

# Liberation: Defined By Women in Shobha De's Novels

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**Abstract – Indian women writers have played a pivotal role in voicing the opinions and desires of Indian women. Shobha De is well known columnist and a frank writer of any social issue. Her novels always deals with the life of socialites that is filled with depiction of sex. Her controversial writing brought back much criticism. De's Contribution to Indian English Literature is worthful because it introduces a new variety of women writing. The article is written by referring some of the eminent person's articles and books to make clear about the concept of liberation. This article and reviews provide a large support to justify Shobha De as a versatile writer. A broader evaluation of her work reveals her protest against the good old image of women who can't live the way she wants to and do things the way she wants to. Women in her novels are represented as sexually liberated and free thinkers who have been termed as 'New Woman'. There so called new women are much more physically active and athletically strong than their mother's. Feminist-New Style, a journal (1927) declared that "The new woman is a blend of physical freedom, sexuality and stamina with feminist self-assertiveness and traditional domestic feminist, a woman who can combine pleasure, career and marriage. They are eager to participate in pleasure as they would do in play, work etc."**

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Shobha De as a writer tries to mirror or portray her feminist mind set while portraying women in her novels. A broader evaluation of her work reveals her protest against the good old image of women who can't live the way she wants to and do things the way she wants to. Women in her novels are represented as sexually liberated and free thinkers who have been termed as 'New Woman'. These so called new women are much more physically active and athletically strong than their mothers. Feminist-New Style, journal (1927) declared that "The new woman is a blend of physical freedom, sexuality and stamina with feminist self-assertiveness and traditional domestic femininity, a woman who can combine pleasure, career and marriage. They are eager to participate in pleasure as they would do in play, work etc."

All her heroines, be it Karuna, Aparna, Mikki, Alisha or Asha Rani are rebellious modern Indian-women who challenge the orthodoxy of social taboos. They are different from the sexually ignorant Indian woman which is quite contradictory to most Indian male writers who feel that sex is an unpleasant subjection to man's desire-necessary in order to have off spring. Shobha De's women challenge this traditional set up in the society. Her women are far more assertive, domineering and bold in comparison to men. They are not submissive, and guilty of their affairs. Sujata, in **Sultry Days** (1994) is a prostitute, who does what

her mind says. This gives her pleasure. Life is defined on her own terms. When Asha Rani, in **Starry Nights** (1991) the famous heroine of Bollywood designs herself a code of conduct for herself which is free from the prescribed gender rules and sexual constraints. This shows clearly that women in Shobha De's novels can't be always taken for granted that they will be dutiful and self-sacrificing daughter to their parents. They will certainly revolt when their self-interest is at stake. They may face hurdles but they are smart enough to ignore them and break these handles very skilfully and tactfully and emerge out of it comfortably.

The novelist has portrayed her women characters in such a way that the readers get a clear picture of her intentions. She has tried her best to expose the normal and spiritual break down of the society which she thinks is in helpless state. Therefore, she has understood the human psyche which has made her take a thorough look at the age old customs which bars a woman from doing certain things which she likes to do but is unable because of the rigid bonds she is bounded with.

Women in upper class society have no concern about public. The concept of morality arising out of love for one and the same person is considered to be outdated. The women in Shobha De's novels,

believe in breaking the old age traditions of enjoying life with pre-marital affairs and extra-marital affairs. She takes a plunge extra into the hearts of liberated upper class women in contemporary Indian society.

Shobha De's novels depict the life of urban women of India. Her choice of subject is always the life of women who is related to media, cinema or ad-agency. It is very interesting to know about the women who belong to one of these fields. In an interview to Asia Week, she indicates that, 'The women in my book are definitely not doormats'. They are not willing to be kicked around." The women of De belong to media and cinema hence De's portrayal of these colourful world shows the hidden realities of women's life. The life of women is depicted with reference to their psyche, career, suppression, psychological traumas and sexual desires. The excess use of sexual matters may cause discomfort but her frank narration and the underlying theme of the story give her writing a unique identity.

Searching for identity, cultural changes, insecurity, feminism, lesbianism, liberalisation, disorientation, realism, tradition and modernity and fragmentation are some of the dealt by Shobha De.

The women characters in Shobha De's novels leads the story and the story revolves around them. Her novels focus on the transformation of women's identity in the particular society. The woman who belongs to urban area aspires to achieve something in their life. But their dreams are shattered with the influence of love, marriage and sex. The characters hail from middle class background and their willingness to come up in life is beautifully portrayed by Shobha De. The women of Shobha De are innocent in the beginning but through some experience they realise the real meaning of life.

Shobha De is very talented in the portrayal of the development of women characters. It is very important to note down that Shobha De never fails in the expression of feministic aspects in her novels. The world of women is expressed in a very realistic way. There is no exaggeration in her way of writing. The flow of writing falls down like waterfalls. The characters like 'Maya' and 'Aasha Rani' are the right examples for female subjugation in the postmodern era. These characters show the conflict between tradition and modernity.

In her first novel Socialite Evenings, the protagonist Karuna is the right example for the psychological struggles of women. She strives hard to achieve the life she desires at. She is ready to come out of her life and even abort the child. Her willingness in crossing the boundaries of life shows her thirst for individual identity. De's women characters are longing for the life that gives them both physical and psychological support, they are fed up with so called traditional values. Karuna does not find her husband interesting or inspiring so she wants to get away from

the marriage life. She opines that, 'He wasn't looking for any simulation, either intellectually or emotionally .....(6)'

The women of Shobha De are very stubborn to leave from the relationship with their husbands in search of their identity. They want to feed for both their physical as well as psychological needs. Thus Shobha De never fails to express multiple realities in the world or life of urban women.

The so called urban area gives women the support and opportunity to live life as they want. There are lot of references about the success story of women in business and career. Aasha Rani in 'Starry Nights' is the right examples for modern women's struggles in Cinema industry, and how she gets trained in the same world is also another story which mirrors the pathetic condition of women in the colourful world. The innocent nature of women is being tested and the experience give her a new identity at the end. The influence of cultural changes helps the women to change into clever beings. Extra - Marital affairs are common in the life of De's heroines, E-Sathyanarayana in her article. "The Dialects of self-assertion : The liberated women in sisters asserts that, "At times, the rebellion of the woman takes the extreme forms such as sexual promiscuity/ extra marital relations which serve as device for her to assert herself." (210)

**Snap shots** is a novel which focuses on the life of six women characters belong to the contemporary world. The life of these women characters reveals the world of women in depth. They meet and discuss about their marriage life, extra - marital affairs and also about their consciousness towards beauty and make-up. J.P. Tripathy in Shobha De's Snapshots : An Overwhelming Question put forth.

**Snapshots** give moral, emotional or human sustenance to society or they are indulgent to vice and therefore repugnant to the general taste of the public ..... Every artist has free choice in picking up material from life. Selection is one established method of avoiding the undesirable. Then idealisation cannot be castigated as a technique inferior to realism. (163)

The women of Shobha De are in a contempt situation that strives them to face the hard realities of the world. Marriage, love, relationship, career and sex are given the prominent position in her novels.

## CONCLUSION:

Feminism, lesbianism and homosexuality are some of emerging concepts are also given reference in her novels. The world of women is beautifully described with excess sexual desires. The woman of Shobha De is bold enough to face difficulties in their life. It is evident that her women have mutual

concern towards marriage life and individual identity. So she is ready to sacrifice even her identity as a married woman to gain position in her personal aspiration. Thus Shobha De proved herself as a postmodern writer in terms of subject matter, style approach and language.

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