

# Feministic Ventoff by Shoba De in the Starry Nights

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The historical milestone of the feminist movement was the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 which in manifesto demanded a women rights to her complete control over her property and the right to divorce her husband, guardianship of her children and an end to sexual discrimination in employment along with right to receive equal pay with men for the same work. During December 14, 1961 American president John F Kennedy signed on the status of women and this feminist rebellion got their first victory and since then first movement never look back.

Of lately, the society had witnessed a sea change in the perception and life style of people, especially of women who have enough of bullying and buckling. This is because psychological feminist consciousnesses the consciousness of victimization. It discovers and cure the deep root reason for the oppression of women. It attempts not mere individual awareness in raising the consciousness of an entire culture. Aware of the evils that originates from patriarchy, no longer do women endorse the Tennyson an wisdom of separation of roles and sphere of activity.

*Man for the field and women for the hearth:*

*Man for sword and for the needle she:*

*Man to command women to obey:*

*All else confusion. (Tennyson, 1847, 48)*

Indian English literature has produced a galaxy of women writers touching various aspects of human relationships. Anita Desai's focus is on psychological matters, Bharti Mukherjee it is a question of identity. Thus the movement which had started as a mere consciousness in writers like kamala Das, Kamala Markandya has now assumed a more emphatic voice in writers like Shoba De.

Shoba Dean eminent modern novelist and journalist has focused in most of her novels on the marginalization of women in Indian society. As a feminine novelist she has marvelous understanding of the psyche of women and therefore she explores the world of specially of urban women with all its overwhelming problems and challenges in her novels like **Socialite Evening, Strange Obsession, Sister, sultry Days and Starry Nights**. Shoba De's most famous as

well as most controversial novel *Starry Nights* took the literary world by the storm for its frank portrayal of sex and sexploitation. Apparently the novel heavily laced with sexuality is a realistic study of astounding conceivable variety of sex, perfidies, deceit, treachery, intrigues, crime and multi dimensional corruption. Glittering Mumbai cinema beckons so many young girls bubbling with ambition lust of power and pelf. Before they achieve their goals they have to pass through dark tunnels of sexploitation and never ending sufferings which resulted in loneliness, frustration and disaster.

Shoba De realistically articulates the experiences of the protagonist of the novel. Asha Rani and other women characters like **Geetha Devi, Sudha, Malini and Rita** as manifestation of oppression in chauvinistic society. They suffer in their lives at the hands of men in one way or the other. First of all, Geetha Devi, mother of Asha Rani has suffered a lot as she was abandoned by her husband to fight with poverty and deprivation with three girls to raise. She had even to prostitute to continue dance lessons for Asha Rani as well as to support the family. She lived in slums, faced all kind of humiliation as well as exploitation. With inmates strength to construct her life as she reweaves the fabric of his life courageously but meek and subservient as she was in the beginning. She was often threaten by her husband who hurled abuses at her, neglect her, deprived her of money and ultimately deserted her after his remarriage with a dancer. Asha Rani painfully recalls:

*"Amma used to be tears often enough when appa showed up*

*Stinking of liquor, with bloodshot eyes and speech that slurred"*

(27).

Geetha Devi was not *only* ill treated by her husband but also by Girija whom she was intended to marry. She had to sell all her jewellery and shift to slums with her growing daughters. Asha Rani looking at her mother's photographs at various film functions in the palm days of her life recalls the experience of her mother. In spite of all her suffering Geetha Devi remained a devoted wife to her husband. At the time of appa's illness amma stays with him in the hospital, eliminates all bitterness and wanted Asha Rani to see her appa in the hospital. Asha

Rani bitter, defiant and fiery can hardly understand her amma's devotion to "a man who had caused her and her children nothing but pain(74).

The novel *Starry Nights* beautifully provides a contrast to silently suffering Geetha Devi by juxtaposing her with modern women like Kishenbhai's wife, Jojo's wife and Akshay's wife Malini who when cheated by their husbands came out of their homes, cry out loud and sack related women to win back their lost husband accompanied by Rita, dashingingly goes on to snarl at Asha Rani to bring Akshay back. Malini also suffers at the hands of her husband. Akshay being a womanizer and fond of blue films is incapable of understanding her sensitive as well as artistic nature. He also scoffs at her music, hates her and mocks Malini's sacrifice made for happy family life:

*For what? For giving up her career? For agreeing to his every*

*Whim and providing him with a home, he could be proud of? For*

*Sacrificing. Yes sacrificing every thing to be Mrs. Arora.... (51)*

Through Malini and others the novelist seem to suggest that mostly actors in filmy duniya are unfaithful in their family life and therefore their wives have the stories of sadism, mental and physical cruelty humiliation to tell. Wives are generally treated as commodities as Aasha Rani thinks:

*The bigger the hero the more miserable his wife. Mused AashaRa*

*ni..... so the wives are only pulled out of obscurity on important*

*functions such as premieres festivals and other V. I. P. affairs which*

*call for social conformity. Then she is expected to reflect her*

*husband's position in the industry and behave in accordance with*

*his status(192).*

Malini's marriage supposed to provide her with love, care understanding is false as it works only through sex. Akshay needs sex and also wants variety therefore loses interest in Malini who can't fulfil his demands. In fact, women should know the tactics to control animal like man as Rita brings out stark reality in her dialogues:

*Men are all the same animals.... and we women such fools.....Ro*

*mance finishes the morning after the wedding night.... The day a man feels that his women has lost interest in sex and therefore*

*in him. The relationship is finished and he starts looking elsewhere*

*e.....Everything is decided on the bed, on the bed(50).*

In *Starry Nights* Shoba De also stresses a very important fact that mostly a woman is an instrumental in another women's sufferings directly and directly. In our society woman ill-treat and exploit women instead of showing respect, love, consideration and understanding for their own sex. Though in patriarchal society, the emphasis is generally laid on women's exploitation by men. But history bears awitness to the fact that women play an important role in the destiny of women in various identifies as wife, mother, mother-in-law, aunt, sister, sister-in-law and daughter.

Asha Rani, the protagonist of *Starry Nights* is a suffering soul since her childhood. The very birth of *Aasha Rani* was a bitter agony. She can recall vividly: "She was nothing but an unwanted bastardchild. For every one to exploit"(32). In her childhood she suffered due to bitter relationship of her parents. Her selfish father and heartless father, a renowned film producer of Madras, left her in the jaws of hardships. She hates her father so much that she does not want to see him when he is ill. In fact she does not feel for him because painful memories of her lost childhood rush to her mind of and on.

In her childhood, deprived of parental love, protection, closeness and emotional security, Aasha Rani had to face starvation and poverty. Owing to the lack of fatherly protection, she underwent traumatic experience at the hands of her uncle. But she was most mercilessly used by her own mother, who instead of acting as a saviour, further pushed her into the hell to support her family. Throwing all moral values to the wind, amma forced Aasha Rani to perform in blue films against her will. The girl, who didn't want to kill her conscience to break the barriers of morality was forcibly made a money making machine in her youth as she painfully recalls:

*But amma had chosen that very day to steer her family from rags to*

*riches cashing in on the only Solid asset, she had in the world. The fort*

*Y inch bust of her fifteen years old daughter (18).*

Tears rolls down the cheeks of Aasha Rani, when she leaves for Bombay. Like a caged bird, she is forced to form in porno session. If ever she resisted, her mother cruelly struck her. Before porno session, she helplessly cries, protests and repeatedly requests amma to save her life. Blinded by craze, ambition and greed, amma could think of nothing except money. When ever Aasha Rani feels so tired and isolated as to withdraw herself, amma furiously and scornfully chides her, show her tantrums, compels her to pull on by remaining her the condition of the family. Aasha Rani always become the tragedy of her life.

**Conclusion**

To conclude it can be well said that *Shoba De* presents not only the harsh realities of the life faced by different sections of women keeping in view the contemporary feminist critical theories. The novel also highlights the role of women sufferings at the hands of women who remain mere agents for the sake of money and by the male who always remain in search of harassment, exploitation and torment them within the limits of the family and society. Shoba De suggests *filmy duniya* which is full of sharks, thieves, blackmailers and double crossers takes the advantage of it. De presents through her women characters in *Starry Nights* that women must be firm and stand up for their right by hook or by crook as Rita said: "We women have to be firm. And stand up for our rights".

**References**

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