

EONISM AND RECONSTRUCTION AS POSTCOLONIAL POLITICS IN SHOBHA DE'S *STRANGE OBSESSION*

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Shobha De, a sensational stalwart celebrity among the 20th century women novelists, is well-known for her awesome yet unpredictable themes and her anomalous expertise to enterprise candour presentations. Obviously her novels parade as an abode of flourishing controversies everyday. She glows as a morning star in the realm of literary arena through her blatant manifestation of barren truths about life and society. She employs language as a powerful weapon to dethrone the inherent definitions of male chauvinism and outrageously interrogates the irregularities of the patriarchal sodality. She daringly throws overboard and subverts mythical norms and ethics prescribed for womanhood.

Shobha De elucidates a strange testimony of a misanthropic horseplay enacted by a woman character blasting the threshold of gender, race and nationality through her masterpiece *Strange Obsession*. By this she tends to substitute patriarchy with a new discourse of Eonism through a trans-versatile personality -- Meenakshi Iyengar. As the prime mover of the novel Meenakshi airs a villainous mood. Her ideas, strategies and her abnormal behavioural standards cajole the reader's mind with a blend of perilous wonder establishing the novel as a perfect yet rare specimen of postcolonialism. The ceremonial deconstruction is initiated with the portrayal of Meenakshi as an admixture of a trans-versatile personality displaying unusual mannerisms generally exhibited by a macho. The cultural landscape of Mumbai has a glaring impact upon the natives and the changes effected upon the outsiders fix the novel in the postcolonial perspective. The inheritance of smoking habits by a woman and the characteristic traits of woman behaving like a gangster raise the novel to the pinnacle of sheer subversion of the patriarchal order. It is rather a clear indicator of the phenomenon of Eonism which could be identified as a precursor of reconstruction in the postcolonial politics.

Poignantly Minx tends to play the role of a man upon a woman's body substituting and camouflaging herself under the fake identity of a man. The ironical highlight of the novel is that she succeeds in quenching the lascivious desires of Amrita, the so called victimized heroine, rather a

vulnerable prey caged in the hands of Minx. These innovative techniques handled by Shobha De ascertain a strong podium for the emergence of lesbian feminism.

The very question of individual identity and enlightenment forms the fundamental criterion of postcolonialism. Minx plays the role of a colonizer by crushing Amrita's life, threatening and subjecting her to a sentimental blackmail. Her possessiveness for Amrita extends to the extremity of indulging in a criminal offence of pushing a poor girl Lola, a co-model to the death bed for the very reason that she turned out to be a competitor for Amrita by profession. Her radical passion for Amrita could be attributed to her sheer yearning and obsession for love from her mother to which she was deprived of, right from her very childhood because she was institutionalized owing to lunatic disorder. "Hasn't Minks told you... My wife has been institutionalized for the past ten years. This news would kill her. I don't have the courage....." (*Strange Obsession*, 202). Hite's psycho analytical study of lesbian feminism reveals:

Women's real life dissatisfaction with heterosexual romantic love relationships has been documented by studies which have found women to be generally disappointed and frustrated with the lack of emotional intimacy in the love relationships with men. (qtd in *Women's Power and Resistance*, 27).

Shobha De throws overboard the very definition of male chauvinistic attitude and substitutes it with a strange phenomenon of trans-versatile sadism followed by Sexo-Aesthetic inversion through the characterization of Minx, the very life blood of the narrative, emerging as the most sensational lime light of the novel. The novelist depicts subtly:

You will move when I command you to Right now, you are my slave, let me feast my eyes on you.... I would love to capture you like this. The way the world will never see her. (*Strange Obsession*, 128)

The character of Minx behaves like a man and acts upon her prey Amrita. She starts dictating upon her, behaves and counterweighs the role of a husband exploiting Amrita's household and financial

dispositions. At the extreme end she becomes too possessive about Amrita that she strongly condemns Amrita's intimacy with any macho or a stranger and corners her desperately. As Minx unveils her love: "You are struck with me. You don't get it? Do you? I love you. I have to protect you. It's my duty". (36) Her psychic passion for Amrita pushes her to commit a criminal offense of a murder. The deep rooted fanatic fire in Minx is the fuelling catalyst that provokes her to succumb the life of Amrita's competitive model to death bed.

De obviously poses Minx in her fanatic psycho trans-versatile behavioural patterns at many a place throughout the novel. She at first threatens Amrita by enforcing a sentimental blackmail. She refrigerates the heart of a goat, the head of a pig and terrifies her diplomatically by warning that the next day it could be her own heart when her love had been rejected as De puts it:

Your live right here in my body. I can feel your presence inside me all the time. Today it's a helpless, animal's heart in your fridge. Who knows tomorrow it could be mine. Don't play with my life Amrita you will regret it. (23)

In a psychological analysis, one could infer that the character of Minx has been carved by De most assiduously that Minx attempts to venture out to any extremity in order to colonise upon the object of her desire. She is such a domineering force who batters Amrita's boy friend Rover at the police station for the sole reason that he dared to copulate with Amrita. She proved to be a terror in society. She had close contact with the policemen and acquainted with daring criminals too. She is a blend of antagonistically tuned emotions stuffed with inestimable complexities and tremendous guts to enterprise hazardous decisions at the unexpected hour.

The under drop of her terrorism could be attributed to her overwhelmed longing and craze for love and passion. She is terribly distressed on her very realization that her physical features stood as a barricade to counteract and substitute a man's stratum to quench the corporal desires of Amrita. She ventures to undergo an operation to become a man and tends to cut off her breast as a means to satisfy Amrita physically. She tells:

.....that I am not a man? O.K. I will become a man, just to satisfy you.....I'm planning to undergo a sex change operation..... Money can buy you anything.....Blood dick. (101)

She hatches novel stories about her father as a weapon to win the empathy of Amirta. She castigates her innocent father, authoring false stories of being raped by him and dares to defame the reputation and morality of her own family. Her psychic passion for Amrita drives her to the extent of soiling herself and attaining Amrita at any cost. As Minx airs a quixotic mood:

I want to remember every bit of you... every pore, every mole. Each little hair, she said as the camera panned over her body recording each detail. (128)

As Ellis and other sexologist. They regarded 'inverts' as lesbians and homosexuals were known as 'third sex':

A pathological category of pseudo-men and pseudo-women who were characterized by unhealthy obsessions and physical, mental and moral degeneracy, unnatural, abnormal freaks and monsters...A member of this third sex had the mind and emotions of one sex with the body of other. (177)

She fences a strong fort around Amrita and entraps her by spying on her, seeing to it that Amrita is under her hold all the time. She succumbs Amrita to lesbianism and enacts a new dogma in many a place to substantiate her stand justifying her outpouring love for Amrita.

Your daughter and I...you probably know already...we...we...Shared an unnatural relationship. She forced me into it... blackmailed me...tortured me... scared me...And then.....I began to enjoy it. To respond I became dependant on her.... (204)

She develops a deep sense of animosity that drives her to the extreme passion of slaying anyone regardless of whoever attempted to seize Amrita from her grip. Minx snarls cynically:

Sad! Sad! She had said to Amrita running a finger down her cheek, no saviour for you. Too bad, all your boy friends are minus balls. No knights in shining armour. What a pity! You seem doomed to spend your life trapped with a witch. (134)

As a classic specimen of a female Eonist, her final mission was to completely transfix her personality into an 'absolute macho' by undergoing a sex-change surgery. Thus she was prepared to pay any price to retain her precious treasure Amrita. Weeks Jeffery points out that, "political lesbianism is a return to nature and nature is now 'benign, female and lesbian'" (qtd in *Women Power and Resistance* 181).

When she apprehends that she could no more retain Amrita after her marriage with Rakesh, she ventures to kidnap him and threatens Amrita to murder him if she fails to surrender to her. In a heart-rending tone, she whimpers:

This is good by, my darling, Minks said, you will never have to suffer the sound of my voice in your precious ears again. But before I leave you, there is one more mission I have to complete... a promise I must fulfil, an oath to redeem...Remember one thing, whatever I am doing is all for you, only for you... *(Strange Obsession, 185)*

As a final delegation she becomes hysteric and tends to witness Amrita's nakedness to topsoil and blaspheme her marital bond. She is rather in her eccentricities and psychosomatic passions which makes her dance around the couple like a lunatic persona. Yet a mysterious texture of criminalistic pattern could be transparently witnessed by a reader in this novel.

She raises herself to the pinnacle of utmost obscenity and vulgarity enticing and vilifying the newly married couple to enact a filthy yet a live scene of sexual intercourse. Minx thunders:

Yes – Its over between you and me. But it’s just beginning between you and him. I can’t wait..... Get ready for the performance of your lives and no tricks. (196)

She vents her ire upon Amrita by successfully executing this tainted operation supported by her audio visual equipments. She berates Amrita for deceiving and neglecting her love ratifying a sadistic outburst. She loses self-control and reminisces her romantic sexual moments with Amrita at the sight of the live sexual event. As De puts it:

The two of them climaxed just as Bolero reached its crescendo. Minx threw down the video camera, flung down the gun and danced around them ecstatically, yelling and screaming obscenities...This is heaven, she said hugging both of them. I couldn’t have dreamt of a better end to our love story. Darling, I can’t tell you how happy you have made me.... So happy. I could die right now. (199)

These series of mind-blowing events could be adjudged as the sheer impact of postcolonialism. The Female Eonist Minx emerges to be the representative of a colonizer preying upon her victim Amrita. The argument that the inheritance of behavioural traits and identification of Minx with the opposite sex has been the vital criterion in transfixing her as a colonizer besides endorsing a distinct yet a rare phenomena of inversion called ‘Sexo-Aesthetic Transvestism’ or ‘Eonism’ which is categorized as an intermediate form of sexuality and common anomaly coming next in frequency to homosexuality among sexual deviations. On the cerebral side Ellis views it as “the Eonist is embodying, in an extreme degree, the aesthetic attitude of imitation of, and identification with the admired object.” (210)

De uses language as a powerful weapon and her text as a media to elucidate the reconstruction of the society, culture and ethical norms in a rather tempestuous tone with utmost candidity which is vibrantly

manifested throughout the novel. “Naked. She commanded..... Go on..... start now. Minks jumped around, switching the camcorder on and off. Playing with the gun on the other hand and keeping up an incessant stream of remarks. What an exciting honeymoon....” (199). De tends to redefine women’s identity as a fragile species and orients them rather in their pulsating dynamic altitudes confounding men as fetished bodies and fixing them as their primary sigh of liberation and redemption from the clutches of the patriarchal order. De’s controversial view emerges to the peak in the very characterization of Minx. Minx tends to dethrone the male society and attempts a proxy of the male physic counterbalancing its absence by identifying herself with the opposite sex from tip to toe, intrepidly pioneering as a ‘one-woman-army’, bewildering the hierarchical order. Thus Shobha De could be perceived as a radical feminist who shatters the threshold of inherent definitions of all religions, gender, creed and nationality.

Moreover, the character of Minx metaphorically categorizes postcolonial politics and indulges in reconstruction of post national identity. Post nationality is the upshot of the tow forces namely the colonial and postcolonial that stand in perfect opposition to each other by their very character which governs the Indian society. Hence the post national phenomena could be exclusively Indian which is a ‘re-creation of the opponent’. Minx comes as the representative of this post national identity through her acts of sadism and tran-versatile chauvinism, elucidating and exceptional prodigy of Sexo-Aesthetic inversion or Eonism which Shobha regards as a radically characterized move with Minx as the hegemony and Amrita as a subordinate to the hegemony. De’s novel ideology indulges as an active altered substitute of the old historic categories called the colonial and postcolonial.

Shobha De through her images of victimization and fantasies as created by Minx, progressively flourishes with the breaking of the wall of history articulated in the marginalization of woman. What Shobha De unveils is an intense of doubly suppressed woman fixed to be oscillated between the two extremes of the post national patriarchy and the imperialist hegemony. Thus Shobha De’s *Strange Obsession* could be regarded as a postcolonial politik performing the ceremonial reconstruction besides demanding a unique yet a booming identity of its kind.

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