

The Marriage System in Modern Society as Exposed by the Women Moral and Spiritual Breakdown in Shobha De's Novels

Ganvir Vijay Sakharam^{1*}, Dr. Ravi Kumar Yadav²

¹ PhD Student, Kalinga University, Raipur (CG).

² PhD Guide, Dept. of English, Kalinga University, Raipur (CG).

Abstract - *The biological definition of marriage described in this article demonstrates the importance of marriage to human society regardless of whether or not it has been recognized by the state or the church. As a lifetime commitment between a woman and husband, marriage is considered one of the Sanskaras (sacraments) in India. Marriage in Hinduism is a solemn contract between a man and a woman in which both parties pledge to support one another in their pursuit of Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. As such, it affects the social and cultural development of society by providing access to the pleasures of earthly life, the hope of future improvement, and the care of the next generation.*

Keywords - *Matrimony, Suffering, Quest, Selfhood.*

-----X-----

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is the single most important institution in society. This time in a woman's life is significant since it signals the beginning of maturity and the blossoming of life. The ideal, however, has shifted with the passage of time and is now dominated by circumstantial evidence. The needs of love, security, and family in society have been met by the institution of marriage. However, in today's contemporary world, marriage has become fraught among India's upper classes. Promiscuity, women's increasing economic independence, higher divorce rates, affluence, and egocentricity all contribute to a culture where the Institution is on the point of collapse. Marriages in modern times are not held up as examples of divine providence. The marriage structure and marital connections in contemporary society, as shown in the novels of Shobha De, have morally and spiritually broken down, resulting in dissatisfaction, conflict, and loneliness. Maya, a character in the essay, suffers from the misery of a trapped marriage. When her spouse ignores and criticizes her, and when her boyfriend exploits and deceives her, Maya stays a silent sufferer. The current research explores the nuances of middle-class society, both psychologically and socially. The socially sanctioned destiny of women has always been marriage. However, marriage means something different to men than it does to women.

The moral and spiritual decline of marriage and family life in contemporary society is explored in the novels of Shoba De. Shobha De has faced the empty, morally bankrupt world of high society. She chooses a middle-

class culture and the silent anguish of many married women to depict in her work. She has an outstanding talent as a writer for discussing delicate topics related to human existence and interpersonal relationships. Her narrative has such incredible force. When compared to other English-language Indian women authors, she is in a league of her own. She has a rare ability to comprehend the female mind and sympathize with its tribulations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Erum Altaf (2017) The biological definition of marriage described in this article demonstrates the importance of marriage to human society regardless of whether or not it has been recognized by the state or the church. As a lifetime commitment between a woman and husband, marriage is considered one of the Sanskaras (sacraments) in India. Marriage in Hinduism is a solemn contract between a man and a woman in which both parties pledge to support one another in their pursuit of Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. As such, it affects the social and cultural development of society by providing access to the pleasures of earthly life, the hope of future improvement, and the care of the next generation.

Begum, Syed Hajira. (2020). Shobha De has written fourteen books, making her one of India's most popular novelists. She's one of the first people to write on the experiences of Indian city women. Her books speak out against a patriarchal society that views women as little more than chattel. She fights to correct the skewed portrayal of women

whose screams for liberation and equality in the patriarchal society are still not heeded. In her books, the women challenge the status quo by becoming stronger than the males, realizing their full potential, and embracing their sexuality. This study analyzes the representation of empowered women redefining femininity in two novels by Shobha De, *Socialite Evenings* and *Second Thoughts*, which provide a glimpse into contemporary urban life while illuminating the flaws in the Indian marital system. Shobha De is an outspoken feminist who campaigns for gender parity and condemns the objectification, marginalization, and exploitation of women.

Krishnaiah, Begary. (2019) *Snapshots* by Shobha De reveals the hidden lives and perseverance of India's upper elite, focusing on the realm of show business in India's most modern and populous city, Mumbai. Editing magazines like *Stardust*, *Society*, and *Celebrity* has given her valuable expertise in this area. "I write about the section of Bombay society of which I have had a ring side view," she tells Ranjit Hoskote. To write about anything else would make me seem like a phony. A intimate acquaintance of the Bombay movies and the world of modeling, Shobha De "beautifully mirrored the shattering human values of this glittering society," as Nisha Trivedi puts it. She's the first female writer to focus on the lives of modern Indian city dwellers. In her own words, she was the first Indian woman novelist "to explore the world of the urban woman in India" (Surendran), and she considers herself a "pioneer" in the area of "popular fiction" writing. Her heroines are sophisticated, fashionable, beautiful, practical, bold, and well-off. They are influenced by liberal thought, which prioritizes individual autonomy and results in a cavalier attitude toward sensitive topics including romantic relationships, family dynamics, and sexuality. We may trace the effect of postcolonialism, postmodernism, and feminism on our present perspective of life and literature back to the fictitious universe created by Shobha De. Postmodernism challenges ideas of centrality and uniqueness due to its emphasis on diversity and reality fragmentation. The novels of De show how these theoretical advances have influenced modern practices and writing styles. Her works echo postmodernism's rejection of canonical literature and culture and its emphasis on fleeting gratification. She explores the minds of city women by talking openly about their battles for self-identity, social status, and sexuality. That is to say, she blatantly discusses the decline of moral and spiritual ideals amongst today's men and women.

Mishra, Deepanjali. (2012). Feminism is a social and political movement that encourages women to take an active role in achieving equality for themselves. A movement against patriarchal sexism and the subjugation of women. Victimization of women may occur for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to discrimination based on factors such as caste, color, ethnicity, attitude towards parenthood, etc. Middle-class white women in Western Europe and North America spearheaded the Feminist movement. The

Cool Right Movement of the 1960s and the end of European colonialism in Africa, the Caribbean, and sections of Latin America and South Asia exacerbated this tendency. Feminists of the Third Wave fight for women's rights and encourage them to take responsibility for their own sexual satisfaction. Essayist Rebecca Walker writes on the need of sex education for young women in her book *Lusting for Freedom*. It acknowledges that sexual pleasure is important to women and does not discourage women who have learned to do it in a healthy way. In order to get what they want, modern feminists celebrate the allure and strength of women's sexuality. They advocate for sexual satisfaction as a basic human right. The experience of joy and its many forms have been discussed by several Indian authors.

APARNA (2017) The novels of Shobha De show how the contemporary marriage system and marital ties may cause dissatisfaction, conflict, and isolation. This study examines Maya's (the protagonist's) anguish as she feels imprisoned by her marriage. The study also addresses the middle-class society's emotional and social difficulties. Maya, the protagonist, is a gorgeous girl from a middle-class family in Calcutta who marries Ranjan, a handsome ambitious guy with a degree from an American university and affluent family roots, and travels to the glittering metropolis of Mumbai. Maya is a "Silent Sufferer" due to her husband's neglect and criticism and her lover's exploitation and deception. De's understanding of the masculine ego, the faithful wife, the domineering mother-in-law, social pretense, and public façade is the book's greatest strength.

DIFFERENT THEMATIC ELEMENTS IN SHOBHA DE'S SELECTED NOVELS

Author Shobha De is well-known in India for her works written in English. She is famous for both her haughtiness and her wit. It is no longer accurate to say that Indian English literature is only a preview of its British traits; rather, it has evolved to include the fresh viewpoint of its own distinctive culture. Shobha De, a writer from India, can convincingly portray the inner and outer workings of the mind in her writing. Her influence may be seen in the mokest subculture. She has no problem calling her main female characters "love-slaves," "bitches," or "simple helpmates" at home. It's clear that her feminist and racist ideals influence her writing.

- **Image of Female:**

There is a firm grip of the Indian norm on Indian society. Its influence is greater even among women. Women have long been considered less than males in Indian society, and this is mostly due to the influence of Hinduism. Because of cultural norms and expectations, women in India are fully incorporated into society. It was first reformists like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand, Swami Vivekananda, Raja Rammohan Ray, Sir

Syed Ahmed Khan, and Keshav Chandra Sen who advocated in print for women's rights. They gathered evidence of the end of male-initiated forms of violence against women such sati, child marriage, the dowry system, and others. As societies progress, they create environments where men and women alike may feel welcome and at ease. It has to put in a lot of effort to make the development norm among Indian women. One of India's most renowned writers, Swami Vivekananda, states:

"Every great nation has gotten where it is now by giving women the respect they deserve. Neither the kingdom nor the realm that does not place emphasis on women has grown to any significant size, nor do they seem likely to do so in the future. You don't give a damn about these middle-class descriptions of Shakti, and that's the single worst thing about this fight."

- **Realism and Realistic Picture of Female:**

"Realism" is a term for a mindset that "considers, complains about, and recognizes circumstances as they actually are, without any some complexion of our feeling or phony anticipates," as described by the Oxford English Dictionary. It presents ownership as though it were unquestionable. The upper class of contemporary Mumbai, India, a large city in Asia on par culturally with major Western cities like London and New York, leads a lifestyle somewhat unlike to that depicted in the stories of Shobha De.

Karuna, a prominent character in her first book *Socialite Evenings*, vividly depicts the eagerness of a well-read, middle-class, determined girl to join the exclusive upper crust. The kind of righteous wrath that Anjali displays is common among human females. Karuna feels helpless in the face of Anjali's fake show of riches:

"Her light perfume drifts down over me. The grey Impala arrives, and it's enormous and well maintained. Discuss the history of its technology and how it works, including the pushcart elevator, the ambler, the minicab, and the restricted buses. It's the perfect car for her needs."

- **Quest for Identity:**

The heroine of Shobha De's novel *Socialite Evenings* is on a journey to discover who she really is. The word "identity" is used to describe the process of forming and shaping one's distinctive qualities or amassing significant relationships with others. The core concept is that a person's degree of intellect or sense of self is shaped primarily by their choices and commitments with reference to their stable personal and social qualities. Many historical records emphasize the value of women. There is a long and established association between "individual understanding" and "masculine familiarity." Because of gyno-criticism, new areas of

study have opened up. Projection of the topic of "self" finding of female individuality from the feminist philosophical viewpoint is a hallmark of feminist literature and a primary goal of feminist literary criticism.

THE 'NEW WOMAN' CONCEPT AND HER APPEARANCE IN SELECT NOVELS BY SHOBHA DE

The introduction of the "new woman" idea in the late 19th century represents a watershed moment in the evolution of traditional gender roles. This advanced woman was given the opportunity to pursue and play leading parts in public productions, and even to display her "sex appeal" She was confronted with animosity from men and women who opposed women's appearance in public and attributed it to the deterioration in morals because she resisted and despised the conventional gender norms imposed to her. These women chose contemporary decisions as a means of asserting their independence and unique identities, so debunking and rejecting the traditional gender roles that had been expected of them. In the early 20th century, what did women bring to the table that was "new"? The most noticeable shift was their greater visibility in public settings. Modern women have expanded their horizons beyond the house into the workplace, politics, and the arts in ways that were unheard of in the nineteenth century, notably among middle-class women but also among domestic staff and slaves. The novels written by women authors in India's English literature are where this new woman image is most vividly realized.

- **Marriage and Family**

Marriage in the Rigveda is described as the coming together of two mature individuals. Women are given due respect in Indian culture, as seen by the phrases jaya, jani, and patni. One may remark that "jaya has the special sense of the sharer of the husband's affection, jani the mother of children, and patni the partner in the performances of sacrifices." The traditional role of women in society and the home has evolved throughout time. She has gone from being the most important person in her husband's life to being nothing more than a possession and source of pleasure for him. But the 'New Woman' raises her voice in protest, feeling oppressed by these limits.

Women's fiction writers have made a shift away from portraying women as helpless victims who play out the roles of mother, wife, daughter, and sister but never as a person who claims her life as her own. These authors have shown remarkable sensitivity to women's issues and situations. They provide a picture of a new culture that has altered its attitude on traditional institutions like marriage and the family. The fantasy universe of De lays bare the deceit and hollowness beneath the concept of marriage. Marriage is no longer revered as a holy union that unites two people and fosters mutual happiness and contentment in all aspects of life. A

source of solemn unity is transformed into a fight over power dynamics. The commercialization of all relationships in today's world of money and power means that even marriage is not immune to its effects. For instance, in *Sisters*, Mikky is not in love with Navin but rather wants to marry him for mercenary reasons. She finds him more attractive because "He may help me with Hiralal Industries" (De 62). In a similar vein, Binny Malhotra marries Mikky off for her money. According to Shobha De, "eventually every relationship is a power struggle, either on an overt or subliminal level," and this certainly holds true in marriage. The marriage is dry, antiseptic, and charmless when approached with a very pragmatic and materialistic perspective. Married life is a source of meaninglessness and sterility for the characters of Anjali and Karuna in *Socialite Evenings*, Aasha Rani in *Starry Nights*, Aparna, Surekha, and Rashmi in *Snapshots*, Mikky in *Sisters*, and Maya in *Second Thoughts*. De's writings portray marriage as a social contract devoid of any romantic allure and emotional depth. Marital faithfulness, affection for one another, and emotional connection have no place in today's culture of individualism and materialism. R.S.Pathak's observation that "Marriage to them is hardly more than a convenient contract to lead a comfortable and promiscuous life, which can be terminated at any time depending on the whims of the partners" is an accurate summation of how the various characters in De's work see marriage. For women like these, neither individual success nor moral principles matter. When compared to "eating Dal-Chawal day in and day out" (*Snapshots* 152), these wives compare having sexual contact with their spouse to something "boring" and "terrible." These women have no qualms about having sex with men other than their spouses before, after, or even during their marriages.

• Man-Woman Relationship

In De's books, male and female relationships are a fascinating facet of everyday life. These conflicting dynamics are given an ironic twist by the portrayal of these interactions. In De's literature, the relationship between male protagonists and female antagonists follows a familiar pattern of love and hatred. Women often do not sugarcoat their feelings of revulsion, anger, and dislike towards males. "Men are all the same—animals... and we women such fools" (De 50) is what they say about the males in their lives. "Intrinsically, instinctively, intuitively dishonest" (De 49) is how Rashmi describes mankind. It's shocking and surprising that these women really like the males they spew hatred on. In *Snapshots*, Aparna realized that Rohit "was a very selfish man..." Vain and self-centered" (De 21). She had sought a constant, loving, attentive partner, but once he left she missed him desperately and craved to have him back. Not at all; if she were being really forthright with herself, she'd happily acknowledge it. She missed more than simply any guy; she missed her husband, Rohit" (De 24). Mikky and Binny Malhotra's connection is another mystery in *Sisters*. After they are married, she learns about his ex-wife and their children. She adds, "It

makes me happy that he is there in my life, despite his refusal to leave his previous wife and children and his ill treatment of Mikky." That he is my guy, publicly at least" (De 124). De's satirical approach toward the mentalities of her literary characters is best shown by the contradictions they display in their handling of man-woman interactions. Modern educated woman Mikky is who she is. She is completely free to choose and choose her sexual partners. At the same time, her behavior towards her spouse is exemplary of conventional norms. She still calls him "my man" despite his many flaws and the cruelty he has shown her. Her opinions are more humorously sardonic now. Despite their lack of inhibition and promiscuity, Shobha De appears to suggest that women are more empathetic and responsive to the needs of their male companions. In a society where males are primarily motivated by practical and sexual factors, their strange behavior may be an effort to be seen and understood. Because of their newfound perspective, they now think:

Getting their attention was the challenge. Make yourself indispensable to their self-centered routines until they begin to believe they cannot function without you or, more properly, the services you provide (De 49).

CONCLUSION

This masterpiece by Shobha De illuminates the subjugation of women in traditional Indian marriage.

REFERENCE

1. Aparna (2017), "unravelling the marital muddle: a case study of shobha de's second thoughts research journal of english language and literature (rjelal) vol.5.issue 3. 2017 (july-sept)
2. Mishra, deepanjali. (2012). Pleasure: redefined by women in shobha de's novels. *losr journal of humanities and social science*. 3. 15-20. 10.9790/0837-0351520.
3. Krishnaiah, begary. (2019). Hypocrisy and moral breakdown of modern men and women in shobha de's snapshots.
4. Begum, syed hajira. (2020). Redefining womanhood in shobha de's novels. *International journal of current advanced research*. Vol 7.
5. Erum altaf (2017), "shobha de's novels expose the women moral and spiritual breakdown of modern society's marriage system," © 2018 jetir july 2018, volume 5, issue 7 www.jetir.org (issn-2349-5162)
6. Anusooya, p., & ramesh, t. S. (2019). Visibility comes with otherness: a study on overcoming selfstigmatization in the novels of shobha de. *Think india journal*, 22(3), 1412-1419.

7. Rajeswari, m. C., & gejeswari, n. (2019). Human relationships in shobha de's socialite evenings. *Language in india*, 19(3).
8. Kumar, k. A. (2019). Marginalization of women in the novels of shobha de. *Cultural encounters in third world literature*, 1.
9. Ahmmed, m. F. (2020). Female individuality and struggle in a patricentric society: a critical analysis of anita desai's where shall we go this summer?. *Sarjana*, 35(1), 23-31.
10. Priyanka, a., & bohra, b. (2020). Signifying the female's character in indian fiction. *Turkish journal of computer and mathematics education (turcomat)*, 11(3), 1513- 1518.

Corresponding Author

Ganvir Vijay Sakharam*

PhD Student, Kalinga University, Raipur (CG).