

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Exploration of Female Sexual Agencies in Nedjma's *The Almond*

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Letter of Recommendation

Ms. Kalpana Gautam has completed her thesis entitled "Exploration of Female Sexual Agencies in Nedjma's *The Almond*" under my supervision. She carried out her research from August, 2009 to February, 2010. I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Abstract

Through the novel, *The Almond*, Nedjma chooses to speak out loudly and unabashedly which expresses the private life of a Muslim women, a world that most people do not often get opportunity to peak into. The writer uses body to fight political and religious prohibition, judgments, operations and cries for gender equality .The entire conflict of the novel revolves around Badra and her sexuality which becomes a tool for her personal growth. Badra, the main protagonist, escapes from thing-hood in order to capture true freedom and able to obtain masculine ethos towards sex with help of Aunt Selma, another major character, who is reasonable, conscious and always takes good decision at the right time. Through these two characters, the writer empowers women in every sphere of life. Driss, a faithless male character is healed with his ill mentality and undergoes complete transformation to spirituality. Similarly, female character is healed through sexuality, not only controls herself, but also controls the relationships she participates in, showing the victory of female over orthodox patriarchy.

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I. Introduction

Exploration of Female Sexual Agencies

This research focuses on Nedjma's novel *The Almond*. It attempts to analyze Nedjma's interest in exploration of female sexual agencies by applying feminist theory. Nedjma, by creating an ultra revolutionary character Badra, who directly fantasizes sexual taboos without any hesitation and opts pornographic highlights in order to liberate Muslim women and gives them back the female sexual agencies, confiscated by the males of Islamic patriarchy. So, Nedjma portrays such a culture, that is obsessed with love and sex, where it does not matter what you do, as long as you are discreet. In this orthodox culture, men do not really know how to love or how to give pleasure to women.

In misogynistic Islamic culture, sex is an obligation without any pleasure for women. It does not allow women to live free life that is caused as per female position associated in Muslim community, ritual, culture and men's will. Their upbringing is repressive and miserable, since they are forced to live in veil. Although men and women connect in marriage and procreation, but men do not care about the working of female bodies, as a result women, consider sex as a burden. That's why, here, writer's main aim is to open a window into a closed Muslim world to unfold the female desires and passion. She also wants to break the wall of silence where their sexual lives are obscured.

All religions have accorded women an inferior status and relegated them to a secondary position. This is true to Islam as well. Islam is often represented as a religion which denigrates women and limits their freedom. In

male-dominated society, women have to face numerous problems both specific to their religious group and specific to their sex. But it is not religion, rather patriarchy which is the real culprit. Religion alone can not be blamed for assigning inferior status to women. However, religion itself is the end-product of patriarchal society and unless these social values change women will continue to suffer from a situation where religion and patriarchal society are in alliance. Men and women are equal in the sight of Allah. Stressing this noble and natural conception, Quran states: He (God) it is who did create you from a single soul and there from did create his mate, that he might dwell with her (in love) [. . .] (Quran 7:189). However, what Islam had given to her, the male dominated society has taken away. In Muslim society, there is a common belief that girls have to mind their homes and hence, there is no need for them to go to schools. A girl is maintained by her father while unmarried and by her husband after marriage. It all depends on family's decision. Man can marry more than one wife but women are not allowed to make decision of what kind of life they want to live. More than that, she becomes victim of triple divorce in many cases. Even women are mentally tortured, beaten mercilessly and sometimes burned alive or murdered in the name of dowry.

Badra's marriage as the third wife of a childless man more than twice her age, was already the husband of two wives is certainly terrible; she is brutally raped on her wedding night. That is stated as:

My mother- in-law tied my arms to the bars of the bed with her shawl, and Naima took it upon herself to hold down my legs. Terrified, I realized that my husband was going to deflower me under the eyes of my sister. With one hard blow, he broke me

into two, and for the first and only time in my life, I fainted.

(115)

The above lines show the pathetic and miserable condition of Badra, who is raped by her own husband. When her husband is unable to deflower her, he takes the help of his mother and his wife's sister. The fact that they tied her in the bed side to make it easy for Hmed shows the sexual violence against women.

Gender identity of women has often been presented as monolithic and homogenous by certain social theorists and mainstream feminists. It reinforces reductionist and essentialist understandings of Islam as an oppressive, misogynist religion. Muslim women are constituted as mere subjects of religious discourse and tradition. They have come to be seen in isolation of the broader social context and the competing ideologies which contribute to the framing and shaping of identities. Thus, the construction of Muslim women's identities should be located within the specific socio-political and historical context in which they live. In the name of Islamic rituals, women have to face so many obstacles.

In Muslim culture, before marriage, they check the virginity of girls but it does not apply in the case of boys. It also does not matter how much is his age, but he always wants to marry younger girl. Although, men and women take equal part in producing child but society always blames woman and punishes her brutally even if male is sterile. It also applied here in the case of Badra.

Hmed, Badra's husband has already abandoned two wives because they did not produce any children. So, the main purpose of marriage with

Badra is to give birth to male child but in fact he himself is sterile. When Pregnancy does not materialize, he mistreats her. Her family members forced her to drink brews of bitter herbs and sips of urine, to straddle the tombs of saints, to wear amulets but they never try to think whether weakness lies there in Hmed or Badra. After three years of devastating marriage, in which, Hmed tries unsuccessfully to impregnate her. It is enough to convince her that sexual pleasure exists only for men and, by extension, is a woman's burden.

When domination is out of control, she breaks out of her prison one night and escapes from the village to her Aunt Selma, in the cosmopolitan port city of Tangiers. There a handsome, rich, refined doctor, frivolous, amoral free-spirit, Driss, who as her master and executioner appears in her life. Driss initiates her in all the pleasures of the flesh, teaches to love her own body and introduces her to a world of sexual passion that she had never imagined. During her obsessive love for the always potent Driss, Badra gradually grows up. As in a bildungsroman, the personality of the dumb farm girl develops into a mature, canny and independent woman.

Even the educated man tries to dominate women and exploit them sexually. Here, Driss refuses to marry Badra who only satisfies her sexually but she loves him passionately. Badra's dependence on him intensifies so does his demands, and suddenly Badra finds herself forced into increasingly degrading sexual acts. Driss is not faithful to her and he has other women and occasionally also has men. But Badra remains Driss's almond, his butterfly. Every particle of her skins becomes a love nest and a source of ecstasy for him. When she is with him she loses the virginity of heart. Fighting against her urge to submit, Badra must escape this man if she is ever to rediscover her

self-esteem. In the end, she realizes that she must also free herself from her master, Driss, to achieve true independence. She explains “When I woke up, I said to myself which Driss was a trap that I had to escape” (170). Badra decides to become the grave digger of a love whose will-less instrument, she has been for so long. Here, leaving Driss, Badra is able to rediscover herself and also able to acquire true independence.

Therefore, Islamic feminism is concerned with the role of [women in Islam](#) and aims for the full equality of all [Muslims](#), regardless of gender, in public and private life. Islamic feminists advocate [women's rights](#), [gender equality](#), and social justice grounded in an Islamic framework. Although, rooted in Islam, the movement's pioneers have also utilized secular and Western feminist discourses and recognize the role of Islamic feminism as part of an integrated global feminist movement. Advocates of the movement seek to highlight the deeply rooted teachings of equality in the [Quran](#) and encourage a questioning of the patriarchal interpretation of Islamic teaching through the Quran, [Hadith](#) (sayings of [Muhammad](#)) and [Sharia](#) (law) towards the creation of a more equal rights in society.

To break such tradition, Nedjma takes the help of literature and wants to redraw the boundaries of Muslim female's obliged ritual notions in Islamic culture and in her prologue she says:

Literature alone has the efficacy of a “lethal weapon”. So I used it - Free, crude and in exultation. My ambition is to give back to the women of my blood the power of speech confiscated by their fathers, brothers and husbands. In tribute to ancient Arab civilization in which desire came in many forms, even in

architecture, where love was liberated from being sinful, in which both having and giving pleasure was one of the duties of the believer. (1)

Nedjma, here, discusses the importance of speaking out. One of her biggest goal is to put female voice out which is a huge part of the feminist literary tactics in the Arab world. For this, she finds literature is the best weapon to bring out such things.

Being Muslim woman, living in veil, Nedjma the writer of the novel *The Almond* dares to write such kind of novel to liberate Muslim women. But more than that, her main purpose in this novel is to give back the female sexual agencies which are confiscated by their fathers, brothers and husbands. It is clearer by these lines which are given in prologue. "I raise these words as one raises a glass, to the health of Arab Women, for whom recapturing the confiscated mention of the body is half battle in the quest to healing their men" (1).

Nedjma is a pseudonymous Moroccan author. She is derided as a whore and an affront to Islam but no one really knows who she is. The author has never revealed her real name, never been photographed and her family and close friends are not aware of her published books *The Almond*. The few details we have about her tell us that she was unmarried till her early forties, childless and has a white collar job that allows her to travel often to Europe. In truth, she says, she lives a schizophrenic life. As a writer, she exists only abroad, and even there she is only a phantom with un-provable secrets; she neither can nor will want to divulge. She never reveals her identity for fear of reprisals from Islamic fundamentalists. Author has expressed in interviews

that it is somehow ground breaking for a Muslim-Arab women to write an erotic work. Contemporary Arab literature does not know any explicitly erotic books, neither written by men, nor by women. She told the German newspaper *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* in March.

The young Moroccan with the lively hands calls herself Nedjma, a pseudonym, which means star. By using Arabic name, she is choosing to be openly associated with the Arab world and she is seizing power in naming herself. Using a pseudonym, she publishes an erotic tale divulging the secret sexual lives and carvings of Muslim women. The book first published in France, read like an erotic manifesto for modern women who want to break free from the repressive bonds of cultural tradition to unashamedly demand their right to pleasure but conservative Muslims have attacked it as trash. If her identity is revealed, she would be stoned in her native Morocco.

Nedjma wants to shock the world. Using an odd coupling of sermon and prayer, she breaks the traditional wall of silence behind which Islamic women live and behind which their sex lives are obscured. It is clear from the lines given below:

This narrative is first of all a story of soul and of flesh. Of a love that states its name, often crudely, and is not burdened by any moral standards other than those of the heart. Through these lines, in which sperm and prayer are joined, I have attempted to break down the walls that now separate the celestial from terrestrial, body from soul, the mystical from the erotic. (1)

The above lines state that she is writing it from her own moral compass, of her own heart. Rather than writing a novel centred on the moral standards of Islam, she shows that she is purposefully fighting against the imposition of other peoples moral standards. She is using the female body as her battle ground. She is speaking out for gender equality in her local realm, and also the right develop her own values in global realm.

In Morocco, Nedjma says that 1001 nights and the worst misery exist next to each other. Her book could not be printed in Arabic, and she had to turn to France to get it originally published. The cover page of this novel also clarifies the internal meaning of this novel. There is a woman swathed in cloth with her head and feet covered-symbolizing her repressive upbringing. But, there the belly has been left exposed, so are we being prompted to see her just as a body, a piece of meat and not as a person.

Another dominant weapon of this novel is the use of pornographic materials which is used to give more rights to women and it also teaches to celebrate their own bodies. The women, who want to rebel their repressive culture, are able to use pornography as a way of liberating their layers of repressed sexuality and confirming their existing desires. These women's shameless display provokes identification with the exhibitionism of the scene in which certain fantasies are presented, that is so stimulating. Therefore, representative of marginal groups like gay, black, lesbian, female that they use the conventions of pornography in their work as a weapon against the comfortable moral certainties of the dominant culture. But there is a debate among feminists writer about the use of pornography in literature.

The feminists who are in favour of pornographic writings say that it gives more power for women. But anti-feminists contend that pornography tells lies about the nature of women, thereby promoting and reinforcing sexist attitudes. Among them, Andrea Dworkin's pornographic book, *Men Possessing Women* (1979), is probably the most strident of the voices demanding the banned of pornography in the name of women's freedom. For her, pornography is simply one of the grosser manifestations of the male will to power and heterosexual sex is always a matter of violation of the women by man. In this context, she says, "The woman is acted on, the man acts and through action expresses sexual power, the power of masculinity" (23). Thus pornography becomes a primary tool for male dominance. She further says sex is rape; pornography is a form of violence against women. A far more thoughtful, deeply flawed effort to press the feminist case against pornography appears in Susan Griffin's *Pornography and Silence* (1981). The subtitle of this book, *Culture's Revenge against Nature*, sums up her argument. She constructs a rather questionable psychology in which the adult male, having lifted himself out of nature and into the nature of culture, must punish woman, the embodiment of nature in order to compensate for the frustration; he left as a child at his dependence on his all powerful mother.

But, on the other hand, the feminist writers who support pornography advocate more power for women in the production and distribution of sexually explicit materials. Pornography gives more power to women. At this point Morlence Wasserman says: "Pornography is not the means by which male achieve power over women but proof of men's lack" (58). So men need pornography for reassurance through fantasies of control over women. But for

women, pornography can produce power, pleasure, knowledge and control over their sexuality. In the same vein, Moser states: “pornography is a commercial product designed to elicit or enhance sexual arousal by the portrayal of sexually explicit images that produce or activate the consumer’s fantasies” (474). According to Segal, “Young women need more erotic education. Women need more than just instructions to examine their sexual organs. They need access to narratives of pleasure and fulfilment” (62). There comes a question: Does pornography reduce women to passive, perpetually desiring bodies-or bits of bodies- eternally available for serving men? It is evident that the war over pornography is a war over discriminating sexually as good or evil.

Now, it is time for women to organize instead of agonize and demand more power in the production and distribution of sexually explicit materials. The feminists appeal for freedom and tolerance for sexual and gender diversity that sets more above the other in power or morality; yet leaves all free to choose so long as they do not harm others. They encourage women to search for ways to understand and express the complexities of their sexuality and take pleasure therein.

Thus, through the means of pornography, Nedjma tries to justify the female sexual agency. It is even a kind of celebration of her own body which are declared by the protagonist of the novel Badra: “I am the one with the most beautiful cunt on earth, the best designed, the best developed, the deepest, the warmest, wettest, noisiest, most fragrant and singing, the one most fond of cocks when they rise up like harpoons” (4).

Moreover, with the help of pornographic highlights, she is able to bring out many things together such as childhood masturbation with other girls, her sexual play with naughty boys. Badra recalls her youthful curiosity about sex life of other girl's and women's bodies were like, her fascination with the two beautiful prostitute sisters and more than that she wants to spy on men and says: “. . . one day I would have the most beautiful sex in the world and it would impose its laws on men and stars, pitiless and relentless” (83).

Thus, here through the use of pornographic materials, the writer is able to achieve her goal. As literary guerrilla warrior, Arab woman writing erotica as a courageous fighter for rights. And so it has come to pass that pornographic prose is original, dangerous and brave which helps the growth of the character. Here pornographic materials doesn't seem to be solely to entertain rather the writer is able to achieve her goal as she makes it clear that she has more socially and politically oriented goals.

It is very difficult to produce any sexually explicit texts by going against Islamic rules. Society says sex should be either in the bedroom or the sexshop, agirlie magazine or a naughty book. It also conveniently treats sex as one of three ways: a problem, as a biological fact or as a guilty secret. So, it is very difficult for women who live in a male-dominated, heterosexist and sex – obsessed culture to wish, to arouse, to allow themselves the pleasure of sexual fantasies. Therefore, a truly feminist agenda needs to emphasize the need for sexuality education for children and attack sexism as representative of male power rather than attacking sexual material as representative of male sexuality. For it, feminists have to view the sexually explicit in the context of the whole range of visual and written texts in order to challenge the dominant

sexual ideology of society, which wants the sexual to be cordoned off and separated from the rest of life. By using pornographic materials, Nedjma's novel *The Almond* becomes capable to bring out the private life of Muslim woman and it challenges the narrow definition of female roles in literature. Through this window, the reader can see many gender fuelled injustices but also the power women hold.

The present work has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter explores the female's repressive upbringing and highlights the female sexual agencies through the use of pornography. It includes the different views of feminist writers about pornography and also talks about the Muslim orthodox culture. The second chapter tries to explain briefly the theoretical modality that will be applied in this research. It discusses briefly about different feminist writers to talk about female position in society. The third chapter analyzes the text at a considerable length on the basis of theoretical modality. It takes out some extracts from the text as evidence to prove the hypothesis of the study *The Almond*. This part serves as the core of this work. The fourth chapter is the conclusion of this research on the basis of textual analysis in chapter three. It concludes the explanations and arguments put forward in the preceding chapter and shows Nedjma reconstructs *The Almond* by implementing radical feminist attitudes.

II. Feminism: As a Discursive Strategy

Feminism is a socio-political, cultural theory motivated by the experience of women, advocating the equal rights of men and women. It even advocates gender-specific rights for women and campaigns on issues such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, discrimination and violence. It studies the most dominated canon in order to understand how men used culture to further their domination over women. In this way, a feminist perspective would enable both critics and the reader to provide an understanding of the sexist ideology in the text under study.

The term female, in many different societies, is defined like colonized subject, have been relegated to the position of other, inferior creature, pleasure-giving commodities, child-bearing machines, second object, emotional etc. It is heterogeneous, multifaceted term intricately linked with social, cultural, political and even historical aspects; this challenging theory is problematic and elusive, still ambivalent and rather slippery. Moreover, themes explored in feminism include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification (especially sexual objectification), oppression and patriarchy. Therefore, the main purpose of feminist ideology is to look for equal rights, privilege, status and obligations which, they claim should not be determined by gender dominance.

Many feminists try to bring women's various issues to the mainstream. The South African political campaigner and author Olive Schreiner was one of several prominent radical thinkers who, in a critical spirit, drew on features of

evolutionary thinking to support women's liberation. In her book *Women and Labour* (1911), subtitled *Sex and Character* in which she says:

There are areas in human life where sex is not even an incidental factor in determining fitness for specific kinds of work. The male and female brains acquire languages; solve mathematical problems, and master scientific detail in a manner wholly indistinguishable; as illustrated by the fact that in modern universities the papers sent in by male and female candidates are as a rule absolutely identical in type. (183)

Here, Schreiner posits that sex is not a determining factor in terms of the division of any work between male and female. For her, both male and female brains are absolutely identical in type concerning the fact that both have an equal access in acquiring languages, solving mathematical problems that can be proved through the university papers presented by both male and female.

Women in the nineteenth century (1845) by Margaret Fuller and *The Subjection of Women* (1869) by John Stuart Mill were major works on feminisms in which Mill wrote about the problems of women's inequality in society, and pointed out: "What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing- the result of forced repression in some directions" (22).

Virginia Woolf was the first women critic to include the sociological dimension in the analysis of women's writing. She explores the situation of women through out the modern history displaying its own kind of independence in her feminism. A feminist who disliked the word feminist, she was skeptic and her concerns were men's anger at women, misunderstanding

between sexes and the psychological condition of women upbringing. Woolf examined the problems of women writers in her radical essay "A Room of One's Own" (1929) and says women are further disadvantaged due to the patriarchal structure of society in which economy is controlled by men. She sees literature open to everybody and knowledge is not subject to a particular sex and says that mind does not know the sex. The women can be confined, her physical freedom can be restricted, the libraries can be locked but the freedom of mind goes on functioning. So, Woolf's ultimate belief was that women could freely develop their artistic talents if they achieved social and economic equality to men.

A much more radical feminist, Simon de Beauvoir in her treatise [The Second Sex](#) (1949), gives detailed analyses of women's oppression and foundational tracts of contemporary feminism. It sets out a feminist existence which prescribes a moral revolution. As an [existentialist](#), she accepted [Jean-Paul Sartre's](#) precept [existence precedes essence](#); hence "one is not born a woman, but becomes one. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole what produces this creature" (295). Her analysis focuses on the social construction of woman as [the other](#). Thus, Beauvoir identifies as fundamental to women's oppression. She argues women have historically been considered deviant and abnormal and contend as [Mary Wollstonecraft](#) considered men to be the ideal toward which women should aspire. Further, she says, the cultural identification of women as merely the negative object, or other to man as a dominating subject who is assumed to represent humanity. Women are made inferior and second-grade citizens as

she is subordinated to man. All forms of power structures in patriarchal society are committed to perpetuating this relation and putsher views: “I can not be just to books which treat of woman as woman [. . .] my idea is that all of us men as well as women should be regarded as human beings” (149). Beauvoir argues that for feminism to move forward, this attitude must be set aside.

In her subtitle ‘Myth and Reality’ she attempts to show how myths about women play a vital role to construct real towards woman in the society. There are different kinds of myth: the one for Behavior, is the division of humanity into two classes-male and female (just social construction, not biological one). Here, she insists, against the myth of women, that women is a being rooted in nature but not therefore assimilable as other in nature The myth of this mysterious otherness has justified numerous abuses. She rejects the mythical interpretation of women and says if mystery is present in women; it is present in man too. As woman is impenetrable to man, man too is to woman. Though men and women are indeed mysterious to each other, men see the world from their point of view as absolute.

From time immemorial, women have been chained with the concepts of softness, sympathy, beauty and sacrifice. This entrapment has limited her pitifully. In all patriarchal societies, man is the creator, she is created; man the maker, she is made. If man’s creative urge fails, her existence ceases to be. Even a learned psychologist, Freud explains the development of a female child as the other of male child and defines her psychic composition in terms of penis-envy. According to Freud, the female child, upon seeing the male organ, recognizes herself as a female because she lacks the penis. Hence, she suffers

from penis-envy, which Freud thought is universal in woman which would lead them to Castration complex. He further says: “Having wanted to be a man, the girl must accept that she can not compete with boys and that it would therefore be best for her to give up the idea of doing so” (256).

Foucault prompts us to contemplate the historical circumstances that shape some of the leading concepts made by the psychoanalyst and philosophers about the explosive conditions of eroticism. Foucault explores the cultural dynamics that have persuaded modern epoch to believe that sex has become more important than our soul, more important almost than our life. To some extent, he stakes that one is led to think that we should exchange life in its entirety for sex. He exposes that this particular belief about eroticism tell us of the ways pioneer is distribute, maintained, and produced with in modern culture and views:

There is no single, all-encompassing strategy, valid for all of society and uniformly bearing on all the manifestations of sex. For example, the idea that there have been repeated attempts, by various means, to reduce all of sex to its reproductive function, its heterosexual and adult form, and its matrimonial legitimacy fails to take into account the manifold objectives aimed for, the manifold means employed in the different sexual politics concerned with the two sexes, the different age groups and social classes. (103)

Exposing the modern view on sex, Foucault holds that if sex is taken into consideration only from its reproductive function; it's heterosexual and adult

form, and its matrimonial legitimacy, it does not do justice with the several acts of sexual politics concerned with different age groups and social classes.

Foucault, therefore, demonstrates how and why eroticism is bound into structures of inequality. In far reaching work, Foucault invites us to think hard about the ways in which sex, sexuality and pornography emerged in first place, about the interest they have served, and about the kinds of power they continue to relay.

In theorizing how human beings establish specific sexual identifications, Freud and subsequently Lacan reveal that the organization of the sexual drives starts the moment we enter the world. They believe that it can sometimes prove hard for adults to manage their earliest and thus most insistent desires. One of main lesson of psychoanalysis is that sexuality comprises turbulent, if not destructive, drives whose early formation can at times proves impossible to eradicate in adult life.

Lacan stresses that the anatomical distinction between the sexes provides the cultural form through which subject came to recognize their position on either the male or female side of sexual difference. Even if the male side may provide the illusion that masculinity has the phallus, it only does so by covering over the male subject's constitutive lack. Conversely if the female side may suggest that femininity can be the phallus, then it does so only in the form of a masquerade. To address exhilarating intensity of sexual experience, Lacan coins the word 'jouissance' that evades the one and other where both party evades engaged in sexual intercourse. Lacan, therefore, throws light on femininity evading existing inequality among male and female.

Considering how women are under pressure to make themselves the desirable objects, Lacan argues: “It is for that which she is not that she wishes to be desired as well as loved” (290). He reminds us we are not strictly entitled to call a sexual relationship. And why we can not speak of sexual relationship because of third party- the other’s, so to speak always interrupts the subjects of desire.

When feminism joins hands with Marxism or anti-racist movement, it acquires a political position. Kate Millett in her much acclaimed work *Sexual Politics* (1977) examines how power relations work and how men perpetuate domination over women. She regards patriarchy as the cause of women’s oppression. In her analysis of social science, she says that sex is a matter of biology, while gender is a culturally acquired sexual identity. In social practice, for example, the boy is supposed to be brave and courageous while girl is identified as meek, timid and obedient. These attributes are hold as universal virtues and taken for granted, owing to the male-dominated power structures in the society.

Millett’s discussion further focuses on male literary figures such as D.H Lawrence, Henry Miller, in a series of chapters examine the development of sexist thinking. Protesting against the habitual masculine bias of Freud’s own terms and diction, Millet rebuts Freud’s Castration complex on the basis that he makes no distinction between fact and fantasy. Millett contends that Freud’s theories collapse culture into nature, the social into the biological and with devastating consequences:

Freud had spurned an excellent opportunity to open the door to hundreds of enlightening studies on the effect of male

supremacist culture on the ego development of the young female, preferring instead to sanctify her oppression in terms of the inevitable law of biology. The theory of penis envy has so effectively obfuscated understanding that all psychology has done since has not yet unraveled this matter of social causation. If, as seems unlikely, penis envy can mean anything at all, it is productive only within the total cultural context of sex. And here it would seem that girls are fully cognizant of male supremacy long before they see their brother's penis. (187)

Freud locates masculine supremacy over female who confronts with so much concrete evidence of the male's superior status, sensing on all sides the depreciation in which they are held girl's envy not the penis, but only what the penis gives one special pretension to.

Michele Barrett is with Millett in upholding the cause for women. But she criticizes Millett for seeing patriarchy as universal state of domination with no historical origins or variations. She sees culturally acquired roles are not natural but stereotypes created by male. According to her, oppression exist not only in terms of politics, but in terms of psychology, economic, culture, religion (example women are created out of man's ribs, God, the creator is male. . .). Similarly, women are equally suppressed in literature. Even in advertisements women figure more prominently exposed and male enjoy it, women are forced to perceive it from male perspective. So, according to Barrett instead of pointing to a single criterion, several issues like economic organization of households, education system, and ideology of gender are to be raised together. She further adds texts have no fixed meaning and

interpretation which depends on the situation and ideology of the reader. So, feminist critics too, should try to assert their influence upon the way in which gender is defined and represented culturally.

Following the empowering rise of the Women's Liberation Movement, the study that most sharply contested Millett's claims was Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing and Women* (1974), an imposing volume of considerable scope and foresight which impact on feminist theory. Mitchell declares: "psychoanalysis is not a recommendation for a patriarchal society, but an analysis on one" (13). To Freud, writes Mitchell, "society demands of the psychological bisexuality of both sexes that one sex attain a preponderance of femininity, the other of masculinity: man and women are made in culture" (131).

Jacqueline Rose's *Femininity and Its Discontents* (1983) provides a painstaking account of why psychoanalysis retains such a contentious position in feminist theory. Psychoanalytic thought does not provide an adequate model of social change. She observes how the work of Freud and Lacan has been regularly accused of functionalism the consequences of which she spells out as follows:

[psychoanalysis] is accepted as a theory of how women are psychically 'induced' into femininity by a patriarchal culture, and is then accused of perpetuating that process, either through a practice assumed to be prescriptive about women's role (that is what women should do), or because the very effectiveness of the account as a description (that is what is demanded of

women, what they are expected to do) leaves no possibility of change. (8)

Rose criticizes Freud's psychoanalysis as a practical theory, encodes that how the theory deems women perpetuate their so-called stereotypical roles prescribed for them by patriarchy. This prescription for the females becomes a description for their roles beyond the possibility of change.

Julia Kristeva brings the Lacanian version of psychoanalysis and feminism together. She feels that female sexuality is open, subversive and characterized by certain fluidity against rigorous male domination. As such, female sexuality is directly associated with poetic productivity. Like Freud and Lacan, Kristeva, defining how the infants multiple drives are manipulated and directed by its encounters with its body and environment, says:

Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body-always already in the semiotic process-by family and social structures. (250)

The avant-garde writing of French philosopher and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray provides a striking contrast to Kristeva's modification of psychoanalytic orthodoxies. Freud declares femininity is a riddle. Through history, remarks Freud in femininity, people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity. Pursuing its sphinx-like status, he adds: "Nor will you have escaped worrying over this problem-those of you who are men; to those of you who are women this will not apply. You are yourselves the problem" (113).

Responding to Freud's apparent condescension, Irigaray exclaims: "so it would be a case of you men speaking among yourselves about women, who can not be involved in hearing or producing a discourse about the riddle [...] she represents for you" (13).

In *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985), Irigaray finds delightful eroticism in exactly the somatic zone in which Freud detects such Castratory lack, the female genitals. Declaring that women's autoeroticism is very different from men, she says:

He needs an instrument: his hand. Women [...] touch her in and of her without any need for mediation, and before there is any way to distinguish activity from passivity. Why? Because, her genitals are formed by two lips in continuous contact. She is already two-but not divisible into one(s)-that cares each other.
(24)

Overtaking Freud, deeming female genitals a Castratory lack, Irigaray celebrates female genital's delightful eroticism. She opines that since the female genital is formed by two lips in a continuous contact, in spite of being two which is not divisible and cares each other. Defying both unitary and binary calculations, Irigaray's vision of women claims femininity at once multiple yet inseparable, plural yet autonomous. Thus, she, through sketching female genital, lays forth a vibrant example of an autonomous feminist.

Helene Cixous in her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1981) calls for women to put their bodies into their writing. She is quite-enthusiastic about the richness of the female unconscious. "Write yourself your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth"

(252). Though there can hardly be any thing like a universal female mind, the female imagination is infinite, according to her. However the most important part of her theory is the rejection of any theory. She argues that feminist writing will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogentric system. Then, she also rejects biologism. Rejecting the masculine/feminine binary opposition and the concept of neutral bisexuality, she means that female writing should deliberately transgress and deconstruct the law of phallogentric discourse. It is the task of every writer according to her.

Elaine Showalter a prominent American feminist has entitled women's writing and culture in which she says that women have their own type of cultures, their own type of body, their speaking style, the languages, the capacity of thinking and believing. Therefore, they are naturally different from male which can not be judged by male standard. Her work *A Literature of their Own: British Women novelist Bronte to Lessing* (1977) is a prominent masterpiece of the theoretical work of feminism. A dissenter and radical in her attitude, she adopts the idea that mind does not know sex, as M.H. Abrams brings the view of Claire Tomalin who remarked: “. . . society is wasting its assets if it retains women in the role of convenient domestic slave and alluring mistresses, denies them economic independence and encourages them to be docile and attentive to their looks to the exclusion of all else” (394).

Moreover, she is critical of the way women are judged in the patriarchal society as easy available domestic servants. In her book, she advocates for the political and social rights of women denying their economic independence and encouraging them to be more subservient and careful to their physical outlook to the exclusion of the existence of reason and intellect.

Women, according to her do not have enough mental strength to break free from the evil consequences to this slavery; and they are forced to live double existence with habitual slavery. Along with that, she is critical of the way in which women are being educated and attacks reading of sentimental novels. The real subjects of such novels are bravery prostrating before beauty which appeal to the emotions of the readers. By reading such novels, women are turned into packs of passions and emotions which hamper the growth of mind and do violence to the reason. As she remarks:

. . . the reading of novels makes women, and particularly ladies of fashion, very fond of using strong expression and superlatives in conversation; and though the dissipated artificial life which they lead prevents their cherishing any strong legitimate passion, the language of passion in affected tones slips for ever from their glib tongues, and every trifle produces those phosphoric bursts which only mimic in the dark of the flame of passion. (399)

In the above lines, she suggests the women of her time to avoid reading sentimental novels; rather she prefers texts related to history and moral laws or even politics and economics. Moreover, in order to escape the vicious circle, the solution involves instantaneous way of formulating the ideas and exercise of reason and intellect.

Since, women in general constitute a kind of subculture within the framework of a larger society; their work would demonstrate a unity of values, conventions, experiences and behaviours encroaching on each individual. Showalter divides feminist criticism into two distinct modes. The first is

ideological which she terms feminist critique. It is concerned with the feminist as reader and it offers feminist reading of texts which considers the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the exclusion and misconceptions about women in criticism, and women assign in semiotic system. The second mode is gynocriticism and about it she says:

Gynocriticism is related to feminist research in history, anthropology psychology and sociology, all of which have developed hypotheses of a female subculture including not only the ascribed status, and the internalized constructs of femininity, but also the occupations, interactions and consciousness of women. Anthropologists study the female subculture in the relationships between women, as mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends; in sexuality, reproduction and ideas about the body; and rites of initiation and passage purification ceremonies, myths and taboos. (248)

Gynocriticism of Showalter explores the feminist research in history, anthropology, psychology and sociology that surge for a distinct female subculture, includes not only prescribed roles but also female consciousness. Similarly anthropologist encompasses the wide subject matters on the role of female in society, in sexuality, in myths etc.

Showalter, in her analysis of historical development of feminism presents three important stages of women writing: feminine, feminist and female. First is the female imitation of mainstream (male) literary tradition dated from 1840 to 1880 and includes the writers like George Eliot and Bronte Sisters. The second is the protest against the male values and advocate

Separatist Amazonian Utopias and suffragette sisterhood, women's winning of the rights to vote, and use of literature to dramatize the ordeal of wronged womanhood protesting the stereotypical postures of femininity are major activities which dated from 1880 to 1920 and it includes the writers like Elizabeth Gaskell, Frances Trollope and Oliver Schveiner. The third phase is self-discovery and of a search for independent identity includes writers like Dorothy Richardson, Rebecca West, and Virginia Woolf etc. It is dated from 1920 onward writers turned reward female experience as the source of an autonomous art and concerned with gynocriticism and establishment of female subculture.

Another Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) is another brilliantly written massive book on historical study of feminism which stresses especially the psychodynamics of women writers in the nineteenth century. Gilbert and Gubar state:

Propose that the 'anxiety of authorship' that resulted from the stereotype that literary creativity is an exclusively male prerogative, effected in women writers a psychological duplicity that projected a monstrous counter figure to the heroine.[. . .]; such a figure is usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage.(qtd in Abrams236)

In this work, Gilbert and Gubar argue that in the past into the present the writer's creativity has been identified virtually, completely with man. Their aim is to locate a place where women's writing is heard. Woman writer has from the beginning of her life had to struggle against the effects of

socialization, which becomes a struggle against man's oppressive reading of woman.

Further, they proposed a term female affiliation complex in *The War of the Words*, the first volume of their study *No Man's Land* (1988). They build on Freud's model of the family romance as outlined in his *Female Sexuality* (1963). In this work, Freud suggests back on sexuality altogether, or she can cling in obstinate self-assertion to her threatened masculinity, or she can arrive at the ultimate normal feminine attitude in which she takes her father as love object and thus arrives at the Oedipus complex in its feminine form.

They compare the situation of Freud's 'growing girl' to that of the woman writer in the 20th century, who confronts both a matrilineal and a patrilineal inheritance. Her reaction to these two parents can take three forms similar to those faced by the growing girl, but whichever path she chooses according to Gilbert and Gubar, she will have to struggle with a female affiliation complex. Very often the woman writer will oscillate between more than one of the available options, but whether she does she will experience anxiety about her choice. For this reason, they argue: "what is needed is a paradigm of ambivalent affiliation, a construct which dramatizes women's intertwined attitudes of anxiety and exuberance about creativity" (170). To this paradigm, they give the name female affiliation complex.

Judith Butler, in her two influential books *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993) has opposed the notion that the feminist movement requires the concept of a feminine identity; that is, there exists essential factors that define a woman as a woman. Instead, she elaborates the view that the fundamental features which define gender are social and cultural productions

that produce the illusory effect of being natural. Butler considers gender as a performance to be masculine and feminine or homosexual is not something that one is, but a socially pre-established pattern of behaviour that one repeatedly enacts.

The category of sex is from the start normative; it is what Foucault has called a 'regulatory ideal.' Butler in *Bodies that Matter* (1993) writes:

In this sense, then 'sex' not only functions as a norm, but is part of regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce-demarcate, circulate, differentiate- the bodies it controls. Thus, sex is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place (or fails to take) place through certain highly regulated practices. (235)

Butler, unravels that sex is socially constructed and is a productive power that controls, demarcate, circulate the bodies (male and female). Thus, for her sex is produced culturally, takes place through repeated and highly regulated practices. She further describes matter of sex as considered in society in this way: ". . . sex is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the one becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility" (236).

Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990) says that gender is an emphatically imitative structure that is, a structure that reveals how being female or male, feminine and masculine, entails a performance that requires the production of specific bodily signs. Instead of claiming that drag simply

copies an original gender identity, she contends that this flamboyant theatrically shows how all gender identifies are themselves derivative copies. Through performative acts, each of us learns to become a woman or a man, feminine or masculine. Here Butler is adopting a strong constructionist position, thus making her affiliation with Foucault absolutely clear.

As Toril Moi makes a useful distinction between three cognate terms which provides a good starting points: “Feminism is a political position, femaleness a matter of biology and femininity a set of culturally defined characteristics” (204). In common use female is associated only with femininity in universal, biological rather than cultural terms. But with the rise of feminism, it is completely applied to cultural construction and hegemonic dealings. The feminist stage involves the advocacy of minority rights and values, and the female position/stage is the phase of self-discovery and search for identity.

Charlotte Brundson identifies the term in the shifting relationship between feminism and women. The first is the transparent; in which an unproblematic identification of the two is assumed. The second is the hegemonic or recruitist, in which feminist writers manifest the impulse to transform the feminine identification of woman to feminist ones.

According to Maggie Humm, feminism incorporates diverse ideals which share three major perceptions:

That gender is a social construction which oppresses women more than men; that patriarchy shapes this construction; and that women’s experiential knowledge is a basis for a future non-sexist society. These assumptions inform feminism’s

double agenda: the task of critique (attacking gender stereotypes) and the task of construction. Without this second task (sometimes called feminist praxis) feminism has no goal. (194)

Here, Maggie Humm defines two tasks of feminism: one is to critique patriarchy and other is to construct of a non-sexist culture through experimental knowledge of women. Beside this, the feminist writer has no other agendas.

According to Jasbir Jain's view that the progress of civilization from the nomadic to the agrarian, and finally leaping towards industrialism and capitalism, is "marked by a remarkable irony that with the growth in human freedom and wisdom, there has been a corresponding shrinking of women's space" (14). As suggested by her, degrees of oppression and repression may differ, so may be the intensities of struggles faced by women to overcome these, but the need of a fresh air where women may breath without the constrains, remain the same in all societies.

Violence against women has many forms and intensities. They can be both physical and psychological. The wounds of the latter category are much deeper and remain forever. There is a significant observation on this issue by Malini Bhattacharya and argues:

In our country, the violence that starts by exploiting the silence of the female fetus even before it is born, spreads out in various forms as economic violence, dowry violence, violence against women in religious and caste communities etc. This violence is

sometimes overt, but not always visible or recognized. But it is always linked with women's disempowerment. (7)

In the above lines, Bhattacharya explores different kinds of violence prevalent in the structure of patriarchy like economic, dowry, religious, community violence etc. These kinds of violence against women affect them both mentally and physically which hampers female's development. Sometimes, remains overt, this violence aims at breaking women's empowerment.

In the article, "Why I Am a Feminist" (2003), Deshpande talks about the equality of women with men in every sphere of life and says: "I believe that the female of the species has the same right to be born and survive [. . .] as the male has. I believe that women are neither inferior nor subordinate human beings but half of the human race" (83).

Feminist literary critics try to explain how power imbalances due to gender, in a given culture, are reflected or challenged by literary texts. Moi contends that feminist criticism "seeks to expose patriarchal practices" (14). Moreover, Moi asks, what is a woman? And answers that the human body is neither sex nor gender, neither nature nor culture. Thus, both feminism and feminist criticism have extended like ripples in a pond, constructing new meaning and deconstructing the older ones. Moris points out those literary texts provide "a strong powerful understanding of the ways in which society works to the disadvantage of women" (7). To quote Radha Chakravorty, says: "with this widely divergent field, certain discourses of the body [. . .] provide spaces where many strands of feminism intersect" (33).

Deardon gives her vision about the domination of Muslim women and says: "the greater the number of women who wear the veil, the more universal

is the sexual segregation and control of women” (4-5). Muslim women in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, India and Egypt all wear some sort of a veil. Here argument goes, “sexual control of women is a universal fact in those countries (10).

Fran Hosken writes, “Rape, forced prostitution, polygamy, genital mutilation, pornography, the beating of girls and women, purdah (segregation of women) are all violations of basic human rights” (15). By equating purdah with rape, domestic and forced prostitution, Hosken asserts that purdah’s ‘sexual control’ function is the primary explanation for its existence, whatever the context. Hosken, in writing about the relationship between human rights and female genitals mutilation in Africa and the Middle East, bases her whole discussion of genital mutilation on one privileged premise and says: “that the goal of this practice is to mutilate the sexual pleasure and satisfaction of women” (11). This in turn, leads her to claim that women’s sexuality is controlled, as is her reproductive potential and says: “male sexual politics in Africa and around the world shares the same political goal-to assure female dependence and subservience by any and all means” (14). Physical violence against women (rape, sexual assault, excision, infibulations etc) is thus carried out “with an astonishing consensus among men in the world” (14). Here, women are defined consistently as the victim of male control-as the sexually oppressed.

Along with Foucault, Jacques Derrida’s poststructuralist contribution of deconstructive strategies has similarly disclosed the credibility of the spectrum of gender and sexualities, demarcating that the insecure division between male and female, femininity and masculinity, heterosexual and

homosexual, friend and sodomite. A point also developed by Rachael Adams and David Savran ascribe in introductory part of *The Masculinity Studies Reader* (2002) and says: “Since all such terms are historically contingent, talking only of homosexual, for example, is not only insufficient to refer to conscious or unconscious performances such as queen, duke, butch, transsexual male, female” (295) . But, as the system condition of human nature than it is feature of certain kind of society. If something can be constructed upon some grounds, by the same token, the pendulum may receive to the other side also to deconstruct that once constructed.

At present the term sex, gender and sexuality blur into each other in a complicated way. Sex not only refers to Sedgwick calls chromosomal sex but to the cultural expectations of male and female, namely masculinity and femininity. Gender again fares the sehema, as due to the hardcore imposition of masculine/ feminine qualities, individuals are forced to act accordingly. If gender was not limited to the logic of the binary, would also be able to wider range of other repressed or unacknowledged desires and practices. Moreover sex and sexuality also overlap as Sedgwick clarifies:

. . . the whole realm of what modern culture refers to as sexuality and also calls sex- the array of acts, expectations and knowledge, in both women and men, that tend to cluster most densely around certain genital sensations but is not adequately defined by them that realm is virtually impossible to situate on a map delimited by the feminist defined sex/gender distinction.
(29)

Sedgwick, here brings gender issues incorporated in feminism and talks about the binary of masculinity and femininity. The knowledge transplanted through in the society is obsessed with such binaries which obstructs the feminist writers to overcome their ideological perception.

The emergence of several diversified forms of feminism encompasses so many aspects that even the use of term in plural sense fails to do justice. Female of the species has the same right to be born and survive, to fulfil herself and shape her life according to her needs and the potential that lies within her, as male has. Now, women are neither inferior nor subordinate human beings, but one half of the human race. Feminists may say that in this era of 'post-feminism', where the equality of women is something that can be assumed rather than needs to be contested, feminists dream to bring about a change wherein female go beyond the male/female politics. That day is perhaps not too far when the 'new woman' will emerge as an entity vibrating with life, remaking her image according to her own imagination.

Contextualizing the imagination of new woman in the part of the textual analysis, the writer here brings her female protagonist Badra to outlet her own suppressed sexual desires in the Muslim culture. The next chapter will verify how the novelist deconstructs male underpinnings regarding female Muslim women, retaining them on the high pedestal of the Islamic culture.

III. Empowering Female Agency over Islamic Patriarchy

Nedjma's *The Almond* deconstructs the orthodoxies of Muslim culture and reconstructs it by recapturing the rights which are confiscated by the Islamic patriarchy. The novel encompasses manifold subject matters ranging from marriage to patriarchal hegemony to the female world. The writer tries to evaporate the vices rooted in the Islamic family structure of patriarchal society. This becomes the main issue of the novel for analysis. The setting of this novel is 1960s, and Tangers is filled with rich hippies and rock stars, mini skirts and whiskey, but as always with erotica, the world shrinks to the confines of the bedroom. By taking the setting of 1960s, Nedjma, here, is inadvertently exposed to currents of the rising counterculture, including feminism. The novel presents its main protagonists Badra from marginalized group who is successful to recapture her true independence in the end. This novel travels its journey through sexuality to freedom.

Nedjma has challenged the Muslim culture by creating such erotic novel which provides a fascinating view into Muslim culture and its restrictions on women, its sexual mores and interaction between and among the sexes. Here, writer attacks over the backwardness, the fanaticism, the delusion, the ignorance and violence in the Arab world. Sexuality, pleasure in her own body, the separation of love and sin showed Badra the way to freedom. The writer breaks the taboos of Muslim culture and dares to publish such erotic tale divulging the secret sexual lives and carvings of Muslim women, which generated the most buzz because the sex life of a Muslim women is not often the subject of contemporary literature. It is a kind of challenge to the Western audiences who always portray Arab women as

oppressed, submissive and as objects rather than subjects which is able to break such stereotype.

Writer is so confident about what she is writing. She sees sex is completely natural. She wants to revive the Arab tradition. She also considers that talking about the body openly is a way to break down barriers that keep Arab women silent. Early in the novel, as the author reads what she has just written. She responds to her own writing in this way:

I blushed about what I had written, then found it to be very right. What is to stop me from continuing? The world is running. So am I. What should be ashamed of? [. . .] who, besides me, the Arab woman, has had it up to here with an Islam you have distorted? Why shouldn't I speak of love, of soul and ass, if only to match your unjustly forgotten ancestors in the argument? (8-9)

In the above lines Nedjma uses tradition as another justification for her subject matter. Sex is not only found in nature, but is also a part of an Arab tradition that has been largely forgotten. In short space, she manages to critique the current state of Islam, how it treats woman and how it forgets where it came from. She also brings of the fact that the art coming from the Arab world, particularly in literature was once known for its sensuality.

Nedjma's purpose is social and political, addressing both local and global issues. In her choose to fight political and religious prohibition, and oppression by using the body, she is also participating in a trend of feminist literature opens the novel in her prologue by saying: "This narrative is first of all a story of soul and flesh. [. . .] I raise these words as one raises a glass, to

the health of Arab Women, for whom recapturing the confiscated mention of the body is half battle in the quest to healing their men” (1).

In her prologue, Nedjma also discusses the importance of speaking out. One of her biggest goal is putting female voice out there, which is a huge part of the feminist literary tactics in the Arab world in which she says: “My ambition is to give back to the women of my blood the power of speech confiscated by their fathers, brothers and husbands” (1). It clears rebellion in the face of oppression.

The novel also celebrates all the things of feminine, a pleasure that is everywhere, frozen with desire, feverish and demanding in which Badra says:

The key of female pleasure is everywhere: nipples getting hard, frozen with desire, feverish and demanding. They need saliva and caresses. Biting and cajoling. Breasts awaken and ask only to let their milk spurt. They want to be suckled, touched, held, enclosed, and then set free. Their insolence knows no bounds. Nor does their magic spell. They melt in the mouth, they hide, harden, and focus on their pleasure. They want sex. As soon as they know the situation is right, they become lascivious. They envelop the cock and reassured, grow bolder. Their nipples sometimes think they are a clitoris or even a penis. [. . .] The key lies wherever you must go, wherever you haven't thought of going: neck, earlobes, the field of hairy armpit, the part between the buttocks, toes that have to be tasted to know what loving means, the inside of thighs. Everything on the body is

capable of frenzy. Of pleasure. Everything moans and flows for
anyone who knows how to titillate. And eat. And give. (7)

In the above mentioned lines Badra is proud of her own body, who is fascinated to play and describe her bodily sensual organs. She glorifies each and every organs of her body. This indicates that she is challenging to the close Muslim world. Despite several restrictions in the society, she rebels talking openly about sexuality which gradually empowers sexual agency in her. This shows that feminine can not only be tool to male's pleasure rather they can enjoy their own way.

The pleasure of female body is also expressed by, a character, who encourages Badra to rebel against Islamic close sexual exploitation. This encouragement is possible through self celebration of hidden organs. In the plotline Aunt Selma, being a Islamic woman her self, first, recognizes the value for female independent sexual pleasure by describing in this way:

“Water is woman's first perfume and her best beauty cream. After that, just to answer you, you faintness bunch, you should make sure you keep your private parts fresh and smooth. Groom them with a cloth moistened with lavender and perfume their edges with musk or amber” (89). Emphasis on the protecting own organs for the sexual appeals is encouraged; this is even followed by Badra, main protagonist of the novel. Badra remarks:

I was proud of having two courtiers whose stares attached me like a magnet. Something told me I had them in the palm of my hand and would be able to do with them whatever I wanted.
But what? My power was inevitably linked to my mouth, my

beauty mark, the Shape of my legs, and even more surely to my private parts. (94)

Here, she further asserts on reluctance of overthrowing sexuality from male's control by evoking their own passionate desires openly. She speaks that why feminine should be at the centre of all, because its pleasing aspects is run through her emphasis on organs where she did not hesitate to describe about the genitals which are formed by two lips in continuous contact that caresses each other.

The plight of women characters and bitter reality of female subordination that are suppressed under the oppressive Islamic patriarchy is excellently present here in the novel. Here long suffering mother who advises Badra and suggests: "Accepts your fate like the rest of us" (43). Badra's mother-in-law ties Badra down to her bed to enable the husband to deflower her more easily. Badra's sister whispers in her ears: "Close your eyes, bite your lips, and think about something else. You won't feel a thing" (111). Badra's sister-in-law is suggesting Badra what to do to please her husband and says: "Don't let him leave his seed inside you. Your vagina will be too wet, and men don't like that. Lie down on the bed. He'll be here very soon" (111). All these show that in the patriarchal society Women have to sacrifice their happiness to please their husband. They are not allowed to think about themselves. Here Badra, her mother, sister, mother-in-law, sister-in-law all becomes the victim of oppressive patriarchy.

In patriarchal society, Women always stand passive in the matter of sex. Here Badra's sister Naima remains silent and does what her husband commands her to do.

Naima did not need to speak. Her husband was expressing his pleasure as well as hers, while the creaking mixed with their stifled hard breathing. Then came a sudden deep sigh. It was Naima giving up the ghost. A kind of nausea together with some cramps shook my belly. My eyes filled with tears. (165)

Women though are not satisfied with the male behaviours, they can not simply protest. They even take them as ghost. Though, female finds incompatible to male in the social structure, they cannot simply express anything against them. Male, without caring anything about pleasure of women, pursues only their own pleasures.

Radical feminist even describe how female subordination is common to all female. Why it is hard to overthrow from society. Some feminists blame even female for the ongoing exploitation on female. Women are also exploiters of other women. Human passions and greed are not endemic to one sex or the other. If a woman of questionable morality wants something badly enough she is likely to exploit any easy source that can satisfy her desire, whether it is a man or a woman. Due to such greed and lack of female coordination, males are at centre for everything. So Women must first come to sexual descriptions openly in the society to gain the power, and making themselves counter balance to male existence.

Females are dominated in different ways. Even prostitution is also one of remarkable domination made up on them. Though, males are responsible to make female prostitute, but People always treat them badly. No one tries to think what is the cause behind which forced them to do such kind of work. No woman is interested to do such kind of work to earn money by selling her

body. Society makes them prostitutes and behaves them badly. When Badra follows prostitutes, then mother locked her in the toilet. When Badra says that they are beautiful, her aunt scolds and pulls her ear and says: “Listen to me: Never get near those women again. Don’t you understand they are bad?” Badra shows her intimate relation to prostitutes and says, “They are so beautiful, Aunt Selma!”. Further, the Aunt replies “And what’s that to you? You are not going to marry one of them, as far as I know! I mean, really! I’ll chop your head off. If I ever catch you around them again!” (146)

If someone tries to say something about prostitutes, people consider they are talking nonsense things. When Badra tries to take the side of prostitutes, her family members scold her and decide to marry her. And her family members say: “. . . we are going to have to marry that little girl off as soon as possible. She’s capable of paying money like a man just to fist her eyes on the titties of those hajjalat!” (146).

Society does too much violence against the prostitute girls. That is also happened here. One prostitute’s private parts had been burned and her throat cut which shows these lines: “Her private parts had been burned and her throat cut. Nobody ever found out who had committed the despicable act. Undoubtedly one of her clients who couldn’t make her give up her profession” (148).

Birth of an individual is obsessed with the norms composed by the society. Being allied to rules and regulation of the society, sometimes, even unwillingly, male becomes follower of the system. Society makes men most selfish, crude and regards women as second grade citizens and gives men the superior position. And men pretend that they are capable in every thing even

they are weak in inside which makes them monsters. The writer attacks this notion and about this Aunt Selma says:

. . . Your father was a softy but had to hide his sensitive nature under a big pile of surely silences. It's not always fun being a man, you know! You're not supposed to cry. Even when you're burying your father, your mother, or your child. You're not supposed to say I love you, or that you're afraid or you've caught the clap. No wonder with all of that that our men become monsters. (26)

The above lines show that Badra's father have some sympathetic feelings for women, but still problem is that he can not run up according to his daughter's will, society is there to direct his sympathies, sentiments. Women also do not have coordination to stand against any sorts of domination over them. They simply follow the system determined by the males in the names of civilization.

Marriage is legal bond and social construct between men and women in all culture. Marriage in Islam is considered to be top of the utmost importance which is the precious gift of god. Moreover, it is the bond of two souls. Husband and wife are considered the two wheels of a cart. If one is not able to understand other, the life can not run smoothly. To move life smoothly, it is necessary to have mutual understanding between them. But, there is extreme domination over girls in the name of marriage. Girls are forced to marry in their little ages. In conservative Muslim culture, man has to marry many girls and he can leave them without any reason. Here in the novel also Badra's husband is forty years old, but she has just turned to seventeen. More than twice her age, Badra is forced to marry with Hmed who had already

repudiated his two wives for the reason of sterility. When Hmed's mother opened the door of Badra's house and Badra knew that she came there for Badra's hand. The pathetic condition of Badra we can feel when she says: "I knew immediately that it is my turn to put my head on the block" (29).

In society, there exists hegemony that it is not necessary to give higher education to girls. It is considered that after marriage, girl's work is to look after their husbands, care children, prepare food and serve them. So, here in the novel also one of the farmer's wife whispers in the ear of Badra's mother and gives her advice to marry her daughter as soon as possible and says: "just accept! [. . .], you can't continue to let her go to the city and pursue those damned studies, which won't do her any good, anyway. If you keep so hard headed, she'll get so itchy that she will leave and start chasing after men" (30).

Violence against women has many forms and intensities. They can be both physical and psychological. The wounds of the latter category are much deeper and remain forever. Muslim culture and religion is so orthodox and misogynistic. There are different kinds of violence against women. One of them is the experiment of girl's body either she is fit for marriage or not. Here Badra's would be mother-in-law and sister-in-law examined Badra's body from top to bottom in which Badra says:

. . . They examined me from top to bottom, feeling my breasts, my behind, my knees, and finally the curve of my calf. I felt like a sheep for the religious holiday of Eid. All that was missing were the feast's ribbons. But, knowing the rules and customs, I let them handle me without bleating. Why interfere with the well-oiled codes that change the hammam into a souk

where flesh is sold at a third of the price of regular meat? (30-31)

The above lines describe strange custom and beliefs of Muslim culture where Girls are treated like animals which are kept in the market for sale. If the animal is good, healthy, the customer buys it. Here Badra's condition is like this where her every organ like breasts, knees, buttocks, calf is checked to find out she is perfect for marriage or not. After that, it is time to check Badra's household activities. It is grandmother's turn to come Badra's door who is hundred years old and with tattoos from forehead to toes. By sitting down in the courtyard, she watches Badra's every household activities, in which Badra says: ". . . My mother didn't stop watching me, urging me to do my very best, knowing the old shrew would report to her family in full on my talents as a housewife. As for me, I knew the goods weren't what they were supposed to be" (31).

Hmed's aim of marrying with Badra is to produce only male child because his earlier two wives were not able to give him child, so he selects Badra to become his third wife. In backward and conservative society, it is considered that women are responsible to produce child. In fact both men and women play the equal role in the production of children. Here, also Hmed himself is unable to produce child but he blames his weakness to female. In fact he himself is sterile. So, his real intention is Clearfield by these lines in which Badra says: ". . . He wanted children. Only boys. To penetrate me, to make me pregnant, and then parade around at the parties of Imchouk, his chest thrown out and his head high, proud to have ensured himself of male progeny, would please him" (31).

There is a huge preparation of girl before marriage. Here, Badra's family member replaced a young peasant girl in the house activities. They delivered delicious food like sumptuous meals, best piece of meat and cared her very carefully.

. . . They filled me with creamy sauces, with couscous sprinkled with sman, and with baghrir smothered in honey. Not to mention the pastries stuffed with dates or almonds or, a great luxury, the tagines with pine nuts, a rare commodity. I gained a pound of fat a day and my mother was delighted with my rosy and chubby cheeks. (33)

These lines show that it is like the care of animals by giving large amount of food before selling or killing. In the same way, there is a special care for Badra before going marital bed. By all activities, it is clear that girls are considered like animals or pleasure giving commodities. Moreover, her family member put her in a dark room where is not any rays of sunlight. She is kept inside and do not allow her to any visit for fear of the evil eye.

Then they cloistered me in a dark room. Since no sun was to touch me, my skin grew pale and white under the approving glances of the women of my clan. A light skin is a privilege of the rich, as being blond is of the Europeans and the Central Asian Turks, descendants of the deys, the beys, and especially the janissaries, those mercenaries Driss later told me about with consummate disdain. (33)

The above mentioned lines explores that Badra is treated like animals who kept inside. As a result, she becomes pale. Badra also feels that she is chained

between the four walls of house. On the one hand, there is special care for her and on the other hand she is chained inside which is justified by this line “. . . I was queen and slave at the same time” (33).

In Muslim culture, time and again, they checked the girl's body. Before marriage, they checked if the girl is touched by any men or not. It is time to check Badra's body again and at this time Badra's would be sister -in-law came to check her. The girl's house member is to follow the rules without any objection. So, here, Badra's mother gives permission passively. Here, Badra's virginity is checked.

Neggafa asked me to lie down and take my panties off. Then she spread my legs and bent down over my genitals. I suddenly felt her hand move to the lips apart and a finger go in. I did not cry out. The examination is short and painful, and its burning stayed with me like a bullet received right in the face. I only wondered whether, before raping me in all impunity, she had washed her hands. (34)

The above lines explore the domestic violence against women which seems common and penetrative to the women in Islamic culture. This suppression demands to be blurred. Though, Badra initially accepts Neggafa's sexual dominance but later on rebels against such legal crime. After examining the virginity of Badra, Neggafa further says: “congratulations!” Neggafa called out to my mother, who had come to get the news. “Your daughter is intact. No man touched her” (34). Here, one remarkable thing is that before marriage girl's virginity is checked but no one knows that her would be husband also has the virginity or not.

Aunt Selma is not satisfied what is happening to Badra. She criticizes this cruel Muslim custom and beliefs and says: “To think that we’re still moldering in caves while the Russians are firing rockets off into space and the Americans are claiming they’re going to the moon!” (35).

There is no any attachment, any love, any feelings between Hmed and Badra. When Hmed returned from office, he kissed his mother’s hand and said hello to his sister and settled down for his dinner. But he said nothing to Badra as she is stranger for him. She is like a servant in Hmed’s home. She does everything for them but nobody cared her in which she says:

I would serve him, and then clear the table. Join him in the conjugal bedroom. Open my legs. Not sigh. Not vomit. Feel nothing. Die. Stare at the Kilim carpet nailed to the wall. Smile at Saied Ali decapitating the ogre with his forked sword. Wipe myself between the legs. Sleep. Hate men. Their thing. Their nasty-smelling sperm. (37)

The above lines show that Badra in her husband’s home is treated like servants. Her daily routine is to feed them, care them and after finishing all households work fulfil her husband’s wishes show the pathetic condition of women who have to sacrifice their life to make other people happy.

Although men and women play equal role in the sexual acts but men do not care about the working of female bodies. As a result women consider sex as a burden. They consider sex is only for male pleasure. The same is there in the case of Badra. Hmed loves Badra in his own way. And her mother-in-law always insists her to become pregnant. Her pathetic condition of living as she says:

. . . And every evening, except when I had my period, I continued to spread my legs for a forty-year-old billygoat who wanted children and couldn't have any. I was not allowed to wash myself after our sinister frolics- the day after the wedding, my mother- in- law had ordered me to The same is there in the case of Badra. Hmed loves Badra in his own way. And her mother-in –law always insists her to become pregnant keep the “precious seed” inside me so I would get pregnant.
(38)

The above lines explore that society treats women negatively. Every family member insists to beget male child when the girl is married as if it depends on women. This is the conservative lesson to the host people of masculinity society.

In fact Hmed himself is sterile. His seed bore no fruit. He had already left two wives because they did not bear any children. So Badra is not responsible for producing child as she says: “As precious as it may have been, Hmed's seed bore no fruit whatsoever [. . .], my belly continued to be barren, worse than a follow field. I would dream of brambles growing in my vagina so that Hmed would scrape his thing on them and give up on coming back” (38). Badra presents herself furious mentality against her husband, which is parallel challenge to the existing norms patriarchy.

There is a close, intimate relationship between Badra and Aunt Selma. Badra openly can share her painful life experiences to her aunt Selma. Badra is sharing about her wretched life where she had to face in her husband's home. “. . . I would never have imagined that I'd be conversing with her openly about

my body and its frustrations. For the first time in my life, I was speaking to her as an equal, a woman now, after having been her very young niece for such a long time” (39). Female characters are organized in the way to share their oppressed sexual life among each other openly. It is a kind of threats to the male centrality at the core of the society. This asserts for the counterbalance in the society to exist female identity.

After three years of devastating marriage, in which, Hmed tries unsuccessfully to get her pregnant. When pregnancy does not materialize, Hmed and his family members starts mistreating her. The painful torture which is given to Badra is also clarified by these lines:

A child! A boy! The words alone made me want to commit infanticide. After three months of marriage, they forced me to drink brews of bitter herbs and sips of urine, to straddle the tombs of saints, to wear amulets that had been scribbled on my fqihs with trachoma-burned eyes, to smear nauseating concoctions on my belly that made me puke under the fig tree in the garden. I hated my body, stopped washing, shaving, and perfuming it. (41)

Above line makes us clear that Badra’s family members want male child from her and her belly becomes the main topic of every conversation and every quarrel. Her family members forced her to drink bitter herbs; sips of urine and to wear amulets but they never try to think weather weakness lies there in Hmed or Badra. She is compelled by such situation to kill her own unborn baby.

When domination over Badra is too much, her sister Naima could not control her and with furiousness she cried out: “It is his fault. You’re not his first wife, you won’t be the last. He could deflower a hundred virgins and still wouldn’t sire as much as a green onion for a son. So stop eating your heart out and tormenting yourself about your belly” (42).

In fact, weakness lies in Hmed himself because his earlier two wives did not produce any child. This shows that he himself is not capable to produce child. When domination is over, Badra comes to stay her mother’s home. But, it is considered that after marriage daughter’s real home is her husband’s home. The house where she was born, grown up becomes unknown place for her. After marriage, she does not have any right to stay in her mother’s house. Here also Badra where she was born becomes strange for her. She has not any right to stay anymore there. Badra’s own mother is totally unsympathetic to her and tells to stay with her house and husband and says: “Your place is not with me anymore. You have a house and a husband. Accept your fate like the rest of us” (43). But, Badra secretly dreams of having freedom. She wants to free herself by escaping from this enchained life.

Muslim culture is different from other culture. It has its own customs and beliefs. In this culture, people marry their own bloodline groups. Here in the novel, Badra’s brother Ali makes Souad pregnant and from their relation they had one child. But Ali’s mother forced him to marry his own cousin to remove from Souad, his first wife and Ali obediently accepts it. It has been revealed through the lines: “Only a woman of your own bloodline will be able to erase your shame and forget your past mistakes, she decreed sharply, visibly, happy to have gotten rid of the intruder” (63).

Men always think that they are superior and they do what they like. They never try to think about other persons. Badras uncle Slimane has already two wives Selma and Taoes, but he used to go brothel. He is not faithful to his wives who have the relation with other woman also. But there is the sisterly relation between Taoes and Selma. They both fight against Selimane. Selma stands against her husband and Taoes her co- wife also took her side and they declared: “never in our beds again! They both decreed, irate allies, convinced of their right” (68). But, in fact Selimane deceived everyone. One side he deceived his wives and on the other side he deceived another woman. Aunt Selma is so careful and sincere woman who thinks about those women whom Selimane deceived and says: “Selimane deceived not to just his wife, but his beloved, the woman who loves him and who gave up everything for him” (69). Selimane’s this behavior hurts aunt Selma very much. It shows that man always thinks about themselves, only about their pleasure, their happiness but they do not care about the impacts that might inherit on their wives which are mentioned in the way: “this is where he hurt me! This is where I am bleeding! I thought I was watching a wheat field burn in the middle of May” (70).

Badra is always curious about her own body and celebrates it. She is so proud of her own body and thinks that she will be most beautiful organs in future which are able to spy on man and says: “. . . I swear that one day I will have the most beautiful sex in the world and it would impose its laws on men and stars, pitiless and relentless” (83).

There is lots of domination against women in misogynistic Muslim culture which is both physically and mentally. On the day of wedding night, Badra’s family members put white cotton cloth to check the virginity of newly

married girl. If there is blood on the white cloth, they accept this girl as daughter-in-law, otherwise they reject her. But no one take concerned about the husband's virginity. All these beliefs are cleared by there lives which murmured by Neggafa to Badra in her first night. "Put your shirt beneath your buttocks, so it will absorb the blood. It's cotton, and the stains will be quite visible" (111).

Everyone is concerned about what makes Hmed pleased. No one even try to ask what Badra wants. Everyone is advising what to do or not what to do to make happy to her husband. These all are the examples of patriarchal society where women are not allowed to think about themselves. Neggafa's suggestion to Badra justifies the subjugation of woman. "Don't let him leave his seed inside you. Your vagina will be too wet, and men do not like that. Lie down on the bed; he will be here very soon" (111).

Submissive nature of woman is also justified by Badra's sister who leans over Badra and whispers: "close your eyes, bite your lips, and think about something else" (111). All these show that in patriarchal society, women have to sacrifice their feelings to please their husband and other members of family.

Despite Badra's passive aggressive attempts to rebel, she is wed. The night of her wedding, not knowing exactly what to expect as her sister and new mother-in-law undress her and prepare her for the arrival of her husband at the bed chamber. Badra, weds on highly anxious anticipation, she hopes that her husband will be gentle. But, the situation of Badra becomes so much pathetic, miserable when Hmed, her husband raped her on her own wedding night as Badra says:

My mother-in-law tied my arms to the bars of the bed with her shawl, and Naima took it upon herself to hold down my legs.

Terrified, idealized that my husband was going to deflower me under the eyed of my sister. With one hard blow, he broke me in two, and for the first and only time in my life, I fainted.

(115)

The above lines explore the sexual violence against women. When Hmed is not able to deflower Badra easily, he takes help from his mother and Badra's sister. Then they tie Badra securely to the bed posts with a scarf and grab her legs. It is considered that sex is a totally private thing and there is necessity of mutual understanding between husband and wife to have sex, but, here sex becomes public matter. With the assistance of the two women, Hmed pierced her which is certainly terrible, loveless horrific movement of humiliation of getting married, the night a young bride loses her virginity.

Hmed is too much older than her when he is not able to deflower Badra on her wedding night, he takes help from his mother and his lawfully wedded wife's sister. More than that, the wedding guests bang on the door outside and demand the proof of virginity. The blood stained shirt that get passed from hand to hand in which Badra thinks: ". . . the bloodstained shirt proved nothing except the stupidity of men and the cruelty of submissive women" (115). It is considered that marriage is the bond of two souls. One understands others feeling and there is equal respect for each other. But in the case of Badra, Marriage becomes the proof of virginity to girls, and fulfils the sexual passion for men.

After three years of devastating marriage, in which, Hmed tries unsuccessfully to get her pregnant. When pregnancy doesn't materialize, he starts mistreating her. His family members also do lots of violence against Badra in the name of making her pregnant. She realizes that Hmed married her only to produce male child. She also realizes that sexual pleasures only exist for men and for women it is a kind of burden because men never try to understand the working of female bodies. When domination is too much, she breaks out of her prison one night. Her determination to escape from her husband's home is shown by these lines:

What did "like the rest of us" mean? That she had been raped by my father and taken against her liking and her will as well? I don't want to belong to a tribe that ends up in the sewer, with a mutilated heart and mutilated genitals like Egyptian women, Aunt Selma! I said so to Naima, and she did not protest. She even helped me to escape. (44)

The above lines explore Badra's determination to leave her husband's home. Badra wants to live her life according to her will. Her rebellious attitude comes out when she determines not to sacrifice her life like her mother and other suppressed female in the Islamic society who are forced to live their life according to their husband's wishes.

After leaving her husband's home Imchouk, Badra flees to her Aunt Selma's home in the cosmopolitan port city of Tangiers. When, she escapes from Imchouk to Tangier she is still a girl. Badra stays in the home of the kindly world wise Aunt Selma who tells her to open her heart, a heart that has been changed down with hatred and anger from her marriage to her uncaring

husband Hmed. Badra soon realizes that she never loved Hmed; all he managed to do was deprived of her laughter. Badra never gets free life to live. Before marriage, she is cared by her mother what to do or what not to do. And after marriage her life becomes more worse, she chained into the four walls of her husbands house. She always had to sacrifice her life what her mother-in-law and husband demand to do. But, she is so proud and confident about her own body which comes in the lines of prologue as “I am the one with the most beautiful cunt on earth, the best designed, the best developed, the deepest, warmest, wettest noisiest, most fragrant and singing, the one most fund of cocks when they rise up like harpoons” (4). Badra thus secretly dreams of having the most beautiful organs and having it imposed its laws on the men and stars, pitiless and relentless.

In Tangiers, Badra’s life takes another mode. A handsome doctor appears in her life. There, she begins an affair with a rich, refined doctor Driss, a frivolous, a moral free-spirit, who as her master and executioner, initiates her in all the pleasures of the flesh. Tangier awakens her dreams which she had seen when she was in Imchouk. Driss teaches Badra to love her own body, and introduces her to a world of sexual passion that she never imagined. Badra gradually grows up; the personality of the dumb farm girl develops into a mature, canny and independent woman. Driss satisfies her sexually but Badra loves her passionately. She loves Driss truly from the heart. Which she speaks here: “. . . it was not only I who was in love with Driss. My genitals, too, revered him” (104).

Men consider that women are pleasure giving commodities. Here also Driss treats Badra like his play thing which he can use according to his will.

As it stated in the lines below:

He soaped my upper and lower back, covered my pubis with foam. It's here concealed my privacy from his look but his fingers quickly slide beneath my panties and opened the lips, finding my clitoris, hard as a chickpea, then press down with a delicate and meditative gesture. I moaned, tried to take down panties, but he wouldn't let me. He turned me over, embraced my thighs, and made me arch my back. There you are, I said to myself. You are his plaything. His object. He can do anything now rip out your tongue, tear open your heart, or make you the queen of Sheba. (100)

The above lines expose Driss own way of loving without caring to Badra's will. Badra finds dominance of male in sexual activities though it is equal to male and female. But initiative is always made by male and which might be loveless, a kind of passionate desire for sexual thrust and uses female like a commodity, which crushes the equal thirst for passion in female. Driss uses Badra to fulfil his sexual desire and says: "every particle of your skin is a bed of love and source of ecstasy" (104). Every man wants to be the first to deflower woman's virginity because they think that they are superior and women are inferior creatures which are justified by Driss's lines: " But I am the first and don't give a damn about the others and what they want. I want you my almond my butterfly!" (104). Moreover, he uses words like almond and butterfly to dominate the female real existence. At the same time he

compares Badra with non-living things like fruits and insects as if he feels that woman are not acquiring the equal social status as man and even not counted in the list of human beings. Along these, he also compares Badra with animal and says: “Don’t go home tonight, Badra my wounded kitten” (103).

Every time when she meets Driss, feels that she lost the virginity of heart. The relation with Hmed who raped her brutally where she lost her virginity and what is left with her is the virginity of heart. But the relation with Driss, she also loses the virginity of heart in which she says: “How many times did I go to Driss’s mouth [. . .] Twenty, thirty times? All I know is that I lost my virginity there. The real one. The virginity of the heart. Since then, my soul has merely been a station platform where I stand to watch men fall” (117).

Males weak love intrigues abide female strongly. She is very much caring to organs and valued the weave of virginity in the society. So, deception by Driss make her to glance at once back to the virgin dignity of her life. Aunt Selma always loves Badra and cares her who knows the reality of Driss. Therefore, she advises Badra not to become pregnant out Driss, because society does not accept children who are born before marriage and she says to Badra: “make sure you don’t get pregnant. Not so much for yourself as for the kid infidels are cruel to bastard children” (120). Aunt Selma is confident that Driss never marry to Badra because Badra is a poor farm girl and Driss is rich and famous doctor. So Aunt Selma suggests Badra and says:

But Driss is perfectly reasonable. A solid bourgeois such as he will never marry a farm girl! Do you really think Tangiers would let you get away with that? He is a doctor; he is rich,

famous and generous with women. Mothers are ready to lick his ass so he will marry their daughters. They are even prepared to land in his bed to make him their son-in-law. (121)

The statement shows Aunt Selma's reasonable thought who is aware of Driss's real intention and always gives good suggestion to Badra. She suggests Badra to become careful because she was sure that Driss wouldn't marry her. Male only uses female to fulfil their sexual passion but when they are proposed for marriage by female they remains unanswered. They simply disconnect the relation with the female. Driss changed Badra's life, way of thinking and life style. He teaches her to love her own body out of farm girl; he makes her one independent woman which is saying by Badra: "Driss had changed my language and my appearance, my way of thinking. I was not committing any sin. I was not stealing anything from anyone -besides, I was convinced that the world was not worth a penny without the enormous inferno of love in which I stood, my heart bared" (121-22).

Now we can see lots of changes in Badra's life. Being Muslim women, she stops to wear veil. According to Muslim rituals, every women need to wear veil to cover their body to protect themselves from the evil eye of men. But, Badra stops wearing veil which is a kind of protest against orthodox Muslim culture where women are forced to live under veil and she says: "I stopped wearing the veil and exchanged it for the dresses he gave me, the pumps, shawls, and jewelry that cost a fortune"(137).

Driss from the beginning of their relationship insists Badra to take large amount of money at the end of each month as her salary. This shows that he treats Badra like a whore or prostitute who gets certain amount of money

after giving sexual pleasure to men. Badra is not aware of his intention and accepts what he says. But Aunt Selma is aware of their relationship. She knows that Driss is tricking with Badra and says “since he is fucking to you and keeping you, what is preventing him from asking you to marry him? He is busy making a high-class whore of you” (137).

Badra is ignorant and she follows what Driss had said to her. When Aunt Selma scolds her by saying that why Driss does not ask you to marry with him and in the reply Badra innocently says: “ Marriage? But we were husband and wife, and it was not the piece of paper to be signed before and *adul* my lover asserted. I believed him” (137).

Driss satisfies her sexually and Badra loves him passionately, however, he is not faithful to her. Driss’s relationship changes Badra’s life, but it is far from perfect. Driss’s real qualities come out here when he says, “My little girl, to love, what is that? Our skins are happy rubbing against each other.

Tomorrow you’ll meet another man, you’ll want to caress his neck, have him between your legs. I’ll be written off”.

Then Badra replies, "Aghast, I cried out, “Never!”, only to get the reply of Badra, Driss says, "Don’t say silly things! I, too, could meet a woman, women, want to lick them.” (139)

It is clear that in the eye of Driss love means only to have sexual relationship and makes the body pleasure. So, he wants to have another woman also. He never satisfies to engage with one woman. He also suggests Badra to find other men. Now, Badra feels that she is like prostitutes who sold their chastity to earn money. As a result, they had been banished from the village. According to Moroccan religious view they called prostitute women

as 'hajjalat' whom aunt Taoes accused: "turning their pussy into cash. I was intrigued and said to myself, "so they do what I did, and I am just like them" (141).

Badra's love towards Driss is so high. She praises Driss and compares him with God. She loves him heartily as she says:

Driss, you scare me. Sometimes I tell myself you and God is the same. Too much power! Too seductive! I love you so much that making love seems to me to be the only prayer capable of rising to heaven and being written down in the register of all my actions that are worthy and justified in the eyes of the Eternal. (151)

These lines show her devotion, love towards Driss. But every time Driss dominates her by using different things. He compares her with many things like little Bedounin, child, pagan and says: "You're bordering on polytheism, little one! Be careful not to burn your wings! Ah, my little heathen, my darling little pagan, my treasure, my immaculate little whore, my fearless child!" (151).

Driss knew that Badra loves him so much, but he is playing with Badra's passion and emotion. He has the relation with other girls also. He seems unknown towards Badra in public place. This shows that he is not faithful to Badra and he is cheating Badra's emotion and feelings which is mentioned below:

Driss knew I was in love and was playing with my passion. On those evenings, he loved sniffing one girl's neck, clasp another one's hips, kissing someone's temple or conspicuously

pinching a pair of big buttocks. He never touched me in public and pretended not to notice my fury or the bullets I imagined shooting at the skin of his little chicks. The burning flashes going through my belly every time he was within a yard of me filled me with tears and exasperation. (155)

Male characters in any civilization bears common traits to treat female as commodity to play. They do everything to show their arrogance and to fulfil their internal passions in public sphere, and they even make the women to take. Their attitude on women is derogative.

Driss has the relationship with many other women like Najat and Saloua. Badra knew it when Driss took her in their home one day:

One night he took me to the house of two women whose name he told me on the avenue de l'Istiqlal. He asked for French wine, took a bunch of grapes from the fruit bowl, told two or three jokes, and then said he wasn't getting enough love. Five minutes later, Najat, who was nearsighted but had the body of a goddess, was on his lap and he was brazenly pawing her breasts. I was ready to kill when I heard Saloua, her companion, laugh and encourage him. (155-56)

Here, Badra generalizes the male nature when his boy friend, Driss, makes very abnormal behaviour, sexually appealing activities. She is getting fed up from Driss's behaviour, once in aggression feel to kill him. But, he is quite clever to tackle; he never does any misbehaviour with her in public place. Moreover, maintains male ego treating female in street with passionate activities.

When Badra comes to know that Driss has the relationship with other women, she determines to leave him. She tells Driss to choose one of them either her or them and says, “It’s either them or me!” (175). Responding her, Driss shows his ego and says: “It’s you and they, at the same time, no discussion” (175).

But, Driss is so selfish who always thinks only about his own pleasure. He thinks that he is superior and his decision is final. He never tries to feel Badra’s feelings eternally. He at the same time wants to continue his relationship with Badra and as well as other women. Driss, here stands as the excellent example patriarchal society where men think themselves superior and women are inferior, second-grade citizens, and pleasure-giving commodities. Men always want to rule over women. As his answer Badra replies: “I am not your object nor am I your servant. I didn’t escape from Imchouk for you to treat me like dirt” (175). Here Badra’s answer shows that she becomes conscious about her position. She starts to rebel against her lover who mistreats her.

Love becomes perfect when there is devotion, respect, and sacrifice from the both side lover and beloved. Here, Badra also wants respect to her from Driss’s side, but he has no respect to Badra which bothers her and says: “What bothers me is that you have absolutely no respect for me” (176).

Now, Badra becomes so powerful, bold, strong who can leave Driss without any tears in her eyes. She confidently says: “Now I will be able to watch you fuck those whores without weeping” (178). But, Driss loves Badra in his own way, in which Badra says:

Does he love me, that man? Did he love me? I doubt it. Or only in his own way: casual, detached, desperate beneath his laughter, his impeccable elegance in gestures and clothes, his mastery over liquor, and his infinite, overwhelming culture, lighthearted in company and black-spirited as soon as he was alone, face-to-face with his own silence, whether or not he had a woman in his bed or on his arm. (200)

Driss loves Badra in his own way and he never tries to think what Badra expects from him. Thereby, he just goes on neglecting Badra's desires, imposes whatever he likes. He makes Badra furious when he does not let Badra to feel what sorts of cooperation there should be in love.

Aunt Selma is aware of Driss's activities and says: "you say he loves you? No, my dear! The only thing he loves is his dick. And don't contradict me, or I'll knock my head against the wall!" (200). Aunt Selma also advises Badra to buy the apartment and tells her to put it in her name. "Make sure that your rabid dog buys you the apartment and puts it in your name. Do that for me. I want to sleep peacefully in my grave" (202). She further tells Badra to take revenge against Driss in this way: "Remember that only a man is capable of cutting off the cock of another man. Go now, may god protect you" (203).

Now, Badra decides to take another man to teach good lesson to Driss. Badra does 'tit for tat' to revenge against her lover who betrayed her by putting relationship with other girls in which Badra says: "Take another lover to avenge yourself on Driss" (203).

When Badra has the relationship with other man, Hamid, Driss becomes angry and jealous towards Hamid who is also his friend. It is the

men's true nature that they think they are powerful and they can do what they like. They do not think about their wife and beloved when they had the relation to other girls but when their women do same thing, they become angry and jealous. Driss shows this kind of attitude here and scolds his friend in this way: “. . . I'll fuck your mother if you so much as think of touching Badra. That one is mine, all mine! Mine, Monsieur Glans!” (208).

With Driss every word and every look sweeps away another fear. He does love Badra in his own way: casual, detached, desperate beneath his laughter, his impeccable elegance in gestures and clothes, his mastery over liquor, and his infinite, overwhelming culture. “He tied my hands together and bound them to my feet behind my back. I acceted being beaten, raped or both. He had told Hamid that I was his and his alone. Nothing else mattered. On the contrary, his rage was enough to set my soul ablaze” (209).

Driss changes Badra's life from innocent farm girl to mature and independent women, but it is far from the perfect. Driss satisfies her sexually but she loves him passionately, however, he is not faithful to her. They engage in rapacious threesomes and Driss has other women and occasionally also has men. But Badra remains Driss's almond, his butterfly. Every particle of her skin becomes a love nest and source of ecstasy for him. Driss refuses to marry her and because they are unmarried, their affair remains hidden from the world. With Driss, she loses the virginity of heart. Driss enlightened her sexually, but not socially.

Although, Driss's relationship to Badra changes her life, but as her dependence on him intensifies so does his demands, and she finds herself forced into increasingly degrading sexual acts. Fighting against her urge to

submit, Badra must escape this man if she is ever to rediscover her self-esteem which she realizes at the end. She realizes that she must also free herself from her master, Driss, to achieve true independence and says: “. . . When I woke up, I said to myself that Driss was a trap from which I had to escape” (170).

As time went on, Driss suffers from cancer. Later Driss realizes his mistake and purposes Badra to marry with him and asks: “Badra, will you marry me?” (227). But at this time, Badra replies: “Never!” (227).

Driss requests God to make Badra to love him. Since he has arrived in Imchouk, Driss directs himself to God without pulling any punches: “God, Beautiful and Great as you are, let me screw my wife again. Just once. Make her say ‘I love you’ again. After that you can send your angels for me, and I will not protest” (230).

Driss in the beginning is a self-proclaimed atheist, but at the end starts to examine his life and his emotions who begins to address Allah directly, apologizing for his ingratitude and begs Badra to take him with her. Finally, Driss prays God to forgive him:

. . . Forgive me, Lord! Forgive me, but never forgive Badra! I don't mind dying. I don't even mind suffering. But merciful God, Make Badra know that I have loved only her and that as my last dwelling I want only her body. By the glory of Mahammed and Jesus among the mortals, tell her that I am already in hell for having spat on her love! I am dying. Dance on, frogs! Rejoice, woodlice! Daub your ass with henna, sons of whores! (232)

It reflects that Driss's realization of his wrong deeds towards Badra. He apologizes directly to God and begs to forgive him for his misdeeds, who spat the love of Badra in the past. But, now he begs God to make Badra love him again. Badra's rebellious attitude arises here.

It is considered that women are not allowed to bury anyone. But she buried Driss to challenge the existing norms of patriarchal society which is mentioned in Badra's lines: ". . . I knew that if I decided to dig the grave of this love, I would also have to carry its corpse, wander in the desert for forty years, and then, vanquished, recognize that , in fact, the corpse I was lugging around was my own" (170). Here, Badra along side challenging the norms of society dares to dig out the grave, which is completely male oriented task. She also able to wrap her loves in the coffin of Driss, and achieves freedom for male deception.

By the end of the novel, Driss comes around to understand that women have agencies and opinions all of their own. Badra and Driss are transformed and differences reconciled. This, however, is only possible once Driss accepts that Badra's power and will use it as she sees fit. Their relationship at the end of the novel is one in which Badra has a dominant voice, deciding what she will and will not to do.

Thus, Nedjma the writer of the novel empowers female character by offering the life of her own desire. *The Almond* shows its ability to rise above the vulgar and to participate in a feminist dialogue in which female character uses such tool for overcoming oppression, and composing space in society for equal treatment in every sphere of life exposing sexual freedom.

IV. Conclusion

The Almond by Nedjma, a pseudonymous writer, empowers female character Badra by giving her sexual agency which is denied in Islamic patriarchy. Nedjma sketches such a culture that is obsessed with love and sex and it remains severely misogynistic society where selfish, lusty nature of male character's stereotypical concepts always dominate women. Sexually empowering Badra against the crude rules of Muslim society, she places her with power of speech to counter the Muslim World.

The most influential characters in the novel are women. In one hand, Nedjma presents the plight of women characters and bitter reality of female subordination who are suppressed under the oppressive Islamic patriarchy and On the other hand, through the revolutionary character Badra who at the end achieves her true independence. This mode of projection of women characters shows Nedjma's aggressive attitude against oppressive patriarchy which she wants to change. In the feminist perspective, the novel is also the story of feminine pleasure, a pleasure that is everywhere, frozen with desire, feverish and demanding. The main character Badra always celebrates her own body who says that she has the most beautiful organs in the world and wants to spy on men. Moreover, she recalls her youthful curiosity about sex life of other girls and women's bodies were like; her fascination with the two beautiful prostitute sisters shows the truly feministic agendas.

Escaping from her unhappy married life, she discovers that she has the ability to choose her lover, she does so and is consequently happier, feeling more satisfied with her chosen lover. Upon discovering that she can not only be treated like humans, she becomes more assertive and demand respect from

her partner. To become more independent, Badra gets an education, job, and place of her own luxuries often denied to women in conservative Muslim Culture.

Badra is one in control of ending each sexual relationship. The literary role of the woman morphs from the oppressed object to the powerful subject. Badra has used her sexuality to move forward in life whether by taking a lover to feel some sense of freedom by escaping daily rape, birthing a child or pursuing sexual conquests at the rate and standard that only a man would in the past. Driss, the most prominent male, undergoes a complete transformation by the end of the novel. Driss, in beginning, is a self-proclaimed atheist, but at the end starts to examine his life and his emotions who begins to address Allah directly, apologizing for his ingratitude and begs Badra to take him with her. It takes spirituality to heal man.

By the end of the novel, Badra and Driss are reunited on her terms, however, Badra denies him the sex he craves, showing that she has come her own sexuality and identity which no one else has control over that.

Nedjma's work shows that females have the freedom and the power to decide how to use their sexuality and that their decision makes the largest impact in the plot, the conventional literary roles available for female characters widens. Female are presented like obstacle, damsel, object of desire in which Nedjma challenges this narrow definition of a female role in literature and move women to the foreground, often using their sexuality as a means to gain power and freedom.

To sum up, the novel shows the sexual awakening of an Arab woman. Through the character of Badra, the writer is able to recapture the female

sexual agencies. Nedjma, the pseudonym author is able to give Muslim women back the power of speech to open a window into a closed Muslim world which is seized by the Islamic patriarchy.

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