

**SOCIAL OPPRESSION OF WOMAN IN THE NOVEL'S OF SHOBHA DE  
RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

**R.SARAN RAJ**

**ABSTRACT**

Shobha De, an eminent modern novelist and journalist, becomes the symbol of highlighting different perspectives of woman's freedom and liberation. The present thesis seeks to provide a modest study of the novels of De, the most popular Indian Woman writer in English. It attempts to make comprehensive critical comments on her fiction with an emphasis on the image of woman portrayed in her novels. Women writers like De are conscious of the marginal status of woman in society. Her women are daring and courageous and unconventional in satisfying their natural urge. It brings out a worthy image of new Indian women who are mindful of their identity and rights. They do not demand to be treated equal to men but they demand to be treated like individuals. They denied to be suppressed in repressive relationships. These women are far more assertive, domineering and bold in comparison to their male counterparts. They are not submissive. They are not guilty about their affairs and attitudes. She emphasizes the quest for meaning of life, identity and unfulfilled emotional life of the characters through her novels. Her novels, *Socialite Evenings* (1988), *Starry Nights* (1990), *Sisters* (1992), *Strange Obsession* (1992), *Sultry Days* (1994), *Snapshots* (1995), and *Second Thoughts* , do not deal with traditional accepted role of women but she presents new women. They want respect of their emotions. These women are ready to quit societal bonds in quest of their identity. They refused to dress up themselves in men made dress of identities. They belonged to another generation called -new women.

Shobha Rajadhyaksha, also known as Shobha De (born 7 January 1948), is an Indian columnist and novelist. De is best known for her depiction of socialites and sex in her works of fiction, for which she has come to be known as the "Jackie Collins of India". Shobha De was born in Girgaon, Mumbai, India, in a Goud Saraswat Brahmin family. She completed her schooling from Queen Mary School, Mumbai, and graduated from the St. Xavier's College of Mumbai with a degree in psychology. She worked as a model for few years.

After making her name as a model, she began a career in journalism in 1970, during the course of which she founded and edited three magazines—*Stardust*, *Society*, and *Celebrity*. *Stardust* magazine, published by Mumbai-based Magna Publishing Co. Ltd., was started by Nari-Hira in 1971 and became popular under the editorship of Shobha De. In the 1980s, she contributed to the Sunday magazine section of *The Times of India*. In her columns, she used to explore the socialite life in Mumbai lifestyles of the celebrities. At present, she is a freelance writer and columnist for several newspapers and magazines.

The study of segregation and distress inflicted on women in a society of hegemonic masculinity is considerable modern trend. In Indian society women are not allowed to play any dynamic function in decision making; they are only passive partners of male community. Women writers in English in India highlight and explore the dilemma which modern women are facing in a traditional society, where prejudiced morality is the accepted norm, Self-willed and individualistic women have to face suffering caused by broken relationship and they are left alone.

The Indian female novelists have contributed substantially to the English fiction by dissecting the reasons of emotional suppression of women. They are like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Kiran Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Arudhanti Roy, R.P.Jhabvala, , Attia Hussain, , Anita Nair and Shobha De have presented a woman's world very movingly. They have introduced their individual styles of writing, -The persuasive need of women to break between through the conventional barriers to establish a new tradition, these feminine aesthetics finds its expression in the female authors' divergence in their devotion to the dominant tradition (9)

De's novels do not deal with traditional accepted role of women but she presents new women. She does not use character of a women only to make lovy dovy storey of male as Shukla said about women in the novels of De, they are not — love-slaves or bitches or mere helpmates at home (115)¶. In her novels she most probably mirrors her own independent, feminist and sexist mindset.

In the second novel, *Ladies Coupe* (2001) by Anita Nair she discusses the stories of six women who are travelling together in a ladies coupe of a train. Mainly it depicts a woman's search for strength and independence. The new women is not only questioning the prevailing subjugating taboos but also they are mounting their will to break them, somehow this strong will proved to be detrimental in eroding taboos. Ankela, female protagonist, puts question through her own self revealing journey that she has never been able to live a life of her own or possess an identity of her own:—She was always an extension of someone else's identity: Chandra's daughter, Narayana's Akka (elder sister), Priya's aunt, Murthy's sister-in-law... Akhila wished for once someone would see her as a whole being (201-202)¶.

Anita Nair in her novels presents marriage as a tyrannical institution for woman. Her characters in the novel *The Better Man* declare their individuality and try to set free themselves from the claws of man. The narrative depicts the feminist attitude of Valsala in the light of new women morality. She justifies herself as -I am just forty years old. I don't want to be pushed into old age before it is time. I want to live. I want passion. I want to know ecstasy, she told herself, night after night (130)¶.

Veena Paintal wrote about rebellious women who boldly challenged stereotypes of women in Indian society. In „*An Autumn Leaf*“ (1976), she portrays a character named Charisma, who is an independent girl with her own views on love and marriage, -I do not believe in arranged marriages. In today's world they have little chance of survival. I have my own personality and my dreams. I refuse to be tied down like a slave to some rich man I do not even

know and be treated like a piece of furniture (01-05)¶.

Nayantara Sahgal gave great importance in her works to personhood. She believes –It takes half of life to achieve personhood but perhaps there is no greater glory (13)¶. By personhood she means identity, self realization and individuality. There is resurrection for the soul of women in her novels. She changed the tradition in a fiction where the most important for women was her utility and faithfulness to men becomes obsolete. Women in her novels live a life of luxury, comfort and security. They are confident, learned, intelligent, aware and sagacious and above all they reject to bargain their personhood, their freedom for a little safety, somehow similar to the women of De’s works.

Manju Kapur has joined the growing number of women writers from India. In her novel

***Difficult Daughters* she represents the emergence of new woman who is no longer the –chaste**

wife whose suffering can only make her more virtuous, the nurturing mother who denies her own self, but the avenging Kali or a titillating strumpet (242).¶

In the novel *Sisters* by Shobha De Mikki , woman, is a very matured and decisive character. Shobha De always tries to give her female characters their own identity in the society by making them bold, confident and professional in urban atmosphere by discarding image of traditional subdued woman. K.K. Sinha rightly states, –Shobha De stands for equal and normal treatment to the woman in this hurly-burly world of ours....She stand for the New Woman – casual looking but ambitious, professional focused and in control. In this novel Alisha represents the author’s own desire for liberation for women in sexual matters. According to Shobha De, –All people need sex. It is something special, something beautiful, something shared.¶ To a question by a woman, sex...who need?¶ Shobha De answers,—Everybody, darling everybody. Shobha De does not ignore the subject of sex. The sex is considered –a taboo subject. De confesses, –It is important for women to talk about it. Our mother endured it silently because it was a taboo subject. Nobody was interested in women’s view on sex...It is a kind of catharsis

(-Shobha De). Sex for Shobha De's female characters is a life reality. They accept it as an inseparable part of life. They think and discuss about it openly. Here, both female characters of *Sisters* consider sex as reality of their lives. Mikki and Alisha cross the boundary of a typical traditional Indian Woman.

### **1.1 Social Oppression Leads to Rebellion**

In Indian society woman is considered to be an epithet of sacrifice, silent suffering, humanity, faith and knowledge. She should be quiet, righteous, unblemished, passive, homely, graceful and devoted to her husband and his family. But the young women of today are becoming aware of unjust attitude of the society. They are trapped in cultural norms and societal taboos, all their efforts to shake these strands unable to produce desired results. As a result they become rebellious, they gathered the courage from their sufferings to revolt against patriarchal culture.

Maya who was emotionally deprived by her husband at the end find out essence of herself after developing extramarital relation with Nikhal. She instead of observing the codes of marriage preferred to follow her inner voice. Nikhal turned her down but instead of lamenting on this she became determined to try another channel where she can assert herself. Maya wanted recognition as woman having emotions not Maya as wife only sponge for her husband. In the novel when Maya was talking to her neighbor Pushpa, the soup which she was cooking spills on the stove. Her husband was warning her. She did not bother him, actually this made her happy. Maya found her -who body in mirth . . . I knew I have to make it from scratch, so what I have all the time in the world now! (289). In these lines soup spilling is used as metaphor. De presents her concrete rebellion of a suffering woman who denied sobbing and moaning, like spilled soup Nikhal was also slipped from her life and she was again ready to make her time enjoyable with another man available. De's women reveal an attitude of insecurity, lack of sensitivity in their

marital relations according to which they unhesitatingly break the marriage oaths. They put their happiness above all.

Maya's emotionless life with her husband compels her to revolt against injustice done by him. She said after developing relation with Nikhail to herself, that their relation was mesmerizing. -I did not want to think of consequences. I refused to assume responsibility. I really didn't care one way or the other. I felt free, lunatic, and wonderful (375)l.

In the novel *Socialite Evenings*, Karuna's concept of conjugal felicity and physical intimacy is a happy coming together on real feelings. On the contrary, her psychologically sophisticated sensibility is crudely shocked at the smugness and crassness of her husband. He turns it into a mechanical affair, more a miserable than a fulfilling experience. Instead of considering it her misfortune she rebelled against it. She is happy to express without hesitation her sexual urge for any man other than her husband. She makes an ingenious declaration about her inner thirst in the following words: -I love this friend of yours, and I will feel thoroughly disillusioned after that. May be he will have some truly foul personal habits that will disenchant me. In which case it will really be *'A Death in Venice'* (186)l. She revolted against the archetypical to an extent that she chose to live alone beyond societal knots of relations.

## REFERENCE

- [1] C.L.Khatri and Sandhya Saxena "Five Indian Women Novelists-Feminist vision" Yking books, Jaipur India, 2013 PP 179- 211
- [2] De, Shobha "Socialite Evenings" Penguin Books (1989) 2013
- [3] Rao, Alapati Purnachandra "Urban Women in Shobha De's Fiction" Prestige Books International, New Delhi, 2013
- [4] [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/3839/11/11\\_\\_chapter%204.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/3839/11/11__chapter%204.pdf)