

## Depiction of Woman's Identity: A Feministic study of Two Tales from Shobha Rao's "An Unrestored Woman and Other Stories"

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### Abstract

Rao's collection of short stories examines women's precarious position. Some of the stories are standalone, but others are connected, with characters from one story reappearing in another years later. Shobha Rao's debut collection, *An Unrestored Woman*, is about the common anguish that began with the partition of India and Pakistan in 1949. Rao's historical fiction, which gives a voice to multi-layered characters from top to bottom, has been added to my women's history month reading list. The paper I'm working on is a feminist analysis of two stories from Shobha Rao's collection "An Unrestored Woman and Other Stories." These stories revolve around female characters who are confronted with social disgrace and mistreatment. *An Unrestored Woman* and *The Merchant's Wife* are the two stories being discussed. The stories are told from a third-person point of view. The language is natural and smooth. Two characters and the severity of their anguish are the common thread that runs across these stories. Neela and Renu are the main protagonists in these stories. At the refugee camp where they were taken to live as widows, they interacted with one another. These two stories are about their struggle to overcome the limitations placed on them as women by society. Renu and Neela keep reminding each other. As a narrator, it appears that the writer wishes to evaluate their sufferings. She wants to paint two different pictures and connect them at the same time. The fundamental concern of the author is to define women's identity in society. Her goal is well met by the account of stories.

**Keywords:** *Women, feminism, society, stories, un-restored, etc.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of these feminist authors is Shobha Rao. *An Unrestored Woman*, Rao's remarkable debut collection of short tales about the impact of India's traumatic partition on its most defenceless communities, offered us a taste of her striking storytelling. She brings her keen eye to this bleak but ultimately happy story. Both of her pieces highlight topics related to women's self-discovery. *The Unrestored Women and Other Stories* is a depiction of committing violence during

and after the demonstration of division. It depicts all scenes, from a religious leader harassing villagers.

group to a mother who has been separated from her kid. It tells the narrative of each Indian and Pakistani village.

The first story, *An Unrestored Woman*, is about the vulnerability of the main character Neela, who couldn't enjoy her life as a married woman even after getting

married. She was afflicted when her husband went missing in partition revolts after only a few months of marriage. She was taken to refugee camps after learning of her husband's death, where she lived in deplorable conditions. The hunger she felt on her wedding day is used as a metaphor for unmet wishes early in the novel. This hunger persisted until the story's conclusion. Her desire to enjoy the swing on a Banyan tree is the second metaphor. In the previous paragraphs, she was sleeping close to her spouse and thinking about a swing she wanted to enjoy but might never be able to appreciate in the future. Her husband mistreated her after they married. Because he had continually restrained himself on her, she was not even considered a person. Her choices and wants were completely disregarded. Her mother-in-law took her to refugee camps for women's rehabilitation following partition after learning of her husband's death. Her connection with Renu at camp helped her to relax a little. They made the decision to leave the camp and seek employment in the city. Neela's husband returned when they chose to spend their lives working for themselves. Her husband drove her back home, further aggravating the issue. Her aspirations were dashed when she learned that her husband had taken her back to get her valuable gold mangal sutra. Finally, she was awake and looking around the banyan tree and its branches, near to her husband. Her thoughts accurately reflect her emotional state. She got up one day and proceeded to the kitchen, where she drank the whiskey from the bottle she had stashed in the rice back. She dreamed of herself swinging

from the branches of a banyan tree in their front yard while inebriated. With the ultimate goal of overcoming the harsh reality, she took a medicine that she had previously refused when supplied by her mother-in-law. Finally, she decided to live a life of unmet desires. The story's final sentences depict her struggle and helplessness as a woman.

The Merchant's Mistress tells the story of Renu, another female character who suffers a setback. On the basis of their characters, the two stories have been linked. Renu visited refugee camps with Neela (the heroine of *An Unrestored Women*). This narrative depicts a woman character who must overcome adversity in order to fulfil her destiny. The exploitation she experienced in camps and at the merchant's house where she worked made her believe that she was less than a human being because she was a woman. There are several symbols in the story that reflect women. The story begins with her taking a rail ride to Ahmedabad after escaping the refugee camp. She refused to grow her hair, despite the fact that other widows in the camp had done so in response to their circumstances. Despite being a young lady, she was unable to settle down as a married woman or pursue a career as a seamstress, while other widows arranged weddings with camp guards and officials. She found an employment at a diamond merchant's mansion after leaving camp in Ahmadabad. Another character who is burdened by being a woman is the merchant's wife. They developed an intimate physical relationship quickly. She has a physical relationship with the

merchant as well. She lived in a merchant's house and had an unusual life. There, she was involved in a love triangle. "Her days were scattered between them," as the narrator mentions. Finally, she considered the merchant's intention to visit South Africa. She assassinated the businessman and took all of his gems. She made a name for herself as a trader and boarded his ship in Ahmadabad. The story finished with her looking forward to a new life on a different continent. In this way, two stories come together to depict two women's sufferings in different areas for the same amount of money.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Carmen Escobedo de Tapia (2018)** The history, nation, and narration aspects of the Indian English narrative must all be examined. This issue has also been addressed by Indian female writers. The way they portray the shock of Partition is particularly relevant to the situation of women in India. This article will diachronically analyse three female Indian narratives: Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*, and Shobha Rao's *An Unrestored Women* (2016), to focus on how women characters develop their memories of historical events as a narrative of loss through which, eventually, we can identify the hint of gender violence as linked to the concept of nationalism trying to restore the past.

**Dr. Itishri Sarangi, Ms.Yajnaseni Mukherjee (2012)** The feminist is devoted to restoring and extolling the woman's tarnished image. The revolutionary spirit

with which all current women writers in Indian writings in English strive to compose is an obvious characteristic. Their writings are a conflagration of suppressed wants and repressed feelings that have been accumulating for a long time. Women's writers have proven that their work is significant and worthy of regard. They manage to strike a good balance between tradition and womanhood. To be a feminist, you must be able to write in a specific feminine style, fight for the liberation of women in slavery, and oppose all of the forces within and outside of society that disrupted the family's clean divisions and multiplied the feminine side of a woman. The entrance of western culture dealt a significant blow to Indian traditional life, and women who epitomised the family system gradually evolved into women searching for their own identities and seeking unfettered freedom.

**Chaman Nahal (1991)** Feminism is defined as "a style of presence in which the woman is free of the dependent syndrome," according to his work "Feminism in English Fiction." Regardless matter whether it is the husband or the father, the community, or a religious or cultural group, there is a dependency syndrome. My vision of feminism comes to fruition when women are free of the dependency syndrome and can live a normal life. Since ancient times, women have been regarded as second-class citizens in relation to men, according to her. It is the outcome of education and social tradition under the direction of men, rather than a necessity for feminine

characteristics. Women's dignity has sunk, yet they still remain on an equal footing in terms of intellectual and professional equality. Furthermore, this has given rise to social ills.

**James (1998)** It appears to be acceptable to use the terms "oppression" and "disadvantage" as placeholders for more substantial (both normative and descriptive) views of injustice with which feminists disagree. Gender has become a contentious subject in our society, as well as a significant feature in the research and creation of social and economic policy. Nowadays, development is viewed as a means of increasing wellbeing as well as ensuring long-term viability. This indicates that we cannot deplete the resources of future generations in the development process. The lives of men and women are included in these resources. In this way, equity and sustainability are inextricably linked.

**Simone De Beauvoir (1952)** Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father* are two of the most important books of current feminist thought, both of which have their ideological roots in the twentieth-century philosophical movement existentialism. This collection of ideas was founded in the theoretical works of a few German philosophers, including Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger, but it was most famously expressed in the works of French thinker Jean-Paul Sartre.

### **3. FEMINISM AND LITERATURE**

Sociology has made more room for gender studies, which identify distinct roles in society, and Feminism has taken up some of that space. With the development of the term Feminism, a call to create a more balanced society for all living things arose. The term has a wide range of meanings that influence gender roles in the social and political realm. "As a movement, feminism is a group of movements dedicated to defining, creating, and protecting women's equal political, economic, and social rights and opportunities." It focuses primarily on women's issues and behaviour. Feminism is generally regarded as a political movement that emerged in the United States following the 1960s. "Women have been battling for the liberation of their half of the world's population from male domination since antiquity. Feminism is not a passing fad or a logical continuation of the civil rights movement; rather, it is a fight against the legitimate, economic, and social restrictions on women's fundamental rights that have existed from the dawn of time and across all civilizations. Typically, feminism's beliefs have been articulated for a long time.

God created humans and split them into man and woman, with a few essential differences in body and mind, and included an element of irresistible desire between the two sexes to aid the process of reproduction and species survival. In the primitive era, there was no such thing as a man-woman connection. The investigation, essentially to determine the dad of each newborn infant, began with the dawn of civilization, when men began

to live in groups and last built families, first matriarchal and eventually male centric. The introduction of the institution of marriage sowed the seed of female subjugation. When Manu, the law-supplier, ruled in Manusmruti, he sanctified this enslavement. Women are ineligible for independence. While the move from savagery to social life had its benefits, it also forced the individual to control his instinctive behaviour, reducing the likelihood of his existence being enjoyable. In India's rigid, tradition-bound society, such repression is even more terrible. Women in India suffer more as a result of the resulting misery, given that India's social standards and moral codes are disproportionately hostile to women.

What matters now, as far as feminist views are concerned, is to believe, know, and comprehend the situation and dilemma of women within the context of society and culture in which they exist. In light of the fact that such an ideology creates a conscious awareness of women's concerns, this might be classified as feminism. Feminism is a feminist movement that advocates for men and women to be treated equally in social, cultural, political, and economic matters. It's a campaign against gender inequality that aims to give women equal rights. Feminism may also be characterised as a global phenomena that provides many uses associated with women all over the world in a specific manner as suited to the unique focus. Despite the fact that the difficulties associated with feminism differ for different societies and cultures, they are always deeply rooted in the basic principle

of achieving gender equality in all aspects of life. As a result, feminism cannot be reduced to any narrow criteria based on a specific social class, race, or religion. Feminist theory arose from these movements and encompasses general assumptions about the causes of inequality, as well as, on occasion, the social construction of sex and gender, in a variety of disciplines.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The focus is on specific female characters who, despite being citizens of independent countries, were far from free. These horrific events immobilised their lives for the rest of their lives. They were left to search for their identity after the chaos that separated them from their own home. They reflect on who they are at their core, from their status in society to their relationships with their country, community, religion, and family. The Author aims to question all social and religious institutions, ranging from marriage to law, politics, and the court, for failing to provide an equally balanced life to a segment of society that should be deemed equally significant to its opposite sex. While going through a horrible experience and enduring emotional and bodily pain, the female characters in the piece lived. They don't lose faith till the very end. They were attacked, tormented, and isolated, and their identities were stolen. From those point exchanges and soliloquies, it is apparent that they are unable to overcome these circumstances. The language is appropriate for depicting their anguish, their quest to persuade themselves to move on with their

lives on their own, to accept themselves for who they truly are. They regain their freedom as a result of this, something they had been denied even after becoming a part of an independent country. The emphasis is on women as people attempting to protect their identities.

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