

A CRY FOR IDENTITY IN SHOBHA DE'S NOVEL - SECOND THOUGHT

Reshma Sood
Research Scholar

Abstract:

Shobha De is a feminist at heart, who feels for the women who are alienated, marginalized, penalized for being a woman. Shobha, came up with yet another novel depicting Indian culture, patriarchy and its norms suffocating a woman. Second thought is De's seventh novel ,wherein she has delved deep into the psyche of inner turmoil of women. She has poured a lady's heart, the alienation, suffocation and subjugation of patriarchy on women. A woman is never free in herself. Before marriage she is under her father or brother's control. After marriage she is supposed to move according to her husband's whims and fancies. In the wake of twenty first century, it seems the times should have changed. But its only on paper, men will remain men as still women have not gained equality in status. This paper deals with the identity crisis of Maya, her suffocation, her inner conflict of mind, her resilience in marriage. Her strong will to sustain the ill-treatment meted out to her by her narcissist hubby Ranjan. In the end ,to give a second thought to her marriage to make it better.

Keywords: *Identity crisis, resilience, conflict, patriarchy, alienation*

Shobha de is a post modern writer of repute. A model, a columnist and a journalist. She is also the founder and editor of three magazines-Stardust, Society and Celebrity. David Davidar was the one to encourage Shobha to write. She took to writing and landed with 'Socialite Evenings' her maiden novel. Thereafter her journey as a novelist started and there was no end to it. She writes fiction as well as non-fiction. She herself hails from an orthodox Maharashtra family. She revolted when she was not permitted to take up modeling as a profession. But Shobha, a girl of her own moods and aspiration did enter the glamorous industry. She gathered courage to bid goodbye to her first marriage and married Dilip De, a businessman. Shobha's novels also reflect brave women like her,

who turn decision makers towards the end .Shobha through her novels has brought women at par with men and showed her readers that women can also have extramarital affairs, break codes of conduct like men, can survive independently without men. This approach of life was highly indigestible by the orthodox patriarchal society and no wonder she was called "Jackie Collins of India".

Shobha De's novels are replete with themes of patriarchy, loveless marriages, alienation and subjugation. Her protagonists suffer, but not to the end. They are all brave, educated women and carve out their ways leading to their satisfaction in the end. Maya, a sweet girl is off from Calcutta to Mumbai, with her mother and maternal uncle Prodipda to meet an N.R.I, Ranjan ,only son of his parents. Chitra, Maya's mother is too anxious to fix her daughter's marriage with Ranjan. She is anxious as well as nervous whether the boy's side would like Maya or no. Here we see a lot of glimpses of effects of patriarchy which have clogged even the women's mind. They are so stereotyped that they forget to have a view of their own, but are in flow with the society, culture and norms laid down by the man's world.

Mayas mother, Chitra makes her daughter conscious of her dusky skin as her complexion was a concern for her. No wonder she remarks "A dark person rarely looks wealthy. Well-fed. Happy. To be born dark is to be condemned for life!" (De 5). Indian society has men, no matter what color they are, seek a fair complexioned bride only. Chitra's numerous instructions on her daughter's appearance proves that even parents flow with the patriarchal norms, well set in their mind right from their childhood.

On reaching Mumbai, Maya was disappointed as well as surprised at Ranjan's cold attitude towards her mother. He didn't have the courtesy even to pass a cup of tea to her mother. On Mayas complaint about his rude behavior, Chitra, her mother supported him instead by saying "Men do

not undertake housework-especially foreign-returned men. It's not done. It would embarrass his family" (De 9).

Ranjan was in America before returning to India, but his thoughts were as old as an orthodox Indian male. Chitra spoke directly to Ranjan of Maya's inclination to work as a textile designer. Ranjan was quite abrupt in his response to her and showed his disagreement over the matter "true, that is the modern trend. But in my case, I am earning well enough to support a wife and a family. I believe it's a women's duty to run a good home"(De 11). The marriage is fixed and Maya is submerged in her dreams of a loving and caring husband. But as a newly married bride, the spark, the romance, the care, the longingness and the sensuality was missing in her life. She found Ranjan too cold and distant from her right from the beginning of her marriage .He was hesitant even to come close to her. On Maya's insistence and initiative, he replied that he needed time. But in reality, he was hiding his impotency.

Maya falls in love with a young boy, her neighbor Nikhil. Nikhil fulfills all the neglect, ignorance of her hubby .Nikhil takes Maya on a ride and shows Mumbai. Maya could feel herself alive for the first time after her marriage to Ranjan as Ranjan never appreciated her nor fulfilled his duties of a husband. He was constantly undermining Maya, showing her incapacities in her household chores. He always compared her with his mother, whom he adored. He hardly realized that Maya was his wife and not his mother. He failed to realize that even Maya had aspirations as a wife and it was his duty to care and fulfill them.

Constant nagging and sarcasm suffocated her, as this was not the life she wanted to lead nor was this the type of husband she desired. Despite her mental sufferings Maya was guilty of her relationship with Nikhil. Gradually this guilt melted away and she gave in to the physical needs required at both ends. First time in an intimate relationship with Nikhil, she could feel complete as a woman.

But destiny had something else in store for her. One day Nikhil's mother came with an invitation card announcing Nikhil's marriage. It was a jolt from the blue for Maya. Her dreams were again

shattered to pieces. But she bore this news with great courage and gave a second thought to her marriage. Here through Maya, De once again brings up Indian culture and daughters who go on working on their marriages in a hope ...someday their destiny might change eventually....

Second thought is indeed a second thought on the part of Maya as she rethinks to work on her marriage again.....

Conclusion: Maya's tale is a cry for identity where she pines for a place of worth and honor in her own house after marriage. She wants to be considered an equal partner in her decisions of her home, wants to be appreciated, cared for and seek all the marital bliss of a happy marriage. Her heart cries for freedom as she feels too suffocated to endure more emotional pains from her hollow marriage.

With the advent of pop culture , wherein we talk of fashion, films ,modeling, technology, fast food, decked up men and women and also equality between the male and female . But in reality as this novel unfolds, we get to understand the truth lying deep down the Indian system, the Indian marriages. That is...Indian society has given equal status to men and women, but, only on paper as men still prefer and hold their upper hand and consider women to be their bonded slaves. They fail to understand the needs of a wife, a human in particular. Shobha de gives a call to parents and specially the mothers, who are the first teachers to wake up and introspect, the upbringing of their wards. To instill in their sons, to respect a girl, right from their childhood. This in turn can only make them responsible and caring husbands. A girls happiness in her marriage, would keep her family united, save so many families from falling apart . Most important would save so many girls from sulking and dying . Dying an emotional death before an actual death.

Works cited:

1. De,Shobha.*Socialite Evenings*.Penguin books,1996.