



Road to Self-realization in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*

Abstract:

*In this Research paper, Researcher studies Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* to represent Dr. Saru's road to self-realization. The Researcher lights the facts on how Saru defines her way to her own real existence, her own identity as woman in context to her relations with her husband and father. The world of Shashi Deshpande's novels is the inner world of her characters. Totally engrossed in delineating the turmoil within the psyche of her Protagonists. Shashi Deshpande presents the detailed analysis of women's world; thinking of women and their search for self-identity and self- realization. Unable to fully defy traditional, patriarchal norms of society, these women characters attempt to realize and preserve their identity not only as women but also as human beings. Being trapped in this woman's world of experience, Deshpande hopes to emerge as Tolstoy who can create real, rounded characters and not merely women characters created for men. *The Dark holds no Terrors* told mainly in the first person narrative, is the story of Saru who attempts to free herself from the terrifying complexes of guilt which threaten to engulf her. In *The Dark Holds no Terrors*, Sarita, a successful doctor, marries a lower-caste Manohar, much against her parent's wishes and walks out of her house. Using her mother's death as an excuse, she returns home hoping to find solace away from her husband's frightening and inexplicable sadism.*

Key words: Self-realization, Patriarch.

Introduction:

Woman is considered as inferior to man. Previously it was believed that woman should not do higher studies as they would have to work at home only. In this novel Saru's mother Kamala always negates her and does not allow her for further studies. Therefore, Saru is passionately conscious about her studies and her self- development. Her passion for self development drags her to the road of self-realization. Though the world touches the sky in all span of life, and we all become modern still our wish of getting baby boy is alive. Most of the people whether educated or non- educated poor or rich everyone wishes to have a baby boy. The only reason is that we are so called modern not actually modern from our mind. Traditionalism verses modernity still prevails in every woman's life. Indu is also in confusion that what actually her life is! But at last through journey of her life she realizes her own self and existence and importance.

Shashi Deshpande's primarily focuses attention on the challenges of Women, struggle of women in the context of modern Indian society. Unable to fully defy traditional, patriarchal norms of society, these women characters attempt to realize and preserve their identity not only as women but also as human beings. Deshpande employs withdrawal as a tool for both introspection and self realization for these protagonists. These characters withdraw not only into a world of fantasy but into a world away from the suffocating circumstances of their life. Unable to adjust to the social demands on them, these protagonists attempt temporary psychological as well as sociological withdrawal.

The Dark holds no Terrors is a story of Sarita; she is referred to as Saru in the novel, and her convulsions and conflicts. In her maternal home her mother did injustice with her she loves her son not to her daughter and compelled her to live at home only denied her for further studies however Saru did her studies in medical college and become a doctor. Her mother always blamed her for the death of her brother and because of that she lived in stress and felt that she was responsible for her brother's death.

In Indian society always male child is proffered. People feel happy if baby boy is born and becomes sad when girl child is born. Girl is symbolized as burden to family. In case of Saru though she is educated but she has to suffer a lot because she is girl. Her mother always gives importance to her brother only and not her. Her mother tells her when her brother dies; her mother accused her and said:

“You killed him. Why didn’t you die? Why are you alive, when he is dead?” (Deshpande 191)

Saru has left her home because she is in search of true love which she never gets her maternal home. Saru puts in succinctly:

“And to do that I must get away. Yes that’s why I am going. To get away from this house, this paradise of matching curtains and handloom bedspreads. The hell of savagery and submission.” (Deshpande 28)

While studying in medical college Saru fell in love of Manohar who was a student. Saru got married with her. Actually Saru was in search of an escape from her home where she felt suffocated because of her mother’s torturing atmosphere. Saru did her duty as a doctor and Manohar worked as a teacher in third Rate College. But Manohar’s male ego hurt and he started to humiliate Saru. So Saru got frustrated and left the home she returned to her home after and mother’s death after fifteen years because she knew her father could listen her problems. She was in search of her real identity and wanted to get rid of all relations and rebels against the patriarchal norms of society and attempts to realize her own self.

Society is consequently structured to perpetuate patriarchal ideology and women are maintained in an inferior position. This persistence of patriarchal ideology throughout history has enabled men to assume that they have a right to maintain women in a subordinate state. He humiliates Saru at night and ill-treats her as she is the object. As Simone de Beauvoir argues,

“Man has assumed the position of universal subject, and woman is positioned as relative ‘Other’ about the woman is object and man is subject”. (Beauvoir 51)

Saru had begun to believe that her professional competence and success at work has driven Manohar to his present state of a monster at night. His male ego has been hurt because of Saru’s position as doctor. Saru is respected in the society and has higher status in the society. She now realizes that being successful is no crime. Her resolve to face Manohar and her future is made possible only after this complete withdrawal. She has now inner strength to overcome the hurdles of her life including accepted patriarchal norms. He literally treats her as an animal and sexually harasses her.

Though A.k. Awasthi calls Saru:

“An anxious, eager, ambitious... confused, hopeless, dull, almost thoughtless and a recluse run away” (Awasthi 107)

Saru does not understand him in the beginning but later on she finds out the reason for this type of behavior and she is search of her own real identity. He is jealous of her career but does not want her to leave the job. She wishes to leave the job and position of doctor but her husband denies as he is not able to leave middleclass life. He wants all the comforts of luxurious life but does not want to give respect and love to her he treats her as object of sex and source of getting all luxurious life and comforts. He is so mean that doesn’t care for her feelings.

It is only when Saru withdraws her immediate family – her husband and children- that she is able to overcome her sense of guilt. This guilt of sense has been thrust upon her by societal norms and the expectations of others.

After fifteen years of marriage Saru now decides to go back to her father with whom she has never had much of a communication. Her alienation from her parents was the outcome of a perceived sense of gender discrimination that she as a child had to suffer on account of being girl. The stay at her father's house nevertheless allows her time to review the past and have better idea of the present. At the end of the novel though she remains unchanged in matters of conviction; she develops a better understanding of herself and of those around her. She is now more able to confront reality, since life no longer holds any terrors for her.

But her father says Saru

“I never blamed you” (Deshpande 193)

She now realizes that she has not failed as a daughter because she had not walked out on her parents. In fact it is her mother who had shut her out of her affections and even cursed her after her brother's Death.

Saru needs this temporary resolve her doubts about her life and relationships. She is bold enough to solve her problems, as she tells her father;

“And, oh yes, Baba, if Manu comes tell him to wait. I'll be back soon as I can.” (Deshpande 221)

Saru's escape is not withdrawal but her self-realization and her re-integration into society. It is only then that she is able to break the illusions that she had created and then face life courageously.

Saru resolve her conflicts and reach an understanding of her without any external help. The novel ends with positive note with the protagonists determined to tackle the problems of life. Saru realizes that,

“If I have been a puppet, it is because I made myself one.”

(Deshpande 220)

She has to learn to accept herself and her various selves:

“Yes she was all of them; she could not deny that now. She had to accept these selves to become a whole again. But if she was all of them, they were not all of her. She was all these and so much more.”(Deshpande220)

It is only at the end of the story Saru realizes that

“She must peel away the multiple layers of the roles in which she had swaddled herself before she can arrive at the truth about herself.”
(Rajendra 87)

Conclusion:

Saru emerges as an individual apart from her traditional roles of daughter, sister, wife and mother. She achieves this by not being brazen feminists or iconoclasts but by a gradual process of introspection and self-realization. Saru is not neither rebel nor conformist. Living within the dilemmas of life she seeks a path that allows her individual freedom and growth even within the constricting environs of traditional

upper middle-class family. Without succumbing to societal pressures and without breaking away from accepted, traditional, social, institutions, these protagonists succeed in being individuals.

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