

WOMEN'S STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL IN THE PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY : A STUDY OF SHOBA DE'S *STARRY NIGHTS*

A. Robert Albin,
Assistant Professor of English,
Urumu Dhanalakshmi College,
Kattur, Trichy – 19.

Abstract

Shoba De is an eminent women novelist in India. For Shoba De women are the main protagonist. In all her works she portrays each and every incident about human relationship. As a writer of women, she understood easily the psyche of women and their problems. She gives more attention to write about women's problems and offers new ideas to them. Her novels focused on women's struggle for survival and recognition in the male dominated society. In the patriarchal society, no one comes forward to realize the rights of women. Shobha De, a distinguished writer has focused the importance of women's rights in most of her novels. Her novels deals mainly on the marginalization of women in Indian society. Hence she is labeled a feminist writer. She quietly understands the urban women along with their overwhelming problems. That is why Shoba De wanted to eradicate social evils against women.

Her second novel *Starry Nights* is considered to be the most controversial novel. The novel describes the story of the struggle and survival of a woman in a sex-starved society. This novel is narrated by the protagonist Aasha Rani. Aasha Rani, a film star comes from a small town to the movie world in Bombay. Her father is a film producer. She is abandoned by her father and under care and responsibility of Vijay's family. There Aasha Rani meets a lot of suffering and poverty. In order to survive in a male dominated society, her mother forced her into the blue film world. In want of money the mother compels her own daughter to be the bedmate of producers and distributors. Aasha Rani, then and there breaks into tears. But Aasha Rani could do nothing against her mother. As Aasha Rani says :

Amma please don't, I'm so scared How can I take off my clothes in front of all These strangers? Amma Said patiently, Think of it like going to doctors Haven't so many doctors seen your body? Examined it..... They see bodies all the time Besides that man won't really do anything. I mean, it is all acting. (53-54)

For the sake of money, Aasha Rani's mother took her to Bombay. There Kishanbhai was a producer who helps her to get a chance as a film star. First of all he exploits her physically. Later on he falls in love with her. Very soon she breaks up the relationship with Kishanbhai. Then she falls in love with one film star Akshay Arora. But he is married already. Aasha Rani known very well that their love would not be fulfilled because he is a married man. Though he is married she continues her love affair with him. He also enjoys his relationship with Aasha Rani. Malini wife of Aksha Arora becomes angry when she hears the illegal contact of her husband. Through various incidents Aasha Rani is reprimanded by Malini. Even Akshay Arora feels ashamed of the relationship. He realizes his mistakes. So he decides to break up the relationship with her. But Aasha Rani could not tolerate her love failure with Akshay Arora. She expects him to attend Mahurat Party, and there unfortunately she meets another one person Abhijit Mehra, a popular wealthy man. Again this relationship proves to be futile, as Abhijit is also a married man.

Finally Aasha Raani decides to leave India and go to Wellington. There she gets married to Jammy Phillips. Her husband is a farmer. Then she did not have any relationship with the cinema industry. Now Aasha Rani leads a married life very happily with her husband. She wants to forget all about her past life. She has a beautiful daughter whose name is Crlced Sashs. After that both of them decide to come to India. But Jammy Phillip's Mother did not accept their proposal about leaving Wellington. Jammy Phillip's Mother says :

Nothing doing no way. I never want to go back. And please don't give amma the news the news. I want to protect Sash from her. I want to bring her up with all the love in the world. I never want her to meet her Sorand grandmother never. (103)

Now Aasha comes to India without her husband and daughter. Her husband asks her to look after her life without his support. So Aasha Rani takes efforts to get a chance to become a film star in cinema. She gets disappointed because she gets only Mother and Mother-in-law, role. She is not interested in film industry. In the meantime, her daughter called from Wellington and told of her father's affair with Nanny. Then and there, Aasha Rani went to New Zealand to see her daughter Sasha. So Sasha says to Nanny: Don't touch Me, I'M not your daughter. I don't want to be daughter (207). Then Jammy Phillips tells her about his affair with Nanny:

I love the girl. She loves me. And she loves Sasha. Things just worked out that way. I had not planned it. I love you too but differently. We have grown apart. We have been drifting off for quite a while now. I guess it was Sasha who was the common factor. Now that she's older and has a mind of its own, we should allow her to choose the sort of life she wants herself. (202)

Shoba De rightly says that women are unable to escape from the cruel hands of men. In any situation, men try to dominate women. Aasha Rani expresses her anger:

Men are very cruel. There is no justice in this world and no equality between men and women. Do not believe that a marriage alters that worse. Power lies with the purse – remember that whoever controls that controls the relationship. When you review our marriage, you will realize the truth of what I am saying ... The only difference is that some men can control their true feelings of superiority other new display them openly. (193).

Geetha Devi, mother of Aasha Rani is racked with pain through her husband. She has been living in slums and there she meets a lot of problems. From her marriage, she was ill-treated often by her husband. Even her husband did not give any rights to her. Finally she was neglected not only by her husband but also from outer world, as Geetha Rani's husband got married with a dancer. That is the reason why he could not take care of his life. In spite of all her sufferings she wants to live in the society and so she sold all her belongings. Now Aasha Rani brings out her mother's mental agony :

Piecing amma's life together, Aasha Rani knew more or less what had happened. Now appa had lost interest in her. How Girija had humiliated her and called her a common prostitute. How appa had abruptly cut off all money, leaving amma no choice but to sell all her jewellery and the clothes of her back. That was when the neighbor began. (68-69)

Malini, Akshay's wife was cheated by her husband. Each and every day she is ill-treated by her cruel husband. So she comes out the house. Akshay Arora failed to find out Malini's true love, as he gave importance to physical relationship. He developed a relationship with whoever satisfied the physical need. As Sobha De says :

Men are all the same animals ... and women such fools ... Romance finishes the morning after the wedding night ... The day a man feels that his women have lost interest in sex and therefore in him, the relationship in finished and he starts looking elsewhere ... Everything is decided on the bed, on the bed. (50)

Both women are cheated by their husbands. In their married life both of them have to face unwanted, unexpected problems in the patriarchal society. They were ill treated and exploited by men. Men did not give any respect, love, liberty and consideration to women. Shobha De has clearly picturized the problems in *Starry Nights* and this novel needs deep scrutiny of those problems and the readers and the audience may provide solutions.

Work Cited :

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