

TRADITION VS. MODERNITY IN SHOBHA DE'S SELECT NOVELS



Supriya Karaanday

Junior College Teacher (English Department)
Nav Maharashtra Vidyalaya & Junior College Pimpri,
Pune. (Maharashtra) .

Abstract:- The paper intends to focus on 'Tradition vs. Modernity In Shobha De's Select Novels'. It has huge significance in the Indian English Literature. The most significant social change in India is marked in the beginning of 20th century, when Western education, secularization, liberation of women, urbanization, cosmopolitan and industrialization start to cast its spell on Indian civilization. The colonization of families in look for service and better life from rural to the industrial areas as well as cities lead to a structural change in the civilization: the traditional dual family structure attain metamorphosed into nuclear families; amplify in materialism and wearing a way of traditional values; cut throat antagonism in economic sphere; rise in the illicit sex- contacts, separation and pre- and extra-marital sexual relations turns into a customary substance.

Shobha De's three novels Socialite Evenings, Starry Nights and Snapshots from the realistic perspective with a view to showing how she is reflecting as well as representing the changed social realism of the lives of upper class women in cosmopolitan in India. She also reflects the fight between two ideological poles of tradition and modernity through the central character, Karuna and her companion Anjali. Both Anjali and Karuna grow up in traditional families. Both of them opt for an open-minded life, refusing to understand the myths created as well as nourished by patriarchal civilization. They swim against the tide of civilization, smoke, drink as well as spoil in extra-marital relationships.

Keywords: Tradition, Modernity, Colonialism, Ideology, Civilization.

INTRODUCTION:

The present study aims at analyzing Shobha De's three novels *Socialite Evenings*, *Starry Nights* and *Snapshots* from the realistic perspective with a view to showing how she is reflecting and representing the changed social reality of the lives of upper class women in metropolitan India. In these novels the majority of her characters, in the initial step, declare their feminine identity through protest and defiance but eventually end up accepting and embracing the traditional values of patriarchal culture. Therefore, the conflict in her protagonists between traditional pull as well as yearning for female autonomy frustrates the quest for wholeness and included self-hood. There will be exclusive focus on this dilemma of her characters without attributing it to the novelist herself.

Indian civilization, from antique period has been very impressionable and open to outside influences. It has eagerly acknowledged the influences from outside and made adjustments and readjustments at dissimilar times. Although, the structural changes have occurred many times; there is rarely a well-designed loss or dissimilarity in the traditional order of the civilization. It is only during the past decades that the social change on Indian view has started touching the functional part though in a limited approach.

Indian women novelists in English similar to Manju Kapur, Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya, Gita Hariharan as well as Shobha De describe this multifaceted, dual as well as ambivalent identity of women engendered by a conflict of tradition and modernity in their women characters. Their works no longer represent female as a mute sufferer and upholder of traditional values, but an individual who fights hard to free herself from the cages of traditional civilization.

Shobha De, in detail, focuses her artistic camera on the various aspects of modern Indian civilization: ethical as well as religious insolvency, insincerity, rat-race for prosperity and glamour, indiscriminate sex as well as sexual perversion. Being the product of a particular socio-cultural environment, she portrays the globe as she sees it and not as it must be. Her fictional globe, which is invariably inhabited by women, is not situated in some daydream worlds or times; the researcher may grasp their glimpses in the people living around. Without adopting a feminist posture, Shobha De in almost all her novels from *Socialite Evenings* (1989) to *Second Thoughts* (1996) attempts to explore and represent the struggle and anguish of the cosmopolitan elite females as they are trapped in the network of tradition as well as modernity, between patriarchy and the yearning for autonomy. Being aware of their rights, they strive for self-actualization by raising their voice against the stifling socio-cultural environment. Her female characters juggle dexterously with these conflicting ideological pulls but the feeling of rebellion to legalize the self is stifled by the civilization. As a result, all the characters of her novels eventually settle down with an attitude of compromise. Mohini Giri, former chairperson of the National Commission for Women states:

To observe with an impartial state of mind, Shobha De's novels appear as representations of the changed actuality of the lives of cosmopolitan females, as a result, the changes brought regarding through urbanization, open-minded financial system, feminist movements as well as courtyard of thoughts among citizens by means of standard. Accordingly, her female protagonists are trapped between traditional ethics as well as insincerity and the free thinking and unrestrained sex liberty stimulated by modernity. Therefore, they are neither the sample of female fighters for self-respect as well as freedom nor the battered and tattered women of domineering patriarchal arrangements.

The novel similar to *Starry Nights* and *Snapshots*, Shobha De again takes the problem of crack self. Into the *Starry Nights* during the character of Amma and Aasha Rani, the central characters, the novelist reflects the disagreement between patriarchal traditional civilization as well as modernity. Amma in the opening forces her daughter Aasha Rani to connect film globe only to receive retribution against the male-dominated civilization. However, towards the end, she too comes reverse to the elderly standards and advises Aasha Rani to put away her daughter from the film globe which according to her is the unclean individual. In the same way, Aasha Rani in the beginning flouts all the standards of the civilization through having illegal relations, but towards the conclusion, she also returns to the traditional fold.

It is one thing to propagate contemporary feminist standards as well as thoughts at the theoretical, scholar stage and pretty another to observe their working in the actual life of females in a civilization that is extremely entrenched during the traditional patriarchal principles as well as standards but is marching towards modernity which dislodges those values. There is actually no domineering occurrence of authorial point of view in these novels which may have made these into propaganda pieces of feminist ideology, however, an honest portrayal of life as lived by modern cosmopolitan females who are split and fragmented selves caught in the dilemma of conversion of Indian society from traditional to modern.

CONCLUSION:

Therefore, Shobha De's novels give out as arealreflection to the contemporary socio-cultural environment. It alsosuggests a tumultuous seriousdiscuss for vulgarizing the printed statement. Within all her works, she shows that the modern female is in a double fix: tradition and modernity.

In Snapshots all the characters experience this alternation between tradition as well as modernity. But it is only Swati who triumphs over tradition. Reema, Aparna, Noor, Rashmi and Surekha go against the create norms of the civilization, but all of them have to pay a heavy price in one way or the other. Noor indulges in an incestuous relationship with her brother, Nawaz and ultimately takes her personal life. Rashmi's son may not be accepted by the civilization for he is the product of an unwed couple. Rashmi in spite of developing a series of relationships, like Anjali of Socialite Evenings, craves for a gentleman who may fasten her. Surekha and Reema also experience the oscillation between the two poles: Reema is modern enough to have an illicit relationship with her brother-in-law but she is too traditional to allow her daughter to marry of her own alternative. Similarly Surekha enjoys lesbian relationship with Dolly but is not bold enough to acknowledge it or go against the wishes of her mother-in-law and her mal-companion.

As a result, it is quite clear that Shobha De like other Indian women writers through the gallery of women characters reflects the modern transitional Indian reality. She portrays the metropolitan elite women as they are rather than as they ought to be. She probes deep in the hearts of her characters and brings to light the sufferingas well asdistress they suffer, as a result, of being pulled in the opposite directions of tradition vs. modernity.

WORKS CITED:

- 1.De, Shobha. Socialite Evenings. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1989.
- 2._____. Starry Nights. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1992.
- 3._____. Snapshots. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1995.
- 4.Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa. Indian Writing in English. 3rd [Ed.] New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., 1983.
- 5.Pathak, R.S. Modern Indian Novel in English. New Delhi: Creative Books, 1999.



Supriya Karaanday

Junior College Teacher (English Department) , Nav Maharashtra Vidyakya & Junior College Pimpri, Pune. (Maharashtra) .