

# Rendering Anxious Cosmopolitan Life in Metro Cities with Special Reference to Shobha De: A Cavilling Review

**Raj Kumar Tharu**

Research Scholar, Glocal School of Education,  
The Glocal University, Saharanpur, U.P, India  
rajtharo62@gmail.com

**Dr. Vinay Tripathi**

Assistant Professor, Glocal School of Education,  
The Glocal University Saharanpur, U.P, India

## ABSTRACT

Since ages, women have been instrumental in narrating short or long tales in folk tradition. Narrative skill is an essential part of women's discourse obviously felt in moral exhortation of a mother or in the idle vicious gossip of women at the village well. But women mostly echoed, not their own views, but the views of society dominated by masculine values. However, Women have raised their voice against the exploitation and victimization since ancient times. During the Victorian period, women were given a prominent position on par with men. Jill Swain in the article, "Feminism, and Politics in The Handmaid's Tale" states: "During the Victorian period middle-class women were regarded as their husbands' possessions and were often known as the 'Angel in the House'. Their role was to be gentle, expressive homemakers". In the twentieth century, the development of technology and increase in popular education made the novel economical and convenient for self-expression of women.

## Keywords

Women, Feminism, Victimization, Homemakers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A Novelist is first and foremost an individual with a personal vision. At the same time he/she is a personality living in a particular period of time, in a particular place, in a particular social environment. He/ she is an individual and a member of the Society, and, therefore, society inevitably plays its part in his/her novel. The writer may be in sympathy with his/her social environment or in rebellion against it, he/she may try to reject it, but its influence will be there. The novel may not be an event in social history, but it is an assertion of the novelist's singular identity. Things and events depicted in the novel might not have happened to him/her, but he/she invents them camouflaging them as real to elicit reader's total participation. Shobha De precisely does that in her novels. Social concern is the main thrust of all her novels. Wayne C Booth has described the art of reading fiction in the following words[1,3] "The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader, he makes his reader as he makes his second self and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement." Women in the upper class society in India in recent years have outgrown Victorian taboos. They are no more prude in public. The concept of morality arising out of love for one and the same person is dated. They behave more or less like Restoration Comedy women who were given to the enjoyment of life through physical consummation of love before and after marriage and even outside marriage. Shobha

De's use of language and creation of new idioms by acclimatizing idioms from Indian languages to English language, adds to the charm of the novels. The narratives hold our breath for sensuous opulence and subtlety of variation and the result is that the novel becomes a 'best seller'. It makes a popular reading [2].

The women writers have given literary work in India an unmistakable edge. They are able to sensitively portray a world that has in it women rich in substance. Their women are real flesh and- blood protagonists who make you look at them with awe with their relationships to their surroundings, their society, their men, their children, their families; their mental make-ups and themselves. With solidarity and scrupulous interest as she occupies the space in the literary world rubbing shoulders with the people in the glittering movie world. Shobha De is a successful celebrity and also a caring mother and loving wife. After a courteous divorce from her first husband Sudhir Kilachand in 1984, she married with Dilip De, her second husband. Shobha De tries her best to give a quality time to her family in spite of her feverish and busy schedule. De is an interesting but unpredictable package who has scaled new heights of success as an Indian woman, who breaks through the rigid barrier. Shobha De is a good observer and this is amply reflected in her depiction of reality in her novels. Almost all of her novels which have passed through my hands reveal the impact of industrialization, urbanization, and disintegration on the human relationships and lives of her characters [4]. Urbanization and industrialization, while at one hand have brought revolutionary progress, on the other hand, it has created disintegration, brought lack of culture, broken moral values and a lot of .

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

So far a lot of work has been done on various aspects of Shobha De's career and her writings. Reviews on her various books and novels are quoted below to help further into the study of the works of Shobha De. Shobha De is "India's first successful pulp novelist", a bestselling author who never quite caught on outside India. Shobha De, perhaps better known here as the Maharani of Muck or the Princess of Porn, is India's most commercially successful English-language author. It's a crazy claim for a 56-year-old middle-class Indian woman--one who describes herself as a "traditional" mother to six children--to be able to make[5,6]. But sex sells, even in one of the world's most socially conservative countries. Bucking all convention, for years De has dared to write lusty, shocking sex scenes, and from a female point of view. In a country where women rarely bare more than two inches of leg and hardly ever file for divorce, she writes about women who, like herself, flee marriages because they are bored. De is

author of more than a dozen titles, all of which start with the letter "s" (Sultry Days, Starry Nights, Strange Obsession--you get the point) and all of which depict a level of privilege that most of India's more than 1 billion impoverished masses cannot even imagine. Even De's harshest critics have to admit that she remains a compelling icon for women in today's fast-globalizing India. "Writing about somebody dropping a sari doesn't mean you're striking big notes for women," says film critic Shubra Gupta [7]. "But she is India's first and only glamorous female brand name, and that means something Shobha De, the novelist fought spiritedly against all the traditional beliefs and moral values denouncing them as out of has gradually turned into an explicit annoyance and finally took the shape of an open rebellion since the ancient age, Women have written novels in plenty but their novels attempted pictures of life as it is seen through the eyes of men. But now Shobha De breaks this world of English fiction by shifting from man's angle to woman's angle and emphasis from the external to the internal world [8].

Shobha De as a writer is gifted with extraordinary ability to discuss very sensitive aspects of human life tactfully. The way she narrates each and every aspects of human relationship in general and man-woman relationship in particular is really wonderful. The orthodox people in India criticize her for her open discussion of sexual matters. But her fiction has got tremendous response not only from several European countries but all over read and enjoy her fiction. Above sentence inscribed by Shobha De in her book 'Speed Post' is a keynote to her personality. Here's a writer who talks about woman without waving a feminist flag. Her life story is a document of a woman writer for whom mother-hood and family-life is a celebration. She enjoys being a mother of six and her family is her greatest possession. She is the first modern mother who has a great faith in the new and candid generation [9].

Sisters is considered as an explosive novel of Shobha De. It is known for its "Pacy narrative quality" and for its "ostensibly intimate view of glitzy side" of Bombay life. The novel deals with the psychic conflict in its liberated woman protagonist who is caught between a personal self and a societal self. The novel deals with the theme of women's struggle for identity in the male-dominated society. Sultry Days is one of Shobha De's most striking attempts propagating the idea that female subjectivity is not just a slavish succumbing to male dominance but every woman is a staunch feminist in her heart resisting male injustices [10].

Speed post is a collection of letters written by De to her 6 children, at various stages of their lives. The subjects of these letters are varied –chastising them for late-night telephone calls, Internet addiction, excessive spending, the fast fading significance of age-old traditions, and about several other memorable big and little occasions in their lives [11].

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To have a thorough assessment of the tensions, traumas, trials and tribulations being faced by the characters in the novels of Shobha De who generally belong to the upper income group strata of the societies in the Metropolitan Cities in India
- To have an assessment of the extremely liberalized, characteristically daring and unconventional societal steps being undertaken by the women characters in the novels of

Shobha De for achieving success, materialistic gains, fame and a luxurious life

- To explore socio-cultural aspects and cultural evidences in the concerned works of Shobha De
- To study the impact of industrialization, urbanization, and disintegration on the human relationships and lives of De's characters as these phenomena of urbanization and industrialization, while at one hand have brought revolutionary progress, on the other hand, it has created disintegration, brought lack of culture, broken moral values and a lot of tensions.
- To assess Shobha De's status and place within the gamut of contemporary Indian English writers of fiction. She certainly stands out among the women writers of the genre but her contribution to contemporary Indian English fiction will be evaluated in this study
- To make a thematically study of concerned works.
- To undertake a thorough investigation of and acknowledge the changing roles and status of women in India.
- To examine the women characters attitude to marriage, love, affection, feelings, care, emotions, moral, values, culture and tradition and family as well as to their male counterparts.

### 4. SOME PEEPS INTO THE NOVELS OF SHOBHA DE

Anjali in Shobha De's 'Socialite Evenings' marries Abe only because he is rich and none of them bothers if the other one is having affair or physical relation with anyone else. Karuna, the lead character of 'Socialite Evenings' leaves her husband only because she has got bored with her married life and doesn't hesitate to have sex with her husband's friend. Mikki, in 'Sisters', breaks her engagement off with Navin when she doesn't find it fruitful. In 'Starry Nights', De describes Indian film Industry 'Bollywood', where the sole aim of everyone is to make money. Asha Rani, the lead character, also chooses the easier way of nudity to get stardom and money. Economic independence of women has given rise to divorce as well. Mostly women of urban cities are not dependent on men for their survival which has made them strong and confident to take their daring and unconventional decisions themselves and they are not bound to live with their husbands if they don't feel comfortable[4, 12].

Enjoy promiscuous sex, drink wine, go to clubs, attend late night parties just to show the society that they are fast forward. Shobha De's men also are no better than animals. They are shown as sex maniac, uncivilized and uncouth, who can start playing with the nude body of women anytime and anywhere having no sense of respect for them. In De's novels we see corruption prevailing everywhere from police department to politics. Goonda Raj is shown dominating. Journalists and other media persons are pampered by such dons. One good news provides them with various facilities from vehicle to bungalow. India, that once was famous for its culture, is quite different from that of today, which has been realistically depicted in the novels of Shobha De [7].

Shobha De's Style is unique in itself. She gave a new definition to the mass market best sellers with her breakthrough, bold and highly individualistic style that speaks a new language. She is credited with having given birth to 'Hinglish', a mixture of both English and Hindi, and it left such and impact on the readers that people have started using it everywhere. De has become a literary success because of her

use of 'Hinglish' in affectionate derision. She has made some Hindi words much popular in English literature such as- Bai, avatar, chamcha etc. Shobha De Knows it very well that language is a powerful tool to convey ideas. De mostly writes for the urban readers with whom she is very well acquainted, herself being one of them. She uses simple words which sometimes seem slapdash and informal. Her diction is chatty and distant. Some of her usages are sparkling - for instance- 'fluff and flippery', 'grim and grut', 'festooned with flowers' etc. De Knows very well how to keep her point in front of readers through words. She herself says, her use of Urdu, Latin and French words in between the diction shows her knowledge of various languages [11, 12]. In her novels, Shobha De has used different techniques very beautifully. Stories of her novels have been either narrated by first person or third person. Flashback technique has been used by her to tell the stories or the events happened in the past. Events and characters are described so beautifully that it seems as if they are in front of us talking and taking actions. She has mastery over the art of storytelling with a viable use of language. Her novels are rich in contents. As a writer, she differs considerably from other Indian women novelists. She believes in frank narration of incidents and situations with a touch of open heartedness. She is popular not only in India but even abroad where her novels are read with keen interest. In some universities in India, as well as abroad, her novels have been included in syllabus [6, 9]

Shobha De, a glamour girl, celebrity journalist, editor, copy writer, designer, publisher and the bestselling author stands as a 'Avant-grade' in the field of fantasy and ranks among the first to probe the tensions of Metro city life in a very equitable way. As an author she is accomplished with incredible ability to illustrate very acute aspects of human life elegantly. The way in which she interprets each and every condition of human analogy is really amazing and apparent [5].

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research work will be undertaken with the help of the interpretative and analytical methods. An attempt will be made to come up with an independent personal response by reading, understanding and investigating the novels of Shobha De. This will be done by intensive and exhaustive readings of Shobha De's novels and also by bringing out indigenous interpretation on the part of the researcher who will try to dig out additional meaning and realities in the literary work. As per requirement biographical, sociological, political, and psychological approaches will be utilized. The study will also consider qualitative technique to evaluate women's characterization as portrayed by Shobha De in her novels. The study is aimed at an analysis of the writings of Shobha De to examine her interpretations of the extremely liberalized and carefree attitude of the Metropolitan women characters towards traditionally espoused and conventionally valued attitudes towards social institutions this thesis will also attempt to study culture and cultural identity and reveals it with author's cultural encounter through characters. The whole society's problems will be studied through the themes and characters of the selected novels of the writer Shobha De.

## 6. HYPOTHESIS

Shobha De De is "India's first successful pulp novelist", a bestselling author who never quite caught on outside India. Shobha De De, perhaps better known here as the Maharani of

Muck or the Princess of Porn, is India's most commercially successful English-language author. Bucking all convention, for years De has dared to write lusty, shocking sex scenes, and from a female point of view. In a country where women rarely bare more than two inches of leg and hardly ever file for divorce, she writes about women who, like herself, flee marriages because they are bored. De is author of more than a dozen titles, all of which start with the letter "s" (Sultry Days, Starry Nights, Strange Obsession--you get the point) and all of which depict a level of privilege that most of India's more than 1 billion impoverished masses cannot even imagine. Even De's harshest critics have to admit that she remains a compelling icon for women in today's fast-globalizing India. "Writing about somebody dropping a sari doesn't mean you're striking big notes for women," says film critic Shubra Gupta. "But she is India's first and only glamorous female brand name, and that means something." The present study, it is hope, will confirm this view. Thus the present study is an attempt of critical enquiry about the essence of Shobha De's writings. Up to now very rare attempts had been made to analyze the thoughts and spirit inherent in the writings of Shobha De. It is believed that the novels of Shobha De deal with the feminine sensibility and changing attitudes of the women belonging especially to rich and affluent strata of the Indian society. So it is proposed to study these novels to bring about the changing roles of women in Indian Society.

## 7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Shobha De is the first to explore the tensions of the Metro city life through the depiction of varied human relationships in a very candid way. It's influence on Indian literature has been very deep and marking. The work of Shobha De is replete with real picture of Tense City Life. The first hard work on tense human relationships in the societal sphere of the Metro City Life in the works of Shobha De will be studied. Thus the work, after getting successfully completed, will prove to be a significant research study in Modern English Literature.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

The study will extensively cover the works of Shobha De and her bold writings and all the appreciation she received for her ever changing personality. It will cover all the aspects of her versatile writing and dynamic role, her perfection in adopting herself to various role models, becoming one with the character in her books, giving a feel of the real life situation, etc.

This study has a large scope because it will be useful to the students, the readers and teachers to develop the awareness about the changing attitudes of women belonging to the rich sections of the society in the Metropolitan cities like Mumbai. The researcher will focus on the women characters in the selected novels in all respects. The study will primarily, focus on women characters but a little bit of male characters description would also be a part of the study as they will automatically come in the picture. There are many women novelists who attempt to project the image of new women and her search for identity. Yet the study may represent some aspects of woman in general. The researcher believes that the present study will be useful in classroom teaching at university and college levels since the available material on the novelist, to the researcher's knowledge, does not include book length study.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Alexander Walker, *Women, Psychologically Considered as to Mind, Morals, Marriage, Matrimonial Slavery, Infidelity and Divorce*, Mittal Publication, Delhi, 1987
- [2] Benjamin J. Cohen, *The Question of Imperialism*, Basic Books, New York, 1973.
- [3] E.N. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, London, Edward Arnold, 1960.
- [4] Havelock Ellis, *Urban Society in India* ed. S.A. Rao, Orient Hangman, 1974.
- [5] Pandarinath H., Jack C. Pla California, 1988, and Roy Otan, *The International Dictionary*, California, 1988.
- [6] Janaki Ramachandran, *Call it a Day, De did*, Indian Review of Books, Vol-3, no.7, P-26.
- [7] Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, 1970
- [8] Mephah John, *Stream of Consciousness*, The literary Encyclopedia, Oct. 17, 2003.
- [9] Oxford English Dictionary, "narrative, V." Oxford University Press. 2007.
- [10] Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Female Imagination*, New York, Avon, 1975
- [11] Paulina Palmer, *Contemporary women Fiction*, Landon; Harvester, Wheatsheaf, 1989.
- [12] Prabhu, *Hindu Social Organization-A study in Socio-Psychological and Ideological Foundation*, Bombay Popular, 1958.
- [13] Peter Evans, 'Shoes, OPIC and the Unique Persuasion and Multinational Corporations and U.S.- Brazilian Relations', *Capitalism and the State in U.S.- Latin America Relation*, ed. Richard R. Fagen, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1979.