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## **Approaching Shobhaa De's Creation of New World with Words from the Perspective of Women's Liberation**

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### **Abstract**

Literature, having been considered an intellectual imitator of life on this planet, has continuously given words to the voiceless for generations. Contemporary modern and postmodern literary concepts have played a pivotal role in changing the whole scenario of Literature. Every burning issue of the times has found its place in the literary words of most writers across the globe. The liberation of women from the chains of orthodox traditional culture is one of such burning issues of contemporary Indian society. Shobhaa De, one of the sufferers of this menace, has very keenly and acutely shed light on this issue in her works. Throughout her literary journey, she has been voicing against the subjugation of women by the followers and practitioners of a patriarchal society. This paper, through the lenses of De's fiction, tries to study the creation of a new world of women suffering from inequality, injustice, agony, deprivation, and pain.

**Keywords** Agony, Deprivation, Gender Inequality, Liberation, Subjugation.

### **Introduction**

Women, an integral part of human civilisation, play an important role in the development of a society or nation. A Woman, having different places in different cultures and ages, has never been, across the globe, considered and well treated equally to men. Being treated as the 'second sex' for a long, a woman, in some parts of the world, still faces the patriarchy hanging the noose of suppression around her neck. In India, people fervently worship goddesses and spend day after day appeasing them to open up their treasure of blessings upon their devotees. But, ironically, when it comes to worldly matters and dealings, it has been the male sex, for the longest time, whose deity has been worshipped and obeyed. Even the *Manusmirti* (the laws of Manu) does not recognise and acknowledge a woman's existence beyond that of her husband (Olivelle, 2005, p. 111). The mythological 'Lakshman Rekha,' drawn to protect 'Sita' from 'Ravana,' still remains intact and unharmed. The birth of a baby son is celebrated as a 'messiah complex' embedded in him. Nay, a woman venturing out of the sphere of male authority is frowned upon and looked upon as breaking the sanctity of a religious decorum she is supposed to follow.

Every action of a woman encounters questions, and the idea of the status quo does not even make an effort to cover the checks of binding and confining her. The patriarchal society has, for the sake of peaceful progression, prosperity, and growth of domestic life, always been justifying the marginalised and voiceless existence of women. However, this idea of life, unfortunately, has turned womanhood into an epitome of sacrifice, tolerance and docility. Women's participation and growth in the domestic and public spheres have continuously been

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a matter of debate. A woman in India is supposed and taken for granted to learn, without any value of her hopes, to prioritise the needs, expectations and aspirations of the men around her. She enjoys her status getting elevated only after becoming her mother. For the sake of her ability to shield, protect and nurture her children and her sacrifice for them, a woman enjoys reverence in Indian society. It has rightly been said, "The idea of womanhood in India is motherhood – that marvelous, unselfish, all suffering, ever forgiving mother. The wife walks behind the shadow" (Sil, 1997, p. 71). Even the *Natyashastra*, a magnum opus on dramaturgy by Bharata of Sanskrit literature, respectively refers to the forces of male and female energies as *Shiva* (the name of a Hindu god) and *Shakti*, meaning power (Schwartz, 2004, pp. 12-15). But, the Indian culture, despite placing these forces on an equal pedestal, has conveniently rendered *Shakti* to subdue before *Shiva*, her master. This submission has, however, for the sake of using her consciousness, cost the Indian woman her identity and power. And her incessant challenge to break herself away from the patriarchal clutches has been seen as a repulsion towards the idea of *Shanta Rasa* (peace) (Masson & Patwardhan, 1969, pp. 90-93) and *Shringara Rasa* ('amorous love') (Bharata, 2016, chpt. VII). Thus, a woman, for centuries, has constantly been suffering a decline in her status. Nay, a woman, the embodiment of *Shakti* in India, has blindly been coerced into following the model of 'Sita,' a legendary, ever-loving, ever-faithful, self-sacrificing and all pure and dedicated wife of Lord Rama, bearing no ill will in her heart even when Lord Rama, her husband, tests her chastity and even, only to satisfy the doubts of one of his countrymen, orders her to live an exiled life and that too when she was pregnant. And, trumpeting this, people even do not hesitate to idealise her greatness in her silent yielding and suffering to the whimsical commands of her husband.

By halting a woman's advancement towards awareness and knowledge, the idea of considering and treating her as a commodity annihilates and corrodes her 'self' largely. Someone, too, once rightly told, "Women should acquire pure knowledge for becoming more mature human beings and utilitarian knowledge for becoming true women" (Tagore, 1978, p. 94).

The idea of consciousness, an idea constantly battling to be repressed and raised against patriarchal authority to consider a woman as an object, is as primitive as the concept of 'other.' A woman in Indian society spends her childhood abiding by the different rules set by her father and brothers while her womanhood suffers sacrifice fulfilling the desires, wishes and orders of her husband. Talking about the journey of a woman's life, a French existentialist philosopher, Simon de Beauvoir, rightly says, "She will free herself from the parental home, from her mother's hold. She will open her future not by active conquest but by delivering herself up, passive and docile, into the hands of a new master" (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 352).

The everyday Indian society, which considers a woman's silence, tolerance, and complicity as her jewels, suddenly gets repulsed when a woman turns her back on the traditional bounds and customs. The patriarchy, very smartly and intelligently, employs the so-called jewels of a woman, in coherence with the practices and dictates of male hegemony, to bring her consciousness.

The world, at the *fin de siècle* (end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), saw the emergence of a new type of woman (different from the previous one being seen as an ambivalent figure, damning herself and others coming into her contact, a harbinger of disaster, a destructive force bringing tribulations in the times ahead) at the literary horizon vigorously chasing her identity and having no shame asserting her 'self' over the will of males. Someone in the journal *Feminist – New Style* (1927) defines this 'New Woman' as

"The new woman is a blend of physical freedom, sexuality, and stamina with feminist self-assertiveness and traditional domestic femininity, a woman who can combine pleasure, career, and marriage. They are eager to participate in pleasure as they would do in play, work, etc." (Bromley, 1927, pp. 552-560).

Someone else, too, writes,

“The ‘wild woman,’ the ‘glorified spinster,’ the ‘advanced woman,’ the ‘odd woman;’ the ‘modern woman,’ ‘Novissima,’ the ‘shrieking sisterhood,’ the ‘revolting daughters’ – all these discursive constructs variously approximated to the nascent ‘New Woman’” (Ledger, 1997, p. 03).

However, the Victorian male establishment of the time sensed the alarm and havoc of this ‘new woman’s thirst for discovering her existence, the meaning of her life, her identity, and preference for the fulfilment of her emotional ‘self.’ This ‘new woman,’ to mark her emergence, was even declared as infanticide, adultress, home-destroyer and more. The patriarchal mindset of the time called her ideas of ‘free thinking’ and ‘liberation from men’s clutches as the enemies of human and familial relations. Nay, her ideas were also labelled as a threat to the so-called ‘naturalness’ of the Victorian concepts of marriage, family, motherhood, and even womanhood. Somebody has rightly observed, “The ‘newness’ of the New Woman marked her as an unmistakably ‘modern’ figure, a figure omitted to change to the values of a projected future” (Ledger, 1997, p. 05).

The emergence of the ‘new woman’ started posing a threat to the stronghold of the established order, a preference for male superiority. However, the patriarchy mistakenly considered her revolutionary outlook, progressive ideas, and immense belief in her capacity as self-serving meanness. Rather than leaving the labelled charges far behind, she earned a reputation as an ‘epicurean’ (Meeker, 2012, pp. 133-161). She, being provoked by her ultra-modern nature blended with evoked consciousness, began acting against the colonisation of her body and the disorientation of her mind. She, in this way, helped her dilemma, indecision and passivity syndrome decapitate her life. She, as a human being, started desiring the legitimacy of her womanhood, having complete possession of her ‘physical constitution’ and having all the equal rights to perform in almost all walks of life.

Shobhaa De has given these ‘new women’ their place in her literary world. De, a prominent cosmopolitan woman writer in Indian English Literature and best known for her flamboyant approaches to women's liberation, is considered to be a precursor to the world of popular fiction and the first to explore the ecstasies and vicissitudes of urban women's life. She, through her wonderful narrative style of frankness, precision and open heart, extraordinarily portrays the sensitive aspects of human life. Being special in comparison to contemporary women writers, De, in a way unique to her understanding, psychologically deals with the many significant issues of women. Ready to defy, at every step in life, the organised moral institutional orthodoxy of the Indian patriarchal society, she hails the new woman searching for her identity in her own unique way. The women of her literary world liberate themselves, challenge and break the menaces of centuries-old traditions and customs that lie in their predicaments and hinder their freedoms and rights. Some people have, talking about this ‘new woman,’ rightly said, “She slaughters macho males with a vengeance, and rattles poisons in her gender with disdain and disregard... and one thing she does not stomach is the hypocrisy of any kind” (Bhatnagar & Rajeshwar, 1998, p. 143).

They, however, are not entirely against the social system; they simply do not want to accept it in toto.

### **Review of Literature**

The thought of a writer greatly influenced the Literature of the time. It helps us get acquainted with the social, political, religious, racial and cultural influences of society. The review of pieces of Literature by different writers discusses the various ways adopted by the selected writer to intimate the plot and bring out the sensitivity of different characters in his/her works. The review of Literature deals with secondary sources related to the selected author.

Bijay Kumar Das (1995), in his paper “Shobhaa De’s *Sisters: An Appraisal*,” discusses De’s achievement in portraying two upper-class young businesswomen's stories. Mikki, the protagonist, suffers and learns the art of living. Her gaining the love and affection of her half-sister, Alisha, is proof of her final exultation for success. The author of the paper finds De’s use of figurative language as adding charm to this book (Das 155).

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Neeraj Kumar's paper titled "Search for Self and Identity in the Novels of Shobhaa De" presents Shobhaa De's touch on the boundary of more serious human concerns. He finds De believing in frankness and open-heartedness while narrating the incidents. De gives her women dignity and individuality and disapproves of sexual discrimination. Her literary works inspire budding scholars to search the field of feminism (Kumar, 2006, pp. 181-190).

An academician, in the chapter titled "Freedom from Social Bondage in Shobhaa De's *Sisters* and *Strange Obsession*," finds De's works as a fabulous complement in the realm of popular fiction writing. The academician does not find De's women excessively emotional. They, rather, by revolting against the traditional image of Indian women in words and performances, prefer to live a life of remembrance. Opposing the restraints of traditional society, De's women have designed their own codes of conduct, be it business or sexual matters (Gupta, 2003, p. 124).

Jaydipsinh Dodiya (2000), attempting to explore De's fictional world in the book *The Fiction of Shobhaa De's Critical Studies*, presents De as a deeply conventional, highly devoted, skilful storyteller and a shrewd judge of people. Her novels are highly complex. Essentially being a feminist writer, De is capable of recognising the displacement and marginalisation of women. However, she simultaneously, through her writings, attempts to turn this pattern upside down.

Shobhaa De's fiction, as conveyed by R. S. Pathak (1999), the author of the book *Modern Indian Novel in English*, presents the institution of marriage as having incomparable importance in young Indians' lives. However, her women, tearing into pieces the ideas of respectability linked with marriage, break all sexual taboos and run after money to live a life equal to their men. The abovementioned book presents De, the novelist, touching upon different shades of an urban woman's life and her plight.

### **Plan of Work**

The study is formalistic, analytical, and critical and is based on the textual study of selected novels of Shobhaa De. After going through almost more than two hundred different articles and books available on various websites, the study has found almost thirty secondary sources relevant to the keywords.

### **Findings and Discussion**

*Socialite Evenings*, De's debut novel, sheds ample light on the loneliness of the road to the liberation of a young, educated and bright Indian woman like Karuna, the protagonist. Unhappy with familial relations and circumstances, she starts her struggle right from here, being reminded of her familial society's doings with girls choosing to go their own ways. Karuna says, "Basically, I wanted to get out of the closed, boring, middle-class environment of my family. I wasn't interested in studies. I wanted to be on my own, independent" (De, 1989, p. 11).

Society in the Indian subcontinent disapproves of a woman aspiring to have her standings. Ironically, the same society, having a contrary view of a young woman, appreciates the same ambition and zeal in an adolescent male. Karuna, owing to her ministrations in her middle-class family, turns a rebel against her family as well as its society. She dreads ending up someday, like her mother, quivering and shaking her male master in the house, slapping at her for not being responsible and worthy enough. She, for her 'uniqueness' and 'newness' in finding her priorities, general attitudes towards life and inclinations at odds with her elder sisters, gets frowned upon, both at her home and outside. But her inability to give in silently conforms to the idea of a new woman in the making.

Karuna's observations of her family life at home clearly suggest the patriarch's ruling his family with an iron fist. The relationship between her parents exemplifies the self-enforcing male hegemony as well as female inferiority. The smart way of internalising social and political values takes the shape of such a 'normal' that the suppressed fail to understand it. The matriarch, like her, brought up in her parental home, gets burdened with embedding her children with the

same rules and ideals. She is answerable to the representative of the patriarchy. These everyday lived relations justify themselves as natural and beyond any change.

Karuna, a free spirit craving for her ways, gets married just for the sake of settling down. But, she, finding her married life to be loveless and incompatible, declines Anjali's suggestions of being submissive, humble and patient; instead of fading away in her husband's home, she takes refuge by establishing an extramarital affair with Krish. Her rejection and betrayal of the role of a traditional, dutiful and loyal Indian wife unsettle the patriarchal forces. She is labelled as being an 'adulteress,' a faithless and deceitful wife breaking the trust of a 'faithful, hardworking and loving man.' Infidelity committed by a woman is considered an ultimate betrayal in the subcontinent. The Indian common law, biased against women, does not help the situation improve even today. However, a woman, being conscious of her liberation, becomes more aware of her social conditions. Her knowledge helps her to see the real internalisation and break away from it.

Understanding and demystifying the processes, Karuna finally decides to take care of her parents, leading her own life as a single woman. Her decision suggests that an Indian 'new woman' does have some facets of the tradition in her life. She, in her teen years, may show her frustration with tradition but development, growth, and knowledge make it clear her idea of leading her life. Karuna, right from the beginning to the end, goes through tremendous growth in her understanding of her parents' life choices.

In *Starry Nights*, Aasha Rani's (the protagonist) transgression against her mentor Kishenbhai's wish to keep her his 'submissive mistress' has also been labelled as disloyalty and unfaithfulness. However, to generalise all women as being 'unfaithful' is itself a depiction of the social and political values of male superiority embedded in men's minds. Men's needs and desire, in the process of subjugating and dominating women by overpowering their sexuality and, thus, suppressing their identity, transcend them above the female sex. Even the cultural codes are framed to focus more on men's needs compared to the development of the identity of a woman.

The character of Akshay Arora in *Starry Nights* itself not only indicates the admiration of toxic masculinity but also paves men's ways, at every stage, for humiliating and insulting the women in their lives. His response to Aasha on the prospect of being caught by his wife suggests the same: "She isn't my wife. I'm staying right here. I don't care whether it's Malini or Goddess Sita herself!" (De, 1991, p. 27).

However, Aasha, even facing the risk of her secret liaison with him can get exposed before his wife, does not run or walk out of the room. She, rather, tells him about their equal involvement in the affair. She, here, appears to be morally superior as she holds out the mirror to him. This scene, as someone says, blatantly exposes male chauvinism,

"The double standard in bourgeois marriage whereby sexual virtue was expected of the wife but not of the husband... marriage should be freed from the contamination of male sexual license" (Ledger, 1997, p. 20).

The novel also presents the patterns of 'generational violence' when Aasha's *Amma* (mother) dictates her male hegemony and suggests going behind the herd. What has led to Indian women's objectification and alienation are the subduction and actions taken against them because "To be man's 'other' is to be his 'thing.' Similarly, the problem of how the object can know herself as such is the same as how the alienated can know its alienation" (Mayers, 1997, p. 76).

It is nothing but the male power that, by distorting the very process of making the foundation of female bondage as 'other' and managing to make itself a myth, makes a woman dependent on it. And a myth, as everyone knows, has real consequences without having a real appearance. However, Aasha, deciding to raise her daughter to live her life on her terms, puts an end to this 'generational violence.' Shobhaa De's objective of liberating women seems to be making them aware and capable of carving their new world, which a completely different from the world created by men for them.

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Mikki, the central female character in *Sisters*, after her father's death, starts handling his business empire and, in the business and industrial circle, proves herself no way less than the man folk. She gives her consent to marry Navin, not for the sake of love and an affair but rather to find a husband. But as soon as she understands Navin's efforts to assault her sexually before her engagement, she cancels her agreement and gets united with Binny, an ardent lover and enthusiastic suitor. Shobhaa De, here, through the character of Mikki, tries to suggest liberated women's power to make men give them what they want. Women can also be seekers of sexual pleasure, and they love and admire the man who, using different tricks, satiates their sensuous thirsts. And Mikki, too, after getting pre-marital sexual satisfaction from her would-be husband, immediately, without giving any second thought to her decision, gets married to him.

People from different categories possess different types of obsessions. They go obsessed with particular things and persons. They, after getting strongly obsessed with a particular person, greatly affect the behaviour of that person. And De's new women's perception of life is unrestrained and has many options; they don't hesitate to choose even women as their sex partners. They, owing to their minds getting swept away by liberal ideas, get whatever fulfilment they demand. Somebody aptly remarks, "The glittering world of cinema is in reality so ruthless, so miserable that it can shatter the moral values and innocence of any human being. But Aasha survives and achieves success" (Trivedi, 2003, p. 186).

It has while commenting on the lesbian relationship between Amrita, the protagonist, and Meenakshi alias Minx in *Strange Obsession* rightly been said that "Shobhaa De has concentrated more on the psychological aspects of Minx's personality, which has prevented the balanced development of her character" (Vats, 2010, p. 111).

Exploring the unexplored world of lesbianism, De has presented this relationship as exciting but terrifying. This sort of relationship between Surekha and Dolly in *Snapshots*, as well as Amrita and Minx in *Strange Obsession*, searches for a new horizon in the chapter on the man-woman relationship. Thus, even being dependent on each other for their biological needs, the traditional relationship between a man and a woman gets changed. De's women, because of the hollowness and ineffectiveness of this relationship, get inclined to extramarital relationships. Nay, they even use sex to the extent of bargaining to achieve their social and financial aims. In this way, these women, to turn the age-old image of women upside down, protest with a cry for freedom, equality and identity.

Exposing the dark amoral heart of Indian politics, "Sethji," De's sizzling novel published in 2012, deals with ambition, greed and lust. The power, in the novel, turns erotic, and Amrita, the protagonist of the story, doesn't want to lose the battle. Power is generally considered to have the capacity and capability of producing an effect, physical or moral, and influencing individuals' conduct. It, affecting the people as an endemic, can be viewed both as good and bad. A change can easily be visualised to become a powerful person in contemporary society. Bringing the economic facet of the power struggle has appropriately been said,

Eventually, everything boils down to money – that great leveller. There can be no talk of independence for women without economic self-sufficiency. An independent mind of a free spirit is meaningless so long as the body and the soul are being kept together by somebody else (De & Singh, 1993, p. 12).

But Amrita was not happy with her husband. Srichand, Amrita's husband, ate well, slept well and lived well. But, he invariably failed to fulfil haughty Amrita's sexual desires. One of the valves of his heart was defective, and his lungs, too, were too weak to pump enough oxygen. Amrita felt contempt for her husband's uninspiring performance. Her life became a mockery to her. She, in her bedroom, cried at her fate and pretended to cover up her sobs. Because of her husband's impotency and disharmony, she turns violent and plunges herself into extramarital affairs. Her mother, a spiteful and selfish lady, doesn't support and advise Amrita to leave or divorce an impotent man; rather, she advises her to have the patience to experience that version of love from her husband. Amrita had everything she possibly desired but not the



pleasure she mostly longed for. Consequently, she approves of her natural urges and makes her own rules.

### Comparative Analysis

Different problems have their roots in different social contexts. Women liberating groups in the West were formulated to voice the individual aspects of social and economic experiences to help draw out the commonalities. Consequently, women's status after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s went through radical changes. Their collective awareness of gender inequalities brought about a personal and political change that still seems to be unfathomable to third-world women. However, it is not to disregard third-world women's strengths. It is simply to put across the fact that most Asian women are still miles away to revolutionise their living conditions.

The environment for women in the West is more liberal to help them discover their strengths and weaknesses, but whenever a woman, particularly in the Indian patriarchal society, tries to assert her identity, she has to suffer the worst kind of psychological oppression because the age-old Indian culture does not support the mental development of a woman. In the Indian setup, the superiority of male perspectives, privileged by the heterosexual outlook over the multiple ranges of visions and personal stories, gets mobilised to the dangerous ends of neutralising and negating even the personhood of the one being objectified. Identifying three types of psychological oppression as stereotypes, sexual domination and exclusion, and further talking about the female condition, someone says, "Female stereotypes threaten the autonomy of women not only under their existence but also by their content" (Bartky, 1979, p. 03).

The characters of Shobhaa De's female protagonists are symbols of Indian women suffering from subconscious oppression, self-loathing, shame and guilt, resulting in their victimisation of internalised oppression. In *Socialite Evenings*, for example, it is Karuna's husband's attitudinal problem that causes her, instead of him, to feel guilty. It is he and his sheer indifference towards Karuna, his wife, that make her launch a stir against the loss of her identity.

An urban Indian woman, being told to abide by ideological implications when her 'being' pulls her in the direction of not sacrificing her identity, individuality, will, sexuality and desire, finds herself caught in a strong strain between tradition and modernity. This binary makes the 'new woman' a hybrid facing tenfold maximised upheavals in her life. Being a third-world woman aspiring for her 'self' by adopting the 'newness,' in comparison to the West, makes the process of being socially ostracised far worse. And any effort, in this situation, to muzzle her voice and to fetter her movement frustrates her to the point of retaliation. However, she never truly shuns her traditional self, even if the tradition significantly tries to tamper with her efforts of being a 'free thinker.' Women in India find themselves unable to delineate traditions and customs altogether.

Esteemed writers in Indian Literature such as Anita Desai, Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Ismat Chughtai, Namita Gokhale, Nayantara Sehgal, Sudha Mazumdar, Amrita Pritam and Manju Kapur, before Shobhaa De, too, in their fictional works, have presented rebellious, educated and liberal female characters. Rebellious and self-reliant female characters without the pressure of inhibitions clouding their judgments, in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were rarely found in Indian Literature. Though the lives of the cosmopolitan women of India were experiencing a transition from tradition to modernity, literary women were still busy blindly worshipping the mythological goddesses *Sita* and *Savitri*. Commenting on one of the many Indian mythological anecdotes, some people have rightly said, "Savitri: The good wife saves her husband from death, follows him anywhere, proves her virtue, remains under his control and gives him her power" (Jacobson & Wadley, 1986, pp. 122-23).

However, the postcolonial writers are more concerned with the issues of Indian women related to their confusion, dilemma, dissatisfaction with their circumstances and an unquenchable thirst for a change in their social and familial status.

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Shobhaa De, through her literary works, rejects the idea of fidelity in marriage. Fidelity, for her, in a typical Indian marriage, means differently for both husband and wife. A husband enjoys an unscathed reputation no matter his infidelity and unfaithfulness, whereas a wife carries the spot of 'grave sin.' That's why her works, frankly and abundantly, tell the tale of sexual incidents. She treats sex with open-heartedness. She, in the case of her women, has replaced mutual fidelity with sexual freedom. Though, she, for talking of sexual incidents, has often been criticised and labelled as *Vatsyayani* (lady Vatsyayan; Vatsyayan, the writer of *Kamsutra*), 'Soft porn queen,' *Pasha* (a Turkish officer of a high rank) of pulp fiction,' and 'Vamp Feminist' (Gupta, 2010, n. p.), etc. However, a thorough study of her works tells something different. By making 'sexual relations' a major theme of her literary world, she tries to shatter the patriarchal ideas of female sexuality.

### Conclusion

This brief analytical approach to some of Shobhaa De's notable works suggests that she, by her bold and frank depiction of the fair sex and feminine attitude, has enabled her women to protest against the traditional patriarchal Indian society where women suffer deprivation of freedom of expression, actions of their choices, cherish and fulfil their dreams. God doesn't discriminate between creating a man or a woman. A woman, like a man, is born to be free. But, the truth is that she, on most parts of this planet, gets controlled by patriarchal norms and factors, victimising and subjugating her differently. She, being restricted by patriarchy, starts protesting and finally turns into a rebel. Shobhaa De, through her creation of a new world with words, has successfully unmasked the crystals of reality surreptitiously hidden, at par with the cosmopolitan Indian trends, under the fog of the glamour world of India.

It is to be noted that the titles of almost all her literary works, like her first name, begin with the English alphabet 'S', which certainly doesn't seem to be a coincidence. It, to more extent, seems to be suggesting De's chief concerns – 'senses,' 'sex', and 'self' - for her literary world. One may or may not agree with everything depicted in her fiction, but the way she has treated the various issues – challenges, predicament, values and lifestyle – of the contemporary cosmopolitan Indian women surely deserves the utmost care. By drawing public attention to women's exploitation, discrimination and commodification, she, through her literary creations, has definitely shattered the patriarchal hegemony of Indian orthodox society.

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#### Bio-note

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