

DEPICTION OF WOMEN GENDER IN SHOBHA DE'S *SISTERS***A. J. Peter**Research Scholar, PG & Research Department of English,
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Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56602/TDJ>Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56602/TDJ/12.1.1592-1595>**ABSTRACT**

Gender is a crucial and sensational topic in India. From the period of independence, the women genders are being treated as inferior to men in Indian society. The term gender has multiple meanings and differs from person to person based on how they understand it. When it comes to employment, the payment and social rights that can woman gender can enjoy is limited and are at times almost humiliated emotionally and physically by the patriarchal society. Shobha De is one of the most astounding feminine writers in Indian English literature. Her novels are severely stinging the treatment of women in the male dominated society. De's female protagonists fight against the oppression and remain as examples motivating the women gender to empower them in such malicious society. Her characters bravely raise the voice against the maltreatments enforced on them. The paper depicts on how the society approaches and treats women genders in India as mirrored in her novel, *Sisters*. Further, the study ignites the spark in the minds of cosmopolitan women for their empowerment.

Keywords: Gender, Empowerment, Male-domination**INTRODUCTION**

In Shobha De's novels women protagonist are mostly urban girls, who settled in Bombay. They love cosmopolitan life and choose wrong life partners but when they understand the hypocrisy of marriage and patriarchal male-domination they break the bondage of marriage life. They come out boldly and choose their own life; become masters of their own. De focuses and differentiates her middle-class characters from urban middle class

women. The step-by-step escalation of gender discrimination, social challenges and suppressed married life, finally explodes like volcano, and destroys all the hindrances so that they re-establish their self-identity and respect in the society. These characters become the model for the future generation. They prove themselves as free individuals and face their male counterpart very comfortably, confidently and in a simple way. They establish themselves as an equal collaborator as well as a tough competitor for men. De's characters mostly prefer the professions highly challenging like advertising, modeling, journalism, acting and even running a large business which Mikky (Mallika) took upon herself in *Sisters*.

STATE OF WOMEN GENDER IN INDIAN SOCIETY

Gender discrimination means treating a person unfair and inequitably due to their gender. More than male genders, the female genders have historically been the predominant victims to face various discriminations enforced by society. As women by birth, they suffer at every stage throughout lifetime. From ancient times, societies have constantly confined the female genders to household work, such as cooking, raising the children, caring the husband, and managing and maintaining the house, while they were not allowed to come out into the professional scenario. Thus, women struggle more to enter professions, in which when compared with men, their opportunities and the remuneration are limited. Female genders have been oppressed for the many centuries from the origin of Vedas, and they were not permitted to pursue the education that has always been easily and freely available to males. Even in the twenty-first century, parents are hesitant to spend more money on female education, as they firmly believe that women are only meant to marry and serve the family. If this perspective exists in the society, women will continue to struggle for emancipation. Most women are devoid of the fundamental rights and opportunities proposed by the constitution of India and the society in most cases does not adhere to the gender equality that the constitution recommends.

WOMEN GENDER IN SHOBHA DE'S *SISTERS*

Shobha De's *Sisters*, a sensational novel in the contemporary India was published in 1992. The plot of the novel chiefly depicts the significance of the forming of sisterhood among women facing protracted hardships. The female protagonists, Mikki and Alisha in *Sisters*, face different challenges in different scenarios. Eventually, it causes both the characters to be united and support each other morally.

Mikki was studying in America; she came to India to attend her father's funeral ceremony. She came to know her father's covert connection with Alisha's mother; thus, Alisha became her half-sister. The situation made Mikki to take care of father's business career. Amidst the hardships and her growing business knowledge, she discovers several unethical decisions made by the male staff. They relentlessly oppose her aiming to devalue her before Ramankaka, her late father's deputy. Ramankaka is one of the advisers of her father and he states that,

Had you been a son your father might have taken you into his confidence from a young age and guided you properly from the beginning. But as a daughter, all he wanted for you was a good husband – that is all. My advice is – leave these serious matters to me. I am there to handle them. Trust me. I will guard your interests like a father. But you will make things difficult for yourself if you do things without consulting me. (Sisters, 30)

Mikki proved her strength, and she handled the business matters courageously, and overpowers the harsh conditions without perturbation and haste. Through her achievement Mikki opposed the abusive statement of Ramankaka as one clearly sees in her bold answer to Ramankaka as,

Thank you for your advice, Ramankaka, I appreciate and value your words. But I'd like you to hear a few of Mine now. I can't change my Sex, unfortunately, that is the one thing all of you will have to accept. But I can change just about everything else . . . and I intend to. . . I don't expect you or the others to give up your prejudices – but I want you to know that I will not let that stand in my way. (Sisters 30)

Mikki faces another gender related issue in the name of marriage and the afterlife as an independent woman. At one stage some external forces hinder Mikki from continuing her father's business further, which create a void in Mikki's life. As she could not bear the situation and the pain of being independent, she intends to reunite with her husband. Unfortunately, she could not drag him into her life again. Due to her unrequited love for her husband, she descends to the world of liquor and drugs. Shobha De's protagonist, Mikki is not such a typical, stereotypical woman to think love is life and to sacrifice everything to it. For she knows the meaning of love that it is part and parcel of human life. Simone De Beauvoir rightly says:

This has always been a man's world; History has shown us that men have always kept in their hands all concrete powers. Since the earliest days of Patriarchy, they have thought best to keep a woman in a state of dependence; their codes of law have been set up against her; and thus, she has been definitely established as the other! (TSS 93-171).

On the one hand Mikki's half-sister Alisha is also an independent woman waiting cunningly for every chance to demarcate Mikki and consequently plotting against her. In order to seek her own identity in the society, she is willing to revolt against Mikki. On the other hand, Mikki has decided to reconcile with Alisha into her life again.

CONCLUSION

Shobha De in *Sisters* has brought out a new two-dimensional gender view, one is fed up with torments at business and her in-laws and the other is suffering as an illegitimate daughter, even though she is strong financially. De's women characters challenge against all the odds in the society and raise to discover their buried social identity. Shobha is very cautious in the characterisation of her female protagonists. The diversity in her characters highlight the gender-based issues enforced on the female constantly and continuously. In *Sisters*, Alisha and Mikki have faced gender discrimination both within the family and in the workplace. Shobha De, an honest writer portrays the gender issues almost from every dimension to prove how female genders are neglected and suppressed everywhere in the society. Her depiction proves that the nation's growth certainly depends upon the empowerment of female genders.

REFERENCES

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