



Theme of Liberation in the Socialite Evenings by Shobha De

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Abstract

Literature is the reflection of a society where we live. Literature has been witnessed the evolution of woman from ages and ages. Female characters in the greatest Indian epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata has also reflects women the real status of Indian woman in the ancient period. The Character of Sita, who is the wife of Rama, has justified power and strength of her husband. Mandodhari, Urmila are representing as sacrificing woman in Ramayana. The character of Draupadi in Mahabharata is also portrayed as a submissive. These characters are created and edited to suit the need of patriarchal society. In Greek mythology women's rights were very limited and they were not allowed to that of Greek men.

As Indian society has been going through several changes in establishing an identity of woman. The importance of focusing on women's issues can clearly observe in the works of Indian female authors over the years. Traditionally, the works of Indian writers portrayed woman as submissive and ready to accept all norms of patriarchal society. But on the other hand many modern and emerging authors changed the traditional image of enduring, self-sacrificing woman into liberated and self sufficient, ambitious woman. Writers like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sehgal, Jai Nimbarkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Shobha De many other women writers have portrayed females rebelling against traditional and patriarchal society and breaking the traditional role of silent sufferer and no longer represented as passive characters. Shobha De an Indian English novelist has skillfully explored the complexities and struggle of urban woman. In her novels she has represented New Indian Woman who is searching for self identity and seeking liberation in everything by replacing the traditional image of Indian woman.

Keywords: Liberation, Freedom, Self-Sufficient Rebellion, Ambitious Identity, Tradition, Status, Liberty, Marriage.

Introduction:

The present paper focuses on the theme of a liberation in the novel Socialite Evenings, a landmark novel by Shobha De. De is one of the prolific writers of the modern age born on 7th January 1947 in Maharashtra. She belongs to conservative Saraswat Brahmin family. She completed her graduation from St. Xavier's college, Mumbai and pursued degree in Psychology. She started her career as a model and later became columnist of leading newspapers and magazines. She brought out three magazines namely Stardust, Society and Celebrity. Presently she is working as a freelance writer for newspapers and magazines. She established her career by adopting versatile writing. She is regarded as Jackie Collins of India. She is frank writer of any social issue. She has written many novels they deal with the life of urban woman and their modernistic thoughts. She has created most daring, bold, assertive women characters in her all novels who challenge norms of age-old patriarchal society. She has clearly depicted the actual picture of Indian society. In all her fictional works De has tried to improve the traditional image of Indian woman as weak, docile, compliant, obedient who is living at sympathy of her male partner. She shapes her characters as an aggressive, breaks the male ego and male hierarchy.

Liberation: liberation is an act of setting someone or something free from imprisonment, slavery or oppression. It is the removal of restrictions or limitations, thereby contributing to the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedom. It can also refer to gaining freedom of thoughts or behavior.

In the 21st century woman is achieving incredible heights as she has acquired every field and succeeding in all of them demonstrating their abilities. She is not contented to remain in the shadow of her husband. She is assertive and self-willed searching to discover her true self. Though she has all the qualities in equal to male, she faces various problems in her day to day life in the male dominated society.

These modern Women in the novels of Shobha De are liberated and rebelling against traditional patriarchal society where Indian woman is deprived the freedom and live according to her will. 'Socialite Evenings'(1989) was Shobha De's first novel. It is semi-autobiographical. It talks about Karuna, her friend Anjali and Ritu wants liberty, power and searching for self identity. It is about journey of Karuna from middle class girl to self-sufficient, independent, tough, pretentious woman. In the novel we can see three stages of Karuna's life before marriage, married life and life after divorce viz. Yet She remains dissatisfied with all three stages of life. It is journey of woman from ignorance to knowledge and innocence to experience. Karuna is representative of modern woman.

Karuna was born in a dusty clinic in Satara. Karuna's life starts when she moved to Bombay against her parents wish for glamorous and wealthy luxurious lifestyle than her traditional middle class background. She did not want to be an ordinary middle class girl she showed at home and school also by her rebellious behaviour. She hates submissive nature of her mother feels that someone or others controls the middle class woman's life. She wants to lead happy prosperous and independent life and she thought of in Satara she will not able to succeed in her career and there will be no opportunity for her to become successful and financial independence. She decided to do career as a model through which she meets Anjali, a fashionable and sophisticated woman who was threshold to big world of fashion designing and advertising. They become close friends and Anjali helps her in every step and motivate her in every situation. The confident and ambitious appearance of Anjali makes an impact on Karuna and she started dreaming of career in modelling and film. In the company of Anjali Karuna becomes harder and stronger in her desire and determination. Karuna becomes successful model and following Anjali's model Karuna marries a wealthy man. She marries to a businessman but there wasn't mutual understanding between them. There is no sense of devotion, love, affection for each other. He treats her as a mere object. She was dissatisfied with him. She felt that she has lost her will and identity. Karuna and her husband has formal relationship there is no intimacy between them. She never calls her husband by his name but derogatorily as 'Black Label'. Karuna maintains her feminine psyche throughout the novel and her sense of freedom and liberty make her rebel against all odds which come in her path. Her entry in the glamorous world of modelling and friendship with Bunty is the act of rebellion. Even she also developed extramarital relationship with Krish. It was revolt against her insensitive emotionless husband and she finally divorces him. She does not accept supremacy of her husband who fails to understand her. Her unsuccessful marriage and temporary affairs provide her with an insight and understanding about male psychology and social reality. When she becomes pregnant and the legitimacy of the child is doubted by her husband, it has created major problem in her life. It has proved turning point of her life. Karuna decides to abort child. Anjali helps and supports her in every situation. She rejects the importance of male values in her life. and after her divorce she got recognition in advertising and television productions and become financially independent. Shobha De has very realistically portrayed husband wife relationship and extra marital relationship through the character of Karuna. Karuna is the representative of any traditional woman who is marginalized in a marital relationship but who later evolves into the New Woman.

Similarly Anjali, a young socialite, another major character also from middle class background having high ambitions who remains ideal and idol for Karuna. She joined Air India as air hostess and married to a rich man Tayabjee. She also suffers much because of loveless and unhappy marital life with Abe. She takes divorce from him. She throws off the traditional conventions of moral values. She feels that she cannot face world alone without man by her side. She joins man to man in search of true love and care. So she finally decided to remarry to Kumar Bhandari which also did not match with her. He found to be homosexual. Anjali's dream of happy married life gets destroyed. She turns to spiritualism.

Ritu, a dashing, modern friend of Karuna and Anjali uses her sexuality to control her husband. She also not happy with her husband. There is no emotional attachment in this relationship. She get divorce from him and in frustration she remarries with an underworld don Gul who turn her into whore and pimp. She jumps into the world of crime and drugs. She was tortured and suffered mental and physical harassment. The result of this she becomes unfaithful to her husband.

Conclusion

Sum up we can say Shobha De is one of the significant Indian woman novelists has pictured the woman not only as protagonist but also as motivating factors in society. All female characters in the novel are not ready to suffer and sacrifice as the traditional women do. Traditional women never preferred to



without husband but now women have changed their views and opinions and prefer to live life independent lee without husband. They never feel themselves alone in their absence. All female characters in the novel appear as more powerful than men. To satisfy their physical hungers and emotional support women need the company of male but women are modernized they indulge in extra-marital affairs to fulfill their needs and wishes. They are ready for rebel against all odds encountering in their way in fulfilling their aspirations. They want to lead their own life in their own way. They don't have feeling of guilt or regret; they do not allow any man to take their benefit. They do not blindly follow age old traditions. Through the character of Karuna Anjali Ritu De has questioned all norms and rules laid down by patriarchal society. They are self-willed, daring, educated, unconventional, self-absorbing with loose morals. They are too modern and sophisticated. They are ambitious and self-assured. And well aware of their strengths and clever enough to hide their weaknesses even they conspire to succeed and fulfill their ambitions. They long for liberty and want a new social order where they can be what they want to be.

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