CHAPTER – 3

FEMINIST CONCERNS IN SHOBHA DE’S NOVELS

In our scriptures, women have been given prestigious position which raises them to the height of goddess. Women should be worshipped so that gods may be pleased. In Vedic age, women were entitled to chant Gayatri Mantra and to put on Yogyopavitra. In later years, our civilization became distorted and their position began to be poor day by day. In literature, we find the real phenomenon of society. Shobha De is one of Indian women novelists who dedicated herself to shatter patriarchal injustice from Indian society. Women novelists like Shobha De is not willing to accept discriminatory injunction of the Manusmriti according to which a woman is protected by her father from childhood to adolescence. In her youth, she is protected by her husband and in her old age, she gets protection from sons. Such description does not provide freedom to women. Virginia Woolf represents real predicament of women: "Imaginatively she is the highest importance, practically she is completely insignificant.... Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips in real life she could hardly read, could hardly spell and was the property of her
Dominating patriarchal system of Indian society is utterly responsible for women's inferior predicament. In modern society, such discriminatory thoughts are losing their charm because women have established their equal status nearly in every field of human life.

In most of her novels, Shobha De chose the upper middle class or upper aristocratic class to deal with feminist issues. She succeeds to get admiration and reputation to attack and solve critical problems pertaining to women throughout the world. Through her writings, Shobha De made successful efforts to awake hidden capabilities so that they may come out of the boundaries and may contribute profoundly to the progress of our nation. While delineating the predicament of lower middle class or rural women, she conveys that Indian women differ largely from the western women. Indian women, who live in rural areas, contribute greatly in agriculture and cottage industry. Unfortunately, they are illiterate and superstitious so they are unable to fight for their rights. They only bear the extra burden of household and responsibilities without making any complaint. The somber of middle class women is increasing enormously. They are also doomed to face different kinds of problems. They have got opportunity to get education, consequently most of them are employed. Inspire of being employed, they are unable to solve their complicated
problem prevailing at different stage of their life. These middle class women are the true representatives of Indian women. Having been well qualified and educated, they are aware of their rights also. These women are forced to lead a dual life, as they are to run among their traditional role of mother, wife and daughter and at the same time that of modern working women. After performing their duty in offices and schools, they have to cope with the burden of domestic responsibilities. Their responsibilities are increased in the comparison of unemployed women who are limited only to household responsibilities.

Shobha De exhibits her deep concern to delineate the various aspect of women's condition related to aristocratic class and well-educated women who don't know how to manage their wealth and leisure time. While arguing the term Indian feminism, we will have to include the responsibilities of every section of society. But in the class of Shobha De, she shows interest to describe the condition of upper class women who are striving hand to establish themselves as 'New Woman' who can't be tied down by hypocritical beliefs. By her tireless efforts, Shobha De relieved women form their traditional image as mere sex object. She succeeded to change public attitude and man-woman relation got a new form. Women had been facing many turbulent and disharmonious
circumstances throughout their entire life and their position in the society had been miserable enough. Due to oppression imposed on them by patriarchy, they could not get chance to come in the main current of the society. Shobha De's feminist writings show that she exhibited utter vigour and enthusiasm to remove women's misery, fomentation and dejection.

Although women are much cautious for their identity in the modern society, they face uncertainty in various fields of life. Women's responsibilities and duties are greater than those of men. In her works, she represents many women protagonists who represent women and whose conduct and other activities make the ideal women. Aasha Rani of 'Starry Nights', six women in 'Snapshots' and many others are the women who establish new norms and culture in the society. People have changed their tendency for women but there are many who have general attitude about women as a shadow figure to a male caretaker to be a father, husband or a son. Feminism stimulates women to secure personal courage so that they may be free from dependence of a husband, father, son or community. They are eager to break the bondage of a religion in order to lead a life, which is free from oppression and discrimination of gender. Feminism rebels against all forms of patriarchal and sexist
oppression. Legal, economic and social restrictions which are imposed on women in a traditional society are not accepted on the basis of gender. In modern time, feminism defines the morality in the changed way and it prepares the ground of life affirming philosophy.

In her works, Shobha De introduces the themes and character that represent the society struggling in the transitional period between tradition and modernity. She considers urban, educated and civilized women as an ideal for the whole society that is why she chooses to include them in her works. Through her excellent writing, she succeeds to make modern India. Her success depends on the fact that she possesses full understanding of the psyche of woman and her problems, position and challenges prevailing all around him. The spell of her writing increases the number of admirers. She provides vivid and real portrayal of the culture and manner of high society. She chooses extra-ordinary female protagonists who are remarkable and superior to male ones. With the help of well-chosen characters, who are representative of their field, she produces the story which is appreciated largely. Her first three novels have been chosen by the reputed School of Oriental and African Studies of London as course material.
Main intention of Shobha De's novels is to shatter male dominance and establish a social system in which women are provided just and proper position. She has keen insight of human psychology and understands male tendency accurately. Having been new woman, she throws sharp focus on women's humiliation and suffering. At international level, she raised the issues of women so that women of the world may be awakened and stimulated to rebel against patriarchal oppression with full force and enthusiasm. While portraying the predicament of upper class women, Shobha De shows no partiality. She observes the contemporary Indian society and concludes that women are the victim of not only physical abuse and violence but also emotional blackmail. Due to her deep understanding and perception of women's psychology, she got success to achieve high praise and wide admiration as a writer. She is skilled to inspect and delineate extreme sensitive aspect of human life. In the comparison of other writers, she is virtuous enough to understand and analyze female heart and mind.

Shobha De is considered an excellent storyteller who treats all women's problems from a feminine point of view. By her constant and aggressive efforts, she discloses women's physical, sexual and emotional longings effectively. She highlights women's suffering in order to bring
awakening among the society. The awakening and the awareness help to seek solution of a problem. Through her writings, she intends to solve women's problem at international level. The spell of her writing arouses women of the world to protest against inequality and imbalance of power. She is enthusiastic enough to analyze all sorts of women's problems, which were beyond the approach of literature. Her unique perception and talent to examine women's psychological conflict enables her to evoke our sentiments and stand in the favour of feminism. Women were forced to suppress their hopes and sentiments but she provoked them to fight and struggle in order to solve their secret problems.

In her writings, Shobha De does not follow the norms established by other writers. She comes to portray all aspects of human life according to her own ideals. Except her household responsibilities, she is utterly devoted to her writings. She doesn't like to be kept in a bondage. Women's slavery is not acceptable to her. She wishes to make women of independent spirit. Women's humiliation and suffering is unbearable to her. Shobha De possesses excellent quality to arouse suppressed hopes, ambitions and expectations of Indian women. Through her characters, De emphasizes women's issues. In 'Small Betrayals' Simran has ambitions hidden in her heart but her feelings are ignored by hypocritical feelings
and principles of men: "After he died Simran tried three men, tried them for everything. I hadn't worked. She'd told herself that when jeet, her husband, had been alive, sex with him had been a little like being stuck with a shoe that pinched eminently. Perhaps if she made love to someone else- someone more in tune with her, she would succeed.... Simran was immensely flexible after all."\(^2\)

Shobha De introduces women characters who are much vigorous and enthusiastic to raise firm steps. They are skilled and capable to defeat men in their own game. She portrays the women characters who have capacity to bear unfavourable circumstances but don't prefer to sustain oppression. They forces men to surrender and co-operate to maintain peace and harmony of the family. In the end of novel, we find them liberate themselves from tyranny of men. In 'Socialite Evenings' when Karuna's husband comes to remarry her, she humiliates her furiously: "Just get the hell out of my house and life. I do not ever want to see you. I let you in this time but never again. I'll call the cops if you try and invade my home in future. You are even more of a worm that I thought. You deserve Winnie. I hope she's got a wax doll of yours. I shall send her some extra pins to stick into it. Now take you frigging pipe and get out."\(^3\)

Through her works, Shobha De makes successful effort to concentrate her
mind and devote her life to give a new approach to women's problems. She sounded the theme of equality, fought against patriarchal hegemony and succeeded to remove male dominance from society. She devotes most of her time to pour her intelligence and skill to her works so that change may occur and women's well-being may be decided.

The impartial scrutiny of Shobha De's works, reveal that she possesses deep sympathy for women and their suppressed and wounded feelings. She narrates their problems not only as a mass but also as an individual. Her works like 'Snapshots', 'Starry Nights', 'Sisters, Surviving Men' exhibit that De is a bold, emancipated and a candid feminist who introduces such women character as are skilled, capable, bold and having revolutionary thoughts. In the beginning of the novel, her women are visible in miserable condition facing tyranny of male members but later on, they return to mainstream and emerge as a dominant and aggressive figure. Maya in Second Thoughts tries her best to survive and to be aggressive in life: "The more I stared at the spilled soup, the funnier I found it. I knew I would have to make it again from scratch. So what? I had all the time in the world now."

Having been a revolutionary feminist, Shobha De reveals her explosive attitude and thoughts before the society and women are evoked
to fight for their economic and socio-political rights and equal position. Since ancient days, our society has tendency to expect women who maintain their grace and capability hidden. They had been the victim of loneliness, alienation and suppression but now they are protesting all these and at international level, they are struggling to find their identity on account of their capabilities and virtues. De introduces women characters who are first prefer to compromise with unfavourable circumstances but later on, they feel suffocated and depressed and make successful effort to acquire their rights. The political change occurred in the country and everything has changed largely except plight of women. So the writers like Shobha De dedicated their literary career to uplift the women so that they may also contribute to lead the nation on the way of progress. Shobha De found herself unable to ignore women's tragedy. In her novels like *Starry Nights, Snapshots* and *Sisters*, she gives vivid portrayal of women's secondary position. As the consequence of feminine writers, women have changed their outlook and they don't agree to be dependent on men for their identity and recognition. Identity crisis is one of the major problems of women. But now women are utterly awakened and are eager to be recognized on account of their own characteristics and qualities. They don't hesitate to scold and abuse their male partners. In
**Sultry Days**, Nisha's mother decides to take her own decisions and leads her life according to her own ideals: "I have had enough of your bullying and hypocrisy. I have kept quiet for too long. Go to hell with your corporate nonsense. Who cares what your boss thinks? Or those bloody women think? Where were they when my world was collapsing and you want me to bother about them? Why should I? Why should I bother about you either? you can also go to hell with your pompous talk and empty boasts. I am sick, do you hear, sick of living this false life... you don't deserve me... whether you like it or not, henceforth I will make decisions about my life."

Unlike modern women, society was gifted with the women who sought pleasure of limited life within the boundaries of the house. They were not aware of their rights, position and exploitation. But now women writers like Shobha De fulfilled their heart and spirit with burning ideas which provoke them to rebel and oppose. No country can ignore the revolt of female population. The progress of the country will cease and danger will be created before the whole humanity. So male population is forced to provide women their rights and freedom. With the efforts of feminism, women are revolting against unfair treatment and conduct and are striving to break the tradition and hypocritical shackles. They
consider themselves no way inferior to men: "Thank you for your advice, Ramankaka, I appreciate and value your words. But I’d like you to hear a few of mine now. I can't change my sex unfortunately. But I can change just about everything else. And I intend to.... This is going to be my show and I intend running it on my terms. My genes are the same as my father's even if my gender isn’t."6

Women's position and living code has been changing in each decade of every century. Shobha De is one of the feminist writers who aim at defects and flaws found in the male dominated society. In the new millennium, women are devoid of the freedom to act according to their own will and needs. There are many women's who can imagine and dream only. They are not offered facilities and opportunities to brighten their career. Social codes of the contemporary society are well embodied by De in her characters. She uses her genius to protect women's rights and to attack on the male dominant society. There are some sects who don't want to pay any attention towards distorted image of women who cries for freedom and equality. The deep and wide evaluation of De's works reveal that she intends to protest against old image of women as subordinate group. Socialite Evenings by Shobha De conveys suffocating vision of women: "I felt like an indifferent boarder in the house, going
through the nations of housekeeping and playing wife but the resentment and rebellion remained just under the surface, ready to break out the smallest provocation.

Through the efforts of feminism, women have succeeded to change their old image and now they have become a companion, fearless, bright and eager to participate in each sphere of life. Indian society seems to appreciate this changed image of women but in real sense, Indian males are not willing to accept properly. Today women are aspiring for their identity, which is not dependent on men. They consider their traditional sex role a curse imposed on them. They have realized their potency and capability, which is equally significant for the well being of a society. De's delineation of rural women's predicament much valuable and praiseworthy. Her works contain the portrayal regarding Indian urban women's challenges, partiality and many other complications. In Snapshots, Shobha De introduces six women whose conduct, behaviour and activities represent different kinds of urban women in India. Through their ideas and conversations, Shobha De throws light on the predicaments of women in India. During conversation, she advises:

"Never give yourself to any man for free, you know why? Men don't value anything they get so easily."
Shobha De's impressive writing emphasizes on equal division of power. This equality of power is necessary to maintain peace, harmony and balance of the society. The imbalance of power creates hypocritical and wild atmosphere and whole humanity goes towards downfall and decay. The women in De's novels are exhibited neglecting and humiliating male ideology, which bans women's interest and ruins their career. They are the women who, it seems, have taken oath to destroy the existing male dominance. In order to acquire their goal, they have become violent, uncompromising and malicious. They aspire to remove age-old restraining ethics of male dominated world. They wish to live in the universe where male is pushed into a corner and is forced to live secluded existence. The urban upper middle class women have got rid of the tortured consciousness. At some places, De narrates the story of such women as go to the extreme of modernity and are portrayed making extra-marital relation, which is device to protect their 'self'. De's women are not ready to destroy their career in order to protect their marriage. In 'Sisters' by Shobha De, we are acquainted with protagonist Mikki, who passes through psychic conflict. She longs to establish harmony in her married life but not to destroy her career. She assures her husband: "I can look after you and look after at least a part of the business."
The women who belong to a traditional and hypocritical society are expected to seek their identity along with men. Women are trying to relieve themselves from such weakening tendency but the work is not easy because a woman grows up in the social background, which prefers man rather than women. A woman has to compromise her individual interest in order to draw man's attention. She finds herself incapable to evaluate herself as well as anything associated with the concept of self. Her unique ideas and principles are not evaluated justly. The alliance with a man grants a woman heterosexual privileges and many of them are ratified by law, religion and families. A traditional society considers a woman as an object who is destined to destroy herself, her voice, her intellect and personal development to satisfy man's ambition and passion. At many occasions, women are humiliated when they find themselves incapable to fulfill men's needs. Many orthodox people regard women as an attendant. But De doesn't project such women in her works. De's women are daring enough to establish extra marital relation in order to relieve themselves from marital frustrations. They don't hesitate to mention their illegitimate relation which is not accepted in a traditional family. In 'Socialite Evenings' Anjali is overwhelmed with her fresh experience with other men: "This is the most beautiful thing to have
happened to me.... What Karan and I share is a very tender and beautiful relationship."\textsuperscript{10}

Such women, having independent spirit and tendency, don't hesitate to use sex as a calculated strategy to gain social and financial benefit. They don't hold for the chastity of marital relations. For them marriage is an insurance which gives them protection from unfavourable circumstances found all around them. These women want to dominate men who consider themselves superior in patriarchy. Now women are shown contesting in political fields. The economic and cultural background of our country has been widely responsible for the suppression of women. The traditional sex role and economic disability had made women dependent and inactive. Now such hypocritical tradition is not visible frequently. Women have created new tradition, which goes in their favor to establish superiority and domination over men. In De's novels, women's different requirements are exhibited so that they may be warned to fulfill them in the span of their life. The novelist evokes women to gain equal power at different stage of their career so that female sensibility may be defined in real sense. Women were expected to be silent, peaceful and sufferer. Devoid of these qualities, women had been considered rude and uncultured but in the modern age,
feminism by its revolution and explosive thoughts and ideas has succeeded to alter everything concerning women's life and career. The protagonists in De's novels are observed revolting against traditional approach to secure their rights in different field.

In 'Snapshots' the novelist got success to create such circumstances as enable women to acquire equation of power. In the novel, we are introduced with the phenomenon in which men are forced to stand on the periphery while women are enthusiastic much to fight for supremacy. In the novel, De projects the expanded challenges, predicaments and values of women's lives. When we analyze the novel thoroughly, we observe that it portrays the situations prevailing in postcolonial era. Many descriptions, which belong to history, psychology and culture, lead the novel toward postcolonial era. Shobha De created a new phenomenon in which six women, Swati, Aparna, Reema, Noor, Surekha and Rashmi are passing their lives in the atmosphere of magnified domestic bliss. Through these six women, Shobha De makes her successful effort to portray the phenomenon of colonial age. They are the students of Santa Maria High School and adopted all the traits of colonial education. Outwardly, they projected as Indians but they have full faith and interest in the western outlook and life style. Through
different feelings, attitude and activities found in their career, De exhibits candid picture of metropolitan life style. Such descriptions are capable to transform tradition principles and values.

It is not easy to gather courage to deal with the theme which goes against the tradition of literature. Shobha De is bold and daring to write differently which can bare the postcolonial scenario. Surekha is a middle class housewife who presents to be devoted to her mother-in-law but in real life, she is shown having deep interest in homosexual activities with her friend Dolly. Shobha De tries to reveal the truth of cosmopolitan Bombay. This phenomenon is created in order to portray psychological separation of Indian women. Now women don't agree with situations in which they have to sweep and wash only. They are not only bed partners but as valuable as men themselves. Reema, the protagonist in the novel is shown resisting her husband's sexual urges. Reema doesn't hesitate to comment: "My husband is lost without me... feed them well. Fuck them regularly and sit tight." In a patriarchal society, a woman is expected to give birth to boy essentially. But Reema, the protagonist has only a daughter and she denies to follow the norms of the society. Her decision goes against the tradition and custom because after death only a son can lit the pyre and can perform other religious activities. Now women are
not trapped in any kind of religious bondage. Reema ignore such compulsion and agrees that she doesn't want to became a child producing machine.

In the novel 'Snapshots', Aparna is one of the chief characters who change her conduct and behaviour transparently. She doesn't care for contrary wind of the society. Her psychology is never shaken by the guilt instilled in her by society. She is found enjoying life at any rate. She uses her sex potential freely and puts challenges before men. Her confidence and wholeness is never confined by unfavourable circumstance prevailing all around her. All her thoughts, activities, conduct and way of living goes against the theory of patriarchal society. Aparna doesn't accept marriage as a bandage which is predefined in heaven. She is destined to rebel against such traditional beliefs. In the novel, the women characters are exhibited possessing revolutionary attitude and spirit, which enable themselves to do adventures of powerful emancipation of women. They show aspiring for all those powers and capabilities that may provide them opportunities to raise their status superior to men. The character of Swati is device as a supervisor who has faith in gaining power and capability. She is too ambitions to check her inner feelings. She is found striving to gather power and to do adventures. In the end of the novel, she is
portrayed establishing her superiority: "You with your little mediocre lives. Playing safe and yet cheating, sneaking inside... I think I'm far more ethical, yes, ethical than that lot of you.... Look where I'm not look where you are, nowhere."¹²

As the consequence of feminist writings, female sensibility has increased its criteria. It comprises demand of power as a prominent component. Shobha De, in her novels, suggests women to make the aim of life in which power should be significant factor to attain. In Snapshots, De's women are more powerful than their male counterparts. Their influence, domination and controlling power make the women superior to men. The scrutiny of the novel express that the novelist has made the women mightier and nobler than men. The equation of power has been heavily loaded in favour of women characters. They are shown fighting for power and supremacy. They adopt fair as well as foul means to achieve success and power because they believe that all is fair in love and war. All the women characters in the novels make successful efforts to hold the reins of power in their own hands. Contrary to the norms and principles of patriarchal society, they are provided sufficient power and capacity to conduct and behave which proves them superior and dominant.
Shobha De, in her novel 'Second Thoughts' delineates urban life and challenges of women. In the novel, we are acquainted with a middle class Bengali girl who is fascinated towards a foreign returned boy and makes arranged matrimonial alliance with him. She finds herself trapped in the patriarchy in which man is still the lord and the woman has to abide by his whims, whether she likes or not. So in the novel, the novelist creates an atmosphere in which traditional motto is dominant. In it, we find a realistic representation of psyche of traditional men and women.

Maya, the protagonist, faces so many challenges and misfortunes. She is surrounded by various circumstances, which don't favour her. Her husband Ranjan is much industrious but does not have time and mind to offer love and respect to Maya. Ranjan is never shown to share Maya's happiness so she seems losing her existence on account of their failure on this sensitive issue. Maya is alienated in her surrounding and it leads her towards extreme depression. In her depressed state, she pours the pangs of her wounded heart: "Nobody needed me, my parents no longer thought I belonged to them. My husband belonged to his mother.... I didn't have a single true friend to call my own."

In order to get solace and pleasure of life, Maya decides to make extra marital relationship with Nikhil but in his company also, she doesn't
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succeed to relieve herself from frustration. She becomes the victim of Nikhil's betrayal, and consequent misery and dejection. She is forced to return to her married life with a fresh spirit. The novelist narrates this story of women's melancholy from a woman's point of view. Very often, the novelist intends to disclose her own biography through her characters. The novelist depicts that a woman does not want to suppress her inner urge but she is forced by circumstances to do so. If she becomes rebellious, society does not support her. Instead, many people seek opportunities to take advantage of women's misfortune. A woman may raise bold step at critical points during her life but very often she has to repent for her guilt because from her childhood, she is taught certain values which she does not to defy. Maya is compelled to accept loneliness and sadness. Through the character of Maya, the novelist throws light on the traditional marriage in which a woman's feelings are hurt at several occasions. Maya's husband argues: "There are certain rules, you have to abide by them whether you like them or not."\(^4\)

Shobha De in her novel 'Socialite Evenings', delineates the miserable condition of women who are marginalized at the hands of their husbands. It was the consequence of such situation that feminism came into existence. In the novel, we are acquainted with Karuna, the
protagonist, who longs for her identity. The portrayal of identity crisis, which is common in Indian phenomenon, is conveyed vividly and skillfully. Male characters are exhibited playing negative roles so that the novelist may expose and highlight the real status of women. While depicting the tendency and attitude of society towards women, the novelist doesn't wander in the world of imagination. Her realistic description concludes that women are stronger and superior to men and can take bold decisions.

Karuna, the protagonist, possess some extra ordinary traits in her characters. She doesn't allow herself to go in the communion and situations which may compel her to assume the status of others. Hypocritical and traditional thoughts and activities never suit her and she always defies such customs and manners. She is overwhelmed with revolutionary thoughts and they are visible in her activities. In her practical life, she refuses to cover before elders and at school, she wore fashionable dresses. She becomes passionate enough in her adult life. She wishes initiation into outside world, which is outwardly attractive and fascinating. She possesses strong desires to be modern and changed in every walk of her life. She wishes to be associated to the world of affluent girls who have everything of luxury and comfort. In order to
fulfill her ambition, she enters the world of modeling by her secret assignment as the Terkosa girl. Throughout the novel Karuna is portrayed having feminist psyche and conduct. Protest and defiance is common her life. She is projected as a woman who is on independent spirit. She is not portrayed as a woman who becomes the victim of male tyranny. She is capable to teach something to men. She is attracted towards Anjali’s fancy palace Malabar Hills to enjoy the bliss of modern fashionable world. She gets opportunity to enjoy and experience of pleasant surroundings in U.S. From here, she is destined to obtain the feeling of superiority to refuse and defy everything, which hurt a woman's inner-self. She is often observed violating and attacking hegemony of the male culture. She wishes to remain in the company of the women who have the thoughts and ideas same to her. Once, after her marriage, she happened to meet with Ritu from whom she learns that men like dogs can be conditioned through reward and punishment. But she could not bring the formula in her practical life. She has also desire to remain as a wife who may get honour and love on the part of her husband. She was fed up with her husband' s compulsive socializing manners. Karuna didn't like to be a toy in the hands of her husband but she didn't intend to protest against him to every occasion. For Karuna, marriage was like a prison in which she was
destined to face a suffocating atmosphere in silence. She had no opportunities to smile, to exchange her thoughts and to put up questions. She felt emotional depression throughout her life.

Throughout her life, Karuna is ignored by her husband utterly. He is always involved in necessary performances and keeps himself away from her. So Karuna is devoid of conjugal bliss of married life. Having been an ideal and soft hearted housewife, she is seen fulfilling traditional needs of the family. At several occasions, her emotions are deeply hurt and she longs for a pleasant atmosphere in her marital relation. Her husband is quite indifferent to her biological needs. Such situations responsible to create disharmony and crisis in marital relation. No me can blame Karuna that she wanted to satisfy her need illegally. If she had tried to contact any other man, it was only a means to fulfill her psychological and emotional needs. She wanted to attain the opportunities in which she can develop her personality freely. Such activities on the part of Karuna, were her consequence of lack of communication and goodwill between wife and husband. She wished to escape from the tragic phenomenon in which both of them were living on two separate islands.

A man is sure to become the slave of circumstances. Circumstances attacked Karuna violently and she was deeply and widely influenced by
it. In order to quench her emotional and psychic thirst, she is found playing different roles at different occasions. When she reaches to the extreme of her dejection and misery, she decides to be free to choose her own ways and means. Shobha De represents her having independent spirit and thoughts. She is shown unwilling her active urge which was stifled within herself. She relieves herself from all the extra burdens, which were depressing and distressing her very often. Having been victim of male tyranny, she begins to defy such customs, tradition and manners, which were designed only to suppress women's feelings and capabilities.

Anjali is another female character who has ambitions to raise herself to the social status of the upper classes. To fulfill her passions and ambitions, she throws off the traditional conventions of moral values. Through these two female characters, the novelist makes effort to shatter all forms of patriarchal traditions and manners. Karuna who used to bear her husband's rude behaviour, has become aggressive and furious. Once her husband accused her for having illegal child but now he is exhibited flattering her saying that it was legitimate child. Anjali decides to use her mind rather than heart in order to seek a suitable life partner. Her intellect allows her to drift into the life of Kumar who seems hopeful for her perfection. Anjali and Karuna project their passions onto others female
play in order to deconstruct the male ego. They recognize themselves as objects rather than subjects. Ritu is another female character who makes extra marital extramarital relation so that she may keep her husband within her reach and control. She advises Karuna to control by foul means. In her opinion, one can control her husband by making him realize that she has done a favour by marrying him. In the lack of a wife's support, a husband's life will become insecure and turbulent. She further advises that a wife should threaten her husband that she will walk out of his life if his behaviour towards her is not proper and satisfactory. Towards the end of the novel, we are familiar with the fact that Karuna and Anjali both succeeded to establish their superiority over their husbands. Shobha De has device the novel in order to make everyone realize that women are no way inferior to men.

In her novels, Shobha De emphasizes the need of economic self-sufficiency without which one cannot talk of women's independence. In order to fulfill their economic needs, her characters are shown leading a liberated life. Her women can sacrifice a lot of their pleasant life so that they may attain economic self-sufficiency. The mission of their life is to fulfill their physical requirements rather than moral and ethical values. In 'Starry Nights' Aasha Rani strongly advocates the significance of
economic independence. She bursts out on her mother: "Money, money, money. I am fed up to being your money machine." In Aasha Rani's opinion, money is significant factor in human life but it is not everything. To attain perfection in one's life, one has to devote one's life in many directions.

Shobha De's women are well educated, confident and virtuous ones who don't give much importance to marriage. This relation is based on mutual convenience and understanding. In their sexual relations, they don't seem to follow the ideals prepared by traditional society. Marriage must provide comfort and fulfills all the basic needs of an individual. In her novels, men are shown blaming their wives to look elsewhere while men are found doing the same very often. De's female doesn't consider recital to lead a perfect life. De tries to explain that modern wife and husband are interested in marital relation till they have interest in sex "but the day a man feels that his woman has lost interest in sex, and therefore in him, the relationship is finished and he starts looking elsewhere." Most of De's women are unfortunate to face such situation. De makes effort to draw attention of the readers towards different types of ups and downs in a woman's life. De reveals the fact that from her childhood to death, a woman is doomed to adjust, surrender, and
compromise without giving importance to her own existence. But Shobha De seems determined to produce such women that are emotionally strong and physically capable. With her successful efforts, women are awakened to be highly ambitious. Now they aspire to lead a life of luxury, wealth, comfort and pleasure. De's women are not attracted towards spiritual values. In modern age, spiritual values are losing their significance and are giving place to materialism. The evaluation of her novels reveals the fact that Shobha De intends to relives the women from the conventional image of 'Sati Savitri and Abla'. Although De delineates the dejected and miserable conditions of women but ultimately she portrays her women stronger, more talented and more capable than men. It had become the fashion of the twentieth century that the novelists began to consist the female characters who were sexually liberated and are recognized as the 'New Woman'.

Shobha De's popularity and reputation depends on some other facts, which are concerned to her personality. She is considered as a glamorous human being who is evident by glamorous presentations in most of her novels. Her glamorous attitude leads her to the edge of success. Throughout her descriptions, we may easily seek the occurrences, which are found on the surface of reality. Choosing the
extracted from her real life, she narrates women story in which we are familiar with the situations often occurred in their life. Paul Roberts comments in *Toronto Review* provides traits of De's life: "Good writer, enigmatic, straightforward, crude, erudite, girlish, wise."¹⁷

Shobha De got success to began a new era by pioneering in the field of popular fiction writing. She began a new tradition to explore the world of the urban women in India. While introducing us 'New Woman', she describes the situations and conditions where women are eager to rebel against the well-entrenched moral orthodoxy of the patriarchal system. In her novels, she adopts Indian attitude to project Indian phenomenon. On account of her experience derived from journalism, she succeeds to project the events with interest and courage. Shobha De takes the help of her unique and impressive method language and technique to develop a work which may be capable to arouse a lot of curiosity amongst the readers. On account of the treatment of contemporary urban Indian women's values and life style, De was gifted with high praise and wide admiration by readers as well as critics. Her contribution in the world of fiction, which she offered by her significant intellect and skill, cannot be evaluated lightly because it will be an unjust and discriminatory conduct and behaviour on the part of readers and others. In
order to reflect the real predicament of Indian women, De represent woman protagonists whose behaviour and conduct throws significant light on their various roles.

In her novels, Shobla De delineates the issues, which are closely associated to human psychology. The aspiration to acquire power and freedom to think and act individually according to one own will and to relieve the opposite sex from unjust and improper conduct and behaviour were chief destinations planned by Shobha De. In 'Shooting From The Hip', she reveals the significance of women's power: "Eventually, every relationship is a power struggle either on an overt or on a subliminal level. Control over the situation has been a male prerogative over the centuries. Women's destinies have been determined largely in that context alone... it is time they were made aware of their own potential and power. The very concept of the sexes locked in eternal battle is negative and destructive. When one talks of Shakti unleashed, one also remembers the two connotations of Shakti... the destructive avatar is a potent as the creative one. It is in maintain the state of equilibrium between these two opposing forces that can lead to creative and dynamic harmony. Men will have to come to terms with woman power."
So many critical problems of society are created as the consequence of in balance of power. So Shobha De emphasizes the importance of equivalence of power. When power centers in the hands of some limited aristocratic people, they misuse it and society is sure to face many complications. Such situation creates hypocritical predomination and conflict is sure to occur in its full form. De was determined to remove the discrimination and establish a system in which power equation is generally visible: "Many men are not willing to accept it and many men expressed their anxiety over the changed power equation." Through her novels, Shobha De conveys the message that women should always struggle to attain economic independence. Her advocacy for power equation and economic independence did a lot to bring awakening in the minds of women. In her opinion, all the activities are closely related to money. Women cannot dream to get independence in the absence of economic self-sufficiency. Our mind and spirit will not be effective unless we are economically independent and powerful. If our women are behaved as a slave and are controlled by somebody else, their individual development, refinement of personality and harmonious development of their natural efficiencies will be marred. Their existence as an individual being will be in danger.
Shobha De has a strange personality having intellect and experience to pour into two modes of writing. She not only spends her time for creative fictions but also is devotes herself to documentary works. She possesses the required fluency as a writer whose own life for that matter becomes no less griping than fiction, no less interesting than a profile sketch of newsmaker in columns of a glossy magazine. Shobha De is straightforward storyteller who is efficient and virtuous to explain facts and kinds of relations on both personal and impersonal level. While narrating her theme, she is conscious of various sensitive and influence matters found in her surroundings. De wishes that Indian women should have independent spirit so that they may construct the background of their life according to their own ideals. In her personal life, she is also found dealing her life as a new independent Indian woman. Having been deeply and widely influenced by the western thoughts and culture, she intends to combat against the fixed identity of the docile tortured woman of pre-independence period. She succeeds to persuade Indian women to protest and shatter the traditional thoughts and values in which they are trapped.

Shobha De possesses matured understanding and wide experiences of human mind so her presentation of her surrounding is excellent and
unique. She succeeds to explore the events in the way which moves our heart and mind. She has deep insight, which enables her to peek into human psychology. She is well skilled to portray the world of glamour. In her words, she includes the description from criminal as well as comic world. In order to acquaint us from the real phenomenon of the society, she includes filthy lure of present young generation. In this way, she chooses the matters from different fields, which very often influence women as well as whole human society. She was destined to find opportunity to work in various fields. Having been a highly ambitious woman, she changed her field of profession and never ran after anything madly. Every time, she changed her occupation, she succeeded to discover a new identity for herself.

The just scrutiny of her novels reveals that Shoba De is utterly conscious of her duty as a novelist. She is capable to emerge the image of a person is deeply devoted to her profession. She has unlimited capability to judge people and events related to them so she portrays the relations, values, thoughts, conduct and manners in the authentic way. She performed her responsibilities in the enthusiastic way and never hesitated to adopt herself with the circumstances and roles which were assigned to her. In her personality, one can find a high level of social consciousness.
De's women are much aggressive to establish their own identity. That is why they are always presented as rebellion who are virtuous, skilled, efficient and aggressive to attack, shatter and bring change. They are determined to transgress the existing social and moral values. They wish to find their identity of new woman on the basis of their own qualities and capabilities. They provoke other women to come out of the surrounding in which women are trapped to suffer and to bear humiliation.

Women are the mouthpiece of Shobha De because her heart aches when she observes the miserable and complicated surrounding in which women are locked. In her personal life also, she experiences tragic situations, which are responsible to prepare De's mental background and attitude for male dominated society. In all her novels, she emphasizes women's problems and their remedy. Her characters are dynamic, assertive and aggressive who are shown attacking the conventional beliefs and activities prevailing in the society. Before the advent of feminism, women's voice, feelings and emotions were suppressed. Shobha De did her best to voice their suppressed hopes, aspirations and expectations; although their wounded feelings were crushed in olden age but they had the seeds of anger and protest even in those days too. They were forced to become the victim of tyranny and oppression but through
the efforts of feminism, they got the opportunity to rebel openly. As the consequence of feminist writing, they have become ambitious to seek and establish their own identity. They don't want to be recognized with the name of father, brother or any male member of the family. In her novels, De projects her ideas with woman's point of view. In most of her novels, she draws her attention towards women's problems and their exploitation. She opposes the conventional tendency, which considers women as object not as a human being. Through her wide experience and inspiring works, she succeeded to create an atmosphere in which women may be provided awareness and independent identity. Shobha De made efforts to produce such women that are capable to begin new era in which women may dominate the society with the help of their skill, power, strength, enthusiasm and other positive qualities. The shackles of orthodoxy and other traditional role are main hurdle on the way of feminist thoughts.

Shobha De, in her novels, narrates the story of women who revolt against male hypocrisy and transgress the moral and social norms which obviously go in the favour of men. Karuna in 'Socialite Evenings', Aasha Rani in 'Starry Nights', Alisha in 'Sisters' are the protagonists who are remarkably bold and possess revolutionary thoughts and ideas. They are exhibited with the unique personality, which never bears the pangs of
inequality and imbalance of power. Although they find themselves in challenging situations and unfavourable circumstance, they don't lose courage and proceed to their destination with increased energy and courage. Shobha De has deep understanding and genuine sympathy, which is evident when she raises women's issues in order to bring awakening and to provide force and self-confidence so that they do their best to strengthen the movement. Shobha De possess understanding and unlimited experience through which is committed for the well being of women in such a way as is not possible by any male novelist or social reformer. Through the descriptions of her novels, Shobha De wishes to suggest that we have to abolish the imposed patriarchal structure of society, which represents the traditional and hypocritical image of women. Women should be provided love, respect and protection in the increased measure.

In order to seek shelter and solace and to establish their own identity, women are shattering the moral and ethical values. Consequently they are forced to face inner conflict which raises so many critical problems and unfavourable circumstances before the society. Having been the victim of grinding suppression, women make successful efforts to create social order, which is set up according to their own ideals and
attitude. In her novels, De creates so many critical problems and complications in the career of woman so that she may suggest proper and just remedy for them. Throughout her novels, she develops the phenomenon in which she may prepare the structure of feminist determination and sensibility. No one can deny the fact that De's novels are praiseworthy for their realistic portrayal of hypocrisy, degenerated values and discriminatory standards of men. In her novels we find modern women struggling to seek identity in a male dominated society. Shobha De is a well-reputed feminist writer who develops the atmosphere in which women may approach towards feminism and may increase the pace of feminist thoughts and activities. 'Starry Nights' and 'Socialite Evenings' are the blend approaches of feminism, which are experimented to proper feminine ideology. The protagonists in her novels, are portrayed throwing off conventional moral values. They are shown striving to adopt uppermost class manners and conduct in the place of middle class lifestyle which creates suffocating disappointment and heart breaking atmosphere. They are shown shattering the shackles and protesting against massive oppression imposed by male dominated society. Now they are seen aspiring for composite energy of production, protection, love, affection and fulfillment both earthly and sexually.
It must be accepted that Shobha De pours her own experiences of various fields in her novels which enabled her to acquire reputation and admiration at the international level. Having been suppressed soul and victimized woman in her own life, she comes forwards as a rebellious against male domination in the span of life. She raises her voice against unjust manners and behaviours and succeeds to resist the authority, which is improper, unjust and discriminatory. She refuses to accept the pre-established norms, which increase the gap of inequality between the sexes. She did not intend to hurt anyone's feelings deliberately but she was against the whole system which serves the interest of men only. In her novels, she pours the matters, which were allowed by her natural traits and inner voice without caring too much about the consequences. Despite so many critical comments, we say that Shobha De is much virtuous, skilled and experienced in the delineation of various themes specially related to women and their various problems. She is widely appreciated and honoured for her accurate characterization, perceptive probing of the secret and perception of human psyche. She draws her attention towards the whole woman race ignoring the discrimination of class, caste, age, sex, race and religion. She raises the values, which are accepted at the international level. Shobha De is a well-reputed
international storyteller who has become synonymous with an undeniable charm. With a span of just ten years, she has produced thirteen books, which increased her name and fame a lot. From her first novel 'Socialite Evenings' to the latest print 'Speed', she succeeded to fascinate the readers of India as well as of western countries also.
Works Cited


14- Ibid. P. 61.
17- Paul William Roberts, The Toronto Review.
18- Shobha De, Shooting From The Hip. New Delhi: U.B.S., 1998, P.111