

The Dark Holds No Terror – An Introduction

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Literature is a truthful expression of life through the medium of language. Its success lies in blending both art and morality in such a beautiful way that art, in the long run, becomes the thought. Novel is a product of post colonialism in India. It has come through English language and western education. It's progress in India is due to the liberal thought from the west, which again is a product of post colonialism. The image of woman in Indo-English novel is based on the traditional ancient literature of India, which showed woman as a devoted wife or a devoted mother. The post colonial writers of Indo-English novels equipped with a new education and sociability have different perspective of the images of woman. In the post colonial period liberal thought was brought in to our country and it was also propagated by western education. The woman novelists were responsible for the new image of woman struggling against the oppressive social norms of the male dominated society. The image of the woman in the postcolonial fiction is a crystallized form of the two different cultures. The image of woman as a custodian of extraordinary moral virtues incorporated with devotion and sacrifice has become an archetype. The image of woman in quest of her identity has emerged from the archetype.

In this respect there occurred changes in theme, emphasis and design in the literature of the twentieth century. The imaginative and creative responses of the writers are related to the changing world view and the questioning attitude thereby developed by it. Let us restrict our view to the section of novels alone with the list of great novelists like Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Kamala Markandeya, Anitha Desai, Manohar Malgonkar, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kushwant Singh, Nayanthara Sahgal, Anitha Kumar and Shashi Deshpande besides the unmentioned numerous others.

These Indian novelists deal with the society in its rich and varied customs and view the predicament of women in different dimensions. The attitude to women has changed in recent times. Their writings are based not only on observations of external behaviour but also on the internal journey in the psychological realm of the feminine sensibilities. A few

women novelists like Anitha Desai, Shashi Deshpande make straight journey into the psyche of their women characters that are torn on account of the tensions generated by the discord between the individual and the surroundings. They have started trying to understand Indian women and portray her in their novels.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the living dynamic women writers in Indian English literature and she published many novels and collections of short stories. Some of them are, **That long Silence(1988), If I Die Today(1982), Come up and Be Dead(1983), Roots and Shadows(1983), The Dark Holds No Terror(1981), The Binding Vine(1992), The Intrusion and Other Stories(1993), A Matter of Time and The Narayanpur Incident(1982)**. The Project is a brief study of the selected novel **The Dark Holds No Terror**. It deals with the problems of a career woman and her marital constraints.

This paper deals with **The Dark Holds No Terror** which is reflective of the feminist aspirations. The discord and the disillusionment of the educated woman in a tradition bound 'Indian Society' is the theme of the novel. There is the ultimate realization at the end after a prolonged mental dilemma and a long drawn introspection. Women's quest for self exploration is the principal theme of this novel. In an interview, the author reveals that all her characters are concerned with their 'selves' and they learn to be honest to themselves. The novels of Shashi Deshpande are about women's self quest and struggle to free themselves from the restrictions imposed by society, culture and nature. It is a story about a doctor who is disappointed as a daughter as the rapport between her and her mother is little bit strained. She is unable to identify herself as a beloved daughter to her mother and when she grows up she is unable to be attractive enough to be a beautiful young maiden having rapturous power. And so she realizes that what she is as a girl is not what that makes her. She understands that what she is to become is going to give her the identity that she is searching for. She realizes that becoming is productivity which means making life feasible and pleasant, and comfortable for others, and so she selects the avenue of medicine. She is a child with a lot of curiosity which is reflected in her playfulness, visiting friends and out door games. This is very obvious when she roams around the mango grove.

It is strong as a curiosity in her childhood and later develops into quest for identity. When she grows and understands life around.

The Dark Holds 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 a 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 Saru remembers and a brief confession to her father about her trauma. The narrative meanders between the past and the present. Her stay in her father's house gives Saritha a chance to review her relationship with her father, husband and her dead mother. She remains unchanged till the end. She has a better understanding of herself and others. This gives her the courage to confront reality.

The initial experiences in her girlhood days influenced Saru heavily that she wanted to become a powerful dominant person in her life. This made her realize that she can fulfill her ambitions through education. After her school years she aspired for college education

Her neighbours become aware of her professional identity, the day she walks back in a blood stained coat, after treating victims of an accident. Instantly her profession achieves for her a position superior to Manu's. She is recognized and respected by the neighbours who came frequently to consult her. The respect that Saru gets disturbs the traditional equilibrium of the superior husband and inferior wife. Later analyzing her marital relationship she recalls, "but now I know it was there it began this terrible thing that has destroyed our marriage. I know this to that the human personality has an infinite capacity for growth. And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the sane thing that made me. Inches taller made him inches shorter. He had been the

young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband” (The Dark Holds No Terror 42).

The suffering that saru undergoes makes her consider of writing to the young students of her friend Nalu. She longs to tell them the rigid rules of tradition according to which:

A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he’s an M.A you should be a B.A. If he’s 5’4’ tall you shouldn’t be more than 5’3’ tall. If he’s earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety-nine rupees. That’s the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage... No partnership can ever be equal. It will always be unequal, but take care it is unequal in the favor of the husband. If the scales tilt in your favor, God help you, both of you: (The Dark Holds No Terror 137)

Saru’s long hours of introspection into her marriage makes her realize that her professional success had killed Manu’s spirit. Actually her introspection helps her to free herself from the feelings of guilt that she has made Manu what he is. She decides that she would not endure any more humiliation because of Manu’s failure and her success. She decides to assert herself and fight her own battle. She realizes that her life is her own which she will have to shape as well as face the events of her life. There is no refuge, other than one’s own self. With this mind she confidently waits to confront her husband and decides to go back to Bombay. Actually this going back to her husband is not to endure the humiliation. According to Holmstrom, Saritha is not going back and he is surprised that people haven’t understood that (Holmstrom 247). Saru as a wife finds refuge in the doctor in herself. It is the doctor who is going to help the wife in her to care her husband with the power of the doctor. She is bold enough to go back her husband and cure him of his depression caused by inferiority complex and bring normal harmony in her family life.

This is how she is attaining power and identity of becoming a doctor and this doctor in her has given her comfort and happiness in her personal life as well as in the life of others.

This capacity to create and give happiness gives one an identity. This is the identity that Saru searched for which gave her the recognition.

Thus the novel ends with the certainty that how Saru will no longer be a victim of Manu's frustrations. She derives pride in her professional success and decides not to feel guilt for someone else's failure. A confident Saru realizes that the essence of any marriage is understanding and mutual respect and not subjugation of one by the other. With this knowledge she readies herself to confront Manu.

The novelist brings out powerfully the psychological problem of a career woman and discusses it artistically without crossing the barriers of art. The novel also transcends feminine constraints and raises issues, which the human beings in general encounter in their lives. The novelist's objective is to show that one should take refuge in the self which means here that woman should assert and ascertain herself so that she can overcome or thrash the suppressing forces. She makes Sarita's consciousness to be touched by her experience as a doctor. Sarita realizes that one has to be sufficient within oneself because there is no other refuge elsewhere, puts an end to her problems. She realizes that we come into this world alone and go out of it alone. The period in between is short. "And all those ties we cherish as eternal and long lasting are more ephemeral than a dewdrop"(208).

According to Dr. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, that Sarita "Strips herself of self deceptions, guilt complexes and emotive illusions, and Shashi Deshpande's language itself flickers like a candle and blobs of remembrance melt and form icicles of furrowing thought. Sarita 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.

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