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THE EVOLUTION OF NEW WOMAN IN PREETI SHENOY'S 'THE RULE BREAKERS'

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Abstract

The image of the New Woman, her struggle and quest for an individual identity has become a popular trend in the Indian English literature which reveals the chain of women marching from tradition to modernity. The Post-colonial Indian women writers have projected the concept of New Woman in their fictions with the help of new images by discarding the old age image of woman. Their struggle to adjust with the established norms of patriarchal society and their search for self-identity go hand-in-hand in many of the post-Independence Indian English novels. This paper aims to explore the plight of the woman in a male dominated society and her evolution as a New Woman as reflected in Preeti Shenoy's novel, *The Rule Breakers*.

Keywords: New Woman, Patriarchy, Marriage, Identity, Evolution

The term **New Woman** was an offshoot of feminism which originated in the final decades of the 19th century in Europe and North America. The feminists of the early twentieth century regarded the New Woman as an enduring social and cultural icon. The term **New Woman** refers neither to a woman who wears trousers and rides on bicycle and nor to a woman who imitates men or opposes them. It refers to an ideology which escalates the path of women's empowerment and emancipation by crossing the conventional barriers of society towards liberating oneself. The New Woman is not a woman who seeks equality with men; she asserts her own personality and individuality to own her rights as a woman. This conception of the New Woman inspires many women novelists to project the series of female figures in their novels who struggle for their evolution to come out from their domestic spheres. The present paper limits itself to explore the evolution of the New Woman in the characters of Preeti Shenoy's novel, *The Rule Breakers*.

Preeti Shenoy is an emerging Indian English novelist. Her stories deal with women as protagonists who are new to thinking, approach and behaviour. The women characters in her works are no longer conservative, oppressed or dependent women who accept the life the way it comes to them; instead they wish to be independent and aspire to get what they dream about. The novel *The Rule Breakers* (2018) is set in the 90s and deals with the complex themes of women's equality, gender discrimination, marginalization, marriage and relationship. It describes the struggle of a woman who breaks the orthodox and traditional values of a society and emerges as an independent woman.

The novel tells the story of a studious, smart and sincere girl Veda who harbors a dream for her future. Veda is the elder daughter of a typical middle class family in Joshimath with four daughters and a son. Her father Rajinder is a Block Development Officer who rules in his