

# First Shattering the Stereotypes: Feministic Analysis of Saadat Hasan Manto's Hundred Candles Watt Bulb

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## Abstract

The study aims to shed light on the plight of women of the sub-continent that have been enwrapped in the sturdy duvet of bestial praxes since their genesis. Nobody plucked the courage up to raise voice against feminine liberation, but Manto did, through his dauntless writings, which are relatable in this era as well. Saadat Hassan Manto was a pronounced maestro of Urdu short story writing of twentieth century. He splintered the run of the mill, orthodox conventions through his literary work, imparting unfading deboss on human psyche to swallow an unflinching veracity of his slit-up times stories. The female characters in Manto's stories are intransigently daring predominantly harlots, making attempts to fracture the well built stereotypes even when they are sufferers of disempowerment and gender alienation. Manto's predilection towards writing laudatory account on social taboos gained him the stature of one of a kind writer in the history of sub-continent literature. Manto was a staunch believer of humanity and it is next to impossible to loathe his stories' poignant characters for being governed by puissant iconoclast. The Hundred Watt Bulb is a tale portraying the barbaric disposition of a husband who is in the saddle to obtrude his wife for fornication rather than bestowing her with a bulwark. Manto has iconically simulated savagery based on gender and sexuality. This study purports to traverse Manto in the paradigm of feminism and revolutionary demeanor his characters evinces as a harvest of subjugation.

**Keywords:** Feminism; Manto; Partition; Taboos.

## 1. Introduction

Saadat Hassan Manto was born in a Muslim Kashmiri family on May 11, 1912, in the hamlet of Samrala, Ludhiana, Akhand Bharat (the unified India)[9]. Hailing from a law background, he was quite a rioter by nature. Being a mere college dropout, he tried to flaunt himself as a wiseacre. Being his pedagogue, Abdul Bari Alig, main editor of a magazine Masaawat, urged Manto to begin reading international lauded writers, hence Manto written a translation Sarguzast-e-Aseer of The Last Days of a Condemned by Victor Hugo, which became immensely popular as the maiden writing of Manto.

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Then first short story Tamasha was published in Khalq magazine. Owing to Manto's audacious nature, his family connections were spliced by hardheartedness. He tied a knot via arranged match by his mother with Safiah Begum, and they had three daughters[9].

In Manto's fleeting literary span, he had written more than 300 artistic compositions viz-a-viz novels, short stories, plays, and film scripts. His literary productions inflamed the sensational churn in the history of Urdu literature. He repeatedly got accused of being fescennine, stomached finger pointing and clapped in irons both in Pakistan and India. It is voiced in *Why I Write: Essays* by Saadat Hassan Manto;

"Manto had earlier been prosecuted in Lahore for obscenity, and one of the words alleged to have been obscene was, "breasts"[4].

Manto was a keen dipsomaniac, and later on, in the age of 42, he succumbed to it (liver impairment) on January 17, 1955[9]. He was prized Nishan-e-Imtiaz, Pakistan's most appreciated civil award. Manto himself wanted these words inscribed on his last resting home;

"In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful Here lies Saadat Hassan Manto and with him lie buried all the secrets and mysteries of the art of short-story writing Under tons of earth he lies, still wondering who among the two is greater short-story writer: God or He"[6].

## **2. Literature Review**

Manto's bald faced verism outlasted to smashing multifarious ideologies and presumptions of societal averred beau ideals moreover, he ventured to waddle on slitting, razor edged scimitar, bare footed. Manto perpetually bolstered the raw narration of realness of an epoch. Attributable to Manto being a keen dipsomaniac, it might be discerned as the leviathan antecedent that he legitimized Urdu literature with flaring, reality based literalism and verism, oppugnant to contemporary writers who merely brooded over surreal fancy rococo subjects, leading the readers to land in a quixotic macrocosm of denial. Without an iota of doubt, Manto is notably venerated writer, as his stories unfold the caustic openness and veridicality of patriarchal society [3]. He proclaims that woman is worthy of equivalent adoration to man, therefore, he illustrated versatile shades of the courtesan's persona in most esteemed way.

The complexity of the character of female protagonist in *Hundred Candles Watt Bulb* is facilely fathomed out merely by its furtherance and procession to a striking break through, consummated flawlessly. It (The Character) throws down the gauntlet to the typecast of patriarchalism of all times, whilst navigating the imperium towards its own self. This is how Manto's work smashed the stereotypical vague structures of society. The leading woman of the story ventures stoutheartedly to debunk the conceited ego of her male counterpart, in defiance. The public viewed Manto's writings enormously detestable and bawdy as his literature bequeaths the roofless injustices and afflictions a shield that women endured in the hands of ruthless contrived haut monde. Furthermore, Manto rebukes the sexual subordination of women, and their powerlessness to tussle the torture, exacted by their virile society and that is indispensably appertaining to today's ultra modern world with same primitive yardsticks to gauge the woman's honor.

### **3. Discussion**

Saadat Hasan Manto was tagged as a scurrilous and profane writer after all his non-fiction tales canvass voluptuousness, gender and sexuality of smothered cocottes, at the time of partition and broadly. He contemplates prostitutes in situational quandary, enforcing a chaste woman into a commercial sex worker. But here in this story, whoredom utterly alters its facet to monogamy, where the shielder of uxor is assaying to make her a vendible property, in order to cope with economical depression and turbulence due to slit up of British India. Manto points up to hades, in which women of that period resided with uttermost endurance. Manto gazed call-girls with brobdingnagian veneration and contended that they are unfeigned warriors [2]. He fumes as a hardworking woman who finds peaceful sleep at night cannot be the heroine of my story. "My heroine would rather be a harlot who lies awake at night and whose day-time rest is often disturbed by nightmares of impending old age – her heavy eyelids encrusted by years of lost sleep can be the theme of my story. Her filth, her ailments, her irritability her profanities – they all appeal to me – I write about them – and I bypass the soft speech, the glowing health and the sophistication of domesticated women" [3]

Manto entices his readers with bewitching speech, even though the titles of the characters are lacking yet progressive dithyrambic to propel the story. Here Manto delineates a wife, who is piqued and hankering for a deep sleep of tranquility, but pertaining to masculine dynamics, she is constrained to hearken her dictating male partner.

"Kill me, then. But I can't get up. For God's sake, take pity..."

The aggrieved woman is too reckless to cogitate about her sole existence, but she is in the wings to get strangled. She is constantly beseeching her cold-blooded husband, the pimp, for compassion, but her mercenary, anarchic counterpart is on tap to go heedless for his own avid boon.

"Rise, my love... don't be so stubborn... or how shall we live?"

Manto superintend the moot point of division in context of female subjugation. He commiserates for commercial fille de joie, while speculating the fact of their earning. Eyeing the tight situation of social alienation of women due to economical suppression through this short story, there is a rebellious female character that yearns for a utopian realm, regardless of vituperation and brutish mistreatment. Manto deputizes his female characters in a way that negates the surmountable aspect of it[8].

Hiding behind the wall, he peered into the room, and the first thing he saw was the hundred-watt bulb. Blinded by the glare in the tiny room, he turned his face to the darkness. Then he looked in again, but this time at the floor, to avoid the glare. A woman lay on a reed mat on the floor. He looked at her carefully. She was fast asleep, her face covered with a dupatta. Her chest heaved gently to the rhythm of her breathing, but as he crept in further, he had to stifle a scream. Just a few feet from the woman, a man lay on the bare floor, his head smashed in. A brick, covered in blood, lay beside him.

She makes bold tread of smashing the palisades of cliché societal norms by having heedless slumber even with

her lifeless husband beside her. In a grapple with her male partner, her husband hit himself with a brick. A brick here is a denotation of brazen faced customs which eventually guzzle the lives of its practitioners. And the gore of the pimp is signifying a rebellious revolution, which the female protagonist of the story discerns, and delightfully, she is in the state of elation.

Manto's stories are a true characterization of pragmatism; he talks through the subject matter without forging things knotty and labyrinthine. He talks out the sexuality of the oppressed women especially his best liked strumpets. In this treacherous world where the only cult of chastity prevails, Manto feasts on the matter of baazari auratain, (the prostitutes)[5]. Most of his stories, paladin is a whore, with a ting of humanity that throughout the story progresses with an amalgamation of bodacious courage and unbeatable fearlessness. Owing to this, Manto's narratives were witnessed as pieces of obscenity, to which he argues in Lazzat –e-Sang;

God alone knows why the prosecution describes a short story as obscene when it is not even remotely so – if I want to mention a woman's breasts then I will call them a woman's breasts – a woman's breasts can't be called peanuts, or a table or a shaving razor – though it has to be said that for some people the very existence of women is an obscenity, but what to do of that ... [7]

Manto never understood the exactness of this word obscenity, he sounds as natural as one can be to dive deep in the currents of oceans. His fumigation through his naked tales of the stereotypical society, the woman's sluthood enlightens the spirit of manism through deeds of free will.

What reason could there be for such hatred to be shown only when a woman offers to sell what she has of value –her body? A woman who honestly puts her wares on display, and sells them without an intention to cheat, is such a woman not virtuous?

Manto was a luminary who never let his reader's eyes fulgurating with sham fantasy however limned the caustic practicality with his pitiless stories unmasking the grave crisis of women at splitting times. He spotted the brutality bare-eyed that injected humanity for the fair sex, particularly those in courtesan's quarter.

"I don't want to harass you... I sympathize with you. You can sleep right here," he said gently [8].

He desired to scrape away the excruciations from the actuality of pestered lorette, whose preserver put out all the stops to vending her. Without any vagueness, the women tortured by the ostensible honor and enforced commercial gains. Woman was contemplated something worst than a pump shoe and he uncovered such stark certitudes, hovering all over woman's life.

Manto once ferociously quoted about the filthy comprehension of men;

“Agar Yeh Maashra Kothon (Brothel) Par Janay Walay Beghairat Aur Shehwaniyat Say Bharay Log Paida Kar Sakta Hai To Iss Maashray Say Randi Paida Karnay Par Hairaangi Kyun Hoti Hai? Jab Tak KhareedarMojood Hongay Bazar Main Maal Aata Rahay Ga”[7](If this society can produce people full of insolence and sensuality, that keep going to brothels, then why is there a queer astonishment on the creation of streetwalkers? As long as

there are clients, the market will be supplied with wenches)

Manto outlived as the most emotive artist of the century. He never mentioned sexuality as a psychosomatic matter, but adduced it as a mere sexual orientation or activity. He condoned being censured throughout his métier, yet he erected the gestating desiderata of earthling. Manto was altogether entangled with the point of sex. He had the temerity to put down such a one, ticklish even so climacteric as sexual preferences. His stories, at first glance, have the ingenuity that can adorn any virgin's cheeks with flush. Perhaps that boldness causes the anti-feminist society to mark Manto as a writer of profanity. Manto however was conscious of this proclamation;

There are few words that are obscene per se. It is usage which can make the chastest of words obscene. I don't think anything is inherently obscene. However, even a chair or a cooking pot can become obscene if presented in such a way – things can be deliberately made obscene to serve a particular purpose[1].

Manto was a stern believer of realism. He in lieu of framing exaggerating cockaigne and taking off the flight of fancy, banked on verisimilitude. Here is the authentic exhibition of a fetish by a female, who is covertly pining for coitus;

“But when a man spoke to her gently, she descended and spread to all parts of her body. Although her mind abhorred the physical relationship between a man and a woman, her body hungered for it. It yearned for exhaustion and forgetfulness, the wondrous sleep that takes over after the body has been wracked, the peace which follows after the body has taken a beating, the bones aching and loose. You forget you exist and in those intervals of being and nonbeing you feel you are high up in the sky, surrounded on all sides by nothing but air. Stifling in that atmosphere would be joy,”[5]

Manto has imaged the pimp in the narrative as a dictatorial male who rejoices to billingsgate and enslave the women.

“You won't get up?” the pimp snarled. “You haraam zaadi (illegitimate), you daughter of a pig!”

Manto is absolutely not extolling a sybarite prostitute like Umrao Jaan, on the contrary he venerates a tyrannized and exploited whore as Gangu Bai was[8]. He squeezes de facto that all men just yearn for a single thing from women and that is a lady part. He fiercely affirms that;

If a man has to make a woman the center of his love, why should he integrate animality into this sacred human emotion?...Is love incomplete without it?...Is love the name of physical excersice

While anathematizing the hypocrisy and sanctimony, he divulges;

“We consider “woman” that belongs to our house, the others are not women for us, it is like a meat shop and we are like dogs standing outside of that shop whose lusty eyes are always fixed on meat”[6]

For decades, in an antiquity of sub-continent, Manto was a founding father in Urdu literature to straighten out the perception with reference to women. He contended that the societal regulations are dreadfully manipulative for being a woman.

“Our society allows a woman to open a brothel but not allow her to ride a Tonga”

Prostitution can be embraced by the public, nonetheless if someone is primed to work their bones off and pocketing money in an utterly male oriented community, where virtuous employment is next to impossible. Manto's partition time men are self-absorbed and inhumane in conduct, traumatizing the women, aguishly. Manto detested the stereotypes, still lingering in every South Asian woman's life.

Be it partition time or today's ultra dernier cri era, woman's plight has never been ameliorated.

The vindictive and cruel homicide of females in the name of honor, religion and culture, is still

in vogue. Manto's quirky wit capacitated him to reckon things ahead of time. He had the grasp of patriarchal man's cerebration about women, owing to this factuality; he endeavored to re-orientate the society with his witnessed piercing occurrences and their ascendancy on generations. He penned about the woman's breasts when no one could go out on a limb to even prate about female's burqah (hijab/ face veil)[2].

Fahmida Riaz, a distinguished Pakistani writer and activist remarks about Manto's accordance to contemporary world;

Manto is especially relevant today because our society is once again plunged into sectarian and communal killings, a malaise against which Manto wrote so vibrantly, exposing the inherent greed and lust for blood concealed under seemingly pious slogans. Manto was an iconoclast. He smashed many idols people secretly worship, idols of their own supremacy, their religion, their sect, their way of life, to the extent that they want to crush the other. Manto always had room for “the other”. He also took pleasure in pointing out that virtue exists where we least expect it. In a way, he was a strong believer in the innate goodness of the human being. Today we are on the verge of losing that faith.

Recently, there is plethora of civil, religious and legal rights for Pakistani women yet there anchorage is tiniest in the society. Regrettably, in the immediate present, a young girl raped and strangled by her abductors and hurled demoniacally in a desolated locality. Implausibly, there is some inhumane majority that philosophizes of feminism-less society since it's the twenty first century; the superlatively empowered time frame for women, nonetheless, the member of meager sex is vulnerable to subordination and vanquishment of male's inexcusable mercilessness [4]. A writer like Manto respires auspiciously in centuries and at times of asperity for women, it is no less than a Godly intervention. Manzar Hasan, the Pakistani psychiatrist and author, sheds light on the necessitude of Manto in current scenario.

I believe he is as relevant as other creative artists who leave behind their influence and create a way for those coming after them. New readers start to absorb their work, like Manto himself read Premchand, Chekhov and so

on. Similarly, those writing in Manto's times and after learnt a lot from him[2]. A lot of writers tried to adopt his style but could not. So he was definitely relevant. The public had become immune to what was happening around them. In such a situation we need writers who can write about the times, writers like Premchand who wrote the story "Juloos"; writers like Manto could write about the riots the way he did.

Women of South Asia have been battling for their rights since eternity however all they acquired is less than nothing in shape of sexual assaults, dowry, domestic abuse, acid victimization, wani and touting. Truth be told, Pakistan has the slightest viability ratio of female neonates, and as a consequence of gender based unfair preferences, women are unshielded and denuded of their fundamental rights of enlightenment and livelihood. Pakistan is ranked second worst country for women to draw breath. Women have been ostracized and bedevilled in light of domestic abuse and rape[1]. The nightmarish, culprit man supplements his bigotry whims when the socially paralyzed languishers withdraw themselves from filing reports against the debauchers. Neither the government nor the corridors of power can help unfettering the poor souls but a writer like Manto accords the unfortified, pregnable women with overpowering élan and aplomb to conquer the world, unconditionally. Manto is giving an introduction to a thunderous female character bashing the hackneyed system;

"If a woman in my neighborhood beaten by her husband daily and then clean his shoes I do not feel any sympathy for her, but if a woman in my neighborhood quarrel with her husband threaten him of suicide and then go to the cinema, and I see her husband in worry then I feel weird kind of sympathy for them"[2]

Lately, the grave circumstances flapping around the territory where women have been belabored zealotries and blanched at fanatic fundamentalists, Manto's writings are identical to a knight in a shining armor and the savior of the society. Manto was more than a writer, the way he prophesied the time ahead, that upholds him as an absolute change maker. It is next to impossible to come by Manto yet perusal of his poignant tales can brew him in proximity. He presupposed the meritoriousness of his work and prior mentioned this overwhelming declaration;

"...and it is also possible, that Saadat Hasan dies, but Manto remains alive."[6]

Manto can be descried in fracas with the patriarchal pharisees in the sexist society where as the day dawns; they commence haranguing others on their immaculacy and temperance while right through the night, with an implanted theriomorphic salaciousness within, to ravage pleasure quarters. Such shameless people up to the present moment prevail, who in broad day light loathe bawds and ladies of pleasure and as the darkness dominates the brightness, they begin to worship them. For such rogues, Manto narrates;

Nobody knows my city's respected people better than my city's prostitutes. Despite of teeming social and political juggernauts for the prerogatives of women, howbeit they are decaying in a furnace full of pathogens of throttling societal moral codes. As Manto points, "Literature is a symptom of the state of a society."Our society is no better than Manto's sphere where women are destined to endure more than their flesh and blood can stand. Writers like Manto might hammer the reasoning faculties of extremist people of prejudiced community, notwithstanding remodeling can only eventuate with pragmatic panaceas, worldwide [2].

#### **4. Conclusion**

Saadat Hasan Manto epitomizes bold, and undaunted female characters through the medium of literature, mostly prostitutes under the heels of atrocious society. He was the only Urdu writer who indubitably transcribed masterpieces, based on verisimilitude. He painted the plight of partition time's women. Being a staunch feminist, he long-wished for women liberation and their emancipation, while underscoring an unequivocal sensuality and carnality of the time that exerts influence on populace, extensively. And prostitution is an offshoot of that impingement. The female character in the Hundred Watt Bulb story, is stalwart and daring, all geared up, summons to contest the primordial stereotypes of masculine governed society. She preserves her self – worth and as having a quirky decisiveness, she terminates the malignant relationship with the representative of barbaric society. That is something, Manto urges women to engender in order to combat injustices and savagery. He reprimands the accustomed politicians and religious bigots who are sightless to the scathing condition of women in the male-dominant spheroid.

The prevailing time is same like the period of Manto, where the environment consents sexual violence, carnal abuse, abduction and subordination of women. Yet, the public is reluctant to put up with this factualism. Manto lived with accusations of profanity because of his narrations stating the same naked truths about his time. During his trials, he repeatedly declared that he was a sheer helpless who just portrayed the actuality of hideous society through the medium of his stories. Even though the background for his write-ups was entirely dissimilar from today's dynamics, despite this, his literature sounds so familiar with the current time.

Manto's extraordinary inquisitiveness in socially prohibited subject matters like the depiction of a valiant harlot, or an adventurous typical housewife, labels Manto as an unapologetic feminist, who, with his revamping written work, made an incredible impact on the people of the sub- continent to be more particular, Pakistan and India.

“If you are not familiar with the time period we are passing through, read my stories. If you cannot bear these stories, which mean this is an unbearable time. The evils in me are those of this era.”[6](Manto)

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