

Shobha De's Novels and the Determinants of Liaison: An Analysis of the Human Psyche

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of how Shobha De portrays the innate human inclination towards prioritizing oneself in practical situations. In a majority of her novels, De aims to reveal the true reality of her characters, which many other authors inadvertently hide beneath the surface. The study also examines the factors and circumstances that significantly influence the development of human relationships as a consequence of individuals' self-centred tendencies. The author, in her works, gives her female characters the chance to define humanity, including themselves. Her reasoning is based on her belief that romantic relationships are intrinsically linked to the human tendency to emphasize one's own desires and needs. As a result, people have a self-centred psychological attitude regardless of their gender. She portrays the women as the leading characters, possessing a psyche that desires complete freedom in both their personal and social lives. To explore the human nature of self-interest in the context of establishing relationships, this qualitative research paper employs the Freudian theory of psychoanalysis and some of its interpretations by renowned literary scholars. The primary sources for this research were some of Shobha De's novels, while the secondary sources included both online and offline materials written about her major works of fiction. The study concludes that Shobha De's fictional works demonstrate that liaisons are determined by inherent human psychological factors of self-interest and egotism.

Keywords: egotism, liaison, lust, psychoanalysis, self-centered, self-identity

Introduction

Shobha De (1948) is a contemporary Indian female novelist, model, columnist, and journalist. She is credited with popularizing *Hinglish* by publishing the first issue of Stardust, a Bollywood gossip magazine, in 1971. While she was in charge of the magazine, controversies involving prominent figures in modern India's film industry were frequently featured on the covers and in the headlines. She frequently and enthusiastically discusses topics relating to women in her various activities, including print journalism, television programmes, and fiction writing. Urban Indian women's sense of self, independence, freedom, desire, sensuality, and revolutionary spirit are central themes in most of De's works. Her works of fiction appear to have dealt with the fact that the vast majority of individuals are logocentric in every aspect possible, although some people are more open about it than others. In her work, Shobha De gracefully

sways the human tale of inner urges to have freedom in social and other issues, including sexual connections, which are most frequently repressed for ethical, legal, societal, and other reasons. For this reason, she is commonly referred to as the "Jackie Collins of India" (Fineman) due to her "depiction of socialites and sex in her works of fiction; moreover, she writes the same kind of sexually charged books with celebrities and socialites as the protagonist" (Betigeri). People, especially women trying to find their place in the world, are the primary subjects of her stories. Relationships of all kinds among individuals who live together or remain apart are determined by the inherent selfishness of humans and, in particular, women.

The way that Shobha De writes about female protagonists is an attempt to empower women to break down societal, psychological, and gender norms. Ankita Shukla has this to say: "Whether she's depicting a city girl or a country gal, Shobha De always portrays her female protagonists with the same level of realism and nuance." The struggles of modern society are reflected in her characters. Shobha De's writings focus on power, money, lust, and sex to show readers outside of India a side of the country they have probably never seen before (Khan). Her characters personify the deepest desires of nearly everyone to live their lives with as much autonomy as possible, but who are prevented from doing so by societal constraints related to their gender, race, class, age, sexuality, and so on. Her female protagonists don't seem to be uncomfortable voicing their sexual impulses, and they work to change a cultural norm that has kept sexuality hidden for millennia in the East, especially in India. In Mishra's words, "their reference to the sexual act in unambiguous terms shatters the traditional image of women who are considered to be submissive, docile, calm, and meek" (18). Shobha De's eroticized storytelling is a big part of why she has so many fans, but it's also made her a controversial figure in India's literary community. However, her fiction has the power to speak out against the norms of traditional Indian society, where many people are uncomfortable with depictions of sexual activity between a man and a woman. Nevertheless, De aims to subvert and challenge the stereotypical Indian view of women through her literature.

The male-dominated culture of the West is accustomed to demeaning women in a number of ways. Some communities are beginning to apply equality principles in practice, while others continue to resist, citing religious and disciplinary norms in their justifications. This action exemplifies the fact that men wish to control the systems that seem to have resulted in discrimination against women. What's more intriguing is that women share men's desire to maintain power positions, but in South Asian countries like India, the patriarchal structure prevents women from openly demanding a change in their status or character. Shobha De gives her female characters the chance to strive to define humanity, including themselves, in her works. This stems from her belief that romantic relationships are intrinsically linked to the human tendency to place an emphasis on one's own needs and desires.

Review of Literature

Shobha De, one of the most prominent Indian feminist women novelists, has revolutionized the portrayal of women in English-language Indian literature. She always gives the highest priority to the psychology of the women, who are the major determinants of the liaison especially between men and women. Her presentation of female characters is always bold and courageous, moreover, she takes into account the female psyche more deliberately. Thus, De appears to have brought out the female inner voices as a challenge to the traditional patriarchal society, which sometimes accuses the author of being a "soft-porn writer" (Chakraborti et al.). However, her female characters are stronger, more ambitious, materialistic, and, most importantly, primarily public figures with romantic notions than her male characters. The families of the male protagonists in Shobha De's novels are upper-middle class. They are portrayed as desiring to ascend to the ranks of the social aristocracy. This aspect of De's characters is indicative of their self-centeredness. She portrays them as those who view marriage as soul-crushingly mundane. Obviously, this is another reason why her characters are unable to maintain improved relationships. In her novels *Second Thoughts*, *Socialites Evening*, and *Starry Nights*, Shobha De depicts conflicting relationships between the characters. This tendency of women has contributed to the development of feminist empowerment, particularly in the aforementioned family categories. On the one hand, De's fictional characters place themselves first, and on the other, masculine characters remain indifferent to women's issues. Therefore, her male and female characters have brief personal and intimate relationships. In *Socialites Evenings* (1989), Shobha De discusses the aspects of the man-woman relationship in which both sexes attempt to assert their superiority. Every relationship is a power battle, overt or covert. Men have always ruled the situation. That alone has dictated women's fates. They need to know their strengths. Human development requires harnessing, directing, and using *Shakti*. The idea of the sexes fighting forever is damaging. When discussing *Shakti* unleashed, one must understand that the destructive avatar is as powerful as the creative one. Maintaining equilibrium between these competing energies can lead to creative and dynamic harmony...Men must accept women's power (111–113).

In her novels, Shobha De provides a novel perspective on the relationship between men and women. In Indian society, she depicts women as victims of marginalization at the hands of males. She speaks out vehemently against all forms of women's exploitation and subjugation, which she abhors. The exploitation of women by men is a result of male chauvinism, which is one of the most influential factors in determining the man-woman relationship. As depicted in Shobha De's fiction, discrimination leads to deteriorating relations between the sexes, which contributes to the emergence of the sexually liberated, free-thinking woman in the man-woman relationship. In their article titled *From Margin to Centre: A Case Study of Ennoblement in Shobha De's Socialite Evenings*, T.S., Ramesh, and R. Vanitha note that De's female characters attempt to challenge patriarchal hegemony because, for instance, they are treated differently than their male counterparts in Indian society. The authors elaborate on man-woman liaisons and their repercussions:

To women in India, freedom is out of the question. In order to strip off their abject status, they raise their voice against the lignification of women. When women long for true love, women in the patriarchal society tend to be gutty. Keeping this in her mind, De's Karuna in *Socialite Evenings* is against other women. She is a self-conscious modern woman(51-52).

As depicted by Shobha De, the male-female relationship among and between family members is predominately female-dominated because "they seem to use their sexuality as a woman against the male dominance" (Baig 2). Therefore, women are the protagonists in Shobha De's novels. In addition, they are portrayed as courageous and ambitious women who pursue victory over their patriarchal families in India. These types of female characters seek to diminish the prominence of the masculine characters. De depicts her female characters as transgressors who violate the social order and refuse to be ostracised by men (Shushil 47). Shobha De has advocated for even lesbianism in her novels *Starry Nights* and *Strange Obsession*. In both of these works of fiction, the main characters have either been exploited by men or have felt sexually unfulfilled, but they find immense delight in the arms of other women. Thus, the author also concentrates on the relationships between women.

The man-woman relationship depicted in Shobha De's *Socialite Evening* is neither pleasurable nor healthy enough to unite all spouses. Karuna, Anjali, and Ritu from various families attempt to flee the nightmare of a shattered marriage and failed relationships for the simple reason that they are all self-centred individuals who have always yearned for total independence. Their search for "self" persists, rendering Karuna, in particular, a woman of the modern wasteland devoid of substance. She divorces her spouse in order to live independently with her parents, as her relationship with him deteriorates after she refuses to continue carrying the pregnancy. In any case, she does not appear to be aware that "a man's personality can only be accurately assessed by examining his interior rather than his exterior behaviour" (Ponezhil 51). Therefore, the relationship between the spouses deteriorates if there are significant disagreements regarding the intimate relationship and conceiving a child.

The issue of sexual relationships plays a crucial role in the married life of the spouse for the simple reason that it reduces their physical separation by fostering an emotional attachment. Every successful married life is highly dependent on the closeness of the spouses. The inability to comprehend one another's desire for intimate relationships is likely to invite conflict into their lives. In her novel *Second Thoughts*, Shobha De presents the tense marital life of Maya and her spouse RanjanMallik, who has been resistant to his wife's sexual desires, highlighting the same aspect of the relationship. This is the primary cause of the deterioration in their marital relationship. Maya is lonely, bored, and aggravated by Ranjan's attitude, who is too preoccupied with himself and his promising career as a bank executive. Due to her husband's inability, unwillingness, and indifference to establish a physical relationship, Maya will inevitably have second thoughts about being emotionally and physically adored. Thus, she develops a

relationship with Nikhil, a younger man who respects her desires, and they engage in sexual activity. The second thought that Maya has is the result of her husband's inability to love, care for, and satisfy her physical passion. In his article *Freud and Sexual Ethics*, David Carr discusses how sexual relations are intertwined with other types of relationships in the family and society: "sexual activity is no longer merely a form of personal pleasure-seeking; rather, it acquires a new significance in the context of some relationship with other humans involving the sort of altruistic relations and sentiments"(363).

In *Sisters*, Shobha De discusses the illicit relationship between Hiralal, Leelaben, Mikki, Navin, Binny, Alisha, and Dr. Kurein in order to expose the reality of illicit relationships, affairs, and liaisons between so-called upper-class individuals and business community members. A series of unethical physical relationships appear to have developed in the novel because each character has prioritised their own self-interest. The interactions between and among the characters define their relationships. Hiralal and his wife Malaben have only one daughter, Mikki. She ceases despising Alisha, her half-sister, after learning about the conspiracy hatched by the industry's most trusted employee. Thus, "Shobha De portrays the upper class as hypocritical" (Book Review: *Sisters* by Shobha De).

In the majority of her novels, Shobha De depicts men and women based on Indian women from middle- and upper-class backgrounds. In De's fiction, both types of men and women are portrayed: those who are aware of their familial code of conduct and those who never take such things seriously because they have complete freedom in their lives. In *Sultry Days*, the first types of women, such as Nisha's mother, are portrayed as revolutionary individuals who are cognizant enough to rebel against mistreatment. They are depicted as opposing their spouses' extramarital affairs in order to maintain a happy marriage; however, the second category of women characters, such as Sujatha, are portrayed as desiring their own lifestyle by establishing their own rules. As a prostitute, she "does whatever comes into her mind" (**Ambadkar 453**); therefore, she represents a woman who enjoys total freedom in life.

Divya C. notes that in *Sultry Days*, Shobha De depicts Nisha's conscious struggle for socio-psychological emancipation as the deranged wanderings of a fragmented self on a quest for wholeness. In a hostile environment, De's novels emphasise emphatically the importance of one's own strength. For her, the "self" is more influential in determining her relationships with others. In her novel *Snapshots*, Shobha de depicts the sensual behaviours of modern Indian women by depicting a strange and awkward group of six leading women with unhappy sexual relationships with their spouses. In this work of fiction, women are portrayed as relating their experience of sexual encounters that contemporary Indian society would consider illegal and unethical with great candour. Again, De focuses on the sexual freedom of women, but as the novel demonstrates, "morality is redefined in terms of social and economic status" (Vijayakumari and Geethanjali 184), which is one of the most important foundations for marriage and family relationships. Women in *Snapshots* are attached to wealth, romance, and independence. Thus, by

revolutionizing traditional sexual practices, De demonstrates that man-woman relationships are not only social-ethical but also financial and sexually liberal concerns. The novel's female characters believe "there is nothing wrong with seeking new relationships outside of marriage and challenging the patriarchal system" (190), which is one of the major causes of the deteriorating and unhappy relationships between wives and husbands in upper-middle class families in India.

Methodology

The selected fiction of Shobha De have been utilized as the primary data sources for this qualitative research paper. For the purpose of analysing and interpreting the subject of the research paper, *Socialite Evenings* (1989), *Starry Nights* (1991), *Sisters* (1992), *Strange Obsession* (1992), *Sultry Days* (1994), *Snapshots* (1995), and *Second Thoughts* (1996) by De were examined. For a broader comprehension of the available articles, secondary data from both online and offline sources were utilised. For the purpose of presenting Shobha De's most up-to-date views on the issue presented in the paper, both recent and older interviews of the novelist on YouTube were utilised. This research paper could serve as a secondary source of information for future researchers interested in the mode of communication affected by the inherent human characteristics discussed in this paper. This paper will contribute to an understanding of Sobha De's emphasis on the psychological level of the human mind in her choice of character portrayal.

Results

Shobha De is a fearless feminist novelist who promotes the sexual freedom of women as a fundamental human right because she depicts her female characters as revolting against and challenging patriarchal perceptions and treatments of sexual relationships, which are, in general, the foundation of the man-woman relationship in the family and society. When viewed from the scientific perspective of the biological aspect, physical relationships can be viewed as necessary human attachments between a man and a woman. However, a failure to appropriately assimilate this necessity can lead to a number of difficulties in the man-woman relationship. Through her fiction, Shobha De advocates sexual freedom as an indication of women's advocacy for gender equality that men and women have the same level of sexual freedom in all aspects of life. This is why she creates female characters who are as strong as men and who have affairs with multiple men simultaneously or at various times. Males in Indian society have long been socially acceptable for having multiple wives and extramarital affairs, whereas the situation for women is quite different on the same issue. In her fictional works, which exemplify the "new woman" (Bhavani 3) of contemporary upper and middle-upper classes, Shobha De, as a woman, rebels against such sexual discrimination. The evolution of women and their temperament has consequently altered their relationships with men such as their husbands, fathers, and sons. Females have sought their new space and function in the family and society as male chauvinism progressively recedes. The gradual elimination of sexual discrimination will inevitably define a

new relationship between men and women. In De's fiction, women are no longer the instruments of men; in some instances, they are even stronger and more powerful than their male counterparts. Her female characters, in an effort to break the traditional concept of sex, violate established sexual societal norms; however, as Divya C. argues, "De never justifies her protagonist's violation of moral codes, but instead emphasises women's emotional need to be loved and cared for" (542).

The man-woman relations in Shobha De's work appear to have become problematic when one gender attempts to subjugate the other in any way possible, and this treatment of gender discrimination is most likely to elicit several causes of the revolt, which the women characters in *Second Thoughts*, for instance, are depicted as having assimilated. Shobha De's depiction of humanity relies significantly on the treatment of one sex over the other, taking into account the reactions to those treatments. Due to their vested interests, almost all of the main characters in *Sisters* have established illicit physical relationships, causing family tensions. Maya's marriage to Ranjan is deceptive because he is incapable of satisfying her desires for affection, caring, and sex. In *Socialite Evenings*, Karuna's quest for self forces her to spend time with multiple male counterparts, preventing her from having a happy married life. Linda and Asha Rani's homosexual relationship The novel *Starry Nights* by De indicates "a revolt against the patriarchal, traditional setup of our society" (Dhanda). This opposes the heterosexual relationship between a male and a woman. In *Sultry Days*, in contrast to her other novels, Shobha De focuses more on masculine characters. Nisha is a strong, career-focused female character, but the novel also deals genuinely with the male characters who are the focus of the plot. But Sujata, who in the same novel defines life in her own way, defying even her spouse, is a prostitute with numerous relationships with men. The plot of *Strange Obsession* revolves around the lesbian relationship between Meenakshi and Amrita (Ambadkar 453). In Shobha De's upcoming novel *Snapshots*, women are bored with their relationship with their spouses. The novel reveals that they are preoccupied with sensual pleasures and challenge the patriarchal system by seeking relationships outside of marriage.

Discussion

Sigmund Freud's "psychoanalytic investigation stresses that human nature embodies some traits which yearn to satisfy the impulses- like aggression, the ego that drives him towards pleasurable experiences and needs for getting love" ("Freud's View On Human..."). Shobha De's portrayal of the women characters of the upper and middle classes in particular as violators of established patriarchal norms is influenced by this theory. Freud contends that there is a significant correlation between human behaviour and the culture in which a person develops. In other words, one could contend that a person's characteristics are the result of the treatment he or she receives in a particular society. No man engages in rebellion unless the structure of society compels him to do so. In this sense, Shobha De's revolutionary women characters are victims of the patriarchal Indian society from which they seek a form of liberation. Existence of any type of segregation inevitably necessitates a revolution at some point. Women in India, in particular, and the entire Indian subcontinent, in general, are under a great deal of pressure from sexual

discrimination, which has prevented them from enjoying their rights and proving that they are equal to men in all matters, including the freedom to engage in extramarital sexual relations. This is the reason why Shobha de depicts her fictional female characters as engaging in illicit affairs, a nearly age-old practice for men in India due to the legalization of male polygamy. Shobha De has advocated for female sexual liberation in her novels *Snapshots*, *Strange Obsession*, and *Sultry Days* for the simple reason that making love a virtue is the result of sexual sublimation.

Sigmund Freud, a psychoanalyst, wrote in his book *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* that "normal copulation leads to the release of sexual tension and contemporary extinction of sexual instinct" as a result of which the relationship between the partners continues to flourish. Therefore, liaison, a matter of intimacy that satisfies the needs of sex partners such as husband and wife, maintains the relationship cordial and truthful. Failure to resolve this aspect of physical and psychological human needs compels them to rebel against one another. Sobha De's novels are also criticized for their allegedly 'vulgar' depiction of female characters, who appear to challenge traditional and stereotypical perceptions of women's sexual behaviour. The female protagonists in her novels are depicted engaging in openly sexual activities, and the majority of their actions are deemed immoral and illegal. However, Carpendale and Kerb note that "morality is less associated with one's thoughts" and that "it is revealed in one's actions." The female protagonists in De's fiction do not appear to view themselves as immoral or erotic; rather, they have made a sincere effort for their liberation from patriarchy in practical lives comparable to those of men. In this sense, their revolutionary disposition is limited to the assertion that both men and women deserve the same degree of liberalization. It is very similar to Freud's theory of human development, which explains that the sexual instinct and death instinct are historically under restructuring phenomena of human nature (Zilbersheid). According to this theory, the perception of sexual affairs has been continuously shifting, and contemporary Indian society has a relatively more open sexual attitude than previous generations. Characters created by De have mirrored this reorganization of ideas regarding sex and sexual affairs.

In her article *Feministic Images of Women in Shobha De's Novels*, Dr.E.Bhavani discusses the significance of sexual affairs between spouses, stating, "In *Socialite Evenings*, Karuna establishes an extramarital relationship with Krish, rebelling against her insensitive husband, from whom she ultimately divorces." Debutante Anjali does not have a joyful marital life due to her incompatible marriage and her husband's oppressive attitude. All forms of authority play a significant role in determining the relationship between two individuals. Additionally, the man-woman relationship revolves around authority. A person who possesses a specific type of authority holds a unique position in society. Money, youth, beauty, sex, etc., can provide both men and women with authority. Females can also demonstrate their authority through their beauty, youth, and sexual appeal. These characteristics shape their relationships with their male counterparts. The novels of Shobha De, emphasize the significance of power equality. R. Rajalakshmi notes that the collapses in this equilibrium produce social tension, and double-dealing and hypocrisy are prevalent. Significantly, the word 'power' appears multiple

times in Shobha De's Snapshots: "This is why we are here: to satiate their lust, not for sex but for power. Power over women. Control over you and me. If they pay for your intercourse, they will feel like kings"(43). This is how De portrays her female characters as having dominated men through their sexual power, which most men aspire for.

The sexual relationships that De's female protagonists form are not solely intended to provide males with physical and mental pleasure; rather, they have been used as a potent instrument to keep their male counterparts in check. Karuna and Anjali of *Socialite Evenings*, for instance, stand out in comparison to males. As far as man-woman relationships are concerned, they are "powerful enough to revolt against every unfair treatment on them because they have tremendous self-confidence" (Ramesh & Vanitha 2018).

In spite of accusations that she is a soft pornographer, Shobha De does her best to expose the moral collapse of contemporary Indian society through rhetoric, but she appears to be more concerned with promoting the liberalization of women's expressive forms. She encourages women to reject the traditional, patriarchal, and dogmatic practices that continue to exist in the name of moral codes imposed on women. This causes the majority of Indian women, in particular, to experience an identity crisis. De's female protagonists are therefore characterized as "women of substance, self-substance, and free spirit" (Kumar). In her novel *Starry Nights*, she depicts the search for identity by modern women in a society dominated by males. Asha, one of the play's major characters, feels shattered after having to sustain affairs with numerous men, but she does not shirk her life's responsibilities and is committed to a better future. Similarly, Alisha resolves to fight for her 'self' and 'share' in her father's business in *Sisters*. Her half-sister Mikki, on the other hand, places a higher value on familial ties than she does. The lustful relationship between two adolescent sisters, Minakshi and Amrita, is depicted in De's other novel, *Strange Obsession*, in which the author explores her characters' inner and psychic reality.

The relationships between men and women in the novels of Shobha De are utterly shattered. Her female characters discuss and engage in sexual activity with uncommon candour. The chemistry of the human body has relevance in De's works. In her novels, men are depicted in dark hues. They are extremely passive, unresponsive, and unable to take responsibility for the way things transpire. She has powerful eyes that enable her to see what we miss and absorbent ears that allow her to hear voices that mostly evade our hearing. She discusses heterosexuality, homosexuality, sexual behaviour, the woman's psyche, and her problems to illustrate the practical relationship between man and woman. In her novels, Shobha De addresses social realities such as the problems of the individual in a developing materialistic society and the degradation of human values in relationships, lifestyle, and thoughts that appear too harsh, brutish, crude, and barbaric. Sexual relationships in her novels resemble four-wheel-drive sex-in-all-directions. It provides a means for establishing connections with another person and also serves as a pleasant demonstration of these connections. It frequently serves both constructive and destructive purposes.

The relationships in the novels of Shobha De are predicated on sex and money. V. Saraladevi observes that the female characters in Shobha De view their sexuality not as a burden but as a potent weapon in the relationship power struggle. To them, sex is not limited to the body; rather, it is the symbol of power that determines man-woman relationships as a whole. Saraladevi opines that the female protagonist of De stays in her miserable marriage for comfort and engages in mechanical relationships, viewing sex as the key to preserving the marriage. This nature makes it impossible for them to consider marriage seriously. Thus, they appear to place a great deal of emphasis on self-importance, which is more likely to harm their marital relationships, which can improve if there is total trust and equality between the spouses"("SHOWSHA", 00:11:55-00:11:59).

Conclusion

Most of Shobha De's fictional works vividly portray her as a strong feminist author, despite the fact that she has described herself as a "gender-neutral" and "bad feminist" who "equally stands for a man" ("SHOWSHA", 00:05:18–00:05:32) in terms of rights and human rights. By this, the author means that she depicts both male and female characters as they conduct themselves or are acted upon by other members of society. In this respect, the depiction of women as revolutionary figures in her novels present the real-life situations of oppressed and victimized women in the name of various rites, rituals, and traditions. Historically, patriarchal societies have deprived women of numerous rights and responsibilities. Shobha De challenges it and depicts her female characters, in particular, as attempting to break these boundaries so that they can attain the same status as males in society. Thus, Shobha De describes the human tendency, as it is observed naturally in both sexes, to be self-centered in one way or another. This human essence is the fundamental basis for their relationships. De believes that male-female relationships are the source of actions and reactions. It has certain expectations of each other; failure to meet these expectations results in strained relationships. A woman becomes revolutionary if she is repressed and exploited beyond what she can endure. Socially, professionally, and sexually, De's female characters revolt because they are denied their inherent rights. According to Ghai et al., "Nisha in *Sultry Days*, Aasha in *Starry Nights*, and Karuna in *Socialite Evenings* endure social, economic, and cultural degradation" (676). These women are completely capable of battling, but they compromise and realise their existence because relationships result from both parties' actions and reactions. The author depicts women as "new women" who "rise like a phoenix by engaging in unconventional sexual behaviour to challenge and reject all forms of male dominance" (Ghai et al., 678). De depicts with realism the socialites and sex in her fiction, which primarily focuses on women seeking self-identity within their society and family. Their search for identity and self-recognition with the same status as males is guided by their inherent self-interest, a natural human trait that defines their relationship with one another. Thus, Shobha De's novels' central focus is the human relationships resulting from her female protagonists' constant quest for self-identity.

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