FEMINISM IN "THE DARK HOLDS NO TERROR"

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ABSTRACT

The Dark Holds No Terror narrates the story of a marriage on the rocks. The protagonist Saritha is a successful lady doctor. 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 stretched mental predicament 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 if curiosity which is reflected in her playfulness, visiting friends and out door games. This is very obvious when she roams around the mango groove.

KEYWORDS : Teneous-Weak, Confrontation- Argument, Alienation- Disaffection, Predicament-Fix, Inherent-Inborn, Diverse-Varied.

INTRODUCTION

Shashi Despande is one of the living energetic 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 martial 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 stretched mental predicament 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.

**FEMINISM IN SHASHI DESHPANDE’S NOVEL**

Shashi Deshpande’s major concern is to depict the anguish and conflict of the modern educated Indian women caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand, and self expression, individuality and independence for the women on the other. Her fiction explores the search of the women to fulfil herself as a human being, independent of her traditional role as daughter, wife and mother.

Shashi Deshpande’s “The Dark Holds No Terror” is a very powerful novel that depicts the life of Sarita, a lady doctor who happens to escape to her father’s house in the beginning being tortured by the sexual extreme of her husband Manohar but this parental home equally brings back of her the horrible memories of the cruel attitude of her mother who is no more now. As Kailash Baral maintains ……… “Deshpande has employed a conscious strategy of embodying and embedding issues that are reflexive upon Feminism anti-patriarchal stance in the narrative. Among the various issues that the novel focuses on, concepts of ‘bonding’ and ‘bondage’ are considered not only in India but worldwide”.

The novel focuses on woman’s awareness of her predicament, her wanting to be recognized as a person than as a woman and her wanting to have an independent social image. At the outset of the novel, the protagonist Sarita is discovered as a victim of her husband; Manohar’s sadistic torture through physical and sexual violence. Her mental state is expressed in a very realistic manner and touching manner. In the novel one cannot fail to notice this differences in her since her childhood till she is an grown up woman. At home she always tries to control Dhruva, her brother and views her mother always resisted all the progressive moves she undertook and has disproportionate love for her son.

Being a son, he had the advantage of receiving more attention, care and love from her parents. Her childhood jealousy comes to the forefront. When she pushes him from her father’s lap when he was hardly a year old. He had been completely loyal to her in all respect always running after his beloved Sarutai. Her mother’s affection towards her brother impelled her to ask why the mother carve a female by challenging the old order, the myriad bondages of tradition imposed by a male dominated society. Dhurva’s death becomes an instrumental in alienation her from them by putting a guilt consciousness seems to act like a fatal flaw at times driving her to a mental state bordering on schizophrenia. This brings the mother-daughter conflict to the forefront.

Saru considers economic independence as an insurance against any subordination. When she decides to pursue a course in medicine in Bombay, the mother is traditionally ill disposed to let her have her way. She makes efforts to understand her and even identify herself with her mother Valli Roa finds this as “… a search for her own feminine side and herself and finally we see ‘rebirthing’ her own individuality personality separate from her mother.
The remark of Atrey and Kripal are noticeable: unable to assert his ‘manliness’ over her (Saru) like a traditional male (that is in economic terms). He resorts to sexual molestation of her nightly while playing the loving husband during the day. His purpose, though repressed in the subconscious is to ‘punish’ her for taking on the ‘male’ role and to assert his superiority and power through physical violence. Manus ego is hurt by her success, he feels inferior and this sense of inferiority makes him brutal in his behaviour. Though he is normal by day, he turns as brutal treacherous rapist at night and tries to assert his masculinity through sexual assaults upon Saru. Her dream of findings in marriage is soon shattered. Saru understands that integration alone would make her whole again and confrontation of the disintegration elements would never make that possible.

Saru desires to liberate herself from the shadier of tradition and exercise her right to reveal her individual capabilities and realize her feminine self through identity-assertion and self-affirmation.

In the words of S.P. Swain:

Saru’s Journey is a journey from self alienates to self identification, from negative to asserting, from diffidence to confidence. She learns to trust her feminine self (Swain:39).

**CONCLUSIONS**

The novelist tries to convey the society that need of the compromise as a survival strategy in this transitional phase, is not a total revolt but a gradual change in the society for which everyone has to put some effort to bridge the gap between sadness and happiness, gap between the old and the new generation. 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).

**REFERENCES**


