

MASCULINITY IS THE PRODUCT OF PATRIARCHY: ANALYZING TRADITIONAL AND SOCIETAL CONVICTIONS OF GENDER ROLES IN SHEEBA SHAH'S *FACING MY PHANTOMS*

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ABSTRACT

This research mainly depicts the major issue of the subversion of gender roles and aims to present the possible causes and consequences of subversion of gender roles in the novel *Facing My Phantoms* by Sheeba Shah. The male characters are unsuccessful to accomplish the assigned traditional masculine traits and it is the females who have occupied that role that ultimately lead to subvert the traditional gender roles. These male characters have not been able to confirm the male values, practices, and traits. Rather they have adopted and exposed feminine qualities like emotional, irrational, timid, dependent, etc. Hence, consequently, some of them are killed and chased away from their home. But, on the contrary, females are bold, courageous, independent, rational, and so on. By highlighting the condition of reversal of traditional gender roles, this research aims to prove that females are no less than males. They also can lead the society, family, and even the nation in absence of males. To prove the hypothesis, this project borrows some ideas from the critics like Judith Butler, Chris Baker, Roger Lanchester, Kate Millet, Judith Halberstam, and so on.

Keywords: *Gender, Patriarchy, Masculinity, Women, Traditions.*

INTRODUCTION

The novel displays the powerful, active and independent position of female characters.

The males are shown as timid, cowardice and dependent. Though they are the head of

the family, they could do nothing to help and save their family. But it is the female characters who always tend towards the welfare of their family and society as well. The subversion of gender roles does not take place due to the strong resistance of the female characters rather to some extent, the males fail here to complete their tasks as male assigned by the patriarchal social system. As patriarchy has given them certain traits superior to the females, they need to take bold decisions to handle the bad situation of a family, society, or even of a nation. But in the novel rather than male, it is the female characters who take that responsibility of helping and saving the family's dignity and prestige. On the other hand, to some extent, females' resistance and their rising consciousness about their rights and duties in a patriarchal oppressive society, has played the role to push the notion of masculinity and femininity into crisis and subvert it. Sheeba Shah, the novelist presents Sanjeevani as the major figure of the novel. Sanjeevani's activities are presented as the main cause of the subversion of masculinity. She, being a female, can handle the bad situation of her family. Her family is chased away by Maoist cadres from their home and now they live in the capital city as an internal refugee. In the name of a feudal lord, her father, Mr. Prashant is threatened with murder by Maoist cadres. So, he flees to the capital city to save his life. He is so selfish that he does nothing to save the life of his only son, Sanjay, and his family. He escapes saving his life. But one night Maoist cadres kill his son accusing him of the feudal lord, exploiter, *samanti*, and the detective of the police against the Maoist activities. Prashant, being a male and the head of the family and father as well, should have saved his son's life. It is the male's duty in the

patriarchal social system to save the family when it is in danger. But he is unable to do so, hence, consequently, happens to lose his only son. In this sense, he is not a protective father.

Traditional masculinity demands a male be protective towards others to be masculine. If one fails to do so, he is lowered to the feminine. In this sense, Prashant is also unsuccessful to accomplish the assigned tasks of masculinity, so he is lowered to be feminine. A male lowered to be feminine means to say that his masculinity is subverted here. Similarly, Sanjeevani's elder father Prabhat is a Home Minister of the nation. Being a Home Minister, he should provide everybody with security. But he can do nothing. He even cannot save the life of his cousin, Sanjay, who is killed by Maoist cadres in the accusation of a feudal lord. His family along with his brother, Prashant's family lives in Kathmandu as an internal refugee but he is unable to handle the situation. He urges the king to overcome the nation, all the political circumstances, and solve the problem of Maoist insurgency. He depends upon the king and hopes that he is the ultimate source to solve the problem. He, being a male, head of the family, and even the Home Minister, depends upon others to solve the problem, rather than being a person whom others can trust and should depend upon and get shelter. In this sense, he is also failure to play his role as a male, so his masculinity is also subverted. On the contrary, Sanjeevani, Sanat, Sharmila, etc. are some of the female characters who work not for themselves only but other members of the family and society as well. Sanjeevani is living now in Kathmandu with her family as an internal refugee. After her brother, Sanjay is killed, they all leave their home and now live in Kathmandu. They have rented an apartment there. She feels

suffocated while living in the apartment. So, she decides to go back to her homeland in Kailali district, the Far Western part of Nepal. There she sees the ruined house of her family which shocks her very much. She vows to reconstruct it. She meets and holds talks to the area commander of Maoist in Ganeshpur for returning her seized land. The Maoist cadres are reluctant to her request at first, but her frequent request, activeness, boldness, rationality, logic, self-consciousness, self-reliance, patience, etc. compel them to return to her homeland. They are so impressed that some of the cadres become her fans and promise to help her in the mission of community farming. She can get back to her homeland which her father could not have done. Here, words like active, bold, rational, logic, self-conscious, etc. refer to the traditional masculinity that belongs to males. But opposite of that notion, Sanjeevani, a female, possess these qualities. Possessing all the masculine qualities within her, Sanjeevani has created a crisis in the traditional notion of masculinity and femininity, and this crisis further steps to the subversion of gender roles.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To highlight the main characteristics of Nepali Anglophone fiction.
- To present the relevance of societal and traditional tensions in the selected text.
- To analyze the subject of Patriarchy.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to answer several questions including:

1. How has Sheeba Shah portrayed the traditional notions of gender roles in *Facing My Phantoms*?

2. How has Sheeba Shah presented the patriarchal and societal pressures on women in *Facing My Phantoms*?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

By highlighting the condition of reversal of traditional gender roles, this research aims to prove that females are no less than males. They also can lead the society, family, and even the nation in absence of males. To prove the hypothesis, this project borrows some ideas from multiple critics. Qualitative research as a methodology remains researcher-friendly and unique in analyzing literary texts. The textual analysis is primarily made on the theoretical grounds presented by Judith Butler, Chris Baker, Roger Lanchester, Kate Millet, Judith Halberstam, and so on. Regarding gender, Judith Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* takes gender as the social performance. She asserts, "Gender reality is created through sustained social performance" (Butler 1990, p.141). She means to say that gender has a performative role in society. It is performed in society to create a clear binary between males and females. It has no innate quality as such. The term 'gender' is in practice to dominate women and promote men.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

This research mainly focuses on the subversion of the binary between masculinity and femininity. The character, Sanjeevani proves to be wrong about the notion of masculinity which is supposed to be with males only. She, being a female, can handle the bad circumstances of her house. She acts rationally, patiently, courageously, judgmentally and can get back her homeland from Maoist Seizures. In Maoist insurgency

period, her family is chased away from their home and now they live in Kathmandu as an internal refugee. Her father, being a male, is unable to get back his land from Maoists. In the accusation of being feudal lord, Mr. Prashant, Sanjeevani's father has been chased away from his house in Ganeshpur of Kailali district, Far Western region of Nepal. Prashant, the landowner is helpless in front of Maoist cadres and flees to the capital city. He even could not save his only son, Sanjay, who is killed by Maoist cadres in the accusation of the feudal lord, exploiter, and detective of the police against Maoists activities. But, Sanjeevani goes back to her homeland after years of departure from there and is successful to get back to her lost homeland. In this sense, she breaks the hierarchy between man and woman constructed in the name of gender.

In society, only males are given good attributes as powerful, rational, judgemental, protective, and so on. But the females are considered just opposite as powerless, irrational, submissive, emotional, and so on. But just opposite of this notion of masculinity, Sanjeevani proves that not only males but females also can have masculine power. They are also equal to men. So, by showing the masculine quality of female characters such as Sanjeevani, Sanat, Sharmila, and so on, this research tries to prove the subversion of the gender roles. Patricia Sexton in her widely quoted book *The Feminized Male* asserts: "What does it mean to be masculine? It means, obviously, holding male values and following male behavior and norms." (Sexton 2002, p.104)

As the gender, these two words masculinity and femininity are social and cultural constructs carried over for the exploitation of women. For that, they created two clear dimensional categories of males and females. In one category, they

kept masculinity' having the quality such as rational, protective, leading, domineering, aggressive, active, independent, competitive, factual, judgemental, self-controlled, courageous, etc., and gave it to the males. At the same time, the next category they made as 'femininity' having the quality such as: emotional, irrational, dominated, protected, passive, dependent, coward, submissive, powerless, etc., and gave it to the females. After dividing the human qualities into two binary categories males started to exercise the masculine qualities. They suppressed females and restricted them within the four walls of a house. But in some cases, they fail to sustain their self-created/constructed masculinity due to their faults and sometimes due to females' resistance and some extent their rising consciousness. In the novel too, Prashant, being a male and head of the family, is powerless, timid, cowardice in front of Maoist cadres and flees away to save his life. He does not care about his family members. As a result, his only son, Sanjay, gets killed by the Maoists. But Sanjeevani, a female is courageous enough to get back to her lost homeland. She goes back to her home in Ganeshpur of Kailali district, holds talks to Maoists commanders and cadres frequently. At first, they were reluctant to her request. But later, her logical power, boldness, activeness, self-controlled decisions compelled the commander to return to her homeland. Biswas Baral in his article "Facing Our Phantoms" reviews the novel that "*Facing My Phantoms* can be read as an insider's take of the difficult lives of the stalwarts of monarchy in the lead up to its eventual demise in 2006" (Baral 2011, p.7). Amish Raj Mulmi reads the novel in this way: "Still, her writing reflects the personal anguish felt by the class during the days of the insurgency and the subsequent Jana

Andolan" (Mulmi 2010, p.5). Masculinity and femininity function as gender identity. Thus, feminist theorists claim that the masculine mode of thought has been the root cause of oppression on a female. In this regard, Anne Cranny - Francis and Wendy Waring in *GenderStudies: Terms and Debate* say: "Women are stereotyped as emotional, nurturing, sensitive whereas men are taken as rational, responsible and authoritative" (Francis et al., 2003, p.145). Masculinity and femininity are social constructs. They are culturally constructed to distinguish between males and females. These terms are contingent too. They keep changing as per the situation of the socio-cultural aspects. Regarding the notion of masculinity, Kamala Bhasin in her book *Exploring Masculinity* says, "Masculinity is not static, like gender, it is constantly reconstructed. It may keep changing in response to community and economic pattern" (Bhasin 2004, p.6). Richard P. Appelbaum and William J. Chambliss in the book *Models of Society* further take gender as the behavioral differences between males and females. They assert, "The term gender is used to refer to behavioral differences between males and females that are culturally based and socially learned" (Appelbaum and Chambliss 2004, p.146). Through this expression, they mean to say that gender refers to the behavioral differences between males and females. Male has different types of behaviors to perform and so on by females. This type of division is not determined by birth but by social and culture. The females, in the beginning, were forcefully imposed the binary opposition. But slowly and gradually, they internalized it and started to think that males were superior. In this regard, Simon de Beauvoir appropriates this notion in her book *The Second Sex* and says, "A man

never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man" (Beauvior 2002, p.1). She means to say that the concept of masculinity is dominant and hegemonic. This sort of compulsion hardly emerges from sex; instead, it is from the culture and its interpretative strategies that the society inherits. A male or female has to adjust to the prescribed framework of masculinity and femininity already established by society. One of the renowned critics, Rishi Raote, in the newspaper *Business Standard* writes: "Shah traces the declining fortunes of this feudal family, from the absolute authority in their village to relative decrepitude in Kathmandu once mismanagement and the Maoists-former feudal dependents Strip the family of their ancestral land and power" (Raote 2010, p.7). Amar Bahadur Shrestha reviews the novel from a political point of view and writes, "The book ends at the point in Nepal's history when the king has been overthrown and the parties are celebrating at the Tundikhel" (Shrestha 2011, p.8). He means to say that the novel deals with the political circumstances of the nation. Subhojit Kumar praises the artful technique of the novelist for presenting the factual history of Nepal and the then socio-political circumstances. He writes in the newspaper *Article Base*:

"Sheeba Shah writes about the most turbulent times of Nepalese history. In her book, *Facing My Phantoms*, she offers us a rich insight into the period of the 1930s, perhaps the moment of history which defined the changing face of Nepal." (Subhojit 2011, p.8)

Conventionally, masculinity is equated with reason, control, power, independence, etc., and to be a real man is to regard the

feminine characteristic in contempt. A male showing the features traditionally regarded as feminine type is considered as lacking masculinity. Appropriating this notion, a notable cultural critic, Chris Barker in his book *Cultural Studies Theory and Practice* says, "Traditionally masculinity has encompassed the values of strength, stoicism, action, control, independence, self-sufficiency, male comrade/mateship and work amongst others. Devalued were a relationship, verbal ability, domestic life, tenderness, communication, children and women" (Barker 2008, p.302). Traditionally, the males in society should be masculine. He should protect the family members. He should act independently, courageously, intelligently, actively, and so on. If he fails to do so, he is considered to have feminine qualities. Appropriating this notion, Roger Lanchester in his essay, "Subject Honor, Object Shame" writes:

"Every act is, effectively, part of ongoing exchange system between men in which women figure as intermediaries. To maintain one's masculinity, one must successfully come out on top of this exchange. To lose in this ongoing exchange system entails a loss of face and thus a loss of masculinity. The threat is a total loss of status." (Lanchester 2002, p.42)

Focusing on this notion of masculinity, it can be claimed that masculinity is related to males and their activities in societies. If he loses his status or command in society, he no longer is masculine, and as a result, his masculinity is threatened and falls into crisis. Prashant, in the novel, in a conversation with his son, Sanjay, says: "They all stand in their courtyards, shameless and indignant" (FMP 6). Prashant, through these lines, reveals his

cowardice. He, once who had the power all over the village of Ganeshpur, is losing his command slowly and gradually now. The Tharu community does not even greet him while he goes past their house. They were once his slaves. They had to depend upon him for their hands to mouth. But now they think that he is no more respectful person. Prashant fails to secure his position as the protection of others in the village. He loses his command and status. He feels a shame to be in front of them. So, he escapes to the city. By escaping to the problem, he reveals his feminine quality just opposite of the expectation of masculinity. His masculinity is threatened and pushed aside into crisis and subverted. The patriarchy cannot tolerate commercialization in sex. Karl Bendarik in his book *The Male in Crisis* says, "Alienation at work, bureaucracy in politics and war, and the commercialization of sexuality all undermine masculinity" (Bendarik 1970, p.104). Bendarik from this statement says that if sexuality is commercialized then it threatens the patriarchal normativity. Patriarchy demands the secret and one-to-one sexual relationship between males and females.

Sheeba Shah, the novelist, to rupture the hegemonic power of masculinity, presents a character who prefers homosexual relationships. To be homosexual is to go against the patriarchy. In the novel, the narrator narrates: "When Sanat entered her husband's room with a glass full of hot milk, without which her husband did not go to bed, she found him standing by his bed, his pants down, and Laata's face buried in his groin" (FMP 103). These lines clearly show that Raja Saheb, Sanat's husband is homosexual. He, despite having a beautiful wife, Sanat, goes for homosexual preferences. He compels his servant Laata (a dumb boy) to suck his penis for his sexual

satisfaction. A homosexual man is not satisfied with his wife and the proof is Raja Saheb. The narrator further asserts these lines to prove the homosexuality of Raja Saheb:

“For days, he had stared at the boy. He used to ask for him to be sent down to fill his hookah, massage his feet and even pluck out the grey hair from his scalp. And when the fire in his groins refused to subside, enflaming his carnal passion obliterating his sense of right and wrong, the Raja Saheb grabbed the creamy white hand of Laata and forced it upon his pulsating penis.” (*FMP* 103)

In an anthology, *Boys in Contemporary Culture* edited by Paul Smith, he suggests, “Masculinity must always be thought of in the plural as masculinities are defined and cut through by differences and contradictions” (Smith 1996, p.32). Feminist criticism becomes the distinctive and concrete method to literature in the 1970s, after the publication of *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millet. According to Millet, this patriarchal system is sustained with the power gained by physical, political, government and so many other agencies. To destroy every thread of constructed power, females need to struggle, with hard effort. She writes:

“Our society, like other historical civilizations is patriarchy. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, sciences, universities, avenue of power within society, including the coercive power of the police, is entirely in male hands.” (Millet 1970, p.54)

Based on this view of Millet, we can see the activities of Sanjeevani, which are stretched

for the liberation of females. She opens an NGO called "Naari" and works against physical and mental abuse of women. The lines spoken by Sanjeevani to Sharmila, one who is beaten mercilessly by her husband and, as a result, her three months pregnancy is miscarried, are remarkable here:

“Your husband beat you. That is wrong. It is a criminal offense and he can even go to jail for this. You must not allow that ever by anyone, not only your husband. A hand raised to beat once, can even kill you the next time.” (*FMP* 119)

Sanjeevani invokes Sharmila to go against the abuse of her husband. She even persuades her to file a case to the police against her husband who is one of the agents of patriarchy. She says that females should not be calm against the abuse but do collaboration against the male to subvert their superiority in society. Similarly, the other character, Sanat also proves that the traditional concept of femininity as submissive, dependent, dominated, irrational, and so on are constructed. They are not innate but constructed to suppress women. She, married to an old man, as a result, becomes a widow in her early twenties. In this situation, a widow to twenty, Sanat decides to move to the Terai for the better education of her children. She has to play the role both of father and mother. Sanjeevani is not such a character who can be restricted by the bondage of the rules and regulations of society. She goes against the system to seek freedom. She further asserts:

“I started rebelling for being a girl and most of my teenage years were spent in forcing myself to think I was a boy. I liked my hair short, wore only pants, and completely stayed away from female fancies. While

HemlataDijju painted her nails and brought matching bangles for her new salwar kameez, I forced myself to say I was not interested.” (FMP 32)

This expression from Sanjeevani shows that for getting freedom, she even neglects the wearings in her childhood. To show that she also has similar importance in the family as her brother does have she forces herself to feel as the boys feel so that nobody could compel her to wear as female and to think as females do. She wears pants, cuts her hair short, and stays away from female fancies only to make others understand that females also have the same feelings as males have. Her behavior as a male shocked her family and they were worried about her future. Just as she does in her childhood, she also repeats the same behavior in her youth and breaks the engagement with Nabin to get shocked by her parents. Her mother and grandmother have internalized the hegemonic nature of patriarchy and also want Sanjeevani to be hegemonized in the similar way they have been. But instead of being hegemonized by patriarchy, she threatens it and pushes it into crisis. The patriarchal masculinity is subverted upside down as she, being a daughter of an aristocratic family, even from the Singh family, breaks the engagement with Nabin, a man chosen by her father, a pride of their clan and from the same caste.

Sanjeevani is motivated by the notion that being a female one should not belimited in the space prescribed by masculinity. She does not believe that females are powerless. She is a powerful, determined and self-conscious woman. Once her family is chased from her homeland, she determines that she will go on the path of returning to her homeland. She makes a mission and goes back to her homeland after many years

of exile from their home. She goes to her ruined home and feels ashamed that once it was a very nice home. She decides to hold a talk with Maoist cadres. But she is insulted by them in the name of a feudal lord's daughter. Yet, she does not lose her hope and goes on talking frequently with them. Though they were reluctant to her request at first, they admire the bravery of Sanjeevani and tell her that her request can be taken into consideration. All these expressions of the villagers promote the appraisals of Sanjeevani. She is admired and appreciated by all the villagers. Though she is a woman, she can handle and lead the villagers into her decision. She does have the power of leading others. She does have the courage and rationality to make others work as her own will. In this sense, she possesses the quality of masculine. She has masculine power. The traditional definition of masculinity that the male is masculine and the female is feminine is subverted here. From the activities of Sanjeevani in the novel, it is proved that the concept of masculinity and femininity is a social construct. So, not only males but female also can have masculine power and traits. To be masculine power with the female is a threat to the notion of patriarchal masculinity. Thus, she subverts the binary of masculinity and femininity.

Archana Thapa, in her article “Redemption and Beyond” writes: “Shah’s fiction successfully synthesizes the national and personal traumas of an affluent family that experiences a socio-economic fall because of the conflict” (Thapa 2010, p.6). Amish Raj Mulmi reads the novel in this way:

“Shah’s works, thus, can be read as an expression of the tumultuous times Nepal has seen in the last decade. She is a member of the very class that the 2006 revolution

sought to overthrow, but she understands the revolution as a historical process.” (Raut 2010, p.5)

The statement by Roland F. Levant in *The Journals of Men's Studies* is significant. He states: "The masculinity crisis involves the collapse of the basic pattern by which a man can have traditionally fulfilled the code for masculine role, behavior, namely the good provider role" (Levant 1997, p.2). Tim Edward defines crisis of masculinity as, "The position of man, often perceived as being is related to an institution such as the family, work, education or even representation. On the other hand, the crisis of masculinity refers more precisely to men's experience of these shifts in position" (Edward 2006, p.14). He also opines that men have been considered to carry out certain roles in terms of family, work, education, and representation. When they fail to correspond with those assigned roles, their position of masculinity falls into crisis and the crisis in masculinity paves the way to the subversion.

Judith Halberstam in her essay "An Introduction to Female Masculinity" talks about masculinity. According to her, it is a social and cultural construct. She asserts; "If masculinity is not the social and cultural and indeed political expression of maleness, then what is it?" (Halberstam 2002, p.355). In this regard, in the novel, Kallu speaks with Bhalmansa Kaka about Sanjeevani. He says: "Rising a healthy nursery is an essential aspect of good farming, Bhalmansa Kaka. So is soil preparation for tomatoes. Maiya has found out through her research that deep cultivation of land up to three feet is necessary" (FMP 258). Sanjeevani is working as a leading icon here. She suggests to the villagers about the methods of cultivation and growing more vegetables.

Leading others is a masculine quality. From this expression, we can claim that masculinity is constructed by society and culture. It is not static but a contingent one. Traditionally it is related to males but now the situation is different, so it is related to females also. Relating masculinity with females means subverting the notion of masculinity and femininity.

FINDINGS

Sheeba Shah, the novelist, presents Sanjeevani as a revolutionary character. She revolts all against the patriarchal norms which differentiate her from other females. She is always in the obsession with breaking patriarchal pillars. She even distorts her name Sanjeevani to Sanju, which is the gift of patriarchy. Sanjeevani is such a character who wants to challenge the notion of masculinity and femininity. She even dislikes the name Sanjeevani, which is the gift of patriarchy kept for her thinking that she would possess the feminine quality. But she even changes her name in her dire need from Sanjeevani to Sanju. She is so fed up with the patriarchal norms that she wants to change her whole identity given by the patriarchy and establish her new one. She prefers to call herself Sanju rather than Sanjeevani to be self-dependent. Distorting the name of her own given by her parents is a threat to the concept of masculinity. Sanjeevani works differently in every aspect of her life. She wants to go against the patriarchal masculinity to shock it and establish female and their status in society. To some extent, she is capable of challenging it and promote the female. She proves that not only males but also females can have masculine qualities through her different activities. Hence, she subverts the

binary opposition of masculinity and femininity.

Thus, Sheeba Shah's *Facing My Phantoms* has depicted the subversion of a traditional form of hegemonic masculinity and femininity. This research along with the various causes and consequences has attempted to present the way of subversion of gender roles. It believes that the major cause of the subversion of gender roles is the shift in men's privileged position in the family and society. Being guided by the psychology of hegemonic masculinity, males always try to maintain their position at the top in the family or society. But sometimes their position is captured or seized by the women because of their rising consciousness. And sometimes, the males themselves are deceived due to false belief that their self-constructed norms and values cannot sustain their position updated. Women overcome the social norms and values constructed by patriarchy and come into power enough to handle the society and guide it and hence, their self-constructed masculinity falls into crisis and is pushed aside and even subverted. And the subversion of masculinity and femininity carries no binary categories between males and females. Sheeba Shah's novel, *Facing My Phantoms*, demonstrates the subversion of a traditional form of hegemonic masculinity as the male characters fail to perform the masculine codes. The male characters such as Prashant, Sanjay, and Prabhat fail to confirm the masculine traits. Their powerlessness, irrationality, irresponsibility, dependency, etc are the causes to subvert their masculinity. But it is the female characters such as Sanjeevani, Sanat and Sharmila, etc, who are powerful enough to possess the traditional form of masculinity. Being female, these characters possess masculine power and lead the family

and society towards emancipation from patriarchal domination, poverty, and ignorance which ultimately subvert the traditional notion of gender roles. The major figure of the novel, Sanjeevani, is bold, active, courageous, rational, and patient. She can handle the worse situation of her family. Her family lives in Kathmandu as an internal refugee due to the fear of Maoists. They are accused of being feudal lords and exploiter. They are threatened to be killed. Being afraid of Maoists threat, Prashant, her father flees to the capital city to save his life. He even does not care about his family and hence, consequently, his son, Sanjay is killed by Moists in turn. Prashant can do nothing to save his son. In this sense, he could not be a protective father which contrasts the traditional masculinity that demands a male/ father should be protective towards others/ his children which is the strong evidence to subvert his masculinity.

This research primarily focuses on the activities of the female character, Sanjeevani in the novel. She is expected to act with the feminine traits as submissive, dependent, and emotional. But just opposite of that notion, she is active, independent, rational, and self-reliant. She can get back to her homeland from Maoist seizures which her father could not have done. She holds talks frequently with the area commander about returning to her homeland. At first, they are not interested in her request. But her rationality, patience, self-reliant compels them to return to her homeland. Sanjeevani is exposed as a revolutionary woman in the novel. She does not follow the rules and regulations of the patriarchal social system. Being a daughter of a highly cultured family, she is engaged with Nabin, a man from the same social class. But she breaks her engagement with him as she wants to select her suitor herself. Rather she prefers

to keep relation with Razat, a married man and from a different caste. She is happy with him. Getting shocked by her parents, she breaks engagement with Nabin and continues an illegal relation with Razat. Doing so, she wants to shock her parents mean to say that she wants to challenge the traditional norms and values of patriarchal masculinity in which women are considered to be dominated, subjugated, controlled, emotional, and so on. It also demands them to act as per the feminine traits. But she acts just opposite of that notion which is another cause to subvert the gender roles.

CONCLUSION

Sanjeevani is presented as the leading icon in the novel. She leads all the villagers to the path of progress. After she gets back her land, she starts community farming in the Far Western region of Nepal. All the villagers of Ganeshpur village agree and support her plan. She launches community farming in her land to emancipate the villagers from poverty. The face of the village changes drastically soon after. Leading others is the notion of traditional masculinity which only men possess. But Sanjeevani, being female, possesses it which is another strong evidence of subversion of masculinity. Along with Sanjeevani, other female characters like Sanat, Sharmila Dhimini, etc. are also active and bold enough to handle the situation in their favor. Sheeba Shah, the novelist, presenting the revolutionary female character, Sanjeevani, wants to empower women and challenge the patriarchal social norms and values. Patriarchy has dominated women since the long past in the name of masculinity and femininity. But she, presenting the character like Sanjeevani, wants to prove that not only males but also females are masculine. They

are no less than males. They also can change society and even the nation. The definition of masculinity is wrong in itself which is constructed to dominate women. From the very definition of masculinity, it is considered that a male should be masculine. He should be active, domineering, protective, rational, and so on. When the males fail to correspond that those assigned traits, then their masculinity is subverted. It means its definition is one of the causes of subversion of masculinity as males fail to accomplish assigned roles and it is the females who occupy that very role. So, the novelist wants to redefine the boundary of masculinity through new parameters.

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