Exploring Contemporary Issues in Shobha De's Novels: A Critical Analysis

Dr. Patil Pushpa Govindrao

Assistant Professor,

Dept. of English, Shikshanmaharshi Dr. Bapuji Salunkhe College, Miraj-416410.

Corresponding Author - Dr. Patil Pushpa Govindrao

Abstract:

This research paper aims to delve into the works of renowned Indian author Shobha De, with a particular focus on the exploration and depiction of contemporary issues in her novels. Shobha De, known for her bold and unapologetic storytelling, addresses various social, cultural, and political issues prevalent in contemporary Indian society. This paper analyses selected novels by Shobha De, examining her portrayal of issues such as gender dynamics, societal norms, sexuality, and the changing landscape of urban India.

Key words : Gender Dynamics, Sexuality, Relationship.

Introduction :

Shobha De has emerged as a significant figure in Indian literature, celebrated for her ability to capture the pulse of modern India through her novels. 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 wrathful because it introduces a new variety of women writing. Her works offer a lens through which readers can navigate and understand the complexities of contemporary Indian society. This paper aims to highlight the exploration and depiction of contemporary issues in her novels.

Gender Dynamics and Feminism:

One of the recurring themes in Shobha De's novels is the exploration of gender dynamics and the evolving role of women in Indian society. Through her characters and storylines, De delves into the challenges faced by women in navigating traditional expectations while striving for personal and professional fulfilment. Women's enslavement and suffering have long been a hot topic in the world of gender issues. It's critical to investigate the creation and execution of

objectification in order to comprehend why women are objectified. When it comes to sustaining the hierarchy between men and women, there are two extremes. One is of the home ritual hierarchy, in which only men have entitlement and women have no access; women should not be frank, private, or expected to abide. The social level is where women are denied the same political, educational, and economic position as males. As we move forward, we can see how cultural oppression affects women, particularly at home, by restricting their physical and mental capabilities. This is significantly more dehumanizing than economic exploitation, which we incorrectly believe to be the most prevalent element. Thus, the primary motivation for this design is to deny subjectivity and objectify women in order to sustain the patriarchal structure. Gender and gendering are closely linked to denying subjectivity in all aspects. In her works, Shobha De has demonstrated how personal and emotional space is more vital than economic independence for women, with the majority of her heroines belonging to the upper-class educated yet struggling with self-identity. Despite their comfortable economic freedom, they encounter gender challenges on private grounds in search of self-identity, emotional, and sexual comfort.

Societal Norms and Cultural Critique:

Shobha De's novels often serve as a critique of societal norms and cultural expectations. By presenting characters who challenge conventions and societal expectations, De encourages readers to question established norms. This section will explore how De uses her narratives to shed light on the rigid norms that govern Indian society and the consequences of deviating from these norms. In her works, Shobha De tries to represent human relations through the lenses of gender, personal wants, and vacuum. She has not only highlighted the gender construction in society as a writer, but she has also depicted the attempts of her female protagonists to break free from such structures. They stood up for themselves, explored their sexuality, sought to connect with their bodies, and so on during their rebellious path. They prefer to be the representatives of difference rather than generalizing women and their qualities. All four novels provide a great sketch of distinct female characters, through which Shobha De, as a feminist, conveys her point that each woman is unique and has unique experiences. Her novels, Socialite Evenings, Sisters, Starry Nights, and Second Thoughts, not only chronicle the lives of various women, but also the challenges that they face in their daily lives and their fight to find self-identity in various dimensions.

Sexuality and Identity:

De's novels are known for their bold exploration of sexuality and its intersection with identity. This section will examine how her characters navigate issues related to sexual freedom, expression, and the societal taboos surrounding these themes. De's nuanced

Dr. Patil Pushpa Govindrao

portrayal of sexuality contributes to a broader conversation about identity and acceptance in contemporary India. In Starry Nights, Asha Rani, a well-known film star who has been exploited by her mother, producers, actors, and others, is discovered to be a homosexual. The tale follows her change from Viji to Asha Rani for the Bollywood industry. Aside from fame and financial security, she wants dignity and subjectivity in her quest. Maya, a middle-class woman, yearns for a sophisticated lifestyle and marries a well-educated man (Ranjan) from abroad to reside in Mumbai in the novel Second Thoughts. However, she quickly realizes that her dreams are traumatic, and she seeks emotional support and self-respect through an adulterous romance, which also fails. Shobha De brings out how Maya was exploited by both her husband and lover.

In her work Sisters, Shobha De demonstrates the importance of forming sisterhood among women while dealing with a variety of challenges. Mikki (Mallika) and Alisha who is Mallika's half sister were in different situations and had various challenges, which caused them to become estranged, but they eventually realized that despite their differences, they could stay together to morally support each other. Mikki is an international graduate who returns to India after the death of her parents, where she discovers her father's secret connection with Alisha's mother, by which she becomes her half-sister. Mikki was assigned to take over her parents' corporate lives in order to manage their firm. Despite her best efforts to

regain a sense of balance in handling new business, she eventually realizes the men in her company's blunders. They regularly try to dissuade her from pursuing a career in business management as a woman, with Raman kaka being one of the most vocal opponents.

Urbanization and Changing Dynamics:

As an author who often sets her stories in urban landscapes, Shobha De captures the changing dynamics of urban India. This section will explore how her novels reflect the impact of globalization, technological advancements, and the fast-paced urban lifestyle on individuals and relationships. The traditional Indian gendering is quite strongly shown in Second Thoughts, where Maya, who wishes to live in the city and desires to be a working woman, is restrained by everyone in her in- law's house. She considered herself fortunate to have married a wealthy, well-educated man, but her marriage is becoming increasingly bitter as she learns that her subjectivity is being ignored. She is barred from looking for a job. This becomes the most customary tradition followed in every in-laws' house. A woman is stopped from going for a job in order to maintain the gender hierarchy. Because if she tends to move out of the house for a job she is exposed to society and will develop a confidence to speak for her which will directly affect the gender hierarchy. This it becomes problematic to maintain the structure of hierarchy. Men are given preference over women here, resulting in

Dr. Patil Pushpa Govindrao

the mental harassment that every woman endures at home.

Shobha De's women characters were from various backgrounds, experiences, and challenges, and as a result, they dealt with various types of resistance in their quest for self-identity and respect. De is meticulous in keeping each character and their traits distinct in order to demonstrate that gender issues cannot be generalized. Despite the fact that feminists join groups to protest together, their issues and experiences are diverse. Thus, we were able to identify women in various situations, such as Karuna, who is married and independent but has gender issues in her relationships, Maya, who is devastated by her married life and lacks physical and emotional comfort from her husband feels lonely at home, Asha, who has gender issues in the film industry, and Alisha and Mallika, who have gender issues both at home and at the workspace. Thus, Shobha De, despite her Indian heritage, is an outspoken writer who depicts gender issues from all angles to demonstrate how women are denied subjectivity. She also portrays how, although sharing the same gender, their difficulties and battles are distinct, which is why contemporary feminists oppose the rule that lumps women and their problems together.

Conclusion:

Shobha De's novels serve as a compelling commentary on the contemporary issues facing Indian society.

Through her unique storytelling and fearless exploration of taboo subjects, De challenges readers to confront and reflect on the evolving nature of their cultural and societal landscapes. This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the themes and issues presented in Shobha De's novels, offering insights into the ways in which literature can engage with and contribute to ongoing societal conversations.

Reference:
1. Bakshi, Priya. (2016). "Shobha De: A Critical Study of Her Novels." Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.
2. Chakraborty, Sudhir. (2019). "ShobhaDe's Novels: A Feminist Perspective." Prestige Books.
3. De, Shobha. (1989). "Socialite Evenings." Penguin Books.
4. De, Shobha. (1991). "Starry Nights." Penguin Books.
5. De, Shobha. (1995). "Sultry Days." Penguin Books.
6. De, Shobha. (1998). "Strange Obsession." Penguin Books.
7. De, Shobha. (2001). "Snapshots." Penguin Books.
8. De, Shobha. (2004). "Second Thoughts." Penguin Books.
9. De, Shobha. (2008). "Spouse: The Truth About Marriage." Penguin Books.
10. De, Shobha. (2011). "Shethji." Penguin Books.
11. De, Shobha. (2014). "Seventy and to Hell with It." Penguin Books.
12. De, Shobha. (2017). "Sethji: A Political Biography." Penguin Books.
13. De, Shobha. (2020). "Lockdown Liaisons." Penguin Books.
14. Kumar, Suresh. (2013). "Postmodern Trends in ShobhaDe's Fiction." Mittal Publications.

Dr. Patil Pushpa Govindrao