

**VICTORS OF STRUGGLE: A STUDY OF DESHPANDE’S HEROINES IN THE DARK HOLD  
NO TERRORS, ROOTS AND SHADOWS AND THAT LONG SILENCE**

**B. Kathiresan**

*Associate Professor & Head i/c, Dept. of English, Thiruvalluvar University, Vellore*

**Dr. P. Vasuki**

*Associate Professor of English, Govt. Arts College, Chidambaram*

The modern Indian woman is no longer willing to be content with the stereotyped mould that she has been cast into. Presently, Indian woman clamors for recognition of herself as not just as “woman” but as a person, an individual acutely conscious of her standing both in the family and in the society. She is aware of the role she has to play both in the family and in the society for the first time. She is also aware of the choices that are widely open to her and also the various demands to participate in them.

Indian woman is undoubtedly caught at the cross roads, striving to strike a balance between the tradition that is deeply ingrained in her and the influences from the west that impel her break away from the binding chains of tradition. With the change in the socio-cultural climate of India, she can no longer idealize the Sita or Gandhari kind of woman. Deshpande weaves the path of Jaya, Saru and Indu from Trauma to Triumph in her novels *Roots And Shadows*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence*.

The new breed of woman who is educated and modern in outlook has begun to tilt towards modern values. In the absence of a complete annihilation of the meaningless traditional values, the modern Indian Woman finds herself in a whirlpool of problems that conflict within her modern sensibility. The external conflict with the society results in an internal trauma. It’s this psychological canvas that Shashi Deshpande endeavors to delineate. Showing her heroine struggle for “being both oneself and fitting a traditional role as a ‘good daughter,’ ‘good wife,’ ‘good mother’.”

The tension arising out of the confusion accentuates their struggles for answers to questions of identity and for solutions to their psychological dilemmas. To resolve this dilemma Indu, Saru and Jaya journey within themselves and their past, looking for self knowledge. They have the “urge to find one to create space for oneself to grow on one’s own,”

*The Dark Hold No Terrors* begins with a quote from Dhampada.

“You are your own refuge

There is no other refuge

This refuge is hard to achieve.”

All the three heroines achieve their desired refuge. Though the problems faced by the three heroines may be apparently dissimilar, they have a lot in common. Indu, Saru, Jaya are very individualistic and unique both in the problems they face and the manner in which they tackle them.

All the three protagonists hail as typical Indian middle class citizens. Their entire childhood has been spent in preparing for the ultimate goal in life which is to make a good marriage and to be a good wife. They are juxtaposed to the stereotyped women. Fiercely modern in their outlook and completely unwilling to “go with the crowd” they struggle to revolt. They fight to be relieved.

There is an air of tranquility and peace that hides effectively the storm raging underneath at the beginning of the three novels. For Indu life becomes a long and dusty road, the skeletons in the cupboard; for Saru and an unending boredom for Jaya underplaying their individuality make their life ideal as that portrayed in advertisements.

The path to introspection is initiated by some incident in all the three novels. For Indu, it is the summons from Akka, To Saru it's the news of the death of her mother, she deserted years ago. To Jaya, it is the disaster at Mama's work that shakes her out to rethink the direction she has let her life take.

Physically and psychologically distancing themselves they see their whole life in perspective. To Indu and Saru it is the home which oppresses them.

The childhood scares of Indu inflicted by Akka accumulating a mountain of negation. She gets scolded by Akka for “Standing in that corner with a boy.” The rigid pattern of serving food, behaving, thinking and acting pattern her escape. The feminist of the hostel repels her. She turns a rebel.

Unlike the other women she can call her husband Jayant. She hates customs marriage she feels can save her. As an idealist she expected Jayant to her alter ego. She hoped to become a sense of being cheated grips her when Jayant fails to understand her. Summoned by Akka, Indu is back, for the first time 12 years. This first separation from her husband puts her marriage in perspective and initiates her to review her relationship with Jayant.

For Jaya the trauma is within herself. It rises from the conflict between Jaya who was Mohan's wife Jaya who is her true self. Mohan is a complete traditionalist while Jaya is modern. For sake of marriage Jay gives up all her modern ideas forcing herself to conform.

Right from childhood Jaya had been brought up in a way different from the other girls in the family. Her father had told her ‘you're going to be different from others, Jaya.’ Unfortunately her father's death makes Jaya like a boat that has list, moorings. She decided to go with the crowd. A perfectionist at heart, a non-conformist, she struggles to become a conformist. She tries to practice the role of the housewife cringing in guilt when

whom thing is not done well. She annihilates herself and her desires making marriage a career. She changes her style of writing into humorous pieces about the travails of a middle class house wife. But the crisis that Mohan faces at work drags her out her cubbyhole. She becomes aware of the drudgery of family life. Her diaries show her life as “Mohan’s wife Rahul’s & Rati’s mother not myself.” Jaya who turned to be Suhasini becomes her original self. She refuses to be Gandhari anymore.

The monotony of family life is so much for Jaya that she secretly nourishes hopes of a catastrophe. Jaya’s own catastrophe comes to her as a gift from her husband who is charged with corruption at office. Jaya sees Mohan’s misdemeanor as an act of irresponsibility wanting to accuse him of irresponsibility Jaya thinks that it will oaty home for the years of submission. She sees her sudden reversal to her true self as a case of the trodden worm revolting. The day they come to Dadar flat, Jaya feels that they are no more than “A Pair of Bullocks (Violently) together.”

The enormity of being different strikes Jaya; with the pair of it comes her determinations not to be different. When she falls to cope up she turns silent then starts the long process of introspection, she feels tied down her marriage by her many deceptions.

#### Works Cited

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