

Acknowledgement

I owe my sincere gratitude to my research guide **Dr. (Mrs.) S. Lavanya, M.A., M.Phil., Ph D**, Assistant Professor of English, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore, for the constant support, encouragement, valuable suggestions, and meticulous guidance she has rendered to complete this thesis. I also express my gratitude to **Dr. (Smt) R.Nandini**, Chair Person, **Dr. (Mrs.) N.Yesodha Devi**, Secretary and **Dr. (Mrs.) S. Nirmala**, Principal, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women for providing me the opportunity to do my research in this reputed Institution. I express my gratitude to **Dr. (Mrs.) R.Padmavathi**, Dean; Academic Support and Alumni Relations for her motivation. I thank **Mrs.B.Mynavathi**, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of English, for her constant support to complete the research work. I express my gratitude to all the Faculty of the Department of English (Aided and SF), PSGR Krishnammal College for Women for their support.

I express my sincere thanks to the librarians of PSGR Krishnammal College for Women and American Library-SCILLET for providing the books and secondary materials required for the completion of the thesis. I thank my parents **Mrs. Girija R and Mr. Mukundhan S Varier** for all her support and love. I specially thank my husband **Mr. Raju. G** and my daughter **Dhatri Skandha Raju** for their motivation in completing the research work. I place on record my sense of gratitude to my dear friend **Ms. Nandhini. G** for supporting me and encouraging me to complete my thesis. I thank God for providing me all help to do this thesis in a successful manner.

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* MLA - 7th edition is followed in formatting

Abstract

Shobha De is a well known personality in Indian media and journalism including the literary world. She has been long associated with the contemporary world of glamour and Indian cinema. Shobha De was the editor of popular magazines such as *Stardust*, *Society*, and *Celebrity*. She was also actively involved in scriptwriting for various TV soap operas including India's famous soap daily titled *Swabhimaan*. At present, she is a freelance writer and columnist for several newspapers like *Times of India* and various other magazines. Shobha De has a number of fiction and non-fiction to her credit. This dissertation entitled 'Postfeministic Reading of Shobha De's Select Novels' examines the select novels of Shobha De in the standpoint of postfeminism. The novels taken for study are *Socialite Evenings*, *Starry Nights*, *Sisters*, *Strange Obsession* and *Second Thoughts*.

The hypothesis of this dissertation is to prove that Shobha De's writings are postfeministic in nature and her works are very much in vogue with the ideologies of postfeminism such as Power and Resistance Culture, Girl Power, Chick Lit, Do-Me Feminism, Raunch Culture, Queer theories, Micro politics and Enterprise culture which are the important aspect of postfeminism. This study applies the theories of various postfeminists who strongly voice their opinion for the cause of women to attain their self-identity and to assert their individuality.

The Postfeminist ideologies of Amelia Jones, Angela McRobbie, Ariel Levy, Judith Butler, Naomi Wolf, Patricia S Mann, Rosalind Gill, Stephanie Genz, Susan Faludi and various other postfeminist critics are cited to substantiate the discussion of the dissertation and thereby the objective of the dissertation is justified.

The introductory chapter traces the development of feminist theories and its culmination in postfeminism. An attempt has been made to explain in detail the similarities and the differences among the first, the second and the third wave feminism,

backlash feminism and the postmodern feminism. The ideologies and the theories of postfeminism are explained lucidly. The history of women creative writers and women theorists are recorded till date. Women writers who could be brought under the preview of postfeminism are discussed. Characteristic requisite of fiction is mentioned thus proving that popular fiction can be utilized for critical and academic research. The chapter also traces the life and works of Shobha De. Shobha De's novels show a real picture of contemporary Indian life style in the upper middle class society. She has projected the image of Postfeministic women in her novels.

The second chapter titled '*Socialite Evenings-A Prototype of Resistant Culture*' presents a vivid description of the current scenario of women who are in the high social position with economic and social emancipation. Shobha De's women are not victims; they are confident, daring and powerful. The characters in her novels revolt against the injustice inflicted upon them. The characters are ambitious and highly potential and they struggle the way up in a world full of corruption, exploitation, abuse and dominance. Shobha De's women are postfeminist in nature. They do not blame the society for subjugating them; instead they resist any form of injustice against them. Shobha De's protagonist Karuna represents the lone-rebel motif and thus symbolizes the validation of individualistic rebellion against the system.

The concept of power feminism is explained in this chapter. Power feminism is a concept which is completely opposite to the victim feminism where the women are always portrayed as suffering and subjugated and as helpless victims. Power feminism perceives women as human beings who are free thinkers and self assertive. Power feminism believes that one cannot attain power through an identity of powerlessness; in addition power feminism also believes that one should be resistant and strong in their endeavours. Thus the protagonist of the novel represents the aspects of resistance culture.

The third chapter 'Raunch Culture and Postfeminism in *Starry Nights*' makes a comprehensive study of the characters in the novel who are persuaded into the strong current of glitz, glamour, fame and wealth, sometimes willingly and sometimes by peer pressure and social necessities. This chapter deals with the Girl Power, Chick Lit and Do-Me Feminism which are an imperative facet of postfeminism. Chick Lit is a female oriented fiction which celebrates the sexuality of women. Girl power is a notion that combines independence and individualism with a confident display of sexuality. Do-Me feminism believes in consciously employing physical appearance and sexuality to achieve objectives and to have control over one's life. It is a form of re-articulating sexual feminine identity.

The term Raunch Culture was first coined by Ariel Levy in her 2006 investigation of the overt or hyper-sexualisation of contemporary popular culture. In her book *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*, Levy uses the term Raunch Culture to describe the infiltration of contrived sexualities into mainstream society and culture which once existed solely in the realm of the sex industry and pornography.

The trend of writing unambiguously and candidly about sex not only diffused into twenty-first century mainstream culture but it also surprisingly resulted into normalization of soft porn images of the female body. Thus this chapter the upward swing of the protagonist in the glamour industry and the aspects of postfeminism is established through the life of the protagonist.

Chapter IV is entitled 'Enterprise Culture and Postfeminism in *Sisters*'. This chapter deals with Enterprise Culture which is an aspect of postfeminism. This concept focuses on the long struggle of an individual who evolves herself to become an enterprising person or an entrepreneur or a person who initiates her own development. This ideology of enterprise culture reverberates with postfeministic beliefs of

empowerment through realizing one's potential to achieve as well as to project themselves as potential candidate for a successful life and not as a victim.

Shobha De portrays an erroneous world where women have to struggle against various odds to become their desired selves. In many obvious and subtle ways, her novel explores the meaning of women's sexual equality. Postfeminist theorists believe in gender neutrality. In postfeminist culture a woman is given freedom to do whatever she desires and yet remain untouched by the fear of being judged by the operations of stereotypical patriarchal social power structure and authority

Chapter V is titled 'Queer Theory and Postfeminism in *Strange Obsession*' and it deals with lesbian relationship. The story revolves around the life and lustful relationship of two young women Amrita and Meenakshi. The chapter is analyzed by means of application of queer theories of the well-known critic Judith Butler. The novel is placed in the light of Postfeministic point of view in relation to gender related predicament.

Chapter VI is entitled as 'Postfeminist Micro-Politics in *Second Thoughts*.' The novel *Second Thoughts* deals with the story of a young middle class Bengali girl who marries a Bombay based foreign returned Bengali Boy. The story depicts the disillusionment of a married woman and an explosive tale of love and betrayal that exposes the hollowness of human relationship especially within arranged marriages. This chapter deals with the concept of Micro-Politics which is a significant dogma of postfeminism. Micro-Politics believes that there has been drastic change in the position of women in basic social relationships, within the families, workplace and other public spheres. Postfeministic notion of micro-politics is intended to provide insight into the complicated nexus of relationship and also to rethink this same concept in terms of postfeminism.

Chapter VII, the 'Summation' validates the objective of the dissertation by substantiating postfeministic theory of various critics and by co-relating the postfeminist ideology with various incidents and characters in the select novels. This chapter concludes the entire dissertation and declares that the hypothesis has been proved. The chapter revisits all the ideologies of postfeminism and establishes that Shobha De as a pPostfeminist writer. The select novels taken for study are applicable to the study of postfeminism. The chapter sums up the arguments of the preceding chapters and posits Shobha De as a postfeminism.

Abbreviation

SE - *Socialite Evenings*

SN - *Starry Nights*

S - *Sisters*

SO - *Strange Obsession*

ST - *Second Thoughts*

SM – *Selective Memory*