

Lesbian Relationship in Shobha De's Strange Obsession

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Abstract – With the publication of her first novel *Socialite Evenings* (1889), the best seller, Shobha De took the literary world by storm and invited both unqualified applause and strong denunciation by the critics. Succeeding novels appeared one by one rapidly in a decade and established her as one of the mainstream women writers in India owing to her profound writing skills and her extra ordinary gift to discuss every sensitive aspect in her fiction. Even while writing on sex, she feels no hesitation and is not stopped by social sanctions. She does not think sex as a matter of shame or an activity to be concealed. She differs considerably from other Indian women novelists for her boldness, openness and frankness. Her bold and modern approach has made her famous the world over.

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Appreciating some significant features of her fiction, Paul W. Roberts observes:

What emerges is what one reads in her work: enigmatic, straight forward, crude, erudite, girlish, wise and untimely contrived truth. She doesn't know how good a writer she is which is why she is so good a writer.[1]

With the upgrading of civilization and an incitement among feminine world, an outline has restored to a striking extent. The questioning on existence in the recent years has been associated to the portrayal of lesbians in literature. Presently several Indian authors have daringly depicted lesbian relations in their works. Lesbianism is not a new aspect of society but as a movement it has sprung up in India during the last decade and with a recent judgment of Delhi High Court decriminalizing homosexuality, a new age has begun. Shobha De's *Starry Nights* (1990), *Strange Obsession* (1992) and *Snap Shots* (1995), Manju Kapoor's *A Married Woman* (2002) and Rita Garg's *Precursor of Love* (2006) deal with Lesbianism. Deepa Mehta has also focused on lesbian relationship in her film *Fire* (1998).

Lesbianism is an age-old phenomenon of society, but as social norms looked upon it hatefully, lesbians did their best to keep such relationship as something top secret. Even in *Manusmriti* and *Kamasutra* it is clearly mentioned. In *Manusmriti*, punishment is mentioned for oxidizing a young girl through lesbian contact or mutual sexual indulgence:

If an unmarried girl spoiled another raw girl and taught her the lesson of self-abuse or gratified with her fingers or other counterfeit male organ or cylindrical

substances, she was liable to pay fine of two hundred currency coins.”[2]

In his *Kamasutra*, Vatsyayan has also depicted the physical activities of the lesbians:

Some women of the harem When they are amorous Do the act of mouth congress on the yonis of one another[3]

Softness of female body is also an important feature in lesbian relationship. A male body can never be so soft and so woman's body is preferable in sexual advances: During late nineteenth century Pierre Louys has written in his novel *Aphrodite*.

A woman is perfect instrument from head to toe. She is made solely and wonderfully for love. Therefore, if a couple is composed of two women, it is perfect; if it has only one woman, it is only half as good; if it has no woman at all, it's completely idiotic.[4]

These days, the steps of Feminism are so rapid that the feminist writers are taking pains to liberate woman in every way. Every write or attempts to develop a theory out of his writings. As various feminist theories have been evolved by now like Liberal feminist theory, Radical feminist theory, Psycho analytical feminist theory, Existentialist feminist theory, Cultural feminist theory, Post modern feminist theory and some more, Lesbianism is also a fast-emerging theory of Feminism.

Shobha De's *Strange Obsession* is a story of lesbian relationship between two girls, Meenakshi (Minx) and Amrita. Minx is the only daughter of a busy police officer. She did not get her mother's love. She gets all love and care from her father. It laid an

adverse psychological impact on her and hinders her balanced psychological growth leaving her mentally weak unstable, self-centered and vulnerable. She feels pity for her father's sexless life and therefore starts liking him sexually. She had also originated a sentiment of animosity for men because of beatings she got from her father. This all turned her into a lesbian, and she compels a lesbian relationship on an imminent model Amrita. Minx becomes an obsessed lunatic doxy of Amrita and can do anything for her. She tells Amrita in a crazy way.

What more do I have to do to prove myself? Kill? I'll do that too. Just tell me — who? you want me to kill someone? Anyone? I'll do it, I'll kill for you.[5]

Minx's obsession for Amrita is so intense that she kills Lola — a competitor model of Anrrita in order to prove herself true lover. She is so maddened in her love for Amrita that she experiences surgery to amputate her breasts because she wants to please Amrita and win her love at every cost. Minx is so over possessive of Amrita that she has a sharp eye on everybody who wishes to come closer to her. She gets Rover terribly beaten by police. She sets aside Karan, a director and a charming editor Partha who could be of great help to Amrita. She haunts Amrita like an evil spirit and Amrita is helpless before her madness. Gajendra kumar has rightly observed —

"Minx is Lesbian eccentric who behaves like a male. She is thoroughly deprived of womanliness. On the thematic plane there seems to be no question of power. But on the theoretical plane it is difficult to disagree with the basic questions of power pleasure as Foucault underlines.[6]

Amrita is full of abhorrence for Minx but there is no escape for her. Fortunately, she gets married to Rakesh, but to her extreme surprise, Minx gets her husband kidnapped and forces Amrita to leave him. Luckily both Amrita and Rakesh escape safely from her clutches. In a few years Minx dies and only then Amrita feels finally relieved from her. To quote Gajendra Kumar once again.

Psychologically, Minx is a case in study in psychoanalytical framework. Minx is a fit case to be treated as a pervert, obsessed and crazy who manipulates Amrita a young lady full of love, warmth and innocence.[7]

Thus, Minx is a strange creation of Shobha De. Her love for Amrita is an instance of offensive lesbianism as Amrita never shares it equally and happily. In other words, I may say that Minx is no better than a man who behaves his beloved at his own sweet will without caring for her sentiments. The discussion may be summed up with the statement of the Radical Lesbians.

A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion. She is the woman who often

beginning at an extremely early age acts in accordance with her inner compulsions a more complete and free human being than her society...cares to allow her.[8]

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