate creatures. She stands against all sorts of social and cultural boundaries which are imposed upon women to remain inside the male constructed myth. Because of Sumnima's refusal to confine herself

within a narrow patriarchal domestic wall, she is challenging the traditional gender roles and patriarchal ideology as a whole. Similarly, she identifies herself as a social reformer by doing good deeds in the society regarding social awareness and social improvement.

Sumnima's disagreement to accept the feminine gender roles which identify women as dutiful and faithful having the attributes of passiveness, weak and ignorance as their good qualities proves that Sumnima is no more concerned towards such traditional gender constructions which compel women to remain oppressed in the society. The traditional gender roles always project women as muted mule of the world who become the victim of patriarchal ideology. Thus, in order to change the whole social structure and to challenge the patriarchal ideology, Sumnima revolts against it with her bold and revolutionary behaviors.

At the same time, she tries to uplift the position of women in the society by refusing to confine themselves as traditional women who become insignificant victim or passive object for others use and pleasure. For it, she conducts social awareness program in the village indicating to the innocent village women. So, in the novel, Sumnima wants to disprove and dismantle to all those patriarchal conventions in order to get freedom and distinct identity in the Society. For it, Sumnima fights and struggles in her life to prove herself as a strong and capable woman of making her own position and status in the society.

On the one side, Sumnima is challenging to the traditional society by reacting against it and refusing to accept the traditional gender roles and to the other hand, she is also challenging it by creating her self autonomous identity in the society. After encountering lots of hardships and challenges in her life, she is able to found the school in Kathmandu. In order to challenge the patriarchal society, she

focuses on women emancipation and empowerment which lead to them towards their independent identity. For it, Sumnima emphasizes on the ideas of self motivating, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-determination which are the essential tools and weapons of women to their succession and great achievement.

To sum up, Sumnima is demonstrated as the dignity of women and pillar of her family as well as the society as a whole. She becomes the career mother who is the breadwinner to her family, at the same time; she is a stream of freedom and women's liberation. In such a way, Sumnima is the twinkling star of the society who gives the light of knowledge and freedom to all of us in order to overcome the darkness of patriarchal unjust ideology where women are forced to be into the trap of circular array of patriarchal evil norms and values.

Works Cited

- Althusser, Louis. " Ideology and Ideological state Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." *Mapping Ideology*. Ed. Slavoj Zizek. New York: Verso, 1994. 100-120.
- Beasley, Chris. *Gender and Sexuality: Critical Theories, critical thinkers*. London: Sage Publications, 2005.
- Bhattra, Govinda Raj. "An Archetypal mother reconstructed for the twenty first century: The story of Sumnima". *21st Century's Sumnima by Pradeep Nepal*. Kathmandu: Bhrikuti Academic Publication, 2008. I-XI.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Chafetz, Janet Sultzman. *Masculine Feminine of Human?* 2nd ed. Illinois: Peacock Publishers. 1978.
- Davila, Elisa. "On Being a "Good Girl": Implications for Latinas in the United States". *Women Images And Realities: A multicultural Anthropology* Eds. Amy Kesselman, Lily D. Mcnair and Nancy Schniede Wind. London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1999. 60-63
- De. Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, inc. 1970.
- Foucault, Michale. "Subversive Bodily Acts". *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of identity*. Ed. Judith Butler. New York: Routledge, 1999. 101-141.
- Francis, Ann Cranny. *General Studies: Terms and Debates*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Femininity". *Issues in Feminism*. Ed. Shelia Ruth. Edwards Ville: Southern Illinoic University, 1980.125. 125-139.

- Gaarder, Jostein. "Aristotle." *Sophie's World*. New York: Berkley Books, 1994. 104-120.
- Ghimire, Subhash, Trans. 21st Century's *Sumnima*. Kathmandu: Bhrikuti Academic Publication, 2008.
- Heilbrun, G. Carolyn. "Woman as Outsider." *Reinventing Womanhood*. New York: w.w. Norton and Company, 1979. 37 - 42.
- Kottak, Conrad Phillip. *Cultural Anthropology* 9th ed. New York: Feminist Press, 2002.
- Larber, Judith. *Paradoxes of Gender*. London: Yale University Press, 1994.
- Ruth, Sheila. "An Introduction to Women's Studies". *Issues in Feminism*. Edwards Ville: Southern Illinois University, 1980. 1-10.
- Sajha Parkashan. *Ekkaisaun Satabadiki Sumnima by Pradeep Nepal*. Lalitpur, Pulchok, 2056.
- Sedgwick, Evekosofsky. Across Gender, Across Sexuality: Willa Cather and Others?". *Displacing Homophobia: Gay Male Perspective in Literature and Culture*. Eds. Ronald R. Butters, John M. Glum, and Michael Moon. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 1989. 53-72.
- Sedwick, Evekosofsky. "Gender Criticism". *Redrawing the Boundaries*. Eds. Greenbelt, Stephen and Giles Gunn. New York: The MLA, 1992. 273-274.
- Snitow, Ann. "A Gender Diary". *Conflicts in Feminism*. Eds. Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller. New York: Routledge, 1990. 10-26.
- Syfers, Judy. "I Want a wife" *Motives for Writing*. Eds. Robert Keith Miller, Suzanne S. London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1992. 165-167.
- Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. New York: Rutledge, 2006.

Woolf, Virginia. "A Room of Ones Own". *Critical Theory since Plato*. Eds. Hazard

Adams. New York: JCP, 1992. 818- 825.

Young, Iris Marion. "Is Male Gender Identity: the Cause of Male Domination ?"

Feminist Social Thought: A Reader. Ed. Diane T Meyers. New York:

Routledge, 1997. 22-34.