

Portrayal of women in select novels of Shobha De

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Abstract

The present paper is based on the novels of Shobha De, in particular *Socialite Evenings* and *Stary Nights*. She is one of the most famous Indian Women writers in English. Her fiction always tries to reveal the character of women. She is a great supporter of open-ended narration of incidents and episodes. Researcher will seek to reveal overall persona of women in the novels of Shoba De. The study is based on the Indian point of view. She has portrayed the woman characters of variety imaginatively in her novels, trying to find their existence, meaning of life, their identity and their unfulfilled loved and emotional self. The important point to be acknowledged about her novels is that her novels particularly *Socialite Evenings* and *Stary Nights* are full of women characters. The novels seem dominated by female characters having full of crowd. After analyzing her novels it is indicated that her main concern is on female characters as protagonists. Less is mentioned about secondary female characters. She has depicted the women in pairs and their concerns on their individual happiness and selfhood pleasures. Her novels are based on women psychology revealing the accepted norm that women are jealous and enemy of other women.

Keywords: Shobha De, Socialite Evenings, Women, Individuality, Society, Self.

Analysis of Shobe De's Novels

India is known for its ancient narratives like Rigveda, Ramayana and Mahabharata. These narratives has inspired and influenced the literature and the most Indian authors. Shoba De was also one among them.

Socialite Evenings

Socialite Evenings: by Shobha De is set in the crowded city of Mumbai. The story is about housewives of rich families who are bored by the usual business of their husbands. Their husbands remain busy with their usual work leading to the extra martial affair of the wives. Their marriages are based on loveless life and rather based on mechanical process.

Socialite Evenings: the novel of Shoba De is about the emancipation of a prominent girl from Bombay (now Mumbai) 'Karuna' from an ordinary middle class girl to a socialite. During her journey from an ordinary girl to an idealistic figure she tries to the ways to become an individualistic and self-sufficient persona. She detaches from all things which engenders her mental stability, struggle nature of rebellion, she puts everything backward and walks through the ways forbidden by and settles herself a figure of different persona throughout the novel. Her sister says about her that:

You were always the strange one, right from childhood; I wouldn't ever figure you out. (Shobha 1989:180) ^[2].

In the novel, Karuna is totally leading a life of different woman. She is enthusiastic in breaking-out the compels which puts down the status of the others. She maintains her feminine psyche through defense and protest from already set norms. She proves herself as a woman, as a member of society rather than being a victim. The emotional disturbance in her springs due to the differences between concepts of marriage: first created by the society and second concept of her own. In the conventional society marriage with a rich husband is said to be a terrific one.

But the thing here, in consideration is that the common interest, intellectual and emotional compatibility is not figured out. Karuna thinks of marriage as full of laughter and conversation. Where one speaks the same language, same thoughts and enjoys the same things every day.

My husband was not a villain. He was just an average Indian husband- unexciting, uninspiring, untutored... He wasn't one for introspection. Unless things went radically wrong he preferred to let things be I didn't have to prove myself.... He wasn't looking for any stimulation, either intellectually or emotionally. (Shobha 1989:65) ^[2].

In a society of male dominant, the males shout, hurl abuses, bully, reproach, criticize and on the other hand is submissive and passive who silently listens, tolerates and bears silently. But the women portrayed by Shobha are binding vine, yes persons to bow down in meek subordination. They are the women who knew how to fight back, how to defy and resist, like that of Karuna.

The life of Karuna was locked up in a fragile and meaningless wedding knot; she was leading a life of emotional disturbance. The communication between her and her partner was meaningless and futile, there were no exchange of love, favors, smiles, thoughts and quires, but a marriage and reation of silence. Only silence as Karuna admits that:

It was not that I never tried, but there was no question that my husband and I inhabited different planets. (Shobha 1989:68) ^[2]

To turn out this boredom and meaningless and silent life she decided to have an extra-marital affair to fulfill her emotional stability and desires, resulting the breakdown of her marriage. Although she got a privacy to find out her own self but she is also upset for her state which make her dejected and depressed. Man is a social animal, he can't get detached from society but at the end Karuna is sitting alone in her room, looking meaningless and blankly into space. Karuna needed company,

but she was a burnt child. She cannot venture. Although she was liberated: economically, physically, but as a human being she was carving for companion who won't demolish her gained freedom. She represents the women of 21st century in this respect, who is torn between freedom and instinct.

Starry Nights

The women in *Starry Nights* are related to the world of fantasy of movies. Aasha Rani, 'Sweetheart of the millions', breaks all sexual bonds and social norms. She is controlled by anyone or anything as she decides and has desire of living her life of own. Her sexual aggression is pointed out in the novel as she has sex encounters with men in the story. According to her own point of view by doing this she tries to defeat men and breaks all the shackles and norms propounded by patriarchal society on women. De, as she writes 'sex is the bedrock of all relationships' she has portrayed the characters like Aasha Rani, Rita, Linda, Shonali etc practicing sex frankly and demolishing the very nature and concept of traditional women. She has portrayed them aggressive, rebellious and trying to assert their identity. The thing, it is out dated to love one and a same person. Mikki breaks all the shackles and societal codes from being a silent person to a rebellious character. The extreme of her modernity or rather saying breaking of shackles goes to the extreme by not being emotional or sentimental on the death of her parents. She is the lady of manners. Her philosophy is based On Pragmatism. The female characters of Shoba De' novels are not passive listeners; she has given her female characters a voice of being active, protective, and dominative.

Conclusion

Shobha De presents reality in her novels by portrayal of different and various women characters. Her women in her novels are modern and beyond the patriarchal society. She has given them the voice of defying the forces of society by breaking all set norms. She has presented the changes which are taking place in India, hence proving her novels authentic and more realistic. She lets her characters change with the changing scenario to attain their individuality and self-hood. By taking all concerns, themes, characters, and narration of Shoba De, one may think of her from different ways, be it good or bad, but one must acknowledge that she is prolific writer who contributed as lot more through her own individualistic way. She is considered a strong pillar of Indian English novel. The present paper is based on the Shoba De's novels *Socialite Evenings* and *Starry Nights* and talks about the women empower in India.

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