

Use of Abusive Language: Shobha De's Rebelian Style of Writing

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Abstract: *Indian English literature has produced a galaxy of women writers touching various facets of women's life. In the use of Language, Shobha De seems to be breaking new grounds. De breaks the shackles of linguistic disciplines by boldly employing what would normally be considered highly objectionable language, thereby liberating the language also from the male hegemony. Her fiction 'transports' us to a world where 'fair is foul and foul is fair. De puts specially into the mouth of the women character slang words and phrases, uses English and Hindi words together, uses of repetition of words and sometimes uses of capital letters in the middle of the sentence.*

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In the use of Language, Shobha De seems to be breaking new grounds. Mulk Raj Anand has already demonstrated in his writing how Punjabi abusive terms and expletives could be effectively translated into English, so as to give local flavour to Indian English. Shobha De goes one step further. De breaks the shackles of linguistic disciplines by boldly employing what would normally be considered highly objectionable language, thereby liberating the language also from the male hegemony.

Feminism has carved a niche for itself in the Indian literary scene with its peculiar flavors and nuances unique to the Indian soil. No longer do our women endorse the Tennysonian view:

*"Man for the field and women for the hearth;
Man for the sword and for the needle she."*¹

Indian English literature has produced a galaxy of women writers touching various facets of women's life. While writers like Kamala Das touch the physical aspects of women relationship, Anita Desai's focus is on the psychological one and in Bharati Mukherjee it is a question of identity. Thus, the movement, which had started as mere 'consciousness' in writers like Kamala Markandya, has now assumed a more emphatic voice in writers like Shobha De.

De's fiction is the kind of consumer product that occupies two niches of the 'popular-elite' in India. The interesting feature of De's feminist narrative stance results in the use of witty, meaningful and interesting dialogues. De's preoccupation with different aspects of woman's life makes her portrays variety of women from extremely modern and liberated to the traditional subjected and marginalized.

Women in De's fiction shun slavish tag of tradition exhibit and urge to unburden themselves not only from tradition but also from all types of restrictions imposed upon them. In this context Dr. S.P. Swain's remarks are quite expressive:

*"Like Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De does not overdo women's suffering, she transformer it into a creative principle of art and beauty."*²

De's women's antagonistic attitude toward men makes them outspoken, bold, arrogant and aggressive. Her fiction 'transports' us to a world where 'fair is foul and foul is fair. The fair sex is there to seek her vengeance and is determined to stun no inhibition, 'decency; decorum is foul words. When a 'creative' woman writer rephrases an expression like 'a rose is arose' into 'a fuck is a fuck' she lends literacy charm to it.

In her novel Shobha De without shame---- presents the glamorous and fast-paced world of the rich and famous,' the beautiful people', with all its superficialities and weaknesses, warts and chinks. However what is important is not the world that she creates but the manner in which she deals with it. Nowhere does she make an attempt to deglamourize her world, not once does she try to offer any explanation or apology for dealing with a subject which is essentially superficial and even trivial. In scintillating language and bold style, the novelist manifests how in an effort to adjust and to compromise between opposite cultures especially in the matrimonial setup, the Indian woman faces inner fragmentation, psychic disorder, and nervous breakdown and in some cases becomes a schizoid.

De puts specially into the mouth of the women character slang words and phrases. The intention is not to reveal the dark side of female character but the harsh reality that they face compels them to resort to the common language, which is the best means of communication in local context.

For example, in 'Socialite Evening', 'Starry Night' and 'Strange Obsession' she writes following words:

Fuck Studies (19)

Perhaps she just needed to tell someone what a bastard Abe really was (29)

Listen asshole (112)

Dehati (79)

Chamchi (110)

Bewada (131)

Sassy kid (11)

Boudoir (31)

Bloody bitch (34)

Witchlike (36)

Gauche and rustic (37)
 Juicy ass (30)
 Fucking bhadwa (2)
 Abey sale! (2)
 Bastards (3)
 Scheming bitch! (3)
 New chidiya (4)
 Her crooked dog-teeth (4)
 A belligerent cow (5)
 Bloody falsies (6)
 Punjabi bitches (7)
 Chhee! Bekar fucks (8)
 Chikna-chikna face (8)
 Goondas,Thugs (9)
 a dark ,fierce,dragon-lady (11)
 Maderchodh (14)
 Bewakoof (14)
 Chamchagiri (15)
 Sala Hiru Bastard (17)
 Chaalu pimp (17)
 Evil home-wrecker (19)
 Rundi (19)
 Filthy prostitute (21)
 Janwar (19)
 Bloody whore! (38)
 a murda (47)
 Wild pig (47)
 Greedy rakhail (57)
 Idiot (59)
 Spiteful bastard (65)
 Silly bitch (70)
 Bhangam (75)
 Nagins (77)
 Bloody kutti (82)
 Bitch!Haramzaadi!Whore! (82)
 Perverts! (83)
 Worthless hijda (94)
 Matlabi,haraami,bastard (94)
 Frisky dog (102)
 Lafanga (176)

Bombay, being a Metropolitan city has its own language problem. Though stress is totally on speaking and working English but still general tendency forces mother-tongue to crop up. De also used this skill to create Indian atmosphere in the novels. These words show lexical borrowing from the native language and their originality. For example in ‘Socialite Evening’ and ‘Starry Night’ she writes:

Dall-chawal (167)
 Chhota-mota (266)
 Daaru-shaar (166)
 Chamak-dhamak (5)
 Khit-pit (166)
 Theek-thak (221)

De also uses English and Hindi words together, to create her desired effect. For example in ‘Socialite Evening’, ‘Starry Night’ and ‘Strange Obsession’ she writes:

Oil-diyaas (39)
 Wramabazi (191)
 Baby-Jaan (6)
 Hero-Log (7)
 Two-Paisa (192)

Naya-Paisa (224)
 Backwash Films (9)
 Challu-Pimp (10)
 Mangalsutra ;Sindhoor (124)
 Karwa (23)
 Surma (19)
 Charpoy (162)
 Upma (194)
 Kaapi (8)
 Kuudali (2)
 Thana (40)
 Hijras (134)
 Mandap (167)
 De speaks through one of her character:

*“In Bombay agencies, most of the paste-up boys and la-out girls are Maharashtrians. No sin, but most inconvenient, unless you spoke Marathi, since she didn’t speak any English.”*³

De use repetition of words in her text to build up sound rhythm in the text. In ‘Starry Night’ and ‘Strange Obsession’ she writes:

Relax, relax ... relax

Poor Minx, Poor, Poor Minx

She sometimes uses capital letters in the middle of the sentence to enhance her desired effect. For example in ‘Starry Night’ and ‘Socialite Evening’ she writes:

You know – SPACE-I need my own space.

He silently mouthed ‘B-I-T-C-H’ before switching on his machine.

THIS is love, understand

Know WHAT? Jay hollered

The language that De has deliberately shaped serves the primary purpose of expression of the new trends that have begun to manifest in upper middle-class life and its sophisticated man and women as the member who execute the newness in every walk of life. The panoramic world of the metropolitan city-life, Bombay, the glamour and beauty along with its dark side stand before us as real entity. De has observed the place from the close quarter, including life and people. Its modern face and socio-cultural crisis are naturally painted. The life that De has observed comes real to us. It seems that writer’s:

*“Way of writing will be an expression of his personality and his way of looking at life.”*⁴

References

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