

**RESEARCH PAPER****The New Emergence of Gender Awareness in the Novels of Shobha De****Anjali Gupta and Shailendra Pratap Singh**

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Email: anjalphd1980@gmail.comReceived: 5th February 2018, Revised: 23rd February 2018, Accepted: 26th February 2018**ABSTRACT**

Shobha De, a revolutionary writer, has made a valuable contribution into the modernity and popularity of Indian Fiction through her literary works. Shobha De's Novels are counted as very rare contributory of emerging new liberated roles of gender that has been subjugated and assumed subordinate since a long period. De launches her female characters in the form of free mind, new aspirations, sharp awareness of human rights and heartfelt desires of going forward to soar high into the sky of success. Her novels- Socialite Evenings, Starry Nights, Sisters, Snapshots, Sultry Days and Strange Obsessions, relate to power, the desire to dictate and direct action and thinking of other words which is uppermost in human psychology. Shobha De expresses her views that every relationship is power struggle either on an overt or subliminal level. The relationship between male and female is also a power struggle. Gender is an over determined subject in a traditional and hierarchical society. In the society female gender is dominated gently with the help of morals, ideals, and great feelings of sacrifice, devotion and duty. De presents her characters demanding gender equality through her novels.

INTRODUCTION

Shobha De's women come with raised ablaze voice of gender that had been underdogged in the patriarchal society. In the novel 'Socialite Evenings' Shobha De presents her protagonist Karuna with feminine awareness. Karuna accepts boldly, "I was terribly self-conscious and awkward and resented with all my being, my middle class origins."

Karuna is unwilling to be a traditional Indian house wife who moulds herself as her husband likes. She cannot stoop to conquer pretending something which she is not. Karuna refuses to accept the traditional outlook of marriage as Gilman defined, "Woman's economic profit comes through the power of sex attraction. Marriage is form of prostitution in both case the female gets her food from the male by virtue of her sex relationship to him."

DAUNTLESS WOMEN IN SOCIALITE EVENINGS

Karuna explores that a marriage should be full laughter and conversations. One in which two of us perfectly in tune. Speaking the same language, thinking the same, thoughts enjoying the same. When Karuna does not find this thing in her conjugal life, she separated from her husband and takes up a lucrative job for her livelihood. She looks after her parents like a responsible daughter. As a single woman, Karuna enjoys her mental freedom, self-respect, self-existence and desire to fulfill her ambitions, dreams and expectations of her spirit. Karuna struggles with full zeal and power.

'Starry Nights' is basically the story of a film star Asha Rani who comes from a small town background to the glamorous world of Bombay and struggles for sometimes.

She ultimately becomes a star, sweet heart of millions. Asha Rani represents a true picture of modern Indian women. All female characters of this fiction suffer a humiliation as far their social, economic and cultural life is concerned but they also find themselves capable of struggling, compromising and realizing their existence in the end. Asha Rani is not dependent on male protection, she establishes new modern concept as we can find here- "The peak that stands alone grows tall impacts ten folds the woman that stands alone grows pretty hundred folds."

Asha Rani rejects male superiority in physical relationship and defines the changing gender equations with the assertion of her independence. De's novel 'Sisters' is the engrossing story of

wealthy and warring sisters- Mallika and Alisha. It's a tale of the life struggle of both sisters for power and self-identity in patriarchal society. Both sisters are bold, assertive, pragmatic and strong. These sisters challenge the orthodox vision of society as Kate Millett comments, "One of the most efficient branches of the patriarchal government lies in the agency of its economic power holds over its female subjects."

INTREPID FEMALE BUSINESS TYCOON IN SISTERS

Mikki takes charge of her father's business empire and exhibits her strength of economic power. Mikki accepts the challenge of male dominated business of economical power. She says, "I cannot change my sex unfortunately...But I can just change about everything else...This is going to be my show and I intend running it on my turns. My genes are the same as my father's even if my gender is not..."

The reflection of independent woman is mirrored through the handling of economic field that has been traditionally served for a son not for a daughter. The economic power in the hands of female cracks the ego of male-market. Alisha marks herself as a self identified intellectual who challenges gender and cultural norms that neglect the illegitimate child. De's women are vocal. They are centralized in the fact that to be a woman is not a crime but to accept the womanhood as a noisome, defeated, dependent gender and shed tears on her helplessness is really a crime. Mikki and Alisha both struggle for her own salvation themselves and protest against the exploitative tendencies of society.

HERETICAL WOMAN IN SULTRY DAYS

In 'Sultry Days' Shobha De takes on a completely new approach towards dealing with the issue of gender and power. Nisha, the narrator protagonist wants everything in life to be achieved through hard labor in the world of glamour. Nisha exposes the dark world of Don Yashawant Bhai and his underworld connections in her write ups. The value of life intends to stand everywhere with correlation of understanding. Nothing remains good if one is unhappy in the context of understanding. In such situation female desires to stand alone with her feministic power. She needs to survive with her own respect and best. No chance, she leaves without understanding herself as the best value of life. Happiness in hardness writes the destiny of a woman. When a man keeps her happy she gains more strength for struggle.

Nisha's challenging action is supported by her mother and social activist Pratimaben who emerges as a strong determined and fearless woman who is ready to face any danger. The other character Pramila emerges as a new modern woman who is highly individualistic, calculative and self-centered. She gets out of the man-made cage that suffocates women in endocentric society to fly freely. Pramila divorces her husband and take her two daughters with her. She wants her high level name and fame through her literary talent. Pramila is confident in her literary talent so she sets on the roads of becoming an emancipated woman. There is gender power politics and woman who comes to fight in this battle, have to face both the aspects- victory and defeat.

SCHISMATIC APPROACH OF FEMALE GENDER

ShobhaDe's novel 'Strange Obsessions' is the rebellious story that revolves round about life and lustful relationship of two young women, Amrita- a super model and Minakshi Iyengar. Both of them represent two different sets of cultural values and upbringing. Prima facie it seems to be a psychological documentation of sexual obsession of mysterious woman Minx and her calamitous end. But on the theoretical ground, it's the basic question of power and pleasure and closely linked to gender. A woman is taught to suppress her physical desires and need by conceding all pleasures to male. The term lesbian is indeed a scare word designed to keep the assertive independent woman in her place as the radical feminists argued, "Lesbianism is a label by the man to through at any woman who dares to be his equal, who dares to challenge his prerogatives who dares to be his equal gender, who dares to assert the primacy of her own needs"

Minakshi boldly accepts that nothing is abnormal in her. She is doing right for herself. In the view of Minx, the difference of gender has no importance in the matter of love. Shobha De seems to advocate the identity crisis of lesbianism.

FEMININE AWARENESS IN SNAPSHOTS

Shobha De's novel 'Snapshots' also presents the play of gender and power ensured by the emergence of new women. 'Snapshots' is the remarkable novel that reflects the multi issues of feminist concern like- equivalence of power, post colonialism, identity and so on. The main issue in Snapshots related to power to desire, to dictate and dominated by directing action and thinking of others that is an integral part of human psychology. Each female character Swati, Aparna, Reema, Noor, Surekha and Rashmi in Snapshots desires for power and enjoys power and battles to control power. Outspoken Swati claims, "We rejoice in our sexuality...we don't suppress it, we don't dismiss it...sex doesn't threaten us"

The novel makes a desperate attempt to establish that women need to be treated an equal partner in life. This equality gains a new kind of change in female feelings. Man and woman have made for one end and that is happiness of life. It's evident that the sexual subaltern has begun to speak. The equation of power is heavily loaded in favour of female character in Snapshot. The struggle begins but never ends on one side while other side it ends and begins with new changes of happiness. All characters are bold and strongly capable of surviving in the face of degrading moral values of life.

CONCLUSION

Summing the literary review of all novels of Shobha De, we find a new emergence in gender awareness in her characters. It is female gender who ultimately holds all trump cards. She can easily checkmate and outplay her opposite counterpart with a strategy full of awareness of her potential personality. Shobha De observes rightly, "The women in my books are definitely not doormats. They are not willing to be kicked around." Amazingly Shobha De portrays her women as free thinkers, making their own decision in their attempts to establish their own identity in contemporary society both as woman as individual.

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