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SHOBHA DE’S “SELECTIVE MEMORY
STORIES FROM MY LIFE”- A REVIEW

In the present chapter analysis of De’s’ Selective Memory’ is presented with a 
feministic viewpoint. The memoir covers not only her family, but also the celebrities of film 
industry and their life styles. It is raising feminine issues of women in general and 
specifically exploitation of women in the film industry. De has firsthand experience as a 
celebrity and a columnist of leading magazines.

8.1 Shobha De: a profile

ShobhaDe born on 7 January 1948 is a columnist and novelist often called 
India’s Jackie Collins. Shobha Rajadhyaksha belongs to a Maharasrtrian Saraswat Brahmin 
family. She has graduated from St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai with a degree in psychology. 
After making her name as model, she began a career in journalism in 1970. During same 
time, she founded and edited three popular magazines-Stardust, Society, and Celebrity. At 
present, she is a freelance writer and columnist for several newspapers and magazines.

Shobha De, perhaps better known as the Maharani of Muck or the Princess of Porn, 
is India’s most commercially successful English-language author. It’s a crazy claim for a 
62-year-old middle-class Indian woman-one who describes herself as a “traditional” mother 
to six children-to be able to make. However, sex sells, even in one of the world’s most 
socially conservative countries. Bucking all convention, for years De has dared to write 
lusty, shocking sex scenes, and from a female point of view. In a country where women 
rarely bare more than two inches of leg and hardly ever file for divorce, she writes about 
women who, like herself, flee marriage because they are bored. De is author of more than a
dozen titles, all of which start with the letter “S” (Sultry Days, Starry Nights, Strange Obsession) and all of which depict a level of privilege that most of India’s more than 1 billion impoverished masses cannot even imagine.

8.2 Shobha De as a Post-Colonial Writer

Shobha De has been many things to many people. Her high voltage career happened in unexpected ways, right from her unplanned entry as a teenager into the glamour world of modeling to her high profile years as a magazine editor, columnist, TV scriptwriter and author. In these incarnations she mainly observed, the upcoming India. She has depicted this brash, affluent ambitious India with an altogether distinct touch in her memoir. Here is a memoir written with a detached attitude, covering high-society hijinks, movie star teller’s celebrity neuroses and much more. Here is a voice of a new Indian woman that speaks of choices. ‘Selective Memory: Stories of My Life’ ‘is remarkable for the honesty with which it captures life-story of a woman who has been a legend in her own time.

‘Selective Memory’ is preoccupied less with the myth as projected by the media and more with the reality that Shobha De embodies. Here she has been projected as daring daughter, a homemaker wife and a worried mother. Generally, Shobha has been considered a glamorous person lacking in the commitment to social cause. Selective Memory, has worked wonders in favor of De, leafing through the book; De emerges as a new woman possessing a mischievous charm and immense capacity to judge and understand other people. She is at her best in depicting the ties of human relationships.

Critics also advocate that an autobiography may begin his/her life-story from any point. S/He is free to choose the events of h/her life. Nevertheless, s/he should be very judicious in his/her choice. Regarding the choice of events, Andre Maurois says,

“A biographer or author is obliged to quit from his narrative, the common place of daily life and the limit himself almost exclusively to salient events, actions and traits. The writing and the reading of the bulky volumes otherwise required would be alike impossible,”

The India De knows and writes about is also very different from India pictured by most writers, that of abject urban poverty or quaint village life.
“My books put an unflinching gaze on upper-middle-class India,”

“She says. “It is out of that class.””

In the 'prologue' to her ‘Selective memory,’ she writes,

"For a woman, a book in progress is like a secret lover. She has to hide from her family, steal time to go back to dream about.”

Shobha De, whose entire career is one of a rebellion against patriarchy might accent the authority of authorship in her belief that she is in control of her matter and medium but in Selective Memory her construction of selfhood is subverted. The way she has chosen to crave up her life into those segments no reservations about revealing and serving up to readers. Her self-examination is tentative and subversive. Its presence is felt through her gaps and silences and in her refusal her hidden self

De’s autobiography as its title is ‘Selective Memory’ is suggestive that a human mind is always likes to retain that which is precious, poignant and painful. The autobiography reconstructs the images of the self-lost in the irrevocable past. These images are not only mortal constructs of the autobiographer himself but often shaped by the society. Hence, the autobiographer is bound to select and eliminate. Human memory is sometimes unreliable wistful and recollection of the past itself is selective.

The character Anjali in Socialite Evenings sums up De’s brand of feminism when she says, 'Men feel terribly threatened by self-sufficient women. They prefer girls like me-dependent dolls. You should try it- see how much more you can get out of him that way. In De’s self-help book for women, ‘Surviving Men the Smart Woman’s Guide Stating on Top’, she gives similar advice. She tells her readers to,

“Thrive a man to any level of competence. Women should use these formula- (a) food (b) sex (c) food and sex.”
Her important works are the following:

1. Starry Night
2. Socialite Evenings
3. Shooting from the Hip
4. Sultry Days
5. Sisters
6. Small Betrayals
7. Second Thoughts
8. Selective Memory
9. Speed Post
10. Surviving Men
11. Strange Obsessions
12. Snapshots etc.

‘God must be a Mother’. These words she has inscribed in her novel ‘Speed Post’ is a keynote to her personality. Here is a writer who talks about woman without weaving a feminist flag. Her life story is a document of a woman – writer for whom mother – hood and family life is a celebration.

Shobha De—Super model, celebrity, journalist and bestselling author is the true observer of the slice of the Indian urban life. In 1988, at age of 50, she published her life story entitled Stories from my life . A marriage manual entitled ‘Spouse’ offers her prudent views on marriage as an institution and De to her kids is aluminous record of guidelines to the posterity.

8.3 Selective Memory: Stories from My Life

‘Selective Memory’ is pre-occupied less with the myth as projected by the media and more with the reality that Shobha De embodies. Here, she is projected as a daring daughter, a homemaker wife, and a worried mother. Shobha De has been considered glamour’s person lacking in the commitment to social cause. Selective Memory, has worked wonders in favor of DE, leafing through the book; De emerges as a new woman possessing mischievous charm and immense capacity to judge and understand other people. She is at her best in depicting the ties of human – relationships.
Selective Memory does not depict the continuous chronological flow like biography or autobiography. Here, Shaba omits, sums up, and comments about the large chunks of her life. Her readers are often left dangling, wondering what had happened, how it had happened and what led to what. A temporality is characteristic of both autobiography as well as memoir. Woman’s autobiographical text being consciously or unconsciously gender-driven resist the utopianism of autobiography proper and align him or her to the discontinuity of memoir. For instance, Virginia Woolf’s ‘Moments of Being’ has a memoir like discontinuity.

Critics also advocate that an autobiographer, may begin his/her life story from any points/he is free to choose the events of his/her life. Nevertheless She/he should be judicious in his/her choice.

De’s life story definitely has an autobiographical charm. She has a wonderful mystery in selecting and weaving a chain of such events that have shaped her mind and influenced her character. In the prologue to her memoir, she observes,

“If nothing else, Selective Memory aided and abetted the transformation. Kick-started the process, as it were, forced me to glance over my shoulder. Look back, sift, discard, reinforce, assess, re-assess, come... to terms, recognize, accept- above all, accept.”

According to Roy Pascal,

‘In the autobiography proper attention is focused the self. ‘The real charm of an autobiography consists in the image of self is at the center in autobiography. It is seen that sometimes too many events and characters down the charm of the self in autobiography.’

Recalling her past, Shobha De recollects her childhood, birth and parentage; Selective Memory has marvelously portrayed her earlier years and her relationship with her
parents and siblings. She has depicted this gender-discrimination still prevalent in our country. She observes,

“Unfortunately, for my mother I was not a second son. She had prayed for the second son. My birth could not be possibly having been rather reckless of my parents to go in for a fourth child with no guarantee that it would be male.”

After Shobha’s birth, her father got a job in Delhi and the stay in the Metropolitan city liberated the family from the narrow notions of a small town in Maharashtra. When her father was transferred to Bombay and from Ghatkoper to a flat opposite Church gate, the process of liberation was strengthened.

In spite of the changes in the family scenario, her father continued to tell,

“Character building youth is meant for character building.”

De reminds us of her visits to Delhi and particularly Khan Market. Most of the stories of her childhood have disappeared but the smells are still the same, walking through the long corridors, her senses are over associate with a particularly happy phase of her childhood.

A large part of this book is about her younger years, her thoughts and her family. The string that holds this book together is her observations of diverse people and issues when she writes about her birth and good luck for the family,

"Fortunately, for me my mother's initial feelings of being let down soon after my father had declared me 'lucky' for the family."

De begins her life-story in the mood of ‘Sweet acceptance’. She does not like to interpret this change as a sign of mellow. With a great zeal, she welcomes her fiftieth year. She is not nostalgic to hanker after her earlier years, but ready to accept her new identity as a more experienced and elderly woman. She observes,
“Mellow? Who needs Mellow? I am not nice neither dumb clucks nor mellow. Merely older, I can’t be a brat at fifty. It’s obscene fortunately, a few remnants of that other women are still intact. I found myself squaring my shoulders sticking my chin out and thinking, ‘so what’? I’ve changed, am entitled to. Those who are looking for the familiar one will just have to settle for this one or lump it. For this, one is here to stay. In addition, frankly, I am rather enjoying being here.”

Always secondary preference is given to the girl child. When Shobha was born to her parents, the wives of Rae sahib’s peons delivered boys and they had an upper hand over their master. When, Shobha’s elder sister Kunda rejoiced at the arrival of her younger sister, she did not know it was only the birth of a son that was good omen for the family. Kunda demanded kumkum hand impression on her back; her grandmother scolded her saying,

“What! You want kumkum on your back. Go and fetch some cow dung instead. Do you realize there are three daughters in the family now? We are not two enough?”

Narration of childhood is something very special for women autobiographers. Childhood memories are often secondhand. Parents and grandparents often narrate incidents from early life. Hence, recollection of childhood is generally no more than what the writer has heard about herself from others. As Meena Sodhi observes,

“For woman, adulthood-marriage or spinsterhood-implied relative loss of self unlike men, therefore, they looked back fondly to the relative freedom and power of childhood and youth.”

The first chapter related to the childhood period is an interesting account of this autobiography but she admits also that she could not recollect much about it. She gives a true picture of a girl as enthusiastic and an ambitious. She writes,
"I suppose that was part of the thrill given the long list of don’ts. I was not allowed to wear sleeveless blouses, cut my hair in a fringe, use make up, listen to the western station of All India Radio, dance, wear perfume, jeans or grown-up outfits or behave in any moment that might attract attention."¹⁴

Mumbai milieu gave Shobha an altogether different look. She grew faster than her sisters did. She introduced to them with the latest fashions and always used slang speech; she introduced them with pop music, Western style dances, trendy hairstyles, high heels mascara, Hollywood magazines, racy books and much more.

About her artisanship and style Sheila Rani Khare observes,

"Shobha De an eminent modern novelist and journalist have focused in most of her works on the marginalization of woman in Indian Society. As a feminist novelist, she has marvelous understanding of the psyche of woman and therefore female dominates her novels. Women struggle hard in their lives and break patriarchal order, pretend against male dominance and at last come out in fixing colors in their quest."¹⁵

She used to play sports activity and attract the attention of Talavalkar family; she quotes this incident as,

"The generous warm and kind Talayrkhan family 'adopted' me as a fringe member and I am certain my attraction to athletics was more because I found acceptance within their home than my desire to excel and win trophies."¹⁶

As a youngster, she was a rebel and always did things against the normal traditional ways. In her college days, hardly she has attended her lectures at Xavier's, Mumbai and took interest in modeling, which later she could turn into her profession. In her college life, she has enjoyed her campus life as a picnic spot. Once, she could experience at a function where she was invited as a celebrity,
"The main reason why modeling never interested me sufficiently was that I wasn't vain enough. I thought you were looking for good speaker."17

Conflict is one of the most significant factors of autobiography. Selective Memory notes how her ideology was much in conflict with that of parents. Her father disapproved her career of modeling. She pursued modeling career as a college student. She thought that, it would give her some pocket money and a sense of independence. Her mother however dared not to reveal that to her father. De’s observation on her father’s reaction is quite significant:

“As soon as I came clean about my modeling to the rest of the family, all hell broke loose. My mother was caught in the crossfire instantly. Who allowed her to accept theeshows? My father thundered. It was my mother’s turn, to take the rap and muttered softly, it is not as bad as you imagine. She has not done anything wrong... The people she is working with are decent.”18

My father did not wish to listen. He was not ready to be convinced. That is how it stayed. Even five years later, he disapproved. He did not want his daughter to be in a field. He considered cheap and disreputable.

De has depicted remarkable traits of many celebrated actors. She has admired all that is possible in term, but has not forgotten to pinpoint their darker sides. She narrates that the inaugural of Stardust in 1971 started with a headline that asked, 'Is Rajesh Khanna secretly married?' She also notes that Stardust becomes so popular because of its content. Her staff members have worked with scientific precision and clarity. Recollecting Rekha’s personality,

"Rekha was an unknown when she walked in with Vinod Mehra. She was overweight, giggly and ridiculously dressed. Nobody could possibly have visualized the Rekha of to-day, sultry siren-seductress sumpreme."19
As a feminist by heart, she appreciated Hema Malini's decision to marry Dharmendra as a married person, as a 'courageous' step and she has appreciated this attitude and bold decision taken by her. She has not bowed down or buckle under pressure, ignoring convention and flaunting society's rules but quietly. Further, she narrates the incident of her editorship of stardust, the exploitation of young girls by their mothers for film and glamour entry. She observes,

"But, each time I see and alarming young girl being nudged into the film industry via the seminude route I think of the gross woman who, thirty five years earlier had walked into my office to make money out of her daughter's overblown membranes. And I recoil at the memories."\textsuperscript{20}

In the portrayal of female stars, Selective Memory is at her best in writing about the females. Her female stars are portrayed with a nice-tinged of precision and with deeper sense of sympathy. Dimple, Zeenat and Hema Malini have been portrayed as calm wives fitted into the slot without blaming anyone for their plights. They are women with no complaints for the men-folk who hurt their feelings and left them all alone to care for their households and daughters.

As an Editor of 'society' once, she could get self-realization of her own skills and power handling her own magazine as she writes,

"Take risks that convinced me, I had always taken risks and won. I like risks, risks liked me, not this time not when the 'risk' involved money, 'other peoples' many."\textsuperscript{21}

She has faced a bad phase in this calculated risk, which she could not overcome and at financial front and in her personal life her marriage was breaking she felt very sad to assess the situation from every nook and corner she felt nothing was going right emotionally and financially and this was the phase she felt alienated and isolated. She has narrated this period as identity crisis one of the main characteristics of feminist movement as,
"I was being forced to deal with an identity crisis who was I now? What was my standing within the community my own family? How did I view myself?"  

Further, about this grace period of her life and patriarchal attitude of her critics for her failure to succeed in business she writes,

"It's a wonder I didn't crack under pressure or develop a thick skin for that matter, people who tried to convince me that all this was an inevitable part of business that lofty male pressure in which a native woman like me had no part to play."  

Generally in an autobiography 'Self' is placed at the center. Nevertheless, man cannot live in isolation. An artist is a sum-total of his race, million and moment. De’s autobiography is a sum total of the experiences that she had in urban Bombay. Her life story marvelously portrays the impact of other individuals on herself. Selective Memory has successfully carted a galaxy of brilliant portraits. In Selective Memory, we have already come across how De has depicted the private and the public lives of some film stars.

As a feminist, she has narrated number of examples of women's suffering like Farha or Rasida. These women have their own problems to share and some of them could not have guts to analyses and voice their problems. About this experience Shobha writes,

"The moment I met Rasida, immediately understood why the painter was taken with her. Here was a woman who was all women, the sort of women who can keep a man in a permanent state of insecurity by knowing when, what and how much to withheld."  

This is not the random case but even Zeenat Aman's broken marriage and survival for career after divorce all such tragic events she could recapture very objectively. About her celebrity status she writes,

"How comfortable I am with my image, my public identity, my own 'celebrity hood'. It's not an easy question to respond to."
In another incident, she has narrated the curriculum of an autobiographer who has brought her book for the review; De described the incident in this way,

“*She told me her husband found her ravishing and that a legendary film maker she’d once interviewed had talked about her inner beauty at length. It had not occurred to her that the husband might have been prejudiced or that the filmmaker.*”

De has also discussed but diffused the charges a pornographic writer with the support from her family. Her disciplined father would not have approved his daughter’s choice of modeling as a career. However, he always respected her as a writer, who could portray man-woman relationship with a great candor. Just like her father, De adores Nari-Hira. This man became a source of inspiration for Shobha De. Recalling Nari-Hira, Shobha De comments that He was an excellent motivator of people and extremely dynamic. He always encouraged Shobha De. He was like a bacon guide to Shobha De. With a sense of gratitude, Shobha observes,

“I do not know why Nari-Hira hired me, I never asked, he never said. I still do not know whether he thought I had it in me a glimmer of talent, some potential. There was no reaction from him, nothing to indicate what he had made of my amateurish efforts. Today, we can joke about it the encounter being at such a safe distance. Today I can call him a friend even if I never address him by his first name. He was Mr. Hira then: he remains Mr. Hira now.”

It is observed that we are rapidly becoming a nation of fame junkies, point a video camera into a crowd and chances are fewer than fifty people will join to get the frame Vex Popular has become the latest sport in town with opinions flying around arbitrarily. Shobha De has also narrated her meetings with super cop Kiran Bedi and her own impressions about her as she has depicted her as,

"*Here's an extraordinary woman with a compelling presence who has the Charisma and media savvy to be in perfect contact of her public image. She is aware of the*
hold she has on the public imagination and uses it to the tilt. De is a smart woman who has understood the changing needs of our confused times, she knows she represents this change and capitalizes on it as a symbol of a new woman. She move than anyone else, is in a unique position to establish herself as a role model for a generation of Indian women who look up to her as someone who has made it in a male dominated profession.²²

De's memoir shows not only one specific phase but there are stages clearly observed in her treatment to the people commented to her by profession or through relations when she described her role as a mother with her children her approach, her language, feelings and sensitivities. She narrates her motherly affection and incidents of firmness too. Her children too are very assertive and assured her very firmly,

"Mother didn't tell your parents everything of no secrets? Did you ever lie? I fib and
I say, "I confessed all and I certainly expect you todo the same."²²

Discussing her devotion to the work of writing, De opines that one needs a sense of dedication while writing. It is hard to keep one’s mind focused on domestic trivia while longing to write a book. De feels that a day can be termed ‘good’ only when the writing has gone well. It is very hard to feign interest in family matters, a spouse’s routine conversation, a child’s prattle, while longing to get back to writing. She had surpassed these hurdles as a woman writer.

Apart from the writing job, nurturing children Shobha was equally concerned with the household works and maintaining house in order she knew the male psyche about household work as even today, the responsibility is considered as female obligation. As Shobha writes in her book, ’Surviving Men: The Smart Woman's Guide to Staying on Top’, about today's working women's expecting from her husband,

"I bring in as much money as he does, I work equally long hours, and I hate it when he offers to help me fix dinner. What does he mean by ‘help’? It is such a presumptions word. It indicates he assumed making dinner is solely my responsibilities and he is being
kind enough to share some of it with me. I bullshit, we both have to feed ourselves. As far as I'm concerned he does his bit and I do mine it’s a joint effort, no favours.\(^{30}\)

De has very candidly confessed how she drew out several characters of her novels from several living beings, which of her acquaintances has been remarkably confessed. For instance, she paints that haute monde in Socialite Evenings is not Indianite version of Beverley Hills but an entirely accurate if merciless exposure of Bombay high society. De, has also written some remarkable presentation in recent years like ‘Spouse’ and ‘Speed Post.’

Shobha's feministic ideas were not directly written but through her women characters portrayed, one can assess that all her fiction world is inhabitant by people especially women who are not overly sensitive in their emotions and thoughts. They are more in love with themselves and with their luxurious lives mostly spent in club and hotels. These females are more interested in occupying solitaires, cars, clothes and enjoying organizing then following moral standards of the conventional society. Shobha De has portrayed contemporary urban Indian women with intimate understanding but few aspects of her life are dealt with utmost sincerity. Almost all her female protagonists understand the significance of power, the power to control and direct the male psyche as they have done till now.

As Sheela Rani Khare observes in her article, ‘Inner World of A film Star: Shobha De's Starry Night,’

"Shobha De an eminent modern novelists and journalist has focused in most of her women the marginalization of woman in Indian society. As a feminist novelist, she has marvelous understanding of the psyche of women and therefore her novels are dominated by female protagonists."\(^{31}\)

Depiction of marriage is one of the constant characteristic of women autobiographers. Women’s happiness depends upon the happiness in her conjugal life. Being an Indian New woman, Shobha like to be called married and is proud to be the
mother of six. Marriage means a lot to her and she firmly believes that both the partners have to work hard to get the going smooth. Talking about her marriage De remarks,

“Marriage to me connotes commitment and surrender. Merging with, blending, overlapping, and combining. It is a symbolic relationship where one feels on the other, needs the other.”

Existential concern is a global phenomenon. It has offered no solution rather it has prepared men and women to come to terms with a particular situation and their predicament. The problem of search for identity is very much related to the problem of existence. It has been a popular theme with the women writers of Indian fiction in English Shobha De is a novelist who has concerns. As a writer, she is gifted with extraordinary ability to discuss sensible aspects of human life she is thus a feminist writer who concentrates on women’s problems and gives a new approach to them.

De confesses that she has learnt much from her children, who have been utterly candid in their comments,

“There have been several such incidents involving our children. Each time I learned a new and refreshing ‘Truth’, they helped me change, revaluate my worn attitudes, reassess my rigid positions on issues that concern us all. I feel thankful to them for having pointed out my mistakes.”

DE has presented her life-story with detached acceptance of life. There are several recesses of a person’s heart which are reserved for none other than himself. De remarkably declares,

“I have chosen to crave up my life into those segments. I have no reservations about revealing and serving up to readers. It is not lapses in memory I am hiding behind. Rather, it is my conscious decision to exercise control over those aspects of my life. I am not ready to make public.”
Truth in autobiography is different from the historical or fictional truth. The naked unblushing truth should be depicted in the autobiography. An autobiography should not depict the man in brilliant colors only. It must also depict his troubles, grief, virtuous and vices as well. The lapses should be presented with equal transparency, as are strong points.

According to S. P. Swain,

"Like Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De does not overdo women's suffering. She transforms it into a creative principle of art and beauty."

De in her memoir has given treatment to the issues related to women is not directed towards a specific definition of feminity. Various feminist positions articulated and exhibited through different characters express her feminity. Her central concern seems to be limited to show different terms of woman's subjugation and their exploitation. The plurality of experiences presented in her memoir makes it thematically rich. Her feminist stance can be ascertained from her own words,

"I write with a great deal of empathy towards women without waving the feminist flag. I feel strongly about the women's situation."

De belongs to the post-colonial Indian writers who have become more innovative, experimental, confessional and realistic then they were ever before. De’s life-story is the story of a new woman of independent India. Her self-identification is described in the new ideology. Her combat against the fixed the identity of the docile, tortured and conformist work on of pre-Independence turns out to be an individual protest under the impact of western culture.

Selective Memory’ is a record of her human relationships but it is not a full circle to her life. This fractured selfhood emerges at the end when she does not find her own words to express and quotes from Frank Sitara’s song:
“I did it my way.”

According to D.G.Naik,

“Certain autobiographies enable us to know the history of certain periods in a far better way than the actual books of history.”

Memory cannot retained in its original form.it is a mingling of many forgone incidents. Memory has its own significance in DE’s autobiography, as its title is Selective Memory. A human mind always likes to retain which is precious, poignant and painful. The autobiographer reconstructs the images of the self-lost in the irrevocable past. These images are not only mental constructs of the autobiographer himself but also often shaped by the society. Hence, the autobiographer is bound to select and eliminate. Human memory is sometimes unreliable, willful, and recollection of past itself is selective at the natural involuntary level.

Shobha DE’s ‘Selective Memory has been written at a time in her life that is appropriate to take stock of things. In this epic first person narrative, Shobha talks the art of autobiography like a self-conscious narrator. Suddenly she feels that five decades of her life has been already passed.

There is a multiplicity of women's existence within the broad concept of women. In this context De's feminist stance corresponding with Taisha Abraham as she observed,

"Feminist theory does not privilege any one school of feminist thought over the other. In this it demonstrates both its like and dislikes of patriarchal her are citations and its openness in acknowledging the various trajectories. Feminist takes in order to combat patriarchy."

De's women characters indulge in deviant sexual behavior to challenge the accepted nations of essential female nature and female sexuality. To express their rejection of the established code for sexual behavior they experiment with different forms of sex.
An interesting aspect of De's understanding of modern urban women's behavior is presented in adoption of pseudo feminism, unaware of the intense pain and humiliation of women's suppressed position in traditional family setup these women present strange logic and offer funny proposal.

Man and society are inter-woven together. Man is not an isolated self, though self-portrayal is the main function of an autobiography. The autobiographer has to portray contemporary history of nation and times in his/her life-story. De is aware of filthy lure of the present young generation for glamour and publicity. Everybody wants to be famous in those ‘celebrity-driven times’. De remarks in her memoir that,

“\textit{We are becoming a nation of fame junkies.}”\textsuperscript{40}

De's feminist views develop as an extension of the existential problems of women, According to existentialist feminist perspective; women have the same nature as men and are free and creative beings like all human beings. Women in De's novels are conscious of their physical and emotional needs. In this context, Meerabai expresses her views about the significance of existentialist feminist perspective in literature,

"\textit{Feminism as an extension of existentialism gets hold in world literature. Indian - English fiction is no exception to this. This existential struggle to establish one's identity, to assert one's individuality and the desperate fight to exist as a separate entity appears in all its intensity in the novels of women writers.}”\textsuperscript{41}

Her language of the memoir is candid and scrupulous. She has drawn her characters pain snakingly for ex. the scene of her weeping on Brussels airport. As reviewing 'Selective Memoir' one of the reviewers ‘Amina’ in Amazon.com observes,

"\textit{Selective Memory debunks Shobha De's glittering image as a socialite and shows the earthy side of her chapters spotlighting her foray into modeling, celebrity journalism faced with some interesting name dropping is bound to be amusing for a culturally akin person. She shows a happy blend of contradiction: liberal yet traditional and arrogant yet simple. Her guilt's, personal upheavals and psychological insights make her come across as}\textsuperscript{42}

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a very strong woman trying to juggle family and professional life. A nice light read the kind you will enjoy over a cup of tea. I can't see its appeal for an international audience that, does not shave a cultural affinity to De. \(^{142}\)

Whereas in a more vehement rather critical Jane Auston nickname as 'Sumita CDM' expresses her frustration for reading selective memory as her earlier experience with De's 'spouse' was very satisfactorily. She observes about selective memory,

"Except for couple of pages in the beginning which do describe Shobha De's early life this book may not be termed as an autobiography. This book has pages and pages of what a movie gossip magazine usually has which movie star has an inflated head, which movie star still has the Bihari attitude…. In addition, movie magazines are something I do not enjoy reading too much. I did not pick up this book to know more about movie stars. I picked up this book to know more about Shobha De the person." \(^{143}\)

An interesting aspect of De's understanding of modern urban women's behavior is presented through the adoption of pseudo feminism. Her themes are of human relationship father and daughter, husband and wife. Her women characters occupy central stage and her narration shifts through her feminine consciousness.

As Neeraj Kumar writes in his article 'Search for Self and Identity in the Novels of Shobha De,'

"The problem of search for identity is very much related to the problem of existence. It has been a popular theme with the women writers of Indian fiction English. They have had to depict this theme in their works. De as a writer is gifted with extraordinary ability to discuss sensitive aspect of human life. She believes in frankness and open heartedness in the narration of incidents. She is a feminist writer who concentrates on the women's problems
and given a new approach to them. De gives her women dignity and individuality with the justifiability deserved."

Her memoir is one way record of historical incidents of both celebrities and magazines through their life styles and attitudes towards society she has witnessed and experience sensibly as an editor with Nari Hira in 'celebrity' and 'society'. She has interviewed leading personalities of her times and communicates with them. In a confessional tone given, she has given a true account of her family life her career and different roles she has played in her life briefly.

Shobha has thoughtful messages to convey to the women of her times. She is a treasure house of experiences and in a philosophical vein, she observes,

"I fear for my generation of women. They really are like daughters, unimportant. They definitely do not want to be like mothers and they definitely want to switch places with their daughters. We walk of options, opportunities and choices. What do us actually with these goodies? We learn, we travel, we splurge and we weep."

At the end of the Selective Memory she writes,

"There is a sense of acceptance today that didn't exist previously. This is who I am. No tricks, no games, no camouflage, life is about going on."

8.4 Conclusion

De in the her memoir has presented her fine study of human behavior and the psyche of Indian celebrities the memoir does not reveal only her life but in a true sense a record of growth and development of film stars of film industry. Being a Feminist at heart,
without weaving feminist flag, she has narrated issues of male child, exploitation of young models, problems of women and her family.

Selective Memory represents both Indian milieus in general and high society culture of snobbishness. Her attempt is to expose the vices of this affluent class and the negative impact it presents on the common persons of the country.

Her style is very interesting and attracts the attention of her readers with rapid writings. It is a self-portrayal and she has searched for her own ‘Identity’ through the present memoir. Through this search of identity crisis, she is voicing the representation of Indian women.
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