

**REALIZATION OF SELF: A SPECIAL REFERENCE WITH KARUNA,
THE PROTAGONIST IN
SHOBHA DE'S *SOCIALITE EVENINGS***

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Abstract

Shobha De is the name of India's top best selling author's worldwide appraisal for the frank penetration of thoughts, ideas, and feelings. This article is a humble attempt to venture Shobha De's stances on marginalization of prominent Bombay socialite Karuna in '*Socialite Evenings*'. It is the story of a journey of Karuna from innocence to experience. The journey teaches her new lesson at every phase. The feminist introspection is revealed at the end of her journey and she becomes a modern woman who is dependent in every way.

Shobha De, being well known for mirroring the Bombay Socialite, has beautifully portrayed Karuna, the protagonist of the novel '*Socialite Evenings*'. The life style of Karuna and her ethos are totally different because she takes a role of emerging modern woman. In fact, it is merely a story of a journey of Karuna from innocence to experience.

Readers come to understand the characterization of Karuna which bears with the feminist introspection. Really feminism conquers male-dominance in the real life too. She struggles tooth and nail to become a typical modern woman and succeeds in every stage of effort and experience in the society. The novelist makes the readers understand Karuna's implacable attitude through lucid description of the characterization. Self – identity of the feminist is exposed in beautiful manner. The protagonist enjoys self-independence in her own circle. As she hates the night-marish present life enjoyment, she recollects the past life in tranquility. However she tries her level best to brush away the memory of her bruised and battered condition with which she got entangled due to "an unhappy divorce and succession of sordid affairs". It happened in her young life, because she had neither proper guidance nor moral and boosting mind. So, she is left in the lurch thinking in the following strongly.

I know, I'm on to a good thing and the good thing is me. (30)

Never the novelist fails to focus the character, Karuna who encounters three phases in her life to attain peace of mind “before marriage, married life, life after separation from husband”. She hardly satisfies with them. Soon after returning from New York, she is held up in dependency and feels heavily saying.

I need my own space. I feel claustrophobic. I need to find myself.(59)

She is so strong and consistent that she reveals her identity after indentifying herself and she decides to lead a life lonely.

First phase of her life started. She finds her life desolate and discontented because she belongs to a middle class family. Karuna asserts her feminine psyche throughout the novel. Her mind seems to be turbulent. Her sense of freedom makes her rebel against her father too.

It needs the suggestion of Jane Wagner to know about the attitude of Kate and Karuna in comparison. In “*The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*”, Jane reveals the voice of Kate.

I am sick of being the victim
Of trends I reflect
But don't even understand.(53)

Kate is sick of being a victim whereas Karuna is not a victim. The former figures as a brave woman and so she becomes firmer and fiercer in her desire and determination against patriarchy to fend both females and femininity for equality. Despite, Karuna takes an unusual decision of becoming of modeling without informing her father and with her mother's caution. With the help of Anjali, Karuna avails an opportunity of taking a role of modeling for a Delhi based jeweler shop. She throws challenge with her father saying that she will never spoil his dignity at all. What the novelist wants to highlight is nothing but the independent decision and action of woman like Karuna that the society expects for the survival.

When she made a virgin trip to a foreign land, she lost her virginity by a film maker. The same film maker is responsible for cancelling her decision of an unofficial engagement and marriage plan with her boy friend, Bunty. She returned to India without firm decision of marriage. When the boy friend asked her for marriage, she simply turned down saying.

You KNOW - SPACE_I need my own space. I feel claustrophobic. I need to find myself. (55)

Unfortunately she meets a man in a restaurant and accepted him as a life partner but she can hardly be happy with him. Realizing her mistakes, she mutters thus she has “married a wrong man, for a wrong reason at a wrong time”. She has lack of communication and confidence with her husband. She feels dissatisfied with her married life and so divorces him. Of course Karuna finds herself trapped in to a meaningless marriage like Anjali's divorce because both are loveless, bridgeless, and joyless due to lack understanding and trust among the spouses.

Karuna is not sure about the longevity of her marriage and so she does not want any child in her life, because she feels that “children always come off the worse in the divorce”. As she is a dependent woman, she is mercilessly humiliated by her husband as “unfaithful selfish and treacherous” while her mother-in-law directs her through Karuna's husband to do something. Apart from that, Karuna's adulterous affairs with Krish bring displeasure between her and her husband. She tells her husband “I think our marriage was over the day our honey moon started. We have got nothing. I don't love you – never have” because of smugness and irritating mannerism. Her contact with Krish arises suspicion over her chastity and motherhood and so his words ring in her ears “(Baby)It cannot be mine anyway” because he never trusts her due to her affair with Krish. He accuses her of adultery which according to him “is an addition - it's only

the first time that is different”. Her parents also decide to absolve themselves of any responsibility by leaving their own daughter lonely and thrust her to face the atrocities of male world. In this connection, the author portrays the pathetic and sarcastic condition of womanhood in the Indian social setup and exhorts women to help one another in the “poor battle of survival”, for their identity, existence as human beings and equality with men.

Self - Realization sparkles in the second phase. Her husband was harsh and advises her, “It is better to be independent”. Karuna feels lonely when fibroid is discovered in her womb which meant that she has become barren and can “never have children”. Karuna now realizes that “there is something like divine justice. I’ve never been a believer- but now beginning to wonder. I’m being made to pay for my sins. This wouldn’t have happened if I hadn’t got involved with Krish”(224) She atones for her guilt and decides to live a simple and lonely life. Her childhood innocence and rest for life revive her from her physical and mental illness in the caring company of her mother who discovered Karuna earlier because of disobedience and disgrace brought by her. The novelist portrays Karuna who undergoes transformation in her character and nature which is the direct outcome of self-realization; resurrection of identity, hope, belongingness and her life journey from innocence to experience.

After her separation from her husband, Karuna realizes that she does not have anything to claim as her own. For the first time, she feels the need for a room, money of her own. “... no money, no job, no nothing. Not even a cupboard to call her own”. (234)

Karuna is offered an opportunity of marrying a film director, Girish Sridhar. She turns down because she is emotionally moved by the pathetic condition of her parents and declines the offer of marriage.

Living with my parents had opened up a new dimension for me. I felt like a responsible, caring daughter for the first time in my life. They need me. And I need them. (271)

Karuna calls for introspection. She reveals her own personality and she, therefore, determines to serve her parents as a son. She values her service to divinity. Karuna has been working in a firm which has earned a famous Ad Club. She took up the professional and become shining. The motto of her market is “capitalize on your award now is the time”. Although Karuna’s mother advises her to remarry, she refuses wildly and questions

Why does (a woman’s) security rest with a man?(276)

She tells her mother strongly that she is good earner as much equal as a man. She voices in her words:

I’m at peace with myself. I don’t feel like complicating my life by getting into a second marriage. I can’t make any sacrifices – not now. (276)

Thoughts are focused in modern way. Ideas are provoked in salubrious manner but feelings are highlighted in the readers’ mind. The revolutionary idea of the novelist with a literary view is exhibit rating.

In the course of time, she has developed self confidence which is evident from her snubbing Varun, an editor of ‘The Outlook’ who admired her gallant attempt mentioning.

How dare you. I’m not afraid of your threats. You can bloody well go head and print what you wish. (279)

The same self-confidence is noticeable in her dealings with an American based NRI Randhin Roy to figure in a documentary on the theme of “the desi – lib movement” on dowry death with Indira Gandhi angle for American viewers but Karuna replies

I had no one to rely on but me (240)

In the conclude, the novelist makes the readers understand the values of reading self as it has abundant capacity to transform oneself. It is true to be agreeable with the view of the novelist through this characterization that self – introspection, rumination over nature of things, realization of self- - identity and a ceaseless effort to find light are the keys to lead a peaceful and social life. The characterization purifies one’s mind and brings out the logged identity to the notice of the society and alerts others to face difficulties in the 21st century world.

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