

**REFLECTION OF INDIAN SOCIETY
DESHPANDE'S NOVEL: DARK H****SHASHI
TERRORS****Dr. Usha P. Yaul**

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Shri Ganesh Arts College, Kumbhari-Akola

ABSTRACT:

Shashi Deshpande is one of the prominent voices to arrive on the scene of Indian literature in English. A close study of Deshpande's novels reveals that she is a highly sensitive writer who is clearly aware of the male-female imbalances in the society. She knows the mood of India and has seriously tried to bring forth in her novels aspects of the changing Indian society.

This paper analysis Shashi Deshpande's female protagonists and struggle for their identity in society. She excels in projecting a realistic picture of the middle-class woman who, though financially independent, is still facing the problems of adjustment between the old and the new, between the tradition and modernity, and between the idealism and pragmatism.

KEY WORDS: Woman, identity, relation-ship, tradition, modernity, revolt, compromise, society

INTRODUCTION:

The family in India, during the last few decades, has been under the process of social change, thus substantially affecting the various relationships in a family. This social change is marked in the Indian society at large; it has touched the fringes of the family and this interaction has brought a significant change in the structure and various relationships in a family. There is a conspicuous change in the spheres of roles and values. From the sociological point of view, the role of husband-wife is the principal component in a family context that has undergone a vital change due to growing enlightenment and the movement for emancipation of women. In this regard, literature has played a sterling role in raising the readers' consciousness. In various forms, it has provided a glimpse into female psyche and dealt with the full range of female experience. It portrays, without inhibitions, the new woman who refuses to play a second fiddle to her husband in various walks of life.

Shashi Deshpande is a well-known name in the field of Indian English literature. She has consistently sought to come to grips with the problems of Indian womanhood in the post-Independence scenario. She is a well-known Indian English contemporary novelist from Karnataka. She is a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1990. She has written twelve novels, short stories for children etc. Her novels are distinguished for their genuine depiction of the Indians and their culture. Characters in her novels are imaginary but readers experience all the things in real people around us in the society. The writer tries to present the Indian families along with their culture, religion, traditions, human relationships, quest for identity, revolt against existing bondage in male dominated society, internal and external conflicts etc.

The protagonists of all her novels are women. Through her characters, Deshpande holds a mirror to the society. Her efficiency and dexterity in portraying characters, situations and scenario in fiction carved for her niche in the galaxy of Indian English novelists.

The main objective of this paper is to throw light on the struggling of educated middle class woman in the family. Journey of Deshpande's women is not smooth. Most of the time, they feel fettered. Silence becomes their need to save their family life. But when they break their silence, everything in family life gets disturbed.

A close study of her novels reflects the plight of women in patriarchal society. All women protagonists are the victims of gender discrimination, first as daughters and later as wives. They are conscious of injustice towards them. They try to struggle against the oppressive traditions rooted in the family in order to search their identity but in the last they compromise with the situations.

In the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Deshpande has portrayed the life of woman who marries a doctor and becomes a victim of brutalization as a result of male ego. It is a story of courage and perseverance that she developed from within herself to break traditional shackles of society to gain her identity and freedom. Her protagonist emerges from cultural rootedness. This novel reflects typical Indian mentality. Saru, the protagonist in *The Dark Holds No Terror* recollects how she was ignored and neglected by her parents in favour of her brother, Dhruva. She was deprived of any importance and parental love which was her birth right.

The preference for boys over girls can be openly witnessed in most Indian homes, and is inextricably linked to the Indian psyche. Sons bring in dowry could be one reason, but the Indian society, steeped in tradition and superstition, considers birth of a son as auspicious as he carries on the family lineage.

In Indian traditional family system, father as a head of the family visualizes son in the same role in future. It is believed in India that a male child would take his parents to heaven. Saru's father's affection towards Dhruva is revealed through many incidents. After his death, the house never had celebrations, which strongly emphasize the importance of Dhruva and negligence for Saru. When Saru comes back home after the death of her mother, she comes to know that her father observes fast for both time on Dhruva's birth day. The father is totally unknown about his living daughter but he has immense love for dead son.

Apart from this, there is colour-consciousness rooted in the Indian family. Saru's mother constantly reminds her dark complexion. She was accused of her brother's death. The sense of rejection by her parents fills the adolescent mind with feeling of hatred towards her parents. Saru's experiences at parental home distort her growth as a woman, as a being. The strange childhood experiences up her inflated ego and her thirst for power over others.

Shashi Deshpande, dexterously reveals that a mother's fondness for the son is responsible for keen sibling jealousy. Her mother's discriminatory behaviour makes Saru feel unloved and unwanted leading to a sense of alienation and estrangement. Resentment and hatred drive her to leave home.

Saru goes to Mumbai to study medicine in spite of her mother's opposition. Her mother does not understand the importance of girl's education. Her mother reproaches her and takes no interest in her education, career and future. Her mother considers spending money on girl's education is useless. This proves that girls are considered a weight; responsibility which has to be disposed as early as possible. While studying medicine Saru falls in love with a college mate, Manohar from a lower caste and marries him against parents' wishes. Devoid of parental love and security, she wanted to be loved. When she gets attention from Manu, she wonders, "how could I be anyone's beloved?" He is an ideal romantic hero who has come to rescue her from the insecure, loveless existence. She marries to secure lost love in her parental home and her identity as an individual. Her marriage with Manu is an assertion and affirmation of her feminine sensibility. But her series of problems and butchering of her inner feelings continues even after her marriage too. Saru is a doctor and gets a superior status in society. Her rise in social and financial status in contrast to Manu's status of an underpaid lecturer sets a great discomfort in their conjugal relation. In her career she enjoys full contentment, and in conjugal life she is totally discontented.

Her husband, Manohar feels inferior and insecure and turns sadist because of her rising status in society. He begins to attack Saru in the darkness of night inflicting untold physical and mental suffering on her. Saru felt angry with those women who are willing party to their humiliations at the hands of their husbands. But now she hates herself for letting her husband do it to her. She is prepared to sacrifice her profession to please Manu and save her marriage. She realizes the futility of her surrender to her husband's taste.

Saru's bitter realization is that a woman must necessarily remain a step behind her husband. Saru has a better understanding of herself and others. As a child, Saru has seen the predicament of her grandmother who was deserted by her husband and considered "an unwanted burden" by her own people. The fate of abandoned woman is worse than that of widow. Even in childhood, Saru had realized that "economic independence alone could be an insurance against subordination or suppression".

After marriage Saru becomes a successful and recognized lady doctor. Saru's sexual exploitation plunges her into an extra marital relationship with Boozie and Padmakar Rao. The isolation and fragmentation in her marital life make Saru look for other possibilities. She begins to enjoy superior financial and social status with the help of an outsider, Boozie. Saru seeks help from them to achieve economic independence in life.

This creates an inferiority complex in Manohar and becomes a sadist, who gets pleasures by insulting his wife, harassing and, hurting her sexually. Both Boozie and Padmakar in the life of Saru prove that their relation gives no solace; it is only the disillusioned relationships. She thinks that man has nothing to do with the emotions of a woman; he is merely concerned about his physical instincts which she finds is the realistic perception of love. These relationships in Saru's life help her to tackle her problems. She feels that she has done in-justice to her mother, husband, children and everybody else. She takes this opportunity to examine, to begin and to reinforce her indispensability. She is also able to think sensibly and logically. She realizes that she has to accept all these selves-daughter, sister, and wife as they are. She understands that escaping is not a permanent solution to the problems but it has to come from within.

When her confidence strengthens, Saru sees that she is no longer a skeleton but a human being throbbing with life. She comes out of the veil and presents a fair picture of woman's predicament. She studies her own physical and psychological trauma with the detachment of an analyst. The understanding of reality makes her 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. She rebels against the traditions but ultimately frees to compromise with the existing reality. Saru cannot forget her children and her sick husband needing her attention. For the society, Saru is a lady doctor with a loving husband and two lovely kids but in reality, she is a victim of the unkindest cut of all. Her predicament is a power struggle in which a woman is robbed of her individuality and identity. Deshpande means that woman should assert herself so that she can overcome or thrash the suppressing forces.

In Indian society, married woman is not supposed to return to her parental house without her husband or having any quarrels or divorce. She is supposed to stay in the house of her husband till death. So, when Saru's father finds her standing alone with the suitcase, he frowns and knits his eyebrows like any other typical Indian father. Also, when Saru tells her father about her husband, who tortures her sexually, but it is something beyond the understanding of her father, who always maintained distance and reserve with his wife. Thus, the root of these problems also seems to lie in

the social attitude. At all Saru's father has never showered with love or shown his anger. But now she experiences tenderness of his heart and kind attitude towards her for the first time in her life. Her father is shown very much proud of his daughter as she is a doctor.

In Saru's case, the mother-daughter relationship is disturbed and father is shown helpless and indifferent. Her father is a non-entity in the house. Had the father intervened, the things would have turned out to be different; the mother-daughter relation could have been saved from disintegration. Shashi Deshpande successfully portrays the plights, problems, trials, tribulations of the relationship between father and daughter.

At the end of the novel, when Saru receives a letter about Manu's arrival, although initially she is not ready to face her husband, she tells her father, "Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait. I'll be back as soon as I can." These words show that she passes from the state of illusion to reality, from frustration to submission and ultimately attempts to reconcile herself to face the hard realities of life. This is true not only of Saru but of all middle-class working women in modern India.

Indian English fiction is indeed the most explicit record of the human spirit. It is a medium through which the essence of our living is made paramount by linking it to imaginative experience. A creative writer has the perception and the analytic mind of a sociologist who provides an exact record of human life, society and social system.

CONCLUSION:

Shashi Deshpande excels in projecting a realistic picture of Indian middle-class educated women, who though, financially independent, are confronting the dilemma of existence. Her novels deal with the woman's suffering, frustrations, social agitations and their stillness as a means of communication. Her heroines are occupied with the difficulties of fulfillment and self-definition in a man's world, the conflicting claims of selfhood, wifeness and motherhood. Shashi Deshpande novels seem to present a realistic picture of Indian woman who is divided in various responsibilities. The bias of society for man and woman is depicted in the novel. She describes the inferior status of women in the tradition bound, male chauvinistic society. Women in such environment try to overcome the restricting dilemma of prefixed definitions and pre-set norms, and try to redefine their status. She describes the Indian woman in a new role who despite the tortures inflicted on her by her husband comes out of this female dilemma by sheer willpower and determination. She has uncovered the boundaries erected around a woman's life from childhood to womanhood in the traditional male-dominated Indian society, even though she has refused to be identified as a feminist.

WORK CITED

1. Deshpande, Shashi. "Why I am a Feminist." *Writing from the Margin*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1988.
2. Deshpande, Shashi. *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. Delhi: Vikas, 1980.
3. Sunil, Seema. Ed. "Marriage, a compromise-A Study of Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*." *Man-Woman Relationship in Indian Fiction*. New Delhi: Prestige, 1995.
4. Sandhu, Sarabjit. Ed. *The Image of Woman in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*. New Delhi: Prestige, 1991.
5. Reddy, Y.S. Sunita. Ed. *A Feminist Perspective on the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*. New Delhi: Prestige Book, 2001.
6. Kaur, Satbir. *Shashi Deshpande: A Feministic Interpretation*. Chandigarh: Unistar, 2009.
7. Atrey, Mukta and Vinay Kirpal. *Shashi Deshpande: A Feminist Study of Her Fiction*. Delhi: BR Publishing Corporation, 2011.
8. Agrawal, Beena. *Mosaic of the Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande*. Delhi: Book Enclave, 2009.