
COMPENDIUM OF THE CRISIS OF THE EDUCATED EARNING WOMEN IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THE DARK HOLDS NO TERROR

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Abstract

A novel is a form of Literature. It is used to refer to the production of 'imaginative activity' where as the complex term fiction is used to describe the activity. It presents the documentations of the lives of people which are related to the society. It is concerned with ordinary people and their problems in the society. This paper deals with The Dark Holds No Terror which is reflective of the feminist aspirations. The Dark Hold No Terror narrates the story of a marriage on the rocks. The protagonist Saritha is a successful lady doctor. It tells her conflict that she has to face as a doctor and as a wife. During daytime she is popular lady doctor and in night she is trapped animal in the hands of her husband, Manohar who is an English teacher in small college. The novel begins with Saritha returning after fifteen years to her father's house. She once proclaimed that she would never come back to her father's place. She returns being unable to bear the sexual sadism of her husband. The rest of the novel is what Sara remembers and a brief confession to her father about her trauma. The narrative meanders between the past and the present.

Shashi Deshpande is known for creating women characters who are contemporary. Deshpande's women protagonists are victims of the prevalent gross gender discrimination, first as daughters and later as wives. They are conscious of the great social inequality and injustice towards them, and struggle against the oppressive and unequal nature of the social norms and rules that limit their Capability and existence as a wife. Fettered to their roles in the family, they question the subordinate status ordained to them by society. Her works have drawn great critical attention and acclaim for her sensitive and realistic representation of the Indian middle –class women. Her sincere concern for women and their oppressive loss is reflected strongly in all her novels and stories.

The underlying theme in Shashi Deshpande's novels is human relationships especially the ones that exist between father and daughter, husband and wife, between mother and daughter. In all relationships, the women occupy the central stage and significantly, the narration shifts through her feminine consciousness.

Shashi Deshpande believes that women have a great strength. All humans do. Actually women have reserves we are often unaware of. But for the woman the situation is made more complex by the fact that they have been told they are weak, they are made to believe in their weakness. And often they learn to hide their own strength, because a woman's strength seems to weaken a man. She says that women are the main support of the family, though the male is the titular head women are better at dealing with emotional traumas. This is because women, unlike men have never had to suppress their emotional selves they are more open about these problems-both in articulating them and understanding them.

Shashi Deshpande has dealt very minutely and delicately with the problems of middle-class educated women. She always had in her mind people from the real India to write about, but as she proceeded spontaneously and involuntarily, woman became the focus of her writings. She does not see males as the cause of all troubles as some feminists do. She deals with the inner mind of women. Education and experience in foreign countries set women writers apart from traditional Indian women. The traditional Indian women suffer submit and adjust themselves to the circumstances. The women novelists like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Pravar Jhabvala have in their novels, portrayed this aspect of women's life without having the first hand experience of it. Shashi Deshpande has projected this aspect of Indian women with more sensitivity and instinctive understanding as she belongs to this category. Unlike other women writers, she is born and brought up on this soil, gained her education in India itself and wrote about India. The projection of the woman's world in her novels is more authentic, credible and realistic. She knows what Indian women feel. Shashi Deshpande does not want to be categorized with other Indian writers writing in English.

Balarama Gupta says that, I think I would do well to begin with Shashi Deshpande whose creative talent and accomplishment are striking enough to have elicited more critical notice than they have done till now. She has four volumes of short stories and an equal number of novels to her credit, not to speak of some books for children. She has of course bagged some prestigious prizes and awards but she is yet not as well known as many of her counterparts. This is perhaps because she is by nature shy of publicity but also because of her rather conventional attitude to her themes. She is, on her own confession, not an expressly or outspokenly feminist writer.

Shashi's depiction of her heroine – and according to Prema Nan-dakumar she has no heroines – operating in the framework of tradition-bound, male-oriented Indian middle-class society, is faithfully realistic and not romantically exaggerated. Shashi's women are conscious of their predicament they are victims of inequity: they are creatures of conventional morality: they are the ones who are unfairly abused, misused and ill-used. But they believe in conformity and compromise for the sake of the retention of domestic harmony rather than revolt which might result in the disruption of familial concord. Shashi's fictional world is replete with only Savitris, not Noras. Shashi, as

Laeq Futehally puts it defines about the middle class Indian women and their feelings not as their champion, but as their articulator.

According to Qamar Talat A.A.Khan Deshpande conveys a message neither through her creative writing that women's emancipation lies neither in suffering silently like a fatalist nor in repudiating all claims of family and society like a rebel. She must recognize her ironer strength which education and knowledge has given her. She need not suffer silently without making any protest. The silent and submissive acceptance of suffering as fate is something which the novelist does not reconcile themselves between tradition and modernity without losing their own identities.

She depicts her women character in visions roles mother, wife, daughter and an individual. Her female character does not seek separate identity of society but they form the 1000 wheels of the same chariot. Mukta Atrey and viney Kirpal say that Deshpande's concern and sympathy are primarily for the woman. While revealing the woman's struggle to secure self-respect and self-identify for herself, the author subtly bares the multiple levels of oppression, including sexual oppression experienced by women in our society. This stance of Deshpande's makes her a feminist writer.

The main themes that have found expression in Shashi Deshpande's novels are inner conflict and search for identity, parent-child relationship, and concept of marriage and sex. Above all, the theme of silence rooted in the complex relationship between man and woman holds a great fascination for Shashi Deshpande as she deals with the inner working of the female psyche in her works.

Shashi Deshpande's novels *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), deals with an unusual character, Sarita, who dares to challenge the age-old traditions to marry a man of outside her caste. "The love marriage between Sarita and Manu, doesn't prove to be fruitful". The note from the author indicated that the novel has been written with a specific propose. She says that All authors, like most parents, have their favorite children; but unlike parents, author can without any compunction, declare their partiality. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is, of all my novel the one dearest to me. Perhaps it is the one that came closest to the visions I had of it when I conceived it. Perhaps, it is because it was this book tht gave me the never-to-be experienced- again acceptance.

The protagonist of the novel Sarita, known as Saru, is an educated and professional woman. But still she yearns for her identifies which the male ego refuses to accept and subjects her to sexual sadism because of her superior social and economic status

Since her childhood she has been a rebel against traditional norms. After death of her younger brothers she dies her mother, goes to a city, studies to become a doctor and marries the man of her choice. When he is a successful doctor with two children, their marriage is on the verge of breakdown because of her husband begins to behave with her cruelly. He, though a loving father and caring husband during the day turns into monster in bed abusing and bruising her. Every night he reduces her to the

position of a slave"- It was a monstrous invasion of my body. I tried to move, toasting my body, wriggling under the weight that pinned it down. It was impossible. I was pinioned to a position of an object surrender of myself".

Saur's inability protest the tortures inflicted on her compels her to go to her father's house after her mothers' death. An analysis of saritha's Relationship with her parents her husband and her brother as well as quest for an identity awakens her dormant strength in her. Several other events which have taken place in her life contribute to the shaping of her personality. In her childhood her upbringing was based on gender discrimination shown by her mother, in favor of her brother, Dhruva.

At every occasion birthdays and other rituals Dhruva was given preference. She recalls one such an event of her childhood days and says; "Birthdays were not then the tremendous occasions they are made out to be now: but the excitement of having one of being the centre of attraction never palled. It was always a fascinating thought. I was born. But of my birth, my mother had said to me once". "It rained heavily the day you were born. It was terrible". And somehow it seemed to me that it was my birth that was terrible for her, not the rains)".

Deshpande also highlights the social evil of people's hankering to have a male child to inherit ancestral property, maintain the continuity of the family and to light the funeral pyre of his parents and grandparents. So the birth of a son is celebrated with singing and merry-making. It leads to a sense of joy and contentment and a feeling of being blessed. Recalling her parents in difference and lack of interest in her especially after dhruva's death Saru says: "He (her father) never took any interest in my school or college. He left it all to my mother. And she never really cared. Not after Dhruva's death. I just didn't exist for her. I died long before I left home. "The difference of treatment towards a male & female child can be seen in the mother-daughter conversation. Don't go out in the sun, you will get darker. Giving her opinion on the mother daughter relationship as portrayed by shashi Deshpande's Rani Dharkas remarks "The mother in the Dark holds no terror is malignant and for giving. Cursing her own daughter forgiving her even on her deathbed?

In the event of Dhruva's death the mother accrues saru of killing Dhruva. She speaks out saru's intentions and not the deed. We witness an extreme instance of the sibling jealousy provoked undoubtedly by the mother's favoritism. Dhruva's death utterly disappoints saru's mother. She loses all interests in life. Saru's dream is mainly the representation of her feeling of guilt. As premilla paul observes. "She (saru) has always felt an inner drive to make his the mythological Dhruva (push of the father's lap by the step brother) and Dhruva's death becomes a tantalizing "North Star" Controlling her happiness from afar. The guilt had come to stay and she is destined to be in the dock perennially". Disgusted with the mother's biting comments saru comes to Bombay for higher studies and her impression-able mind is attracted to the Manohar (called Manu), a popular fellow a student of the college, who is senior to her by a few years.

His talents as a budding writer, a poet, an active member of the college Dramatic society, charm saru to develop love affair with him, and to marry him.

Deshpande makes her protagonist assert her personality through her decision to adopt medical profession and to marry at her own choice. Now she feels happy and liberated. She experiences a malicious pleasure in thus defying her mother's strict Conservatism but years later when her marriage turns out to be failure and is on the verge of a breakdown, she regrets her decision to have married Manu. Deshpande attaches importance to material prosperity which can be extended by a professional wife like saru. After giving up her job, she is no longer satisfied with her mediocre standard of living. She now begins to miss the small things saying: "It had begun to wonder at his acceptance of our shabby way of living. For me things now began to hurt... a frayed sari I could no replace, a movie I could not join in. I knew now that without money life becomes petty and dreary-The thought of going on this way became unbearable.

Saru dreams of rising high in her professional carrier, and of earning money to set up a new life. Now she comes in contact with Boozie who is making an open display of his relationship with her view with a view to hiding his homosexuality. But because of her feeling of contempt and loathing towards Manu She makes no effort to clear any misconception in Manu's mind regarding the nature of her relationship with boozie. Her social and financial status grows far beyond that of her husband. She becomes a busy, a successful doctor while Manu lags behind as an underpaid lecturer. Saru's professional success satisfies her ego and feel fills her dreams of establishing herself as carrier woman but rains her married life. The threadbare description of the situation exhibits Deshpande's deep understanding of medical field. "Married to a practicing neuron pathologist, shashi Deshpande presumably as intimate knowledge of the neurotic world of the likes of Manu But the shows remarkable restraint in the depiction of these scenes and spares readers the clinical details"

Unable to bear Manu's Sadistic onslaughts, saru decides to seek refuge in her parental home after a long gap of fifteen years. Externally she makes a show of her intension to take care of her father, but actually she wants to escape the tortures inflicted on her every night by her husband. At her father's house she thinks over her familial problem seriously and tries to objectively analyze the cause for the failure of her marriage. She comes to the conclusion that Manu's male ego is responsible for the ruin of the family.

She also blames herself that her ambition for power and progress totally ignored Manu's existence. A sense of guilt and shame prevails upon her. Then she feels guilty of having done injustice to her mother, brother, husband and children. She comments, "My brother died because I heedlessly turned my back on him. My mother died alone because I deserted her. My husband is a failure because I deserted her. My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood. "Saru's of guilt reaches its climax when she

advises the college girl students to be submissive and obedient to their in-laws after marriage. To ensure a happy married life they should remain a step behind their husband. Through this episode Deshpande want to convey the message that in a traditional society, even an educated and professional woman cannot thrust her views on the whole men-women folly.

A female person is fated to suffer the inequality based on the gender discrimination. The Superiority of the male is considered to be an essential condition for the success of marriage. The concept can be very hardly replaced and uprooted as in saru's case it is projected. She seeks happiness and joy in extra marital relationship with Paramakar Rao and Booxie but she abruptly with draws from them and ends the relationship, as she finds no comfort in them. She says: "Now I knew it was not just the consequences I feared and hated, but she thinks it. What had I imagined? Love? Romance? Both, I knew too well, were illusions and not relevant to my life any way".

Kamini Dinesh agrees with Saru's response and comments on her relationship with other men, "In the Dark Hold No Terrors... There are other men but the relationship gives no solace. On the other hand, the homosexual Boozie and the frustrated padma bring to saru the disillusioning realization that there can be no happiness or fulfillment in this relationship. There cannot be escaped-route from the tension of the married life. The woman, seeking a crutch, finally to fall back on herself"

Thus the novelist shows certain amount of sympathy towards her. Saru's observations as a lady doctor and her submission to the orthodoxy underline her feminist leanings. Beside these stray references to the varying symptoms of feminine disease viz. backache, headache, leucorrhoea, hemorrhages, dysmenourrhea and loss of appetite etc. Indicate Deshpande interest in the female world. Saru's meeting with the Gitangali the wife of her husband's, friend her obvious desire to please every whim of her husband, readily changing her name to Anju (short for Gitanjali) after her marriage in. Keeping with the wishes of her husband, her friend nalu's bitterness at such whims of male person, and her adopting spinsterhood evince the grievances of the Indian women, Saru thinks that it. Would not be justified to assert that"... She (Nalu) is better because she never married, never bore a child. But that would be as stupid as calling me fulfilled because I got married and I have bore two children". Shashi Deshpande has tries to establish that devoid of mutual understanding neither married life nor unmarried life is happy. Lack of wisdom and mutual respect leads the family life to ruin and disaster. Saru thinks herself very much to be a person, she infer that escape is ridiculous idea.

Saru realises with honest astonishment that she ought not to have made this speech at see her all. She thought that she would have given the advice of choosing medicine as a career for women. Saru's marriage with Manu and her status in society as a doctor fails to secure her freedom she yearns for. She receives Manu's letter but opens none of them. Later she hears the news of his arrival to bring her back. She feels desperate and

has no interest of going back. She is still in an undecided state. Her father advises her not to get back. Her father says, "Don't turn your back on things again. Turn around and look at them. Meet him" (216) His real affection is clear and he pleads saru to meet her husband and talk to him. Saru has a peculiar expression over her face and at last she decides to meet her husband and talk to him. Saru realizes that she had been a puppet because she had made herself one. She had been afraid of proving her mother right. Ready to go to see her child-patient she informs Baba that if Manu come he should be asked to wait for her. At last she decides to explore herself sociologically and economically as a "woman".

According to Dr.K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, that Saritha "strips herself of self deceptions, guilt complexes and emotive illusions, and Shashi Deshpande's language itself flickers like a candle and blots of remembrance melt and from icicles of furrowing thought. Saritha cannot forget her children or the sick needing her expert attention and so she decides to face her home again. In this unpredictable world, even total despair can open up a new spring of elemental self-confidence (758).

The intelligent and educated protagonist soon begins to feel restricted in the traditional claustrophobic existence. In this regard Deshpande once remarked, "It is necessary for women to live within relationships. But if the rules are rigidly laid that as a wife or mother you do this and no further, then one becomes unhappy" (Vishwanatha 236). Their balanced and practical approach towards life makes them realize the importance of marriage and family. Concentrating on traditional values Deshpande almost always shows her woman seeking the solution of their problems within marriage.

Towards the close of the novel, we find saru receiving a telegram and preparing herself to confront to her husband Manu. She realizes that there can be no refuses other than her own self. Thus, she frees herself from her fears and pains and confidently waits to face what used to be the greatest tremor of her life, her husband. She gains confidence and learns to trust herself.

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