

## **Realism and Romance in Shobha De's Small Betrayals**

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### **Abstract**

*Realism is the behavior that shows facts of situations not influenced by feelings. It shows the things as they are real, but literary realism tells a story as truthfully as possible instead of dramatizing. It is the literary movement that represent reality of every day experience faced in real life. Realism in Art shows accurate, detailed and unembellished depiction of nature. Romance is a narrative genre in literature that contains adventurous, spiritual or mysterious story line. It is the story of boldness or bravery. In Romance, the main character conquers various challenges without harming the plot. Small Betrayals is a collection of 14 stories. The Fair One is the story about a Voyeuristic middle aged man in Bombay obsessed of a woman. He spies on her from his balcony, watches her armpits, her buttocks and creeps in his mind the feelings to marry with her and turns to his fantasies.*

*Shobha De narrative stands for existence- similar to the state of affairs of people what they feel right and influenced by high rank of contemporary society. Her self righteousness in concerned to females characters.*

**Key Words:** *Realism, Romance, movement, story line, contemporary society, righteousness.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Shobha Rajadhyasha is known as Shobha De. Shobha De, the best seller novelist and a well known free lance columnist of the leading newspapers and magazines, is a budding flower in the realm of Indian writing in English. Her novels depict mental and physical sufferings of female protagonists and other women characters. She mocks on cosmopolitanism society and shows ironical attitude towards serious issues. It goes without saying that her extraordinary language style and her realistic of woman, has undoubtedly heralded a new conception in the realm of traditional thinking. Like Arnudhati Roy, she has invented so many words and dictions, technique and style to conform to the feeling. She has given a new style to English language, a style that turns and twists language to portray the different facets of the modern mind which is being haunted by so many traumatic experiences; a style that lulls us away from cheap sentimentalism to the world of poetic pattern and metaphorical structure. To shobha De, the pure art has nothing to do with absolute truth. It shows truth the medium of art and beauty, feeling and form, her novels, e.g., sultry Days, starry Nights, strange Obsession, Socialite evenings sisters and Small Betrayals (a story Collection) are still sold like Hot cakes in India. Her other works include- Spouse: The Truth about Marriage, Surviving Men (1998), Second Thoughts (1996), Shooting from the Hip (1994), Sisters (1992), Selective Memories (1998) etc.

Now the question arises : why is it that the novels of shobha De sell like hot cakes? Why has she become the object of literary discussion these days: what is extraordinary in her writings which cannot help without giving a jerk and jolt into the minds of an average reader? In order to seek an accurate answer, one will have to dig it out form the different layers of human psyche. According to psychology, our mind has got three layers– conscious, unconscious and subconscious. Freud, a great psychologist of our time points out that our mind is just like an ice berg of which the major part always lies hidden beneath the surface. So, if one wants to study a man in its true perspective, one should try to study a man's interior more than his exterior. In Psychology, it is termed as "voyage within" or "vertical Movement". And if a reader dives deep into the ocean of De's novels, he finds that she, being a student of Psychology, has tried her best to study the interior workings of a character rather than his exterior behavior. And this is what appeals to most of the readers of modern age. Moreover, sex the root of all our energy and a prominent need of modern man, plays a very vital role in Shobha De's works. Perhaps this is why her novels directly hit the sentiment of most of the readers of this materialistic world where a large number of people are wildly hungry for power, wealth and carnal gratification.

The forte of Shobha De is the interpretation and elucidation of the interior world diving deep into the fathomless depths of the mind and digging out the pearls and gems hidden under the surface.

The central theme of De's novels is woman and her relation with the family and society; her trials and tribulations, fret and fever in an uncongenial atmosphere; her tireless efforts to make an identity in a hypocritical and callous society. She seems to fling hot and cold, irony and innuendo on the ostentation and artificiality of modern man.

Small betrayals, a collection of some short and beautiful stories examines the everyday people, their subtle nuances in the characters the pathetic cravings of the inner soul of both men and women wild and uncontrollable longings for sex; obsession with beauty; the protagonist's discovery of himself or herself; a newly married couple and their so many mutual problems, etc. the author very well tries to study the structure of despair that emerges out of a feminine discourse on the sad tale of hapless woman and men.

This is what we find in the story the Motor Cycle in Small Betrayals which presents a realistic picture of man woman relationship in the back ground of a cruel and callous conservative patriarchal family which creates obstacles and hurdles in the path of love between Pesi, the Parsee bachelor of 51 years old and Mohini, a Hindu teenage. Pesi managed to meet Mohini daily at a patriarchal domination in a conservative family is dead against their blooming love. Pesi's mother, who resembles one of Macheth's witches prevents Pesi from taking the step of love that goes against the age old norms of a traditional Parsee family. She objects:

"it is not possible that Hindu girl has done black magic on you. Khodai! Marriage and that too to a non Parsee. Have you gone completely mad? Or are you so separate for... for... sex. Go to a prostitute Dikra, if you have to satisfy your urges. But mark Mama's words – these sort of ridiculous affairs don't work. I won't call it a marriage since nobody in our community will recognize it as one.."

Shobha De also presents a modern woman attitude towards her right Now woman are not simply the flowers in the hands of man. She asserts her claim and retorts wherever necessary so, Mohini is also not going to be meek and polite. She behaves like G.B. Show's Candida and putting her arms around pesi, she fumes:

"Why should I be mean to her? Unless she is mean to me... I'm n't mother Teresa but I am nice to people who are nice to me. If she's horrid, I'll be horrid. Don't worry we women know about such things we can handle it. Leave Mama to me – I'll straighten her out in a week if she acts funny."

But the story takes a serious turn when Mohini goes to the temple and pesi awaits outside. Though pesi is married to mohini. Yet he is opposed to Hindu's rites and customs particularly the doesn't like. According to his opinion, commotion which he achieved only through concentration. When Mohini comes out of the temple she pesi some Prasad a few grains of sugar and a piece of coconut. But pesi doesn't have any regard hindu's customs and mythology. The author says.

"pesi declined hastily. He couldn't bear to have any not with all those flies buzzing around. Mohini insisted on putting a small piece of th half bitten coconut in his mouth. Pesi reluctantly allowed himself to accept it. When Mohini was n't looking, he removed it surreptitiously and threw it onto the dusty ground."

Thus, the author presents a confrontation between love and religion. Here religion wants to cut down the feathers of love that craves of fly freely in the sky. But we should not forget that love is more powerful and more sensitive than a religious conservatism. Emerson is of the opinion hat a mind might ponder over its thoughts for ages and not gain so much self knowledge as the moment of love teaches it in a moment. The main function of religion is to sublime your soul and to cauterize your dross of desire. So, this work can also be done by a pure and spiritual love which singles our heart to the highest percipience.

The other famous story, the decision draws the picture of a domestic problem through some fine images and symbols. Mohan, the central figure of the story, goes to Washington to do a job he telephones Manisha, his beloved wife to come to him, But Manisha is a lady of idiosyncratic attitude – who is like a cat content to be on her own. Mohan has a great love for Manisha. But Manisha, on the other hand, has no love and reverence for him. She even develops a sense of hatred towards her mother:

"Manisha had accused her mother of "taking sides" favouring her younger sister in a trivial argument and for ten long years, she'd nursed the grudge, refusing to compromise... apologize... make up. In that period her sister had emigrated to Canada, her father had died but Manisha's fury hadn't abated."

Moreover there is a great gap between the attitude of both the husband and the wife. Husband and wife are supposed to be the two wheels of the same chariot. They should learn how to harness the chariot through collective efforts and co-operation. But here the case is just the otherwise. Mohan likes plants in his room as they look dramatic, reflected in the full length mirror fixed to the bathroom door. But Manisha does not like plants at all. Why' because plants emit carbo dioxide at night and is bad for health. Even in the night. She turned away from him and preferred to shift to her side of the bed. Shobha De, a great observer of men and manner very aptly observes Mohan's unsatisfied longs for a sexual urge:

"Mohan had got used to that, even though he longed for a night in which she'd stay in his arms, her soft, whipped cream – like skin touching his, her warm breath moving the hairs on his chest with each exhalation her fingers resting lightly on his arms, her hair tumbling over his face her thigh interlocked with his her belly fitting neatly into the curve of his waist, her breasts moving against his side, the nipples grazing him gently."

It is to be noted here that people generally, brand Shobha De as a 'pornographic' writer. Undoubtedly her novels are full of sexual portrayals. But they have never been rendered at the cost of art and beauty

aestheticism and other norms of literature. They have some fine images and symbols, words and phrases which make them magnetic to the connoisseur of art. In art, it is not the matter that matters but manner that matters.

Here the carnal game of man and woman is not described in a dry and monotonous way, rather it is woven into the fabric of powerful images of the flowing river and the sailing of the boatman. And this is what we find in most of the works of Shobha De. If we judge the works of de, we certainly come to the conclusion that she has never impaired the tempo of aestheticism or metaphoric structure of a great art. We should always bear in our mind that now sex is not a taboo as it was in the traditional thinking. Freud has expounded a highly revolutionary theory about sex. "Ginger Eye Strategies tells when we try to peel ginger and its juice reaches our eyes, we are much perturbed and leave our work sometime. We control our emotions and try to get over them. This strategy can help a person to learn how to express the emotions in a balanced way. It assists in having access to emotions, allow intense feelings to emerge, trains us to handle feelings without losing self control, moves states of grief to acceptance, creates hope through self awareness, facilitates the process of restoration, keeps one healthy through expressing and releasing and eliminates denial," (Misra, 48).

Thus, to Shobha De, sex ceases to be a 'private' matter. She seems to have proclivity for publication of sexuality. Whatever references of sexuality we find in her works are meant for probing the reasons for one's behavior, moods and attitudes, through these sexual portrayal she seems to support the view of Michel Foucault.

"Every thing that might concern the interplay of innumerable pleasures, sensations, and thoughts which through the body and the soul had some affinity with sex"

Well, let us come to the story. In spite of Mohan's heartiest request, Manisha made up her mind not to pay visit to Washington. This shocked her mother a great. And then follows a hot discussion between the daughter and the mother. Her mother is so furious that she begins to hurl abuse and insult to her in a firm and loud voices which sounded unnatural to Manisha's ears.

"Listen to me you foolish woman. Flesh of my flesh you are but that is all... nothing more. You were conceived on a moonless night – perhaps that is why I have harboured only dark thoughts about you. You were also fathered by the devil himself a devil who came to me whenever there was hunger in his groins and lust in his heart. I didn't want you."

Now the question is : what makes Manisha so insensitive towards her husband and everything? What makes her life sapless, lonely and claustrophobia? The proper answer can be sought in the studies of child psychology Right from her birth, she has been an object of constant neglect by her own mother, though a mother must be an embodiment of love and affection, nourishment and creativity. As a matter of fact, the mind of a child is so sensitive that the sights of events of horror of cruelty and callous treatment of the elders causes such aberration in it that all through his life, he is haunted by them Philip, a little child in the story, the Basement Room by Graham Greene also suffers the same traumatic experience.

"Again he had the sense: this is life. All his seven nursery years vibrated with the strange, the new experience. His crowded busy brain was like a city which feels the earth tremble at the distant earthquake shock"

The last story, the Bindi deals with a traumatic and nightmarish experience of its protagonist, Sushma, who defied the wishes of her parents and the age long tradition by marrying Asif, a Muslim boy it also presents, more than other things, a harrowing and terrible experience of a newly married couple in a horrendous night during the Hindu Muslim riots in Bombay. It explores the mindless blood thirstiness of fundamentalism and brilliantly captures the insanity of violence' created just after the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on 6 December 1992. It says how Sushma a Hindu girl, a teacher in a public school, has to face so many unbearable taunts, insults and abuse of her Hindu friends and colleagues, her neighbours, of bigots and fundamentalism. When Sushma puts before her parents the proposal for her marriage with Asif, a Muslim boy who loves her dearly, her parents become wild with anger.

" if you are thinking of marrying that man, forget it. We will never accept this marriage. Think of the family sometimes. These sorts of marriages never really work you'll be miserable. Besides, no body will marry your sister. People from our community will shun us. Don't be so utterly foolish."

Mushtaq, the peon of the school in which Sushma is working has also to face religious fundamentalism. After the riots, he'd been forced to return to his village or face the unspoken – 'the discernible wrath of his neighbours – and worse – his coworkers in the school. Mushtaq returns to his duties after twenty days looking sheepish, unable to meet the eyes of his colleagues. Thought he is very devoted to his work, yet people begin to suspect him only because of his muslim identity. Some parents are not comfortable with the thought of a muslim being in charge of the bus queue. Yes, that muslim, for him, the school's children – especially the little ones, were a part of his otherwise joyless life. He loved them loved their laughter... even the pranks they laid on him. He loved the children like his own children and knew each and every bus child by name it was his strong arm that pulled the kids up into the by name it was his strong arm that pulled the kid up into the vehicles. And it was he who made sure the doors were properly bolted. The same parents who had developed a sense of hatred for Mushtaq, asked for him by name when their child was sick and needed to be

seated comfortably away from the bus bullies. And it was Mushtaq who had been deputed to the sports field to keep an eye on the young athletes. But the bomb blast in Bombay has made the mind of the people a store house of suspicion and contempt against the Muslim community in general and Mushtaq in particular. It is to be noted here that in this story all the prominent characters like Sushma, Mushtaq and Asif, have to undergo not the physical tortures but only the mental ones which pinch and prick directly to the heart and soul. Their tortures reminds us to the novel, *Lajja* by Taslima Nasrin in which the minority characters have to pass through the tyranny and injustice, insult and abuse both physically and mentally

Thus, this brief survey very aptly shows Shobha De's perceptive portrayal of the secret depths of the human psyche; her accurate characterization; her saucy, racy and captivating style which invokes vivid images and compels a reader to identify himself or herself with the characters and situations. Ellis (1946), on the basis of studies in which psychiatric and psychological diagnosis, results from case studies by psychiatrists or psychologists, were compared with the results obtained from the inventions, clearly demonstrated that inventions are not useful instruments in the hands of psychologists," (Hussan, Shamshad, 15).

She had tried her best to expose the moral and spiritual breakdown of modern materialist society where idealism has given way to Machiavellianism; where a hapless and forsaken woman longs for pleasure and craves of flying freely in the free sky. Where the hypocrites and the dishonest are gaining ground by leaps and bounds; where in the words of W.B. Yeats, 'the best lack all convictions/while the worst are full of passionate intensity' though she has been severely criticized yet we should always bear in our mind that whatever she has penned down, they are all fine pieces of poetic brilliance or metaphoric down, they are all fine pieces of poetic brilliance of metaphoric structure which linger to haunt our mind long after finishing them. But what actually matters most in her writings is her implicitly of language a language which is beautifully handled to accommodate or rather dramatize the ebb and flow of emotions to project the different layers of the subconscious or unconscious mind a language that sometimes breaks the conventional rules of grammar and syntax..

To sum up, her works encompasses its own exquisite world of passion, romance, fantasy and enviably hard reality.

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