

**SHATTERING OF WOMEN'S SILENCE IN INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH WITH
PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO SHOBHAA DE'S "SNAPSHOT"**

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Abstract

The current scenario has forced the Indian women writers to speak out on their issues, to empower their individuality. Earlier women were restrained to think that silence is the only way to live.. Shobhaa De has shattered this traditional notion. This paper aims to throw lights on the changes, in the voice of women, in Indian writing in English, with special reference to Shobhaa de's Snapshot.

Key words: *Indian writing in English, Silence, shattering, voice, modern, sex*

"Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves" says Maurice Maeterlinck. However, ideologically the word "silence" governs women. Recollection of the earlier period, brings out how the women kind were dominated. This gloomy situation made the weaker sex to remain silent forever. It is perceived that they lacked in communication that affected the conjugal relationship between men and women. But , ,there is a paradigm shift in the voice of women, as they are more liberated than before. This can be subtly observed in the words of Natasha,

Everywhere you look, you see individual women who are freer and more powerful than women have ever been before. (197) At present, women have started shattering their stereotyping silence by accepting and facing the tasks with great challenge, in various spheres of life and in the society. They have also begun to capitalise their voice by entering many fields. In this way, contemporary literary figures, especially women writers, like Shashi Desphande, Arundhati Roy, Kavery Nambisan, Shobhaa De etc., have begun focusing new tones and various cycles of women's life style of Indian society.

Unlike the other Indian women novelists, Shobhaa De shows a great difference in her writing. In each of her volumes, she regularly tried to raise the voice of women against the Patriarchal set up; whereby the old image of Indian women was deeply shagtered. To stress this reality, a special reference of Shobhaa De's Snapshot, is taken up, to dissect in a brief way. Infact, De herself stands as a premise, who breaks the muteness and thereby becomes role model to many.

Shobhaa De is otherwise popularly summoned as Jackie Collins played a special role of a mother to six children and loving wife to Dilip. She was born in Maharashtra on 1948 and had her education in Delhi and Bombay. She started her career as a Modelist, and then

turned a Film Journalist, Editor, Columnists, T.V, Script writer and Social Commentator. As a result of all these she finally turned as a novelist. She has written above dozens of novels. Her writings though criticised as “X-Rated”, she remains one of the most popular and bestselling authors. This credit partly goes to “Penguin Books”, which published most of her novels in an effective way.

To be precise, various roles and skills in her life gave her more experience and shaped her as a multi-talented personality. In addition to this, the balanced Bilingual language Hindi and English helped her to create a new form of style named “Hinglish”. This made her a special remark in the Indian English literature. She was also accepted universally, when three of her masterpieces “Socialite Evening, Sultry Days and Starry Nights” were included as a course material in the University of London. However in all her novels, she out spoke the emancipated women and evoked a great awakening amongst the Indian women.

In *That Long Silence*, Shashi Desphande dealt silence as the medium of protest and means of communication. Whereas Shobhaa De in her novel *Snapshot*, protests the silence and uses sex as a powerful communication. In this context Madhumalathi Adhikari remarks, “...De has surely and definitely revolted against this traditional approach. Her protagonists’ are vocal” (253)

De’s characters created a great impact amongst the readers and challenged boldly the risks of our traditional approaches.

The novel *Snapshot* revolves around the get -together of six schoolmates Aparna, Reema, Surekha, Rashmi, Noor and Swathi, from Santa Maria High School, Mumbai, who reminiscences over their past event to catch up their old times. Swathi who resides in London is asked to write a series about the Indian urban women of nineties. So she plans to meet all her school friends, in a party at Reema’s home. In spite of various problems and hatredness, for Swathi, Aparna, Noor, Surekha and Rashmi joins the party. In their reunion each discussed about their pre and post marital life and gave a touch to their memory. As they discussed all their dark secrets were revealed and finally the party turns nightmarish, by ending with the suicide of Noor. These women characters act as a mouth piece of the author and reveals out the changes in the Indian society, in terms of their attitude in tone and how they attain equations of powers. She also has tried to heighten the voice of women. This could be rightly mentioned when Swathi said in the concluding chapter of the novel as, “She needed voices, authentic voices, familiar voices, confused voices, voices that would ring true” (SN 306)

The novel starts with Prem and Aparana’s intriguing relationship and slowly slides towards introducing various characters and finally ends with a tragic note. Throughout the novel, the women characters have tried to justify that just like men; women are also filled

with emotions, love, support, concern and loyalty. When men fail to fulfil their expectations and to be faithful, it is here, where women characters break their stereotyping norms of silence. In this regard, Aparna stands as evidence.

Both Aparna and Rohit loved each other and intertwined as one in the name of marriage. As the day passed, Rohit yelled at Aparna often. Yet she forgave him and “Trained herself to keep quiet even when it killed her” (SN 26). She longed to be a mother as well women. But selfish Rohit denied it and refused it. “No babies, sweetheart. We can’t afford them” (SN 28). As the day passed, his tormenting words made her to hate even the word “Husband”, yet continued her life with him. But it was Rohit who left her all alone and went behind various women. His absence left her in dark silence that made Aparna to long for her husband, affection, concern and a person to share her feelings and emotions. Finally the uncaring, unfaithful and selfish character of Rohit turned her to break the muteness that she underwent the training for a long time. It was here she paid Prem and kept him at her “work and play”. “You work for me because I pay you top dollar more than your market value” (SN 2). Over here the author conveys that women break the conventional norms because of men and in this case, leave us Aparna as evidence.

Surekha is yet another character, who breaks the Indian traditional attitude. She married Harsh lived as a traditional wife and a good daughter-in-law. In spite of all happiness she received from her marital life; she turns to be a westernized woman in the novel. Her friends entangle their relationship with men, but Surekha maintains lesbianism with Dolly. Though this act doesn’t fit into traditional patterns, Surekha and Dolly break the social norms and voice themselves to be free and independent. This shows that Surekha like earlier era, was married at the age of 19, gets boredom with her husband and so seeks new unhealthy relationship with Dolly. Through Surekha De brings out the soar of early marriage and its emptiness.

Like Surekha, Reema too lived as a traditional life. Though she was very much attracted to younger Randhir, she was married to Ravi. Her soften voice never raised, so it compelled her to marry the choice of her parents. Yet she thought, life with Ravi would satisfy all her needs, but turns despair, when Ravi runs behind his business to earn money. Like Aparna, she too cared for her husband touches, laughter, concern, warmth and share, but was often left in loneliness that naturally led her into silence. Her silence made her to think of Randhir, her Brother-In-Law and finally broke her silence that helped her to intrigue new relationship with him.

Over here the novelist brings out the situation of Indian women. Most of the women, like Reema, marry the choice of their parents. This is what happens to too many, in India. Parents fail to do their duty with utmost sincere and trap their daughters in the unbalanced marital life. Yet Reema could have raised her voice, in choosing or asking for

her desire and need. When women like Reema fails to ask, it is how the individual women's life gets shattered. Rashmi and Swathi, both were also entirely different character, in terms of their attitude. Both grew their relationship with many men for their physical pleasure and started flirting with various men. They also believed that no men are faithful, sincere and loyal to stay with women, for a long period. Though both hated men, they could not stay without men. Both were behind men for lust, money and luxurious comfort, like other women characters in the novel. They never felt guilty or ashamed. These women enjoyed their life to an extreme, as no one was there to control. Both the women considered enjoyment, freedom and independent as their motto and never bothered about the traditional notions, or about others. Here the novelist has tried to bring out that, both lived their life style in their own road like western women and asserted that women in India too can live like them alone.

Eventually every women character in the novel wanted to be free, independent and spend a fun or enjoyable life. For it, they considered marriage as a source of boredom, yet they kept it as a weapon to enjoy their post-martial life with various men, freely. "You can hide behind marriage" (SN 214). All these women's motto in their life was "Say no to divorce. Never break up home. Have your fun quietly somewhere. But don't leave the family. That is the sensible way of handling the situation" (SN 295). Though all the characters intention was to have fun, they all shattered the stereotyping silence and remained a powerful voice of women. They never worried, felt guilty or concern on social patterns and norms. This shows great change in the facet of Indian contemporary women's life. Shobhaa De also makes the reader to compare the women in early period and women in the current scenario. Just like men, women have started drinking, smoking and spending time on bed with various men's. Equal power of women has just started hissing up, as shown in the novel. To windup, Shobhaa De's characters learnt the tactics, at time to keep silent and as well to break that silence. However, one can say that, strong voice of individual freedom is pronounced throughout the novel. As a result all the women need is an assertive voice in all the streets of life.

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