

Redefined Womanhood in Shobhaa De's *Starry Nights*

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Shobhaa De is essentially a feminist writer. Like Nayantara Sahgal and Shashi Deshpande, she concentrates on women's problems and gives a new approach to them. She is a modern novelist who recognizes the displacement and marginalization of women and attempts to turn this pattern upside down through her writings. She constantly tries to shatter patriarchal hegemony and raises a voice of protest against male dominance. For this, she explores the world of urban women in India. According to Pushp Lata, Shobhaa De's female protagonists are remarkable when measured against men. The man-woman's complementary image has been completely shattered in her novels.

As a writer, Shobhaa De has been able to bring into light women's displacement and marginalization in culture and society. She has discussed very sensitive aspects of human life factfully i.e., women relationship through her profound understanding of contemporary urban women's positions and the challenges. Her women characters in most of her novels like *Socialite Evenings*, *Starry Nights*, *Sisters*, *Strange Obsession*, *Sultry Days*, *Second Thoughts*, *Snapshots*, *Shooting from the Hip*, *Small Betrayals*, *Surviving Men* etc represent true picture of the new woman. Modern feminists may learn a lesson or two from Shobhaa De or her women characters. Frailty's name is no longer woman; given chance she can easily become woe-man. Her women revolt against the traditional image of Indian women in words and deeds, be it business or sexual spheres. In a sense, she is the forerunner of the emerging Indian women with her liberated womanhood.

She has discussed very sensitive aspects of human life fact fully i.e., women relationship through her profound understanding of contemporary urban women's positions and the challenges. She succeeded in her mission as she explored the world of modern women. She constantly tries to shatter patriarchal hegemony and raises a voice against the male-dominance by presenting the concept of the 'New Woman' who is new literary female model, assertive and self-willed, searching to discover her true self. The new woman is in fact an urban middle –class woman who still suffers but not in silence as she need to be.

The modern Indian woman who is at the centre of fiction of Shobhaa De, is no longer a model of Vedic or Pre-Vedic dignified woman, nor is she modelled on the past-Aryan woman who is passive in nature and accepts the dominance of men in society. Her women characters in most of her novels like *Socialite Evenings*, *Starry Nights*, *Sisters*, *Strange Obsession*, *Sultry Days*, *Second Thoughts*, *Snapshots*, *Shooting from the Hip*, *Small Betrayals*, *'Surviving Men* etc represent true picture of the new woman.

A close study of Shobhaa De's works reveals her protest against the good and ideal image of woman. She writes about fair sex and gives graphic depiction of their pursuits and attitudes. These create a cry against the male-dominated Indian society where women are denied freedom and forced to act at the whims and wishes of their husbands. In fact, in doing so, she invites criticism from the orthodox Indian society. But she keeps on writing without being disturbed.

Thematically, Shobhaa De's novels are highly complex. They offer sufficient stuff to the critics to interpret them in varied ways. Shobhaa De gives vivid picture of the society and culture of the high society of contemporary India. Eminent Italian scholar Alessandro monti evaluates the fiction of Shobhaa De in terms of 'the making of modern India'. Shobhaa De's female protagonists are remarkable when measured against men. The man- woman's complementary image has been completely shattered in her novels.

In *Starry Nights* (1992), Shobhaa De has anticipated the shattering of human esteems in this sparkling universe of Mumbai silver screen through the practical depiction of Aasha Rani, Geeta Devi, Malini and Rita. In our society, women abuse and ill-treat women as opposed to indicating adoration, regard and comprehension for their own sex. In reality, Shobhaa De draws out the general mental truth that the woman is the adversary of woman. The women in this novel are identified with the universe of movies. The main character, Aasha Rani, 'sweetheart of the

millions', breaks every single social progressively and social standards by her strange and freak conduct. Nothing controls her willingness to carry on with her own existence. Her sexual experiences with various men call attention to her sexual animosity. She overcomes men unexpectedly, and devastates the legendary picture of lady forced by male centric society. As indicated by De, 'sex is the bedrock of all connections'. Her character's in this novel honestly speak and have sex. They are intense and rebellious who secure against their abuse and endeavor to state their identity. However women in Shobhaa De's are sufficiently tolerant to proceed with their indulgences and issues without their partner. These women are sure and are sufficiently sensible to legitimize their relationship. This relationship is best shown in the connection between Aasha Rani and Akshay Arora in *Starry Nights*.

Shobhaa De through *Starry Nights* has graphically delineated the Bombay film world and how could Bollywood be finished without sex and beefy joys. Shobhaa De has anticipated the quick breaking down of human esteems in the glitzy universe of Mumbai silver screen. Aasha Rani, Geetha Devi, Malini and Rita encounter abuse and misuse in film industry. It overwhelmed the artistic world for its straight to the point depiction of sex and sexploitation. Bombay silver screen is known for marvelousness; it entices numerous young ladies, rising with desire and desire for power and self. Young ladies like Aasha Rani needs to go through the dim passages of sexploitation dejection and fiasco. Shobhaa De attracts thoughtfulness regarding woman's misuse, separation and commodification. The very birth of Aasha Rani was an intense desolation. In her youth, she was denied of parental love, and passionate security, Aasha Rani needed to confront starvation and destitution. Her mom pushes her into the demonstration of making the blue movies and along these lines her mom is mindful in offering her body in the market. The basic examination of the content uncovers that Shobhaa De has delineated the expectations and desires of an advanced young lady whose principle thought process is achievement, glamour and money.

Aasha Rani, is nicknamed as "Sweetheart of the millions" however she breaks every sexual and social standards by her deviant conduct. Nothing controls her desire to carry on her own existence. Her sexual experiences with various men call attention to her sexual hostility. She vanquishes men unexpectedly, and destroys the legendary picture of woman imposed by male controlled society. Aasha is a female criminal who utilizes all the sexual techniques to entangle men to uncover them. Aasha Rani's wellspring of happiness are men and the amusement she

appreciated playing is love making. For her age isn't a bar by any stretch of the imagination. Aasha is intense in her sexual scenes delineated in the *Starry Nights*. Shobhaa De has concentrated on the topic of utter liberation of woman. She anticipates the thoughts of freeing woman through self-acknowledgment. It's a story of a provincial young lady from Madras who looks for total freedom tossing every single good. The trip of Aasha Rani and her mission for total freedom is on the double intriguing and energizing, thrilling and progressive. Sex and exotic nature are part of life and with a specific end goal to acknowledge life.

The journey of Aasha Rani is for the genuine mind-set of men who is superior to women. Her mission for affection, money, name and popularity and sexuality prompt their erosion of self. Unquestionably she investigated the idea of male hostility and sexual abuse. She understands that the world she had ventured in was exceptionally remorseless. Shobhaa De has transparently talked about free play of sex, homosexuality, and lesbianism in her books. She has depicted a man-woman relationship with extra-ordinary realization. Her woman characters have experienced their own particular encounters, go to their genuine self. They likewise rebel against the customary picture of Indian women in words and deeds. One might say that they are the precursor of the rising Indian women with their freed womanhood.

Shobhaa De's woman characters are extremely candid about their appearance of sexual desire by scorning the sexual ethical quality which is basically ordained for women in the male centric framework existing in India. Her books speak to the new Indian woman's voice. She demonstrates her hatred and aversion for their unscrupulous and socially unsatisfactory conduct. Indeed Shobhaa De encourages her woman to break down their conduct and quit posturing to be men. In the present situation of sexual orientation separation, an investigation of her books broadens and guides our thoughts to significant issues influencing women in Indian culture. The presence of lesbianism in De's novel is a part of the new insubordinate woman who needs an equivalent balance with man. What Linda and Aasha Rani, Minx and Amrita share are appearances of the new woman who looks for satisfaction inside her own sex.

Shobhaa De's delineation of unequivocal sex between women is an honest depiction of the new reality which is coming up quick in the new world and its inexorably autonomous woman who are tossing difficulties to men in relatively every circles of human in lesbian activities. De's woman will never again endure sexual subalternity. Lesbianism has totally autonomous of man. Women in De's books are depicted as sexually freed and the scholars who

have named it as 'New Woman'. All her women characters are rebellious modern Indian women who challenge the conventionality of social taboos. They are not quite the same as the sexually ignorant women, who feel that sex is as repulsive subjection to man's vital in order to have posterity. Her women challenge this conventional set up in the society. They are more confident, overbearing and striking in contrast with men. They are not marginalised and blameworthy of their affairs.

Shobhaa De has created the characters that she has created and treated the themes that she has treated in her novels to call attention to the kind of treatment meted out to women in India. She does not present them for any idealistic purpose or aesthetic effect. The novelist has touched upon different facets of an urban woman's life and her plight, but no issue has received the same kind of full-throated expression as the question of matrimony and sex. Attention has been drawn by others also to women's exploitation, discrimination and commodification, but De's voice is the most vociferous and striking. She lashes at hypocrisy with all her might whether she is taking up the issue of arranged marriage or interference from the relatives. She seems to be emphasizing the value of what is most conspicuously missing in the Indian context, namely, 'communication,' full-blooded interpersonal normal relations. Modern feminists may learn a lesson or two from Shobhaa De or her women characters. Frailty's name is no longer woman; given chance she can easily become woe-man.

All the women in her novels are attractive, self-assured, conscious of their plus points and clever enough to hide their drawbacks. They are happy with wealth, happy with the pleasures which they could buy with money and the new-found freedom. Shobhaa De made her women very powerful and her women characters are working for liberation of women. She has brought those women of the society on the surface that is ready to transgress the existing one sided moral values to establish her own identity in the society.

To sum up, Shobhaa De writings are a definite feminist perspective. Her female characters are endowed with a vision which penetrates human psyche. They easily outplay their male counterparts with a better control and placidity in their attitude, desire and expression. Mostly the males are subdued and threatened by the self-assured and self-reliant females. Her women revolt against the traditional image of Indian women in words and deeds, be it business

or sexual spheres. In a sense, she is the forerunner of the emerging Indian women with her liberated womanhood.

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