

Shobha De: Life and Works

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Shobha De is one of the most prestigious women novelists of India. She tried her best to create most daring women in all her novels. She has formed very bold and assertive women who challenge the norms of age-old patriarchal society. She has depicted aristocratic urban women in her novels who paved the path for all Indian women.

Shobha De is born in an upper middle class family in Maharashtra in 1948. She completed her Graduation in Psychology from St. Xavier's college, Mumbai. Shobha Rajadhyaksha was the young child in a representative class Maharastrian family of a government officer. Her mother prayed for second son but unluckily she was the third daughter. She was reared in happy atmosphere. She was proved lucky to her family as prominent positive change followed her birth. Her father had applied for post at the centre in New Delhi and obtained it. After such change she secured the greatest favor in the heart of her mother. It is hateful and tradition thinking that when a male child is born his birthday is celebrated with great zeal and regarding a female child as debt on the family. She received her primary education in Delhi where her father was posted. When she was ten years old her father was promoted and transferred to Bombay. Although she was entirely unacquainted to Bombay, yet she felt we "We were finally going home" since then Bombay has been her home where she played different and multiple roles she assumes.

Bombay has cast its charm on Shobha De ever since her first shift from Ghatkopar to downtown Mumbai which changed her life. Downtown Mumbai was "Fashionable, affluent and sexy." She had finally found, "My kind of environment, my kind of people and my kind of fun." (Shobha De Selective Memory, 20). She liked the sort of life she lived in that fashionable part of Bombay. This caused process of liberty in her life. Maharastrian male domineering traits formed everlasting strain between father and his favorite daughter challenged her conservative father's dictates; it was De who introduced her siblings to a life they never knew existed:

... Pop music, stolen cigarettes smoked furtively in the small balcony---occupational swigs of beer, western style, dancing, trendy hair styles and fashions waving of unwanted hair, high heel mascara, Hollywood magazines so much forbidden fruits (Shobha De Selective memory, 21)

She is not academically ambitious. She admits: "Studies did not interest me there was a life right outside the classroom that I vastly preferred. And I wanted to make most of it. (Shobha De Selective Memory, 33)

Her father wished his daughter to become a doctor or engineer or a lawyer but was a part from all these. She declared that "she did not want to be anything at all except a happy carefree young person." (Shobha De Selective Memory, 42)

De had already begun her career in modeling forgoing her parents order and even without her father's knowledge. It was such an occupation which provided her money and furthered her sense of liberty. Modeling exposed her world of glamour and advertising both national and international. She became very rich. De remembers an incidents during a magazine shoot in 1968 to model excellent Banarasi sarees where she was the youngest of three models.

She earned her popularity as a model in the late 60s, much against the wishes of her bureaucrat father. In 1970 she occupied her career in journalism and became crafty, fervent editor of the spirited film magazine Stardust. Treating 'Hinglish', particular anti-colonial mix of English and Mumbaite hindi, the magazine won great popularity. "She also edited three popular magazines namely Society and Celebrity. She was consulting editor to Sunday and Megacity." (R. S. Pathak Feminist concern in De's work) She secured her popularity with her radiant writing skill as a free-lance writer, T.V. soap writer and a reviewer of salient papers and magazines. "Physically charming at fifty seven she actively looks after her family of six kids and her husband and has the daily routine of writing for six to eight hours." (Khosla Surabhi, The New Age of Women Authors)

Shobha De has published twelve books out of which seven are novels. Socialite Evenings (1989) is her first novel which is based on the lives of super rich urban Indian society. It became an incontinently hit and best seller. David Davidar, the editor and publisher of Penguin Books India Division emphasized to write this book. This book was

ensued by a series of knowledge which have become standard shaping female characters, challenging conventional norms and moral values. Including novels are *Starry Nights*(1990), *Sisters*(1992), *Strange Obsessions*(1992), *Sultry Days*(1994), *Snapshots and Second Thoughts*(1996).

Shobha De is an enormously talented author. In all her novels there is indication of a great insight in depicting an actual picture of Indian urban women and their psyche. De astonishes her readers dear tales of human relationships, especially men-women relationship and old and new value patterns. The changing moral values over the years along with producing steamy novels about film stars, socialites business men and the like, De has brought forth small betrayals (A collection of Short Stories) in 1995 and works of non-fiction such as uncertain laisians (Essay on Sexuality in Urban India which she edited along with shooting from the Hip (A Collection of Snappy Profit And Essays) in 1994, surviving men (A Provocative non holds banned guide to Indian women, in 1997 Selective memory: Stories from my life (an Autobiographical book) in 1998, Speed Post(A series of letters to her children) in 1999. It is very amusing to note that almost all her books begin with the letter "S" in similarity with first letter of her own name. She is the best seller novelist and famous free lance Communist of the leading news papers and magazines.

De belongs to the modern feminist school of thought. She raises female fictional characters to be at par with male characters. They have some freedom in walks of life. As De says: "I did write with a great deal of empathy towards women, without waving the feminist flag, I feel very strongly about the womens' situations." Dodiya and Dhawan (The Fiction of Shobha De)

In all her fictional works De is all out to improve upon the traditional image of the Indian women as a weak, Docile person living at the sympathy of her male partner. She shapes her women characters as an aggressive blasters of male ego and male hierarchy. As she observes: "Women in my books are definitely not doormats. They are not willing to be kicked around." Ajay Singh (The Trouble with Men)

Indian woman over the ages has been an image of tolerance, sacrifice and purity. She has forever occupied secondary place to man. Indian society has been always male dominated. Men apply their rules over women in spite of several modern changes and reform in the world by the means of education. Her identity as an individual is not at completely confessed. In this relation, it can be said that they have received acceptance in the western countries to a huge scale. Also in India parity is successively rising on its peak. The importance of partaking of women in the growth and development of human society is shown by Sarojini Naidu. As Naidu observes: "Other national questions come and go; they are the results of time changing spirits: but one question that has never changed since the beginning of the time itself and life itself, his beauty of womanhood the influence of womanhood the simple womanhood as divinity of God upon the earth, the responsibility of womanhood in shaping the divinity into daily life." B.G.Kher (Pageant of Life, 58)

Most of the Indian English novelists are bi-lingual or multi-lingual they express themselves in their selected languages. As many of the creative writers have been fit to bend English language to their own aim for the full of fancies and effective rendering of the different shades of their emotions and ideas. De also indulges in extraordinary linguistic which causes her novels remarkable. She uses curious and brand of English Esperanto the "Hinglish" which helps her prominently an unsparing transparency. Shobha De employs different ways to present her story. In *Socialite Evenings*, She employs the first person narrative "I" with Karma, the protagonist as narrator, the novel opens with Karuna's narrative: "I was born in the dusty clinic in Satara, remote village in Maharashtra".(Shobha De *Socialite Evenings*)

We find out in her three novels *Socialite Evenings*, *Second Thoughts* and *Sultry Days* she makes use of first person narrative in other her remaining four novels *Snapshots*, *Sisters*, *Strange Obsessions* and *Starry Nights* she possesses the third person narrative. Her distinctive narrative style is marked by intense imagery and a subtlety of variations. In this way De's artistic skill, her tactfully drawn gallery of characters her intricate form and above all her prose expresses her perfect command over the medium and creative intellect.

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