

## Women's Identity in Shobha De's Novels With Reference to *Socialite Evenings*

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### Abstract

The term 'Feminism' refers to intense awareness of identity as a woman and interact in feminine problems. The subjugation of woman is a central fact of history and it is the main cause of all psychological disorders in society. Feminism is not only the movement, which runs by women for women but it is a kind of human liberation movement, which encourages society to think that women are also human beings and think about their problems, dreams and needs.

Feminism transformed the accuracy of life and literature. The feminist ideology began to effect the English literature in India. Women's writing was considered as a powerful media of modernism and feminist statement, these women writers told that feminism means putting an end to all the sufferings of women. Women writers in India are moving forward with their strong and sure strides matching the pace of the world. We see them bursting out in full bloom spreading their own individual fragrances. They are recognized for their originality versatility and the indigenous flavor of the soil that they bring to their work.

**KEYWORDS:** women. Identity, life, feminism

### Projection of Women in the novels of Shobha De

Shobha De's novels characterize the new Indian woman's voice. 'New woman' wants to explore self identity, seeks freedom in all phases of her life reinstates the conventional representation of Indian women. The need for women to seek their individuality is the message in her novels. Indian women were dominated since ages. They were under the influence of man. Different aspects were accountable for women suppression; they can be categorized as societal edifying, conventional and so on. In Indian patriarchal society, Indian women have always been taught since her early days that they have to follow her spouse and family. Her parents offered her no option to think about her own individuality. In Indian culture, the birth of a girl child is never receives a welcoming response nor from the parents nor from the society. Thus the journey of such woman becomes a case study of feminism, all spheres of her growth, societal, political and psychosomatic remains the focus of research. Contemporary woman is a career-oriented because she knows that it is her financial dependence which authorizes a male to dominate his wife and subject her to physical and psychological pain.

Shobha De considers in a very honest recitation of incidents and open heartedness. Nothing is held in reserve in her fiction. It is in this respect Shobha De fluctuates considerably from other Indian women novelists in English, she represents a variety of women from the conventional, dominated and marginalized to the enormously current and open-minded women. Her novels splinter patriarchal supremacy. With the rise of feminism, there emerged the new woman, who is completely different from her traditional counterpart. These new woman is conscious, confident and sometimes even aggressive. To acquire a new identity she is seen

dealing with the world around her own terms. She has become aware of her destination, that is to liberate herself from the clutches of unjust taboos and customs imposed on her by the male-dominated society, becoming aware of her own rights, she has started a fight, of course, the fight is not going to be easy and short lived since it is against the human elements like ego, greed, ambition and selfishness. So far the women are looked at as man's privilege and they have also accepted it without protest. But the modern women have realized the unjust nature of such an attitude and therefore they have started thinking on different lines. De shows an important shift in the position of her women who are autonomous. They do not depend for their survival on their fathers, husbands or sons. On the other hand, they have required strength to face life with all its ups and downs. They are assertive, practical and strong. They solve their problems themselves. Shobha De projects the ideas of liberating women through self-realization and the quest for self-identity. Shobha De believes that the women have to be aware of her own identity as a human being and should think for themselves. Woman should be an independent identity and entity by being aware of the choices open to her.

### **Distinctiveness of women in Socialite Evenings**

Socialite Evenings, the first novel of Shobha De is about the journey of a prominent Bombay Socialite Karuna, from a middle class girl to a self sufficient woman. The novel presents the institutions of family and marriage existing in the wealthy class of the Indian society. An enduring theme in the novel is the search for identity and selfhood. Karuna born in a dusty clinic in Satara, a remote village in Maharashtra and does not remember much of her childhood except the strict vigilance of her father. Her mother, who was preoccupied with domestic chores, does not devote much time to 'know' her daughter. Karuna the protagonist of Socialite Evenings is the perfect example of the misery of women in India, Karuna's life starts only when they migrate to Bombay because of her father's official transfer. She meets Anjali a prominent socialite and the wife of a wealthy playboy. Karuna's world changes, Karuna starts dreaming of a career in films and holidays abroad. When she enters college and gets married to Bunty, a rich business man, the family accepts him because of his social status. But he is not the right 'husband material' discovers Karuna. He was just an average

Indian husband-unexciting, uninspiring, untutored...He wasn't looking for any stimulation either intellectually or emotionally, she gets bored with her husband who does not share her interests, tries to down her blues in reading books and crossword puzzles. Woman is thus reduced to matter a mere object. This reduction of woman to matter or a commodity is in the main a phallogocentric pattern. Karuna's husband treats her as matter, a mere object subjected to his own will. It is clear that Karuna has just a formal relationship with her husband. Intimacy between the husband and wife is lacking for Karuna who never calls her husband by his name but derogatorily as 'Black label'. Karuna suffers due to the callous and non-responsive attitude of her husband. Her husband treats her as a mere object subject to his will as a result there is a complete loss of her identity. She revolts against her insensitive husband and finally divorces him. As a self-realized person, she comes to know that extra marital affair proves to be an oasis in the desert. It does not bring any happiness to woman and therefore she refuses the offers of Girish and Ranbir, because she does not want to lose her identity. She prefers to create her own authentic presentation which gives her

a sense of freedom. She gets ready to live her life on her own terms by rejecting the idea of getting married second time. As a self realized person, Karuna opt for singlehood as a way of life. Again when her husband tries to reconcile with her, she understands his duplicity and dishonesty and rejects him. Because of her disgusting and unfruitful experience she accepts singlehood status as an affirmation of herself: "I still resisted them. I suppose my real concerns were different. It wasn't money or success I was looking forward to in my life at that point it was the freedom to do what I wanted." Karuna is the modern new woman, who is independent in every way. She breaks out of the bonds of marriage and lands her fact firm into the profession of her choice that is modeling. In the process of establishing her identity, she discovers her husband and takes up journalism as her career. Karuna occupies herself busy with write ups of her memories. She acquires good fame through her writings, pride in her venture. She becomes a Socialite to firm her profession in media. She leads her profession in all aspects with her charms, intelligence and boldness. Karuna is initiated into the life of a model by her mentor Anjali. Karuna had always yearned to be a part of the smart and beautiful set. Modeling helps her create an identity for herself. Similarly Anjali a young socialite suffers much because of her incompatible marriage and her husband's oppressive attitude. Anjali and Ritu are also presented as liberated and emancipated new women.

Throughout the novel Karuna figures as a woman who asserts her feminine psyche through protest and defiance. All the women in the novel are attractive, self-assured and conscious of their places and are clever enough to hide their drawbacks. They are happy with health, happy with the pleasures which they could buy with money and the new found freedom. Socialite Evenings gives us the image of new women at the hands of their husbands. Shobha De's is the picture of women not only as protagonists but also as motivating factors in society, initiating and regulating their own lives as well as the lives of others in the voluptuously fascinating world of Bombay, its enticing glitter and glamour enamoring many a Karuna to its ensnaring and captivating gossamer. In Socialite Evenings the woman is constantly reminded of her identity until she assimilates this identity as herself. In De's novel, this assimilatory process is helped by the roles of media and the flow of information. As a writer of the woman-centered fiction De has worked for the complete emancipation of women. Here, Shobha De's attack is not against the individuals, it is against the system that favours men and causes women subjugation and marginalization. She projects the ideas of liberating women through self-realization. She is emancipated against the orthodox role of women and dominates her male counterparts. In fields such as familial, social, sexual and business De's women revolt against the traditional image of Indian women. They are free thinking women.

### **Summation**

Being a woman, De is more interested in the predicaments of women. She presents the vital reality and makes us awake of the miseries of women and injustice done to them by their counter parts in the patriarchal society. All her novels are the protest novels against the male-dominated Indian society where women are denied the freedom of expression and action. The need for women to seek their self-identity is the message in her novels.

## References

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