
HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN SHOBHAA DE'S *SECOND THOUGHTS*

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Abstract

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been used in gender studies to explain the men's power over women. Hegemonic masculinity in the empirical case demonstrates the hegemonic masculinity shifts and adopts the new practices to enable men to retain power over others. Shobhaa De depicts the new urban woman in a patriarchal hegemony in her novels. She also projects hegemonic masculinity in her novel *Second Thoughts*. She also projects the extra-marital affairs of women to break the traditional and moral values of society. *Second Thoughts* is the story of an Indian girl, Maya who is victimized as a silent sufferer in the clutches of matrimonial bond.

Keywords: *Hegemonic masculinity, marriage, patriarchy, the quest for identity*

Shobhaa De is assailed by most of the critics as an ultra-modern Indian woman writer in the literary world. She discusses the very sensitive strand of human life in her novels. People judge that women are inferior to men because of their different sex. The people of the Orthodox family in India used to criticize her for her open discussion on sexual matters. Gender activists seek to change the relationship of men with women which is based on the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity was introduced as a concept of understanding gender as a dynamic relational power, between the diligence of male power and the potential to change the social structure. It poses the global dictionary of power and manipulation by focusing on certain passages or clauses and metaphorical references present in the novel which reflects the culture, norms and social beliefs of the Indian community. It takes a deep insight into Indian cultural diversity, unequal distribution of power like gender discrimination, racism, and marginalization. Shobhaa De has become the symbol of highlighting different perspectives of woman's freedom

and liberation. It is one of the important aspects of feminism. Her women are daring and courageous in establishing extra-marital affairs to satisfy their natural urge.

Second Thoughts is Shobhaa De's seventh novel and describes the agony of Maya, who is trapped in matrimony. Jaydipsingh Dodiya comments that the theme of this novel focuses on "the hollowness of Indian marriage". De explores the female psyche against the male ego, the dutiful wife, the overbearing mother-in-law, the social pretense and public facades in *Second Thoughts*. Maya, a middle-class Bengali girl, lives in Calcutta wanted to move to Bombay to escape from her dull life. But she finds herself trapped by an arranged marriage to Ranjan who is highly conservative and completely indifferent to her desires. She becomes utterly lonely. At this time she becomes friendly to Nikhil, and a tale of love and betrayal started. Maya is neglected and criticized by her husband and is exploited and deceived by her lover, and thus remains a silent sufferer. She is unable to find happiness and satisfaction within marriage and her extra-marital relation also makes her utterly frustrated. It represents psychic-cum-social complexities of middle-class society.

Maya has come to Bombay with a dream of becoming a journalist. She is more fascinated and also in love with Bombay. When she meets Ranjan, she is excited about settling in Bombay. If she were lucky enough to become the other Mrs. Malik, Maya knew she'd be bonded with Bombay forever" (13). He is graduated from America and is working in a bank. He is a traditional, orthodox person who thinks, "It is a woman's duty to run a good home"(11-12). Mrs. Malik and Ranjan do not approve of working women. Maya's uncle supports and says: "In an Indian family, the husband's comforts always come first. Everything else follows"(12) Maya also belongs to a traditional family where a girl has inferior status and her education, career, ambitions, desires and dreams are of secondary importance. She is not free to take any decision of her life. After marriage whether she should pursue education, do the job or be a home-maker is completely decided by her husband. That's why even though Ranjan and his mother disapprove of Maya's being a career woman, no one in Maya's family objects to that.

The institution of marriage has been idealized and worshipped since time immemorial. But in modern times, the institution of marriage is breaking up. Shobhaa De's novels expose the moral and spiritual breakdown of modern society's marriage system and marital relations. Shobhaa De tries to bring out the complexity of human relations and crumbling marital relations leading to frustration, conflict, and loneliness. However women like Maya try to break the silence, and Maya has to return once again to the stifling atmosphere of marriage. Maya has the only option in her life that is the loneliness. A woman, like a man, is born to be free but in reality, everywhere she is controlled by many man-made norms and factors victimizing and subjugating her in many ways.

For Ranjan, there is no existence for Maya and for Nikhil, Maya is only just an object to be enjoyed sexually.

The stressful life and the differences in attitudes, ignorance of sex knowledge, and selection of marriage partners by the family members are the reasons for the disturbance in Ranjan and Maya's marital relationship. A healthy sexual relationship is also quite important in marriage. It is Shobhaa De's masterpiece which throws light on the traditional Indian marriage in which woman is a silent sufferer under the clutches of hegemonic masculinity. Shobhaa De's *Second Thoughts* is a successful attempt to bring out the plight of the New Woman who is entangled in the maze of domestic chores and takes up unconventional decision to assert her individuality and establish her identity.

Maya, a new woman, is ready to face the consequences of her own choices. Her protest is not for equality but for the right to be acknowledged as an individual- capable of intelligence and feeling. Maya rebels against the patriarchal society and explores her true potential and struggles hard to fulfill her urges and needs.

Works Cited

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