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Theoretical/Critical Essay Article

The Feminist Utopia in Prema Shah and Rokeya S. Hossain: Linking the Real to the Ideal

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Abstract
Prema Shah's "A Husband" and Rokeya S. Hossain's "Sultana's Dream" present two complementary versions of women's world: the real in Shah and the imagined in Hossain aspire to make the other complete. The worldview that each author projects in their texts reasserts the latent spirit of the other one. The embedded interconnectedness between the authors under discussion reveals their unique association and bond of women's creative unity towards paving a road for the upliftment of women in general. The paper seeks to find out the historical forces leading to the formation of a certain type of bond between these two authors from different historical and socio-cultural realities. Shah locates a typical Nepali woman in the protagonist in the patriarchal order while Hossain pictures the contemporary Bengali Islamic society and reverses the role of men and women. Hossain's ideal world and Shah's real world form two complementary versions of each other: despite opposite in nature, each world completes the other. Sultana moves to the world of dream to seek a new order because Nirmala's world exercises every form of tortures upon the women's self. Shah exposes the social reality dictating upon the women's self while Hossain's protagonist escapes into the world of dream where women control the social reality effectively and successfully. Overall, Shah and Hossain complement each other's world by presenting two alternative versions of the same reality, creating the feminist utopia.
Keywords: *Rewriting, resistance, utopia, gender relations, complementary worlds*

Introduction

Prema Shah and Rokeya S. Hossain unfold a close affinity in terms of the worlds they construct in their stories "A Husband" (1966) and "Sultana's Dream" (1905) respectively. Despite the significant cultural differences in the context of two South Asian societies, the authors express their solidarity against patriarchy as a repressive order that does not allow the bloom of agency in women. The early twentieth–century Islamic Bengal in Hossain's text and the eastern Nepal of the 1960s in Shah's text present two faces of the same worldview in that Hossain moves into a utopian world

while Shah remains firmly rooted in her own world. Both the authors revolt against the prevailing strategies of seclusion practiced in patriarchy to weaken women's self. Shah delves into the predicament of her protagonist, an upper middle-class widow. She finds the ways of the world at odd. Hossain forgets the hardship of the world for women in order to create a Ladyland. The authors present in their texts a close connection in their gender strategies and the world they present through their characters.

Women and the Protest

The past studies on Hossain and Shah show that they promote the cause of freedom of women. The powerful agency in women meant a feminist utopia in 1905, for the strong patriarchal values that would allow imagination of any such possibility where women could rule the world. Hossain's "Sultana's Dream" is approached from the perspective of the feminist utopia: the imprisonment of men and military leadership of women are two fundamental issues that the people would have never imagined in the beginning of the twentieth century. On the other hand, Shah's "A Husband" is studied along Freudian lines of psychoanalysis and the shock she posed to her society. Viewing both the author and her protagonist as the rebel of the society, the critics point at the moral challenges Shah has posed to the society through her writings. This section surveys some of the seminal studies on Hossain and Shah in order to examine a range of the themes and issues that are examined in their respective works.

The scholars consider Hossain's story as a feminist utopia that promotes a strong nationalist ethos. She sees the liberation of women not in religion but in science: she fills the world of women with scientific research and innovation that men would have never heard of or imagined in their time. For instance, Sangeeta Ray argues:

> Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* presents a radical transformation of the temporal space carefully shored up in the exclusionary and hegemonic discourse of nation formation. In Hossain's feminist utopia the nation is envisioned as Ladyland, a technologically advanced world where men are placed inside the zenana and women guaranteed complete freedom. (121)

In this sense, women's utopian world truly refers to a secular space where the female would experience complete bloom of their self. Such a self knows the possibility of taking of new challenges in the creative domain. In this sense, Nilanjana Bhattarcharya and Eunice de Souza unanimously declare that Hossain constructs an ideal of the world of women in the story. For Bhattarcharya, the world emerges in the story to present "men according to the demands of the matriarchal Ladyland" (175). Contrarily, de Souza plainly observes: "… it is a feminist fantasy utopia in which women control the state and men are confined to the 'mardana'" (1644). Focused on the feminist utopia in Hossain, Ray, Bhattacharya and de Souza, Hossain identifies the female's quest for equality in the formation of nation in her story.

There are many scholars who also read Hossain as the early thinker of independent India in that she begins to see a new possibility of a just world. This world comprises of rebels only. Since her work is contemporaneous to Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (1909), the critics have brought these two texts together to discuss shared ethos in these narratives. Rajeshwar Sundar Rajan examines the story historically to find certain kind of resemblance between Gandhi and Hossain. As a matter of fact, both promote secular reasoning in their ways. In addition, Ray states: ""Sultana's Dream" can then be understood not only as a feminist utopia but also as a manifesto for a truly secular nation" (122). Examining the spirit of the age in Hossain, Rajan again presents: "But "Sultana's Dream" bears as well an unexpected resemblance to yet another literary oddity from the Indian subcontinent almost contemporary with it: Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (1909).

The dialogic form of both texts, between a leading guide and an interlocutor, is strikingly similar" (42). The time demanded cultural unity and scientific innovation in order to prepare the ground for India as a notion to fight with the colonial regime. The feminist revolt present in the short story implies the great political struggle for an independent India. Very symbolically, Gandhi had adopted the spirit of women in various ways in his resistance movement against the British Empire as well.

The critical rationality emerges as a major tool for the redefinition of the old world that leads to the formation of a newer social spirit. Both Gandhi and Hossain shape the spirit of the upcoming age through their quest for a new order. Like Gandhi, Hossain promotes critical reasoning through the scientific culture as a source of power. Jasbir Jain concludes:

> In 'Sultana's Dream', she projects a feminist utopia where the world is all topsy-turvy. With the men behind purdah and women in the open, roles are reversed and national calamities call upon the women to prove their worth, which they are able to do through their intelligence and education. They harness and control heat, sunlight and rain water for the purposes of development and protection. (188)

On the one hand, the historical spirit in Rajan's study brings Hossain close to Gandhi in terms of time and her approach to social change. Similarly, Jain's observations reveal a way for the powerless to emerge victorious through the scientific reasoning and technological advancement. Both Rajan and Jain implicitly argue for critical reasoning as the deeply seated theme of the text.

As a means to power, the use of scientific and technological innovation paves the ground to read Hossain from the perspective of the futuristic vision. In the Ladyland, women have completely controlled the state mechanisms and put the men in seclusion. In this connection, Debali Mookerje-Leonard presents the society with the female supremacy:

> To begin with, in Ladyland gender roles are reversed- it is a country where women pilot 'air-cars' and men handle domestic chores. However, except for the instance of the all-women army repelling foreign invaders without resorting to brutal violence, a question that remains unaddressed in 'Sultana's dream' is whether in a society run by women, science and technology will serve a purpose different from its current role within capitalist patriarchies. (147)

The women employ technological advancement for their common cause. Unlike the patriarchal greed, they control the physical phenomena to reward the members of their sorority with comfort and happiness. The real world bears within itself multiple tortures and inflicts them into a female self in such a way that Sultana prefers to envision a world where women achieve liberation.

Unlike Hossain, Shah projects a world of reality that dismantles any possibility of feminist utopia. She puts her protagonist amid the piercing arrows of patriarchy and leaves her there to suffer endlessly until she longs for a sleeping tablet to push herself in the world of oblivion. In a similar fashion, Abhi Subedi exposes the female strength: "She was first and foremost a courageous writer who boldly presented a woman's persona and pride, body and mind in her writing" (7). However, Subedi confesses that any serious studies have not been carried out on Shah. Similarly, Narendra Raj Prasain also agrees that only certain opinion pieces are produced on Shah's works as she has remained ignored from any extensive study on her work (Personal Interview). The limited resources on Shah's writings also indicate the rebellious nature of the author in analyzing the society and living the spirit of her conclusion.

Several critics have viewed Shah's multifarious dimensions in literary and political perceptions. Prasain brings in many contemporary discussions in a single platform in his 2018 biography of the author. He presents Bashudev Tripathi, Dayaram Shrestha, Mahadev Awasthi, Sailendra Sakar and Ghataraj Bhattarai who explore latent facets of her writings to understand her philosophy of life and society. Tripathi and Shrestha examine the instinctual attraction between men and women in her poetry: Tripathi declares that she derives her aesthetics from the images and symbols developed therein (qtd. in Prasai 114) while Shrestha argues that she possesses the genuine analytical ability and perception to measure and feel the depth of the dynamism of instinctual attraction between men and women (116). Awasthi also follows along Tripathi and Shrestha's line of argument and identifies a decent portrayal of sex and its impact in her writings (117). Also, Sakar identifies love and sex as the basic stuff of her writing, which illustrate the drama of life through the principle of attraction and repulsion (119). Moving away from the Freudian interpretation of her works, Bhattarai unravels that "Prema Shah is crafted enough to express effectively the internal tensions and extremities of Nepali women" (115). The critics focus on the sexual impulses and their moral connotations as key issues in Shah's writings. The major dimension of gender remains an unexplored domain in such discussion.

The existing scholarship has explored multiple issues related to the world of women and their psychological aspects. The socio-political themes that the critics have explored in each text indicate at the vision of the authors regarding the future configuration of their respective societies. Hossain fantasizes mardana as the reversal of janana: she actually rewrites in the dream the way patriarchy functions in reality. The text challenges the existing patriarchal rigidity of the Bengali Islamic society in specific and the Indian society in general. On the other hand, Shah's story exposes the repressive mode of patriarchy in which women are presented as puppet. As a function, she becomes useless thing after the death of her husband. Critiquing the text from multiple standpoints, social and political meanings are brought to limelight. Similarly, Freudian interpretation has dominated the reading of Shah's short story. However, Hossain and Shah have not been brought together to view the ways they present their texts as complementary to each other. This study fills the gap in the scholarship by reading the world of each text as the world implied in the other text.

Shah and Hossain: Women Rebels

Literary studies can examine the thematic underpinnings of certain worldviews, perspectives, and arguments imbedded in creative works by seeking to see proximity between two or more authors. Often, such comparisons reveal the nature of relationship between two mindsets that are located in two unique periods of time and geographies. This study builds itself on this premise to scrutinize two literary texts: Shah's "A Husband" (1966) and Hossain's "Sultana's Dream" (1905). Both the creative rebels fight against the power structures of the society, framing the same argument about women and their world. In this regard, sorority emerges as a uniquely binding category for both the authors and their characters. In many ways, the female in their emotional connection to the heterosexual culture unfold:

> In many ways, sororities are a celebration of women's friendships. They are the embodiment of the relational model of women's nature: women need each Sororities help satisfy that need; however, women in sororities need each not only for the intrinsic value of their emotional bonds, but also as a guiding in the navigation through the heterosexual culture of college and Greek life. (Handler 252)

Subtly following the Foucauldian new historicist approach to literature, this study examines the ways the female authors and their characters complement themselves respectively. As a strategy, gender plays a pivotal role in shaping the perceptions of the people and society, and identifying the solutions. Thus, sorority helps measure the closeness between the world of two female authors from diverse times and geographies.

The principle of sorority fails in Shah's "A Husband" (1966) and Hossain's "Sultana's Dream" (1905) in social forces in their failure to the formation of agency in women in the real domain of social practice. The patriarchal mores of society impose full prohibition in the resistance from women: firstly, the women are functional entity in society as the patriarchy assigns them with certain roles to perform; and secondly, the choices of women are never paid any attention to as such because they are put outside the domain of reason. Consequently, the women are forced to reside in the domain of oppression resulting from men-led social practices in both Nepal of the 1960s and India at the wake of the twentieth century. Shah's short story presents the psychological state of mind of recently widowed Nirmala who faces conflict against both her own desires and the expectations of the men outside in her society. Biologically, she fails to act compatible with the social imagination that only privileges and prioritizes men's role over women in society. Her sister, Urmila's prospective husband excites the slumbering instinctual desire in her body and his presence develops enmity towards her own sister. In fact, a woman is supposed to and required to accept masculine hegemony, and act as the effect of the social structure under traditional expectation. Despite the subtle resistance embedded in the depth of Shah's narrative, Nirmala is compelled to eat the sleeping pill to go into the oblivion after the trouble and tension in the afternoon. Hossain's Sultana does not live in the reality of the fiction: she is also surrounded by the repressive forces of Nirmala's world. Actually, Sultana lives in the world where women are secluded in 'zenana.' However, feminine utopia where the patriarchy is annihilated to its last ruin is the world to assert sorority between Sultana and Sister Sara. They perfectly accompany each other in the world of Sultana's fantasy. Viewed in such light, Shah and Hossain complement each other's world with reality and fantasy to realize women's worldview and their trouble in patriarchal order. Nirmala and Sultana stand to supply each other with the attributes of the reality and the projection of the safe haven for the woman in reality to find her own world of inner, mental choice. They pose each other a threat to challenge and present a complementary version of interpretation of a unique social world.

Shah and Hossain build two complementary versions of social reality: the former paints the real picture, while the latter seeks to escape from the reality into the world of utopia so as to claim peace of mind from the real, harsh practices of the contemporary society. Shah's recent widow, Nirmala stays at her mother's house where she attends her sister, Urmila's engagement; she helps her younger sister's Urmila with her make-up; and she realizes within the loss as she busies herself in the preparation. In the meantime, Nirmala sees the prospect of a husband in Urmila's life and she recognizes what it was that she has lost in the plane crash a year ago. Then, she cannot control herself as the patron of her own sister as she tears the flower from her sister's head into pieces, removes tika and other cosmetics from her face, and rub her younger sister's makeup. The terror-stricken younger sister walks away from the room, leaving Nirmala a space to unconsciously beautify herself. In support to this position, Shah continues the narrative:

> Nirmala jumped, and the lipstick she had been running along her lips fell from her hand. In the mirror she saw Godavari standing in the doorway. And she saw herself, made up like a butterfly. She felt shaken—she did not know what on earth she could have been thinking of to make herself up like this. Crushed by

> the enormity of her deed, she stared fixedly into the mirror as Godavari confronted her. (280)

Her fantasy does not last long, for Godavari enters into the scene as the agent of the social superstructure or the patriarchal ideology embedded in the opposite gender. She reminds her that her husband is dead and she must not use any sort of cosmetics. Although Godavari represents woman in form, the essence carried in her forms a rigid body of social order and its morality; hence, she cannot align herself with the slumbering feminine desire in Nirmala. However, Godavari and Nirmala share the same perspective and position of life and society. Then, "Nirmala poured out the rest of the water from the glass and hurriedly rubbed the makeup from her face" (280). The women are caught in a conflicting web of society where the inner drive urges them to break free from the domination of the social, political imagination; still, they wash away the beauty of life and continue to accept domination even at the cost of sorority.

Women compel themselves to escape from the harsh prison of life as such. The patriarchal order does want to tame the women as the puppet, devoid of any type of ability to assert their choices. Hossain's Sultana goes drowsy one fine evening on her bedroom chair, thinking of Indian womanhood in general. The conscious persona of the narrative comprehends the social reality behind the Muslim women of India and Iran at the dawn of the twentieth century in and around 1905 when the story was written in support of women's cause. She happens to see Sister Sara in her dream and follows her to a feminine utopia where the women rule the world, and lead scientific and technological innovation. The coherent world of the dream has shut up the men in *'mardana,'* preparing a ground for a safe world for women. Hossain further narrates:

> 'But how do you manage,' I asked Sister Sara, 'to do without the police or magistrates in case of theft or murder?'
>
> 'Since the "Mardana" system has been established, there has been no more crime or sin; therefore we do not require a policeman to find out a culprit, nor do we want a magistrate to try a criminal case.' (165-66)

The dream world has introduced a system in which all the male members are secluded from the mainstream of social development and they are locked up in seclusion in the ways Muslim societies in India and Iran practiced 'zenana' system to isolate women from the world of men in those times. Women in Sultana's dream make use of these women to satisfy their physical needs and the social necessity of reproduction only. Unlike Nirmala and Urmila or Godavari, both Sultana and Sister Sara express their mutual love and respecting an ideal world of the feminine order.

The Feminist Utopia: Alternative Ways

Men and science torture women in the world of reality in Shah and Hossain. In Shah's narrative, Nirmala loses her husband in a plane crash a year ago. On the surface, it might sound natural for one to think it regular to encounter such a death when such accidents occur in the real world. But a closer scrutiny of the text further reveals that she is disgusted by the things of science. A new jeep waits for a professor at the gate while the professor engages himself at the house and the driver sits at the steering wheel, whistling at her (282). She cannot tolerate the situation and heads off the scene. The masculine world domesticates science and employs it to trap the women as implied in the ownership of the jeep. The attractive jeep is brought there by the professor who comes to see Urmila. Moreover, the world outside irritates her as Shah describes, "Outside, the sun was fierce. She felt even more depressed by the sight of the dust blowing around on both sides of the road and by the deafening roar of the horrible trucks that went past the house one after another" (282). The instrumental reasoning of the world does not help women

soothe themselves when they want to ease during the emotional disturbances. The sun, the trucks, the road, the jeep and its driver are all symbols representing the advancement of modern science as practiced in Nirmala's society; however, she finds only oppression from the practice. If she finds anything useful to go out of this state of life, it is only the sleeping pill that helps her forget the immediate and hurting reality.

Hossain's utopia weaves a story of another version of reality. The narrator escapes from the patriarchal order to dismantle it and found a feminine society at its ruins. In fact, the harsh version of reality does not help Sultana to explore a smooth course of life as such. Furthermore, Feroza Jussawalla studies the writing of Islamic women and sees a general feature in them that right from Hossain, these authors use their writings as a tool to critique the social mores and practices. As she argues, "This is also the continuous dichotomy of Muslim women's writing from the 1900s to today: they use their writing to criticize their societal injustices, yet are strongly rooted in their religion and their traditions, which they defend" (293). Sister Sara explains the whole story of scientific development in the feminist utopian world of Sultana's dream. The women have captured the seat of knowledge and redefined them according to their collective needs. The feminine science has emerged as the source of political power for them. For instance, Sister Sara tells:

> Never since the 'water balloon' has been set up. You see the big balloon and pipes attached thereto. By their aid we can draw as much rainwater as we require. Nor do we ever suffer from flood or thunderstorms. We are all very busy making nature yield as much as she can. We do not find time to quarrel with one another as we never sit idle. Our noble Queen is exceedingly fond of botany; it is her ambition to convert the whole country into one grand garden. (166)

The utopia presents women exercising physical sciences such as pure objective knowledge in order to address the practical difficulties of their life. They have actually taken hold of the natural phenomena to serve the purpose of life in general. On the contrary, Nirmala's world is filled with heat from outside, frustrating herself from the core of her heart. The presence of Urmila's prospective husband excites her inner desire for biological pleasure, which is forbidden for a widow in the prevailing social order. Hence, both inner heat and outer heat put her in a state of mind from which only escape lies in amnesia. Furthermore, the imagination of domesticating solar energy in women's world puts them in a position to defend the nation and defeat their enemies. Although the women were humiliated in the beginning regarding development of science, they do no leave their mission. The men were busy in their political mission as described in the book, "When they came to know that the female universities were able to draw water from the atmosphere and collect heat from the sun, they only laughed at the members of the universities and called the whole thing "a sentimental nightmare"!" (163). However, they could not realize the significance of objective knowledge and the authority it that it generates at the end of the day. Hossain narrates:

> Our good Queen liked science very much. She circulated an order that all the women in her country should be educated. Accordingly a number of girls' schools were founded and supported by the government. Education was spread far and wide among women. And early marriage also was stopped. No woman was to be allowed to marry before she was twenty-one. I must tell you that, before this change we had been kept in strict purdah.' (163)

The emancipation of women rests on educating them and empowering them as a source of knowledge. The one who fails to locate herself as the locus of knowledge is made to function as the effect of social structure. Nirmala's is an effect of social structure that triggers her unconscious desires at the state of widowhood and restricts her from

realizing them at the same time. Widowhood is a state of permanent oscillation for women under the patriarchal order. On the other hand, Sultana's dream world harbors women who use men for their celestial purpose of reproduction, pleasure and the like.

The Nepali writings of the 1960s discuss the prohibited zone of the society, that is, widowhood. In the Hindu social order, widows are forced to stay single throughout their life, remaining a true devotee to the deceased soul. Shah weaves a unique narrative of her protagonist to telescope the personal, mental landscape and the cultural assumptions simultaneously. Michael James Hutt states: "Prema Shah's "A Husband" *(Logne,* 1966) introduces us to another widow, Nirmala, and describes her feelings and somewhat neurotic actions as she helps her younger sister prepare to meet her prospective husband" (183). The woman in the story cannot challenge the deep-seated beliefs and assumptions about the course of life that women are supposed to take after their husband's death. No man's touch is allowed for them. The inner tension resulting from this state and the envy that she happens to develop towards Urmila disturbs the whole of the atmosphere in Nirmala's world. Unlike Sultana's utopia where women's safety and choice are the first concerns, every man Nirmala encounters ahead in the prevailing social order begins to eye on her for a singular prospect of deriving pleasure. Urmila's prospective husband pinches on her left cheek so hard that it bleeds (282). Then, there is the jeep driver, attempting to grasp the opportunity when Nirmala is seen at the balcony. He whistles to draw her attention towards himself. At the end, there appears Rame, handing her the chit of her neighbor asking her favor (282). Despite so many people being attracted to her, can she comfortably accept one of them for her satisfaction? The social forces and the repressive patriarchal order detain her from taking any decision for her pleasure.

A widow loses any sort of pleasure and use of cosmetics along with the demise of her husband who functions as a source of beauty and knowledge for women in patriarchy. The death of her husband permanently seals the possibility of seeking bodily satisfaction in the Hindu social order. Shah critically views the conflict between social imagination and biological drives by foregrounding the widow, Nirmala who is not yet twenty years old. Because of prohibition of the social order, she must subdue her instinctual drives without the second chance to her. Regarding the protagonist's mental condition, Shah unfolds the character's reactions:

> Back in her own room, she slammed the door shut. Her soul was rustling and swaying like a bamboo grove in the heat of midday. The scarf over her shoulder felt like a serpent clinging to her. Quickly, she pulled off her dress and rolled onto her bed. But still she felt uneasy. She slapped her own face a couple of times, but it brought her no peace of mind. Her heart banged away like a window left open in a gale. She clutched at her breast, but her misery wrung her even more. (282)

Nirmala's world is filled with the complexity arising from the patriarchal assumptions regarding women, body and pleasure. The men desiring to get her body walk upright in the very soil where moral obligations detain her from accepting them for her physical and mental satisfaction. They might find their desires satiated in other locales. As an obedient woman who stands as an effect of the larger moral codes of the society, she must not give in; otherwise, she ends up bringing disgrace to her brother (Shah's narrative mentions absence of her father). She cannot listen to the inner call of her body even when the desire for the physical bliss constantly emerges in the body; rather, "She took two sleeping tablets from the bottle on her table and gulped them down. Then she laid her head on her pillow and let out the sobs that were hiding inside her" (283). Nobody accompanies her in the most difficult of the times. She weeps alone. Despite the

presence of a lot of female members at home, she cannot get anyone by her side when she is the most disturbed one.

Both Nirmala and Sultana are trapped in the cage of patriarchal order that does not allow them to practice their agency. They turn mere effect of the underlying gender codes of society. Still, they both complement each other so as to bring about the picture of contemporary reality and utopia respectively. In fact, Jussawalla rightly evaluates: "…Rokeya Hossain in *Sultana's Dream* (1905) dreamt a feminist utopia, where the women go to war and the men stay at home in secluded quarters to execute duties traditionally considered female" (301). Hossain's imagination of agency in women helps to seek out more natural ways for expression of the inner desire and inner freedom for women who must not live a life of suffocation like Nirmala forever. They must find their ways to challenge the repressive social order and break its prohibition in quest of justice. Margaret S. Archer thinks that social actors identify middle position to bring about change: "The intermediate position where structure and agency conjointly determine society's trajectory, whose shape is an unintended consequence conforming to the exact desires of no one, is passed over. If humankind cannot be the master of society it becomes the slave of one of its sub-systems, culture, restrictively presented as language" (24). Like what Archer presents in the statement, humanity has to learn the art of resistance to overcome the restriction and dictations imposed on it. Shah and Hossain through Nirmala and Sultana act out on the principle of sorority that advocates the same gender concerns in different societies of different times. The safety in Sultana's dream world and trouble in Nirmala's real world imply that women in all the times and societies desire and suffer in the same ways and both the storytellers firmly assert the need of resistance for women to realize their true essence. The women can assert themselves helpful to each other and creative actors of the society only when they realize the repressive social forces imposing damage in their inner personality.

Hossain and Shah present two worlds that complement with each other. Sultana's dream portrays the world that Nirmala would have happily aspired for. She would not have required any sleeping pill to relieve herself from the torture of the real world if she had even imagined a space of Sultana's dream. Sultana's world displays a completely new order in which women rule in all the major domains of life. The science and technology gives women emancipation from the quotidian repressive devices of patriarchal order of the society: the women lead centers of science and technology, the universities, and the government. This world shows the perfection of humanity which can be achieved through women's leadership. Shah's Nirmala suffers in the repressive order that Sultana also undergoes the similar situation. Both the creative geniuses write two versions of the same story in which the dream and the reality appear as the two sides of the same coin.

Conclusion

Shah and Hossain intertwine their worldviews in the suffering and ambition of Nirmala and Sultana respectively. Nirmala emerges as Sultana in reality while Sultana serves as Nirmala in a utopian dream. Nirmala's present subtly argues for Sultana's fantasy where Sister Sara and Sultana walk hand in hand, discussing science and technology, forms of governance, acquisition of power, education for women and flying in the machine to travel from one place to the other. Nirmala and her sister Urmila or Godavari cannot agree with each other, for the values and situations in life of each one differ from one another. In other words, they simply cannot agree with what the other wants or says in the most critical junction of their life.

In both Shah and Hossain, the real world suffers from the breakdown of the principle of sorority. Consequently, women cannot understand each other's concerns while responding to view other's problems through the patriarchal lens. Nirmala suffers more from the absence of attachment from her own people. Likewise, Sultana moves into the world of dream in quest of a place where women get united to explore a harmonious order. Both the texts present that the real appears devoid of the attachment among women while the imaginary world foregrounds the harmonious relations among women. The principle of harmonious relations among women has broken in both the worlds: both Nirmala and Sultana negate the existing reality by choosing to negate the world. Sleeping pill or dream smoothens them to achieve a better state where women are in a perfect unison. As soon as the communication is governed by the prevailing repressive order of the society, they end up humiliating and hurting each other. Nirmala is living an uncommon life, resulting from the social assumptions about the widowhood; however, the society understands it as natural, or biological state of living. For instance, she can escape from this station of life only through the solution, i.e., the feminist utopia as proposed by Hossain in her story "Sultana's Dream" where women understand and respect other women.

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