

THE TRANSFORMATION OF A MUTE VICTIM TO AN EMANCIPATED VICTOR IN SECOND THOUGHTS BY SHOBHA DE

Name:P.Rajisha

Ph.D. Scholar,OU,Hyderabad,TS

Abstract: Patriarchal society maintains certain norms for the welfare of the society. Marriage is observed as an institution which can construct society to run on healthy rules and regulations. In a natural fashion, marriage is considered as a tender bond; therefore it is seen as a permanent relationship between man and woman. Marriage is considered as one of the sacred relationships between husband and wife in India. This is seen as a sanctified bond, which couple observe with reverence and dedication. Indian society gives respect to this union of the couple. Married couple take this relationship as the lifelong commitment which they have to fulfil irrespective of the hurdles which they face in the due course of their lives. It is a portal to a world of leisure, growth and the promotion of the next generations, and thus has an effect of community and cultural expansion on society.

Key words: Anguish, Search, Identity, Matrimony, Rebellious

Introduction: Marriage is an institution of unparalleled magnitude in the life of every individual. It represents the blossoming of the life of a woman, but it has distorted over a period of time and misconstrued. A woman is seen as a mere possession of man, an object to enjoy. The institution of marriage has been established in the society in order to realise the value of love, security and precious family bonds, which subsequently strengthened the society. However, in the modern era, marriage has become increasingly difficult in Indian society. The upper middle and elite class have started to observe this as a sign of social status. The Institution of marriage is on the threshold of disbanding due to innumerable reasons including immorality, women's increasing financial freedom, a rise in the rate of divorce, a lavish lifestyle, and a self-centred and self-absorbed lifestyle.

The novels of Shobha De reveal the ethical and spiritual collapse of modern society's marriage structure and marital ties, which leads to resentment, dispute, and loneliness.

The current paper focuses on Maya's anguish. She is the protagonist of Second Thoughts. This fiction is authored by Shobha De, published in 1996.

Maya feels stuck in her marriage. Maya continues to be a mute victim. She is ignored and mentally tortured by her husband and physically abused and manipulated by her lover. The psychological and social aspects of middle-class society are discoursed in this article.

Society, from time immemorial has labelled marriage as a destination for women. Matrimony, on the other hand, is not the same for a man as it is for a woman. The novels of Shoba De reveal the moral and spiritual deterioration of the present society's marriage structure and marital relationships. Shobha De has lived with high society's morally bankrupt world. She chooses the middle-class society and the mute agony of so many married women for her novels.

She has an exceptional capacity as a writer of novels to delicately explore important characteristics of human life and human relationships. Her narrative has a tremendous amount of influence, unlike any other Indian woman writer writing in English. She is thoughtful of the psychology of a woman and her issues. Her novels reveal the emptiness of the marital relationships of higher class. Her novels have a candid portrayal of sex life. However, a close examination of her novels reveals that she is a subtle and thoughtful author. She is a writer who has dared to bring to light problems of man-woman relationships that have never been addressed

by a female author. Shobha De addresses the issues of women in patriarchal society, man-woman relationships, bisexual and homosexual relationships, and the rise of live-in relationships in her books *Socialite Evenings* to *Second Thoughts*. She lets her readers reflect on the rapidly dwindling passion, enjoyment, and happiness in marriage through her fiction. In all the previous novels she portrayed the elite class which lacks in principles and ethics. She chooses the middle-class society and the misery of so many married women due to the conventional arranged marriage structure in *Second Thoughts*.

Shobha De's seventh book, *Second Thoughts*, was published in 1996. It depicts Maya's anguish as she feels stuck in her marriage. The novel's theme, according to Jaydipsinh Dodiya, is "the hollowness of Indian marriage." In *Second Thoughts*, De examines the psychology of women in contradiction to male supremacy, the obedient wife, the domineering mother-in-law, social falsification, and public faces.

Shobha De aims to depict women as prime characters in this novel and appears to excel in portraying the difficulty of modern elite women with exceptional skills, as well as portraying the present-day realities of modern women novelists more effectively. The roles allocated to men and women in the Indian society are one of the most organised trends in the nation. Man is the king, woman is the slave, woman is the victim, and man is the guilty. The soft and comfortable matrimony shell that most Indian women enjoy can crack at any time, exposing the couple to disgust and damage. Maya moves out of her parents' house to a Bombay apartment with her husband, but she soon learns the repercussions of her decision. She wanted to be cherished and joyful. She loves her husband, but he does not love her.

A daughter does not have freedom till she lives with her parents. Hence, to gain her independence, the woman seeks marriage as a substitute to the parental love. She begrudges her role as a daughter and looks forward to her new role as a wife, hoping that the new role will allow her more independence. However, she is disillusioned in sex and agonizes and undergoes disgrace. She questions the conventional Indian wife idea. Shobha De projects the mental abuse and agony with zeal and accuracy, down to the last detail.

De has attempted to dismantle patriarchal hegemony through her novels. This reality should be kept in mind when examining her literary works from a feminist perspective. It is this aspect that offers credibility to Shobha De, even though her fictional universe has sparked with both fascination and condemnation.

The affluent classes of Indian society are depicted in this novel through the structures of family and marriage. Since the narrator is from the elite class, which is the focal point of the book. The representation of most of the characters have reliable portrayals. The family in the book's futuristic world is disintegrating, and marriage is being reformulated. Maya, an attractive girl from Calcutta, is keen to leave her boring, middle-class home for the charm of Mumbai, where she moves after marrying Ranjan, a good-looking and determined man with a degree from an American university. He is from a wealthy and an elite family background.

Maya is resolute to be the perfect wife, but she is stuck and suffocated by the restrictions of her arranged marriage to a man who, she learns, is rigidly traditional and utterly uninterested in her desires. She becomes depressed and disappointed because he does not satisfy her fantasies. In Mumbai, she starts to feel rather isolated. Nikhil, her next-door friend, satisfies her emotional needs initially.

She forms acquaintance with Nikhil, the young, handsome and college going student. She falls for his love, eventually gets betrayed. Maya wishes to live a happy and fruitful life with Nikhil, who is well acquainted with her. She wishes to get separated from her husband. She decides to live with Nikhil.

Maya, a Calcutta-based middle-class Bengali girl, desired to relocate to Bombay to escape her monotonous life. However, she was bound by an arranged marriage to Ranjan, who was extremely traditional and uninterested in her wishes. She felt all alone. She met Nikhil, a handsome college student, at this time, and a story of love and deception began. Maya remained a mute victim of the emotional exploitation of her husband and the physical abuse of her lover. She could not find contentment and completion in marriage. Her illicit relationship left her with even more dejection. The novel demonstrates the novelist's understanding of human psychology. It reflects the psychological and socio-economic dynamics of middle-class life.

Maya, a textile designer who aspires to be a journalist, travelled to Bombay with a marriage proposal for Ranjan Malik. Maya was a lovely young lady with a golden-brown complexion, shiny black hair, and wide dark eyes. Maya was more enthralled and enamored by Bombay. She was more enthusiastic about the possibility of settling in Bombay, the city of her dreams, when she met Ranjan. "Marrying Ranjan would make her a part of it immediately- Maya knew she'd be bonded with Bombay forever." (12) Ranjan was a hardworking, dazzling person with a pleasing demeanor. He had dark hair, wide, intense eyes, a muscular chest, and broad shoulders. He had an American degree and a successful job in a bank. He was a conservative and orthodox man who believed, "It is a woman's duty to run a good home." (11) Working women were frowned upon by Mrs. Malik and Ranjan. Maya's uncle also backed them up, saying, "In an Indian family, the husband's comforts always come first. Everything else follows." (11) Maya also came from a conservative family, where a girl's education, job, goals, wishes, and aspirations were all considered insignificant. She does not have the freedom to make any life decisions. Her husband decides whether she should continue her education, work, or stay at home after they marry. That is why, despite Ranjan and his mother's denial of Maya's decision to pursue a profession, no one in Maya's family disagreed with that decision. Maya was not one of them, since marrying Ranjan was like marrying Bombay for her.

Maya thought that she was "the luckiest girl to get a foreign educated, Bombay based bridegroom" (195). Her newly married life, however, began with a failed and unhappy honeymoon. Ranjan was never at ease with women. He was impotent. Ranjan did not feel sexually attracted even once in the presence of a wife as dazzling and bewitching as Maya, and to mask his impotency, he displayed his control over Maya in various ways. Maya inquired Ranjan's lack of sexual arousal. However, Ranjan responded angrily.

"What's your problem? You are beginning to sound like some sort of a nymphomaniac. Are you that sex-starved? Nothing else on your mind? How can sex being so important to anybody, I've never understood." (351)

Maya was reduced to a caged bird inside Ranjan's home. He never had any emotions for her. He acted in a dictatorial manner. He would not even let her be in the company of other women of her age. He refused to offer her money and forbade her from using the S.T.D. phone, television, or air conditioner. He was completely indifferent to Maya. Maya was consistently advised to follow his mother's footsteps. He always remained like his mother's son. He could never accept Maya and her identity.

"If you want to go anywhere, ask my mother to accompany you." (27)

"If you have problem understanding things just ask me. And I'll ask my mother." (56)

"Mummy is a very good house keeper and home maker. She is amazing. May be you should train with her instead of doodling away your time at a drawing board." (66)

Ranjan's mother had a major impact on him. Maya was chosen by him because she was Mrs. Malik's pick. Ranjan, on the other hand, talked about Maya's parents with disrespect and sarcasm. Mrs. Malik and Ranjan Malik had a sense of dominance. Maya had been chosen on purpose so that they could claim their power over her.

Maya was in excruciating pain as a result of Ranjan's callous attitude. Maya received nothing from him but financial assistance, a nice home, and four square meals per day. They are like brother and sister, or flat mates in bed. He lacked passion because he was devoid of it. Maya was regularly reminded by Ranjan of her responsibilities being a married woman. Surprisingly, he often had a habit of forgetting his responsibilities to her. He never missed an opportunity to chastise her. He was completely oblivious to her presence. Instead of talking to Maya about domestic issues, Ranjan used to talk to his mother. Ranjan, a responsible and caring son, failed to be a responsible and caring husband. Maya was certain that if Ranjan maintained his rigidity in sex relations, she would be never become a mother. They have never done something together before. Ranjan was uninterested in her. They lived like strangers under the same house. The following lines from the tenth

chapter shed light on their relationship's emptiness. "Hot week day afternoons were to be suffered silently and stoically with just the whirr of noisy ceiling fan to stir the warm air around."(100)

Maya lived far away from her home. There was a complete lack of contact between them. She did not know who to speak to. In Ranjan's home, she received no love or care. She could never affiliate herself with that house. Maya imagined herself as a full-time, unpaid maid servant. Her husband's insensitivity, relentless suppression and misery rendered her a disappointed individual. Maya was depressed and angry as a result of Ranjan's cold demeanor and her debilitating isolation. She had no one with whom she could express her emotions. She constantly felt, "Nobody needed me, absolutely nobody. My parents no longer thought I belong to them. My husband belonged to his mother. It was unlikely that I would bear children who would belong to me. And I did not have a single true friend to call my own."(372-73)

Maya met Nikhil, the only son of Dipankar, Ranjan's bank colleague, in this depressed and perplexed state of mind. Nikhil was totally in contrast with Ranjan. Maya was constantly chastised by egoistic Ranjan, while chatty and striking Nikhil was always pleasing her, even for minor aspects. She started to enjoy life again after the arrival of Nikhil in her life. She went on a tour of the real Bombay with Nikhil. She felt a sense of liberation she had never felt before. She used to share her feelings with him. Maya went on a bike with Nikhil for the first time to see Bombay, and she was overjoyed. She let out all of her feelings. She felt like laughing, singing, and feeling the salty sea air on her face for the first time since her arrival in that city. She smiled as she looked up at the stars. Maya was drawn to Nikhil's attractive character by isolation, lack of physical fulfillment, dull routine, and purposelessness in her married life. Though she was having fun with Nikhil, she was also feeling guilty about deceiving Ranjan. She felt that it was wrong for a married woman to betray her husband by going out with a young man. Simultaneously, she sought to comfort herself by saying that going outside and breathing fresh air is not at all a sin.

Maya loved Nikhil and his companionship but she had no intention of having a sexual union with him. Nikhil was a vivacious young man. He advised her to enjoy life rather than agonize quietly. Maya was manipulated by Nikhil. He exploited her physical needs, debilitating isolation and depression. He observed her agony and her desire for companionship. Nikhil began addressing her by her first name rather than Didi. He wrote a song for Maya called 'a lonely, lonely lady' which she heard many times and was delighted to think that she had inspired Nikhil to write a song. Maya, who had always been ignored, embarrassed, and hurt, was now being admired and flattered for the first time because the song was about her. Maya experienced happiness and relaxed when Ranjan went on a ten-day tour. She felt oddly relieved rather than missing him. She felt relieved of the pressures of being evaluated, observed, rectified, abused, annoyed, troubled, and instructed. She accompanied Nikhil on seeing the sights. When Ranjan returned, Maya's life became even more sad and pitiable. As Ranjan was visiting his mother in the hospital, Nikhil came in and abused her chastity. She objected at first, but after that she relished the bliss of becoming one with him. Maya thought, "Every bit of me was suddenly alive to the feel of Nikhil's lips, hands, arms, neck, chest, knees and legs. An unknown recklessness started to sweep over me. Maybe I was going crazy. I did not want to think of consequences. I refused to assume responsibility. I really didn't care one way or the other. I felt free, lunatic, and wonderful."(375).It is emancipation from a mute victim to a victor for Maya

The doorbell and the phone rang when they were indulging in sex, but Nikhil asked her to pay no attention to it. She opened up herself into the sexual act and wanted to swallow Nikhil. Maya had anticipated union with Ranjan. Sexual intercourse involves becoming one with the other for Maya. This union was never experienced with Ranjan, neither physical nor emotional. She wanted to leave her mundane life and live a full life in the company of Nikhil. Nikhil, on the other hand, was never a possibility for Ranjan. Nikhil's beautiful language was deceitful, and his affiliation efforts were insincere and only a prelude to physically seducing Maya. She learned about Nikhil's engagement to Anshu, a Delhi-based girl, after ten days and was astonished to learn that she had been duped by him. All of her ambitions were dashed when she came to know of Nikhil's engagement. She had no choice but to function in the suffocating confines of her arranged marriage. Two completely separate people must live together in matrimony.

Maya was never a cheap woman who was craving for sex. Her association with Nikhil was always a source of guilt for her. Her marriage to Ranjan was a mistake. Ranjan had married her to please his mother, and she had married him to get away from Calcutta, thus they were stuck in a relationship that neither of them wanted. Ranjan was unable to meet her physical and emotional requirements. Maya was admonished by Nikhil that it was pointless to suffer in silence and that she should stop. Make an effort to be genuine. She must think of her physical needs. Maya was a victim of Nikhil's well-thought-out schemes.

Who is to blame for Maya's wrong decision? May be Maya. What is it about Ranjan and his chilly, icy demeanor towards Maya? Nikhil, a worthless, sex-deprived adolescent who was only too eager to take the opportunity? Or is it the age-old, customary institution of marriage, which gives a woman a home, economic security, and a family in exchange for her character and personality. Marriage is built on the foundation of union of couple. As previously said, sexual satisfaction, is a basic necessity of the couple. Maya's sexual joy has been taken away from her. No one can blame Maya for having an extramarital affair with Nikhil. It is undeniable that human beings have profited and grown materially in the twenty-first century, but in the institution of marriage, man is still the lord the master, and a woman is his lifelong slave. Maya is made of flesh and blood, and she has desires other than food and shelter, which Ranjan has never considered. Maya desired emotional and physical love, something she did not get from Ranjan, and Nikhil lavished it on her.

Nikhil was candid very sensitive, and full of excitement, but Ranjan was selfish, emotionless and self-centered. Maya was enthralled by his greetings sarcastic quips, and compliments. She began to love and have a high regard for herself as a result of Nikhil's company. She discovered her own self-identity. She discovered the pleasure and ecstasy of physical intimacy. With truth, she was emotionally invested in Nikhil, but he cleverly exploited her. Nikhil is a representative of the present era, a man who has no qualms about having one-night encounters with unhappy married women. Maya is just another addition to Nikhil's never-ending list of lonely married women. Maya's idyllic world was broken once more. There was no choice but to continue with Ranjan's boring married life. Her life's romance and pleasure were finished, and she would always be a lonely lady.

Maya is the attempt of Shobha De to depict the sorrow, misery, and protracted silence that so many Indian women who accept marriage as a fate sanctioned to them by the patriarchal society. It will endure for the rest of their lives. Maya is one of the victims of such a system. Even if a woman like Maya tries to break the fetters of the mute victims, she is victorious for a short span of time, but she will be compelled to return to the suffocating environment of marriage. Life is not a beautiful fantasy; it is a hard and terrible reality that a woman must endure in silence. Maya has no choice but to endure her life's loneliness. Maya desires to emphasize her own identity, to be assertive in the face of society's unjust norms, but her silent scream was trapped in her throat, unable to escape.

The story portrays the mind of an Indian married woman torn between custom and nature. The work examines not only the hollowness of Indian marriage, but also the insincerity and dishonesty in extramarital relationships, which cannot be considered an alternative to marriage. It is the cry of a mute victim who emancipates to be victorious. Maya's silent cries for meaningful companionship not considered every time. In addition, the novel explores the nature of men. Maya did not exist for Ranjan, and for Nikhil, she was merely a sexual object to be enjoyed. She indulged emotionally with Nikhil.

According to Shobha De, marriage is defined as follows: "Marriage to me connotes commitments and surrender, merging with, blending, overlapping and combing. It is a symbolic relationship where one feeds on the other depends on the other, needs the other."⁽³⁾ Maya and Ranjan, on the other hand, show no signs of commitment or becoming one. Maya attempted to comprehend Ranjan at first. Initially she loved Ranjan. She tried to make physical contact with him by touching, stroking, and kissing him, but Ranjan remained uninterested and detached Maya was handled as if she were a maid by him. Maya's frustration led to her fall due to Ranjan's lack of warmth, caring, understanding, sympathy, respect, admiration, and love.

Trust, connection, affection, and sharing are all important aspects of marriage. Marriage is also a technique for interpreting the emotions and peculiarities of the other partner. There is no such thing as a "perfect partner" or "perfect marriage." Marriage is the perfect union of two bodies, brains, and souls.

Differences in attitudes, a hectic existence, personal discontent, a lack of sex education, and family members selecting marriage partners are all factors that cause strife in Ranjan-Maya's marriage. In marriage, having a healthy sexual relationship is equally crucial. Ranjan's impotency is the source of Maya's attraction to Nikhil.

In this work, Shobha De's maturity and intellect have reached new heights. Shobha De's masterwork sheds light on the typical Indian marriage, in which the woman is the silent victim. In *Second Thoughts* Shobha De depicts Maya as a victim of patriarchal society who is a mute sufferer. She portrays that even a weak, dependent and suppressed wife like Maya gets emancipated from the fetters of marriage institution. The male-dominated society has given absolute authority to man to make his wife a slave. The female protagonist of the novel Maya rebels and goes against the existing norms and rules which dictates terms to women. She breaks her fetters and liberates herself from the patriarchal frame work of marriage, where a woman cannot question the power of man but subjugates. Maya indulges in sex with a much younger man and satisfies her physical needs which were not fulfilled by her husband. She continues to indulge in sexual activities until he gets married. Once she realizes that the Nikhil is getting married she gets liberated from his clutches and goes back to her husband.

Maya, a simple town girl who gets emancipated from a victim to victor is an example for many women who suffer humiliation, suppression and exploitation in the male-dominated society. Maya shows how to live one's life on one's own terms. She liberates herself from the emotional exploitation of Ranjan as well the physical exploitation of Nikhil. She realizes that all men exploit women. She breaks her silence from a mute victim to victor by emancipating herself from their hands.

References

1. De, Shobha., *Second Thoughts*, (New Delhi: Penguin, 1996)
2. Sur, A.K. *Sex and Marriage in India: A Critical Survey*, (Bombay: Allied, 1973) p.3
3. Beauvoir, Simone De., *The Second Sex*, translated and edited by H.M. Passheley (London: Penguin, 1974)
4. Dodiya, Jaydipsinh., "Second Thoughts: A Critique" in *The Fiction of Shobha De: Critical Studies* p.281
5. Wollstonecraft, Mary, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Random House. 1794. Print.
6. Cott, Nancy F., *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987 .Print.