

**ENCOUNTER GROUP- A STUDY ON THE DETERRENT WOMEN IN
SHOBHA DE'S SNAPSHOTS**

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Matrimony in women's fiction - whether by Kate Chopin or Anita Desai, Alice Walker or Jean Rhys - is at once the inevitable destiny of the average woman and the weapon with which she is bludgeoned into accepting male hegemony, the retardation of her emotional and intellectual growth and the stifling of her attempts at selfhood.

Urbashi Barat

Oxford Dictionary defines 'encounter group' as a group of people who meet regularly in order to help each other with emotional and psychological problems. Such is the case, in the life of Shobha De's prime characters known as Swati, Aparna, Reema, Surekha, Rashmi and Noor. The problem of these characters is not out of 'cosmic' but of 'nomic', which tries to 'prang' them with its mores. Still, these characters try to obviate by their cogency.

Snapshots, brings out the lives of six women, who were friends at Santa Maria high school. After obtaining 'bene decessit', they left the school with the hope of 'bene vobis' to all. Unfortunately, their life prief to be 'horrisonant' which lacks 'altisonant'. In fact, 'soigné' is 'thing a my' to them. The reason is marriage comes as a 'hornswoggle' and land them as 'hors la loi' in their home. Marriage is a sacred one. It is not a 'tongue in cheek' affair. It is 'lagrimose' to note that it never instils confidence rather it brings diffidence on them. In a family, the 'kickie-wickie' is treated as 'gastar beiter' and prieve to be 'hors de combat'. Sometimes marriage brings them the mind of non placet'.

The concourse of these butties take place in the house of Reema Nath after 'yonks'. Their 'korero' clearly shows that they did not have 'palmy days'. Though the 'klatch' begins with pleasant note, they begin to recriminate on one hand and 'grow hostile' to each other on the other. Also, the characters seem to be 'lolo', when they try to give 'mordacious' comment about marriage and married life. This clearly shows that they are immured by absurd situation and this is clearly expressed through their 'contagion'. When the deliberation broachs among them, it is Aparna, who initiates the conversation and tells more 'izvestia' about her. It is sad to see that though she is married to Rohit, she remains to be 'eloined' from him and this creates 'frenzy' in her mind. Basically, "she likes men with high ideas and lofty ambitions" (p.9) and keeping this in mind she married Rohit.

Unfortunately, 'Rohit has let her down'. Also, he has left her 'high and dry' and with fumescent tendency. This pushes her to go in for getting 'decree absolute'. This is witnessed in the following lines:

Aparna had grown up with Shame. Shame about her body. Shame about her adolescent looks. Shame about her background. Shame about practically every aspect of her life. It was the environment she was raised in. Guilt was its defining feature. She couldn't recall a time when she wasn't made to feel acutely conscious of every small pleasure - emotional or physical. (p.6)

At a point when she is suffering from atrophied self Prem, a man who is already married, comes as a solace to her. To him, she is ready to submit her body without 'pro bono'. In fact, she is intimidated by his prowess. Even, she stops analyzing her 'out-of-character conduct'. The thought of this kind of conduct makes one to think that even she is ready to be a 'troll' and even 'unabashed' to say 'If I'm being undignified, so be it'. It is sad to note that the married life of Aparna has no eternal triangle. The nuptial relationship between Aparna and Rohit absolutely has no 'hantle'. Rohit's blasé plays politically incorrect behavior on Aparna. This is seen when she precognises "almost as if he wished to subjugate and humiliate her into submission. She hadn't experienced the slightest pleasure just a searing, burning sensation that had left her sore and hurting" (p.24).

Further, it is very heartening to note that between them there is "No nagging. No explanations. No strain. That didn't work either." (p.26). In fact, the relationship between them proves to be 'cold and mechanical' and probably this may push both of them walk out of their life with 'no explanations and no apology', thereby to become patsy to Prem.

Rashmi, another prominent character in Snapshots, marries to Pips Sr. His mind is always preoccupied with the by-word responsibility which makes Rashmi not only to detest but also becoming 'manichaeon' to him. So, he walks out of her life 'for a tidier new home' after exploiting her physically, emotionally, financially and morally. Probably, this may force her to become 'nymphomaniac' and 'prurient' woman. Also, the libido in her drives her to have nexus with Max, Younes, Anupam and Balbir. This is seen when it is observed by the following lines "The men would come and go. Come and go. Float in and out of her life wispy cotton balls on a summer day" (p.50).

It is interesting to note that Rashmi carries no feeling of shame or guilt about her sexuality. This clearly shows that she is not only shedding her conventional morality aside but also she does not have her share of redeeming qualities as she is involved in several causes of charity - "street children, old peoples' homes, Dying with Dignity" (p.35). The reason for her failure to secure the love of all, including men, is that she is not like other women who are "intrinsically, instinctively, intuitively dishonest" (p.49) and happily do this "But she just didn't know how" (p.49).

Reema, another interesting character in Snapshots, is married to Ravi. She is a hostess and he is a big broker. The greatest problem in Reema's life is that she is always engaged in his 'money making affair'. This creates an incubus on Reema. Further, it brings

a 'turbulence' on Reema, which is known as sex starvation. She longs for a 'steady, warm, attractive' companionship from Ravi but he leaves her to be "cold, physically and emotionally" (p.147). To her, marriage becomes 'chimerical' and becomes 'ne'er do-well' because of Ravi's 'pursuit for money'.

On the day of wedding itself, Reema discovers that she has been married to 'the man of wrong choice'. This stark reality of her married life makes her 'morose'. The heavy-petting affair is expressed through the following lines "They'd slipped into duty fucking without having fucked in the first place. That night decided all the nights that followed"(p.150). Adding fuel to the fire, Ravi's extra-marital liaisons and lack of dignity pushes her to become quite indifferent to Ravi. So, she has decided not to bother about "sex- life outside their bedroom" (p.160) and "never to break-up the home; have fun quietly somewhere. But don't leave the family" (p.167).

Surekha, another female protagonist, prefers to have an arranged marriage at the age of nineteen. It is very interesting to note that when her friends are going for 'tertiary education', she prefers to have a cosy married life. This tendency is seen in the following lines: "Surekha chooses a life with the lowest risk by going for an arranged marriage at nineteen, when all the other girls were busy getting their degrees and enjoying themselves with college boyfriends" (p.30).

Though she had teething-trouble at the beginning, she with her pliant mind escaped from the comestible situation. As a result, she makes her married life to be a 'friend' because of her 'nolo-contendere'. This is expressed in the following lines: "May be I am (happy). I am married. I live in a comfortable house. I have a well behaved daughter. A prosperous husband. What more do I need"(p.86).

Among other protagonists, Swati is 'nonsuch'. She always acts according to the 'volition' of her husband and she never resorts to 'nolition' which proves to be highly successful of her married life. To put it in 'illation', the characters of De in *Snapshots* prove to be a 'huma'. They have to face 'ferocious' scenario in their family rather than 'feracious' life. Sometimes, this forces them to become 'non compos mentis'. It is interesting to see that the members of the family are able to show love and affection in 'non multa sed multum'. Further, the counterpart in the family behaves like 'nomothetic'.

In such existent, the protagonists of Shobha De turn out to be placitory and beg for 'true love in stouth and routh'. In fact, they resort to j'adoubé. It is very heartening to observe that the relationship between the partners seems to be at 'noli me tangere'. It is expected that in any healthy family the partners resort to 'hortative' to each other. Otherwise, the spouse may suffer from battered-self causing others to feel 'horrendous'. This is witnessed in the life of the protagonists of Shobha De and it is ones duty to give them 'laissez-aller' keeping in mind that one should not be 'laissez-faire' to avoid 'Laingian' to all. From the study, it is understood that Shobha De expects women to be treated as 'queen' and not 'quean'.

Work Cited

- De Shobha, *Snapshots*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1995.
- Urbashi Barat, “Feminism in the Day in Shadow: Archetypal Patterns and Interpersonal Relationships” in *Points of View* ed. K.K.Sharma, New Delhi: K.K.Publications, 1995, p.72.