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Patriarchal Influence in *Shashi Deshpande's* novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*

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ABSTRACT :

Shashi Deshpande is one of the living dynamic women writers in Indian English literature and she published many novels and collections of short stories. The image of women in fiction has undergone a change during the last four decades. Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self sacrificing, searching for identity, no longer characterized and defined simply in terms of their victim status. The novels emerging in the twenty first century furnish examples of a whole range of attitudes towards the imposition of tradition, some offering an analysis of the family structure and the caste system as the key elements of patriarchal social organization. Deshpande writes mainly about everyday India. A society in which we breathe, a culture to which we belong. Her major concerns emerge from our own environment, from our immediate world, holding up mirrors to our own lives. She does not simplify India but presents India as it is to her readers.

Even though her writing is very Indian in its framework, the themes honour no borders. The protagonist of *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita hails from the urban middle class society of contemporary India. Through her heart rending tale of injustice, violence, guilt and terror Deshpande tries to portray all those bewildered and tortured women. In spite of being intelligent, independent, sensitive and attractive, Shashi Deshpande's women characters are leading a miserable married life.

Keywords: honour, protagonist, violence, injustice, dominance

Introduction:

A number of Indian women novelists made their debut in the 1990s, producing novels which revealed the true state of Indian society and its treatment of women. These writers were born after Indian independence and the English language does not have colonial associations for them. They generally write about the urban middle class. For the predicament of women, their inner conflict, quest for identity, issues pertaining to parent-child relationship, marriage and sex, and their exploitation and lack of expectation, Shashi Deshpande has been labeled 'feminist'. But after analyzing her work it might be said that she is not completely in the favour of overthrowing the patriarchy and establishing the matriarchal system. She has made her utmost efforts to balance the relationship between man and woman. Deshpande has a strong hold among contemporary Indian novelists in English. She deals with the middle class Indian woman who represents the overwhelming majority of Indian women and is struggling to adjust in it rather than get freedom from the traditional world.

Sarita, in this novel experiences the real life and realizes that the dark no longer holds any terror to her. She is known as 'Saru', an ordinary, modest, sensitive, middle class woman, aware of her own drawback. She always wishes to crack the rigid traditional norms and wishes a new environment where, the mother, father and husband may not play oppressive role towards her daughter and wife respectively. She is a successful doctor during the daytime and at night a terrified and trapped animal in the hands of her husband Manohar who is an English teacher in a small college. Saru comes to her father's house after fifteen years of marriage. She had once determined and had proclaimed that she would never come back to her father's place but circumstances forced her to return back as she was unable to bear the sexual sadism of her husband. Here she had an ample opportunity to review her relationship with her father, husband and her dead mother. She emerged with a better understanding of herself and others. Saru remembers all the past, a brief confession to her father about her trauma and her courage to confront reality, "To make myself in your image was the goal I

sought.”(TDHNT,124) These lines highlight a very crucial and closest relationship between mother and daughter. The novelist explains the fear, the panic, the suffocation and the helplessness. The thought of ones own self disowning one’s own mother is the question to be probed. Saru is deprived of parental care and affection. Her mother’s hatred for her and prefers her brother, Dhruv creates a rift between the mother and daughter and compels Saru to be a mutineer due to the bias policy of her mother. The novel exhibits the cruelty of a mother. It is a

strange that in today’s male bigot society, the mother, full of a closed minded conservative, and a moral bounded, prefers a son and the daughter, yet to come to secondary place in the family.

Saru’s mother never forgave her for being alive even after her brother had drowned, and she could not forget the traumatizing effect of her mother’s hysterical outburst. “You did it, you did this, you killed him, you killed him. Why didn’t you die? Why are you alive, when he’s dead?” (TDHNT,62)

Saru hopes for a miracle to happen and that one day she would grow up and be beautiful. She goes to Bombay to study Medicine in spite of her mother’s opposition and got a medical degree with the connivance of her father. Saru’s mother doesn’t understand the importance of girl’s education and expresses her standard thoughts.

Saru’s confrontation with her mother reaches its peak when she decides to marry Manu. Her choice of a boy from a lower caste is a sign of her rejecting the traditional ways and values her orthodox mother adheres to. She recalls the conversation with her mother, when she confronts her with her intention of marrying Mannu. “What caste is he? I don’t know. A

Brahmin? Of course not. Then, cruelly Oh, so they are low-caste people, are they?” (TDHNT ,96) The Institution of home, which is supposed to foster the growth of a child, robs the woman’s right and respectability. Her mother never looks both the son and daughter with one eye. Saru has also to put up with this gender-based discrimination, typically common to the Indian middle class society. Even the educated middle-class people perpetuated and rationalized boy girl child syndrome.

Marriages normally subordinate the wives to the husband and it also idealizes female martyrdom. There is a subtle contrast with Manohar. After marrying Saru, Manohar begins to enjoy superior financial and social status. Both enjoy a harmonious relationship so far as Saru was only his wife. When she assumes the role of a lady doctor and he is recognized as her husband, the equation changes, he becomes a jealous; sexually

aggressive husband. He can't tolerate that his wife enjoys better social prestige and it gradually destroys their marriage.

Male dominated society in India basically does not allow a career oriented woman. Profession does not success for a meaningful existence, as she knows that she will always be judged, first and foremost, as a woman and her success in a profession shall always be considered secondary to her success in her marriage. A woman should know that success in marriage means manipulating, sacrificing, adjustments and silently managing her relationship with her husband in accordance with the norms dictated by the society. In the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru understands that her intellect, her carrier, her achievement and her ambitions-in case supersedes her husband are the stigmas and she will have to carry them like black mark forever. Manohar's sense of inferiority changes him into a sadist, who insults, harasses and hurts her wife sexually. Many a time she intellectually protests to reshape her life but in vein. She seeks admission to a medical college and her dreams to get first division is materialized, but her marriage in terms of social expectations, the traditional male chauvinistic husband totally shatters them. Saru accepts her loneliness and tries to overcome it and reflects her thoughts and feelings. She thinks that one must believe in oneself for living a happy life and get rid of the trifle whirligig of the society. She decides to keep her marriage in favor of her husband. But, Manohar's disgusting behavior in the night- makes all the difference.

The courage and confidence develops gradually in Sarita. To Saru the idea of men going to work, children going to school, and women staying at home to work, clean, scrub and sweep, appealed as she finds a supreme harmony in these tasks done by whom who stay at home this is a kind of contentment in her new routine life, makes her feel that she has a totally new life, and now as she calls herself as a totally changed person and nothing old Saru is left. At her father's place, slowly she loses the awareness of her femininity, she stops thinking about herself as a woman. The aspect of a doctor in her is more often seen than that of the wife, and the mother. Her neighborhood women now visit her for their physical health. Mostly these women keep more of their ailments everything as a secret.

Sarita takes interest in their problems and tries to solve them by employing all medical skills as she listens to them. Though she is desirous of settling down with her father's but at the same time she is aware of the practical problems involved in it. Sarita, before she could start off again with her life, executes one last act of restoration. Being disappointed in her marital life

Saru once starts affairs with Boozie and PadmakarRao. Saru becomes resentful towards Manu who had closed his eyes to Boozie displaying his affection towards her in public, at the inauguration in her consulting room. Saru is completely engrossed in a painful experience of having done injustice to her mother, husband and to her children. She is unable to face the situation and overcome her guilt till the things take a better turn to benefit her. A letter from Manohar increases her bitter emotional of vengeance. She reacts very sensitively to every sound of his arrival and requests her father not to allow Manohar to come here. The whole problem is due to lack of perfect understanding between husband and wife, Deshpande tries to explain that in family life there must be a harmonious blend of acceptance and rejection, flexibility and rigidity and above all revolt if the occasion demands and compromise for peaceful life. Sarita's trauma is her aspiration and efforts to fulfill it. Women bound in tradition sacrifice anything for the sake of her family's welfare and she may be unaware of individuality. On the other hand in educated class, an educated woman more often aware of her individuality, family life happiness becomes smallest because of a divided self between husband and children and then between her profession and herself. Whenever a feminine sensibility is on crumble down then the natural love disappears and clash, ego and self take place. Thus love no longer becomes a sweet thing to possess and enjoy. Manohar's male ego attempted to dominate Sarita but results in disintegration. Sarita's feminine psyche fights with the existing forces and she gets no support from any quarter and hence doubles her suffering. Deshpande probes the inner recess of Sarita's consciousness in order to discover the root of her silent suffering and passing resistance.

Saru feels that too much dependence on intuitions like marriage is also sheer foolishness. Her decision to go with Manu shows her confidence and courage in this direction. Obviously, the problem faced by Saru is the problem of hundreds of such learned and professional women who become the victim of the double stand of society. If a husband is superior to a woman's position, she has to serve him, but unfortunately if the husband is inferior to her, she is bound to face the sadism and ego of her husband like Saru. Indian society still tradition bound superstitious. No one dares to gauntlet the existing patriarchal order. The people who boast theoretically that husband and wife are two wheels of a van, two aspects of the same coin, are beating about the bush because the fact is that man is always considered superior to a woman.

Saru is educated, intelligent and economically independent, she could not accept her destiny as fate written on her forehead, turns into a 'New Woman' Now, the time has come for Sarita to face her husband fearlessly.

Today, the modern woman is more than a mother, sister or a daughter. She is a multifaceted personality, capable of any work or any role, but the only vitamin she needs is a strong healthy mind and will which showed Saru in this novel. This modern woman passes through a process of transformation, signifying a change from bondage to freedom and self-assertion. Sarita asserts openly when the interviewer mentions bread and butter; she makes it clear that as a doctor she earns not only bread but butter too. This remark makes Manohar realize that he is no longer her equal in affluence. And so he decides to show her that he is more powerful in bed.

Conclusion:

Sarita realizes that everyone in life encounters problems and under goes suffering at one stage or another. When confidence strengthens, Sarita sees that she is no longer a skeleton but a human being throbbing with life. Once this realization dawns on her, all other problematic things are melt away. The lady doctor, Sarita, comes out of the veil and presents a fair picture of a woman's predicament. Deshpande means that woman should assert herself so that she can overcome or thrash the suppressing forces. She makes Sarita's awareness to be touched by her experience as a doctor. She studies her own physical and psychological trauma with the detachment of an analyst. The understanding of reality makes Sarita see for herself the whole world in a distinct form. In consequence, she gets a new energy to achieve wholeness and overcome her identity crisis. In this way, Sarita represents the middle class working women in modern Indian Society. She rebels against the traditions but ultimately frees to compromise with the existing reality. Sarita cannot forget her children or the sick husband needing her attention and so she decides to face her home again

A woman is never regarded as an independent being as she has always been considered a secondary position. Man can think of himself without woman but because of socio-cultural conditioning of Indian tradition she cannot even imagine her existence without man. She is nothing but man decree. She materializes essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex, absolute sex, no less, no more. A women considers herself insecure without the support of a male. A woman is always identified in our society by her relationship with her father and her husband.

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