

A Study of Difficulty and Socialite in Novel of Shobha De

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ABSTRACT

Shobha De an eminent modern novelists and journalists in Indian English literature. She has becomes the symbol of highlighting different perspectives of woman's freedom and liberation. She conceives extra- marital affairs of women as the stroke to break the traditional and moral values in society. ShobhaRajadhyaksha is a well-known novelist by the name of Shobha De in the realm of Indian English novel. Shobha is a gifted novelist with extraordinary ability to discuss very sensitive aspects of human life tactfully. The way she narrates each and every aspect of human relationship in general and man-woman relationship in particular, is superb. Shobha differs from other Indian women novelists writing in English. She is a writer who believes in very frank narration of incidents and absolute open-heartedness. The present paper is a study of ShobhaDe's first novel Socialite Evenings. De conceives the extra-marital affairs of women as the stroke to break the traditional and moral values in society. Socialite Evenings is about the journey of a prominent Bombay socialite Karuna, from a middle class girl to a self-sufficient woman. Making a feminist approach, the novel gives us the picture of the marginalization of the Indian women at the hands of their husbands. Socialite Evenings is a novel that presents the institutions of family and marriage existing in the wealthy class of the Indian society. This portrayal is authentic, being an inside story, because the narrator herself belongs to this class. Socialite Evenings is a romantic tale, suffused with feminist traits. An enduring theme in the novel is the image of new women, search for identity and selfhood.

1. Introduction

Indian fiction in English has been enriched by several talented women novelists including Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayanatara Sahyagal, Attain Hosain, Santharamarau, ShashiDeshpande and Shobha De. They have a women perspective on the world. They have written about Indian women, their struggle, their suffering and their awkward position, keeping in view their image and role which the society has created. Their chief contribution consists of their exploring the moral strength of women characters and their struggle with challenges in creating their own identity Shobha De is a prolific writer born in Maharashtrian Brahmin Family in Mumbai in 1948 and was educated in Delhi and Bombay. She graduated from St. Xavier's College, Bombay with a degree in Psychology. She has achieved top most position in the queue of best-selling writers in India. All the twelve books which were written by her gained high score in the charts as well as created new records. She writes about the high-flying- he has achieved top most position in the queue of best-selling writers in India. All the twelve books which were written by her gained high score in the charts as well as created new records. She writes about the high-flying- upperclass society of India. She has dealt with issues related to woman. To project urban culture, she has changed tradition picture of enduring, submissive and self-sacrificing women with a new picture of bold and liberated urban women. Shobha De is renowned for bold and frank style of writing. She explored the lives of bored housewives and their loveless rich husband and family. Her novels mirror the life styles of the elite and the middle classes of urban world.

Socialite Evenings is ShobhaDe's first novel published in 1988. The novel portrays Mumbai high society and explores

the lives of bored rich housewives trapped in loveless marriages and engaging in ill-fated, extra-marital affairs, smug selfish husbands, fashionable parties, false spiritual leaders, and a portrait of general moral, spiritual and intellectual bankruptcy and decadence of the elite who have traded their traditional culture for westernisation and modernisation. In the novel, Karuna the main protagonist and narrator caught up in a drab, boring life that she seeks to escape by writing memoirs. Her memoirs are successful and she achieves a measure of fame and pride in herself as she becomes an active socialite and eventually uses her new found prominence as celebrity to get herself a position as an advertising copy writer and creator of a television series.

In the novel Socialite Evenings Karuna is the main protagonist. She is all agog to break-out of such thralldom which compels her to assume the status of the other. A problem child both at home and at school, she declines a dog the traditional path of etiquette and manners. At home, she refused to cower before elders and at school she wore her sash hipster style. As she grows in age there develops in her the emotional urge to identity with the outside world, the modern crowd, the bewitching and fascinating world of affluent girls who had the lewd and clandestine world of modeling with her secret assignment as the Terkosa Girl. Throughout the novel Karuna figures as a woman who asserts her feminine psyche through protest and defiance. She figures as a woman, not victim. Shobha De deals with the sullenly skewed of art. We do not have here the stereotypes associated with male artistic representations of women. Karuna's initiation into the fashionable world of modern life begins at Anjali's fancy place in Malabar Hill. But Anjali accuses Karuna of bitchiness and

lechery, her insatiable appetite for sex. This is borne out when Karuna dates with the New Delhi ad film-maker in London. Further her stay in the United States gives her a feeling of superiority and makes her assertive. Karuna, with all her attempts at ego-assertion, refuses subscription to stereo types, to succumb to the hegemony of the malist culture.

2. Identity of women in Shobha De's novels

ShobhaDe's novels characterize the new Indian woman's voice. „New woman“ wants to explore self-identity, seeks freedom in all phases of her life reinstates the conventional representation of Indian women. The need for women to seek their individuality is the message in her novels. Indian women were dominated since ages. They were under the influence of man. Different aspects were accountable for women suppression; they can be categorized as societal edifying, conventional and so on. In Indian patriarchal society, Indian women have always been taught since her early days that they have to follow her spouse and family. Her parents offered her no option to think about her own individuality. In Indian culture, the birth of a girl child is never receives a welcoming response nor from the parents nor from the society. Thus the journey of such woman becomes a case study of feminism, all spheres of her growth, societal, political and psychosomatic remains the focus of research. Contemporary woman is a career-oriented because she knows that it is her financial dependence which authorizes a male to dominate his wife and subject her to physical and psychological pain.

Shobha De considers in a very honest recitation of incidents and open heartedness. Nothing is held in reserve in her fiction. It is in this respect Shobha De fluctuates considerably from other Indian women novelists in English, she represents a variety of women from the conventional, dominated and marginalized to the enormously current and openminded women. Her novels splinter patriarchal supremacy. With the rise of feminism, there emerged the new woman, who is completely different from her traditional counterpart. These new woman is conscious, confident and sometimes even aggressive. To acquire a new identity she is seen dealing with the world around her own terms. She has become aware of her destination, that is to liberate herself from the clutches of unjust taboos and customs imposed on her by the male-dominated society, becoming aware of her own rights, she has started a fight, of course, the fight is not going to be easy and short lived since it is against the human elements like ego, greed, ambition and selfishness. So far the women are looked at as man's privilege and they have also accepted it without protest. But the modern women have realized the unjust nature of such an attitude and therefore they have started thinking on different lines. De shows an important shift in the position of her women who are autonomous. They do not depend for their survival on their fathers, husbands or sons. On the other hand, they have required strength to face life with all its ups and downs. They are assertive, practical and strong. They solve their problems themselves. Shobha De projects the ideas of liberating women through self-realization and the quest for self-identity. Shobha De believes that the women have to be aware of her own identity as a human being and should think for themselves.

Woman should be an independent identity and entity by being aware of the choices open to her.

3. Women's Identity In Socialite Evenings

Socialite Evenings, the first novel of Shobha De is about the journey of a prominent Bombay Socialite Karuna, from a middle class girl to a self-sufficient woman. The novel presents the institutions of family and marriage existing in the wealthy class of the Indian society. An enduring theme in the novel is the search for identity and selfhood. Karuna born in a dusty clinic in Satara, a remote village in Maharashtra and does not remember much of her childhood except the strict vigilance of her father. Her mother, who was preoccupied with domestic chores, does not devote much time to „know“ her daughter. Karuna the protagonist of Socialite Evenings is the perfect example of the misery of women in India, Karuna's life starts only when they migrate to Bombay because of her father's official transfer. She meets Anjali a prominent socialite and the wife of a wealthy playboy. Karuna's world changes, Karuna starts dreaming of a career in films and holidays abroad. When she enters college and gets married to Bunty, a rich business man, the family accepts him because of his social status. But he is not the right „husband material“ discovers Karuna. He was just an average Indian husband-unexciting, uninspiring, untutored...He wasn't looking for any stimulation either intellectually or emotionally, she gets bored with her husband who does not share her interests, tries to down her blues in reading books and crossword puzzles. Woman is thus reduced to matter a mere object. This reduction of woman to matter or a commodity is in the main a phallogocentric pattern. Karuna's husband treats her as matter, a mere object subjected to his own will. It is clear that Karuna has just a formal relationship with her husband. Intimacy between the husband and wife is lacking for Karuna who never calls her husband by his name but derogatorily as „Black label“. Karuna suffers due to the callous and non-responsive attitude of her husband. Her husband treats her as a mere object subject to his will as a result there is a complete loss of her identity. She revolts against her insensitive husband and finally divorces him. As a self-realized person, she comes to know that extra marital affair proves to be an oasis in the desert. It does not bring any happiness to woman and therefore she refuses the offers of Girish and Ranbir, because she does not want to lose her identity. She prefers to create her own authentic presentation which gives her a sense of freedom. She gets ready to live her life on her own terms by rejecting the idea of getting married second time. As a self realized person, Karuna opt for singlehood as a way of life. Again when her husband tries to reconcile with her, she understands his duplicity and dishonesty and rejects him. Because of her disgusting and unfruitful experience she accepts singlehood status as an affirmation of herself: "I still resisted them. I suppose my real concerns were different. It wasn't money or success I was looking forward to in my life at that point it was the freedom to do what I wanted." Karuna is the modern new woman, who is independent in every way. She breaks out of the bonds of marriage and lands her fact firm into the profession of her choice that is modeling. In the process of establishing her identity, she discovers her husband and takes up journalism as her career. Karuna occupies herself busy with write ups of her memories. She acquires good fame through her writings, pride

in her venture. She becomes a Socialite to firm her profession in media. She leads her profession in all aspects with her charms, intelligence and boldness. Karuna is initiated into the life of a model by her mentor Anjali. Karuna had always yearned to be a part of the smart and beautiful set. Modeling helps her create an identity for herself. Similarly Anjali a young socialite suffers much because of her incompatible marriage and her husband's oppressive attitude. Anjali and Ritu are also presented as liberated and emancipated new women.

4. Women on Manju Kapur's 'difficult daughters'

In *Difficult Daughters*, her first novel, published in 1998 and located primarily in the India of the 1940s, ManjuKapur speaks, with great narrative eloquence, of the idea of independence. The book, whose author, born in 1948, lives in Delhi and currently teaches at Miranda House College, was awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book (Eurasia Section), and has earned her very substantial success, both commercially and critically, both in her native India and on the world market (2003 saw the appearance of a Spanish-language edition, translated by Dora Sales Salvador of the Universidad Jaume I de Castellón)². ManjuKapur has now published a second novel, *A Married Woman* (2003)³, which is quite as powerful as its predecessor and, if anything, thematically even more controversial. The present essay, however, will focus on a number of key aspects of *Difficult Daughters*. The search for control over one's destiny, surely the key theme of *Difficult Daughters*, refers to the Independence aspired to and obtained by a nation (despite its cruel division by a fateful Partition), but also to the independence yearned after (and finally not obtained) by a woman and member of that same nation (or of one of its rival communities). *Virmati*, the heroine, seeks human relations that will allow her to be herself and to exercise the degree of control over her life which, as an educated woman, she knows she deserves. Born in Amritsar in the Punjab in 1940, the daughter of a father of progressive ideas and a traditionalist mother (Kasturi, obliged to give birth to no less than 11 children), she aspires to a freer life than that offered her by those around her. This aspiration is condemned to failure, thanks to the incomprehension she receives from both her own family and that of the man she marries - but also thanks to her own mistakes, for no-one obliged her to marry who became her husband, and she was free not to make the choice she did. *Virmati*, like so many other subcontinental women, is asked to accept a typical arranged marriage. She rebels against that destiny, to the lasting shame of her family, above all of her mother. Insisting on her right to be educated, she manages to

leave home to study in Lahore. Nonetheless, she falls in love with an Amritsar teacher known as 'the Professor', a married man who first appears in her life as her parents' tenant. After a number of vicissitudes, including a period as a school principal in a small Himalayan state, she finally marries the man she loves (or thinks she loves), and returns to Amritsar to live with him. However, he refuses to leave his first wife, and the consequences for *Virmati* are harsh indeed: she ends up being marginalised by her own family and despised by her husband's. *Virmati's* tale is told, from a present-day perspective, by *Ida*, her only daughter, who seeks to reconstruct her late mother's life-story, against the background of the Independence movement of the 1940s and the subsequent trauma of Partition.

5. Conclusion

The major theme of Kapur's and De's fictional works is the man-woman relationship. They portray their new woman characters as those who are not ready to yield to the conventional and hierarchal world of hetero-sexuality. On the one hand, these women disregard the domineering and superficial man-women relationships, and on the other, they demand intimacy and relationship purely based on equality, justice, mutual respect, affection and admiration between man. The new woman characters of De and Kapur enclose the feminist assumption of an ideal man-woman relationship. They urge men as well as women to take positive and creative approach to the concepts of evolving feminist waves that highlight the basic rights of women. They exhort men to have adaptability and flexibility to the paradigms of new womanhood and woman. This paper attempts to make an inquiry into the new woman concept employed by two leading female authors, ManjuKapur and Shobha De in their works. Literature is indeed the most explicit account of the human essence. It is a medium through which the spirit of our living is made predominant by linking it to the fanciful experience. From time immemorial; Indian society is patriarchal in its approach. It demands submissiveness, patience, obedience, unconditional love and service mentality from a woman. If anyone deviates from the traditional paradigms, they are hardly accepted in the society and even considered as an outcast. With the acquisition of education and occupation that led to economic independence, Indian women's approach towards their own servitude state begins to change. In the early period of twentieth century onwards, women started to react and oppose the phallo-centric suppressions and begin to think and decide upon the matters that affect them. It paves way to the daring and striking concept of the modern woman.

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