



POSTMODERNISM IN THE NOVELS OF SHOBHA DE

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Abstract:

Literature is the right source which pictures the society that is being created out of new experiences. Indian English Literature is one of the distinguished literatures which capture the new concepts with new perspectives. Postmodernism is one of the emerging theories in the late 20th century. It has been emerged out of the departure of modernism. Both concepts have their own effects in literature. Postmodernistic theories helped people to introduce new concepts in literature. It is totally opposite to modernism and the trend that is formed to encourage whatever that has been ignored in the modernistic theories. Especially the women writers of the late 20th century throw light on the different facets of the society they live in. Hence it is very important to study the literature of women to bring out the various lives of women. Shobha De is one of the postmodernist writers who have created a unique kind of literature. She creates her novels with a new outlook and they are the sources through which a new world of women can be seen. De's style, approach and content matters are more relevant to that of the postmodern era in which she lives in. This paper aims at describing 'Shobha De as a Postmodern Novelist' with reference to her different approach about describing the life of Indian Urban Women.

Introduction:

Shobha De is one of the prolific writers of the late 20th century born on 7th January 1947 in Maharashtra as Shobha Rajadhyaksha. She belongs to a conservative Brahmin family. De is a multiple personality started her career as a model who turned to be a journalist. She established her career by adopting versatile writing. She is a well known columnist and a frank writer of any social issue. Her novels always deal with the life of socialites that is filled with depiction of sex. She has written many novels and they deal with the life of urban women. Her controversial writings brought back much criticism. De's contribution to Indian English Literature is worthwhile because it introduces a new variety of women writing.

In his article, *The concept of 'New Woman' in Shobha De's Second Thoughts* Rajesh R Ladva expresses his thoughts about shobha De as follows,

Shobha De is one of the most brilliant stars in the literary firmament of Indo-displacement and marginalisation in culture and society... she has discussed very sensitive aspects of human life fact fully i.e., woman relationship through her profound understanding of contemporary urban women's position and challenges. (247)

Review of Literature:

The article is written by referring some of the eminent person's articles and books to make clear about the concept of postmodernism. Their articles and reviews provide a large support to justify Shobha De as a postmodernist writer.

Postmodernism and Indian Women Novelists:

Postmodernism is a new theory which has been created with concepts against modernism in the second part of the 20th century. It is a revolt against significance and authority. The term postmodernism is used to describe the significant change that was salient in the novels that are published after the Second World War. Bharati Mukerji, Namita Gokhale, Arunthadi Roy, Jumbha Lahiri and Shobha De are the distinguished women novelists of the postmodern period. The novels of these writers deal with some of the postmodernistic thoughts. The study focuses on the concepts of postmodernism in Shobha De's novels.

Surabhi Khosla in her article *The New Age of Women Authors* brings about the writings of Shobha De, "Shobha De - ... writing about sexuality is still hurtful to men...it could mean women talking about their husbands' shortcomings or writing about being bored with them sexually, mentally or spiritually."

Postmodernism and Shobha De's Novels:

Shobha De's novels have a unique identity that the title of the novels start with 'S', and she uses the city Bombay as one of the characters in her novels, further she introduces a new variety of language called 'Hinglish' in her novels. Peter Barry in his book *Beginning Theory* opines that, "Postmodernism rejects the distinction between 'high' and 'popular' art which was important in modernism, and believes in excess, in gaudiness, and in 'bad taste' mixtures of qualities." (81). She has adopted a kind of writing that has always been referred as pornographic and that is the new variety introduced in the postmodern era.

Shobha De's novels depict the life of urban women in India. Her choice of subject is always the life of women who is related to media, cinema or ad agency. It is very interesting to know about the women who belong to one of these fields. In an interview to Asia Week, She indicates that, 'The women in my book are definitely not doormats'. They are not willing to be kicked around.' The women of De belong to media and cinema hence De's portrayal of these colourful worlds shows the hidden realities of women's life. The life of women is depicted with reference to their psyche, career, suppression, psychological traumas and sexual desires. The excess use of sexual matters may cause discomfort but her frank narration and the underlying theme of the story give her writing a unique identity.

Searching for identity, cultural changes, insecurity, feminism, lesbianism, liberalisation, disorientation, realism, tradition and modernity and fragmentation are some of the themes dealt by Shobha De.

The women characters in Shobha De's novels lead the story and the story revolves around them. Her novels focus on the transformation of women's identity in the particular society. The woman who belongs to urban area aspires to achieve something in their life. But their dreams are shattered with the influence of love, marriage and sex. The characters hail from middle class background and their willingness to come up in life is beautifully portrayed by Shobha De. The women of Shobha De are innocent in the beginning but through some experience they realise the real meaning of life.

Shobha De is very talented in the portrayal of the development of the women characters. It is very important to note down that Shobha De never fails in the expression of feministic aspects in her novels. The world of women is expressed in a very realistic way. There is no exaggeration in her way of writing. The flow of writing falls down like waterfalls. The characters like 'Maya' and 'Aasha Rani' are the right examples for female subjugation in the postmodern era. These characters show the conflict between tradition and modernity.

In her first novel *Socialite Evenings*, the protagonist Karuna is the right example for the psychological struggles of women. She strives hard to achieve the life she desires at. She is ready to come out of her life and even abort the child. Her willingness in crossing the boundaries of life shows her thirst for individual identity. De's women characters are longing for the life that gives them both physical and psychological support, they are fed up with so called traditional values. Karuna does not find her husband interesting or inspiring so she wants to get away from the marriage life. She opines that, 'He wasn't looking for any simulation, either intellectually or emotionally...(6)'

The women of Shobha De are very stubborn to leave from the relationship with their husbands in search of their identity. They want to feed for both their physical as well as psychological needs. Thus Shobha De never fails to express multiple realities in the world or life of urban women.

The so called urban area gives women the support and opportunity to live life as they want. There are lot references about the success story of women in business and career. Aasha Rani in *Starry Nights* is the right example for modern women's struggles in Cinema industry, and how she gets trained in the same world is also another story which mirrors the pathetic condition of women in the colourful world. The innocent nature of women is being tested and the experiences give her a new identity at the end. The influence of cultural changes helps the women to change into clever beings. Extra-marital affairs are common in the life of De's heroines, E. Sathyanarayana in his article *The Dialects of Self-Assertion: The liberated women in Sisters* asserts that, "At times, the rebellion of the woman takes the extreme forms such as sexual promiscuity /extra marital relations which serve as a device for her to assert herself"(210)

Snap Shots is a novel which focuses on the life of six women characters belong to the contemporary world. The life of these women characters reveals the world of women in depth. They meet and discuss about their marriage life, extra-marital affairs and also about their consciousness towards beauty and make-up. J.P.Tripathy in *Shobha De's Snapshots: An Overwhelming Question* put forth,

Snapshots give moral, emotional or human sustenance to society or they are indulgent to vice and therefore repugnant to the general taste of the public... Every artist has free choice in picking up material from life. Selection is one established method of avoiding the undesirable. Then idealisation cannot be castigated as a technique inferior to realism. (163)

Shobha De as a postmodern writer reveals the life of Indian Urban Women with contemporary issues. She uses a method to express the in-depth analysis of postmodern women. She never fails in describing the desires of her women. The women of Shobha De are in a contempt situation that strives them to face the hard realities of the world. Marriage, love, relationship, career and sex are given the prominent position in her novels.

Conclusion:

Feminism, lesbianism and homosexuality are some of emerging postmodern concepts are also given reference in her novels. The world of women is beautifully described with excess sexual desires. The woman of Shobha De is bold enough to face difficulties in their life. It is evident that her women have mutual concern towards marriage life and individual identity. So she is ready to sacrifice even her identity as a married woman to gain position in her personal aspiration. Thus Shobha De proved herself as a postmodern writer in terms of subject matter, style, approach and language.

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