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**MARRIAGE IS A 'MIRAGE': A STUDY OF WOMAN PROTAGONIST IN SHOBHA DE'S
SOCIALITE EVENINGS : AN OVERVIEW**

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ABSTRACT

Shobha De has emerged on the literary scene of Indian fiction dealing with the vital aspects of existence and survival in the high class society of India. Closely acquainted with the Bombay cinema and the world of modeling, she has beautifully mirrored the shattering human values of this glittering society. Her novels occupy themselves with the themes of over-powering materialism, lack of spirituality and the resulting inner conflict, the lack of identity of women, and the crumbling moral values. Her women characters reflect the true picture of the modern Indian women. Marriage is a phase of initiating Dharma, a part of life's pleasure, away of fulfilling one's social and religious commitments and liberation from being socially convicted. Love is not requisite in marriage. Woman married to have an identity security also. Whereas female need protection from the society. Shobha De concern about the problems of women and their quest for identity makes one to consider her novels as feminist texts.

In the life of an Indian woman all exist against the certainty of marriage. Marriage in a traditional society is a continual self-sacrifice for a woman, a denial of even her selfhood as a person. Whatever she does, she actually does for her husband to please him as her master. A woman in the novels of Shobha De truly feels that marriage is not a mere accident but it's a trap and a cage where emotional stress haunts them through lack of care, bondage and love and leads to marriage as a mirage.

Keywords: - Marriage, Mirage, Woman, Indian, Traditional.

The protagonists of Shobha De, right from their childhood endure lot of emotional, psychological and social problems. Patriarchy haunted them with fears, as the set of impositions laid on them have scrupulously curtailed their freedom. So in a stage of ignorance they move away from the patriarchal system. When they move away, they expect that there is something good that is going to happen outside the realm of patriarchal society. But the hands of patriarchy are so strong or large or long, so one cannot escape from it.

Karuna, the protagonist of the novel *Socialite Evenings* was born in Satara, a small village in Maharashtra. Her father being a government employee gets transfer from Satara to metropolis. The move to the big city changes the mindset of the Karuna, as being totally different in perspective who against the traditional upbringing. Karuna fascinated towards the city and its advanced culture, had keen to seek metropolis and its life because she was an individual who always tries to find her identity. But her dreams were shattered in the name of marriage.

Karuna gets a marriage proposal from her parents named Shetti who was expected to take over his father's hundred year old export Import Company. Though she was not interested in marrying, but in order to get rid of her miserable middle class woman life and to fulfill her dreams(identity) accepts for marriage. She thinks that marriage is a perfect option because the economic and social security which gains through marriage helps her to gain her indentity.Simone De Beauvoir in her work *The Second Sex* (1949) says about young married girls that: "Through marriage woman is now no longer lent from one clan to another: she is torn up by the roots from the group into which she was born, and annexed by her husband's group; he buys her as one buys a farm animal or a slave; he imposes his domestic divinities upon her; and the children born to her belong to the husband's family". (TSS 114)

Marriage is uniquely beneficial to society because it is the foundation of the family and the basic building block of society. It brings significant stability and meaning to human relationships. It remains the ideal for the raising of children. It plays an important role in transmitting culture and civilization to future generations. Marriage is not merely a private contract, but a social institution of great public value and concern. As social science research and government surveys increasingly show, the decline in marriage since the 1960s has been accompanied by a rise in a number of serious social problems.

Marriage is one of the most important institutions of human society. It has been variously defined by sociologists as well as by legal luminaries. Westermarck has defined marriage as a more or less durable connection between male and female, lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of the offspring.

Marriage among Hindus is one of the sixteen Sanskar – a sacrament, indissoluble union of flesh with flesh, bone with bone, to be continued over in the next world. It is thought to be a 'janam-janmantarkabandhan' viz. The marital tie once created is supposed to continue throughout life i.e. in this world and it could not be broken on any pretext, excuse or grounds. Sanskar literally means

impressions gathered during life but in Hindu tradition, it means the value system. Sanskar comprise values imbibed since birth enabling one to deal skilfully and wisely with any type of relationship and situations that one comes across in life. These are a combination of value system, social skills and inherent traits that help in the development of one's character. Manu, the seer, who is regarded to be the expounder of Hindu Law, explains the thesis of sacred relationship of marriage as follows: 'Let mutual fidelity continue until death'. This may be considered the summation of the highest law for husband and wife.

The initial year of Karuna's married life was normal; she adapts to the ideals of her husband and adapts the role as a traditional wife. Karuna listens to her husband words and tried to show some enthusiasm. But her enthusiasm faded at the end of the first year of her wedding. The couple didn't spend time with each other, as they were busy in their own chores. As Shetti was busy in spending in business meetings, squash, golf culb throughout the day, whereas Karuna sleeps for the whole day. As Bertrand Russel in Bertrand Russell, *Marriage and Morals* (New York: Bantam Books, 1959) says: The essence of a good marriage is respect for each other's personality combined with that deep intimacy, physical, mental, and spiritual, which makes a serious love between man and woman the most fructifying of all human experiences. Such love, like everything that is great and precious, demands its own morality, and frequently entails a sacrifice must be voluntary, for, where it is not, it will destroy the very basis of the love for the sake for which it is made. (MAM 215)

Lack of communication and emotional attachment between them made her life boring. Discussing the importance of talk or communication in human relationship, Rollo May, psychotherapist in his book *Love and Will* (1969) observes that: "Communicating leads to mutual Understanding by strengthening the bond between two individuals (LAW 247)".

Though Karuna confronted her towards the duties of tradition Indian woman, as an honest Indian wife, she likes to show some kind of interest in discussing and taking note to her

husband's business plans, but those things didn't work to remain their relationship healthy. Their relationship was devoid of affection and love so it was very strange and mechanical. Karuna being a rebellious woman tries to break up the marriage but she was in a state of transistion, and she does not had that courage to take the decision. Simone de Beauvoir in her Second *The Second Sex*, 1949 says, of the young girl as a being who, outwardly is passive, and has a rich inner world. In the very conflict between her fantasies of power and her lack of scope for action in the real world lies her possibility for intellectual and creative growth at odds with society. She suffers war as a nightmare, as schizophrenia, as hostility between lovers.

Women globally are taught and trained since childhood that her future lies in her marital home. Mary Wollstonecraft in her magnanimous work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)* stated: "Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers that... softness of temper, outward obedience and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety will obtain for them the protection of man..." (AVOTROW 21)

Her married life was turning into worse day by day, as a result of it absolutely was loveless and affectionless. Lack of emotional attachment, feelings, and lack of proper communication between the couple created their married life boring and unexciting. Karuna was tired of leading such a submissive life and realizes that her life has become a typical house wife. According to Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women (1896)* Women was the product of age-long custom and was not the proof of any inherent inferiority in them. He writes: "All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others. All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women, and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections". (TSOW 36)

Karuna illustrates that wedding subjugates and enslaves women. They fall victim to men due

to their financial dependence.

These marginalized women do not have the characteristics of latest women like authority, independence of spirit, clarity of thought, moral courage and emotional soundness. They are victimized as a result of they lack purity of head, heart and character. *The Second Sex (1949)* opines that: "Woman herself recognizes that the world is masculine on the whole; those who fashioned it, ruled it, and still dominate it today are men. As for her, she does not consider herself responsible for it; it is understood that she is inferior and dependent". (TSS 609)

Karuna went through a phase of disappointment and gets concern by another person in her life, named Krish, a Bengali man who was her husband's friend and in addition he associated to theatre. Lack of Emotional fulfillment, Karuna gets attached to her in regular meetings with him and shares her day to day happenings and in course of time they fell in love with each other and flew to London. Her love with krish is a kind of protest against her husband. This news reaches to Shetti. once Karuna's husband arrived London, He expresses his opinion concerning giving an additional opportunity to Karuna to tune up her mind and he wants to take a promise from her that she never see, talk with that man in life time, leaves there Karuna returns back to India. Once returning from London to India, Karuna found that she was pregnant. And she breaks this news to her husband he litigant her for committing adultery and blames her. Karuna is shocked and feared by the reaction of her husband. As her husband even determined to call off their wedding, he asks to give divorce by mutual consent. He extra adds that divorce is that the correct answer to complete their problems

Thinking of this finally Karuna moved out of her husband's house, and was in utter confusion as she didn't knew where to go and therefore rang up her parents and explained the truth about her divorce. Hearing this news her parents were shocked, therefore they denied to either accept her or to offer any help. In such a situation Karuna underwent abortion. Thus as a wife Karuna serves the perfect example of miserable Indian woman. She is frustrated due to her sterile marital life and marginalization. At this context Karuna mother asks

her to marry again because of social security that will happens with man. karuna says “why does security rest with a man? I feel confident now that I can look after myself”.(SE 276) She denies the proposal and she moves towards thruts for her identity as she finds that marriage is a mirage in her life.....

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