



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol.2. Issue 3., 2015 (July-Sept.)



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION OF IDENTITY IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S
THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS

A.BHAGYALAKSHMI

Ph.D Candidate, Mother Teresa Women's University, Kodaikanal



ABSTRACT

Indian Writing in English has been entered a new phase in finding the New Woman, a dissatisfied woman with the cultural and sexual roles assigned by the patriarchal society. The New woman attempts to rebel against the cultural and social oppressions. But at the same time she cannot reject the cultural social background in total. There is a female dilemma a conflict in her mind. Because of this conflict she cannot depict her revolutionary spirit to the highest level. In India since ages a woman's role in life was strictly listed out as daughter, wife and mother. In all these roles she had to follow the norms set by the tradition. The new generation of women in India has the desire to assert itself. But the trouble is there in their mind when there is traditional restrictions and pervasive discriminations which have the strong impact on them. The impact of tradition is so rigorous that the women in India are not ready to come out of it easily. The conflict between the tradition and modernity is dealt by the contemporary Indian English women novelists. Shashi Deshpande is writing at the transition of tradition to modern. The woman in this state is neither free nor dependent. She is in between the two. There is an urge for the identity and independence in them. The collision of culture and the revolutionary spirit of woman are vividly portrayed in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. The paper deals with the conflict of the protagonist Sarita in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*.

©KY PUBLICATIONS

Indian Writing in English has been entered a new phase in finding the New Woman, a dissatisfied woman with the cultural and sexual roles assigned by the patriarchal society. The New woman attempts to rebel against the cultural and social oppressions. But at the same time she cannot reject the cultural social background in total. There is a female dilemma a conflict in her mind. Because of this conflict she cannot depict her revolutionary spirit to the highest level.

Women, in India, were long unaware of their miserable condition. It was only with the advent of the Indian Renaissance, the new education, political struggles and the ever-increasing western impact that they began to show some signs of awakening. Fortunately, there were many important Indian leaders who had faith in equality and encouraged women towards self assertion and self identity. They tried a lot to the improvement of Indian women. After independence the new Indian constitution has granted equal rights to

women as par with men. The rights for which the women fought in the West have been given to Indian women willingly. Hence, in India, the women movement is mild and tempered. But this is only the half of the picture. Men and women are equal in theory and law but in practical life women were subjected to all sorts of discrimination. The Indian society is with more complexities based on religion caste and classes. The state of women in such a society is totally oppressed and suppressed.

In India since ages a woman's role in life was strictly listed out as daughter, wife and mother. In all these roles she had to follow the norms set by the tradition. In all stages women are expected to be the dependent and subordinate to men. There is no separate identity as a human being to woman. Things are changing nowadays as there is enlightenment in especially amongst sections such as education and material prosperity. The new generation of women in India has the desire to assert itself. But the trouble is there in their mind when there is traditional restrictions and pervasive discriminations which have the strong impact on them. The impact of tradition is so rigorous that the women in India are not ready to come out of it easily.

The conflict between the tradition and modernity is dealt by the contemporary Indian English women novelists. Shashi Deshpande is writing at the transition of tradition to modern. The woman in this state is neither free nor dependent. She is in between the two. There is an urge for the identity and independence in them. The collision of culture and the revolutionary spirit of woman are vividly portrayed in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. The main theme of her novels is redefining the role of new woman and reinforcing the state of confusion imposed by the age old tradition in the patriarchal society. Shashi Deshpande's novels depict the Indian Women who are at the cross roads and the protagonists suffer to overcome the cultural barriers on the way to 'self identity'. She attempts to closely analyze man-woman relationship within the perimeters of family and the contemporary social set-up. The women she portrays are educated urban middle class women who are in search of their 'total personality' in the fragments of shattered roles in family, career and society. She primarily focuses on the captivating problems and the suffocating environs of her heroines, who struggle hard in this malicious and callous male-dominated world to discover their true identity. Deshpande has thrashed women's problems and situations in a fast-changing social scenario. We cannot brand her either as 'typical Western liberated or an orthodox Indian one'.

Deshpande generally has the heroine as the narrator, and employs a kind of stream of consciousness technique. All the novels of Deshpande hold the power to deliver the problems of middle class women in a genuine sense. Her novels picturise the elements of personal experiences. Her psychological insight into her characters equals her to the masters of the genre.

The Dark Holds No Terrors show the confusion and conflict of two women Sarita and Jaya respectively. Both are educated middle class women, confronted by the female dilemma. Sarita (saru) a career woman has been tortured by her husband physically. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors* Saru has been a successful doctor in the day but a 'terrified trapped animal' at night in the hands of her husband, Manu. The economical freedom and the social status she has got with the help of her profession have disturbed the 'male-ego' of Manu. Saru is not ready to compromise and so the ego of the two becomes the base for the problem which destroys the happiness they found in their love marriage. The tortures are endless and Saru has been driven to her long forgotten parental home where she finds the time for self- analysis and self- realisation.

Deshpande presents Saru as an individual and as a female all together. She loved and married Manohar (Manu) against the will of her family, expecting a happy life in her love marriage. the very name Manu has implied the symbol of tradition and culture as the name Manu reminds us "the legendary patriarchal law giver" who has given the 'male centered perspective' and assigned the least place to woman in society. As her love marriage proves to fail in giving love and support, she returns to her long- forgotten parental home to seek solace from the physical and psychological sufferings. She comes back to there as a ' confused, dull and hopeless woman'. Now she is a reputed doctor and a mother of two children. When she learnt from her childhood friend Manda that her mother had died, she decides to go to her home as an escape from the present tortures of her husband. At her stay in her parental home she has the opportunity to analyse her past and present.

She recalls her happy and comfortable life with Manu. She has felt the warmth of love in their every touch. The happiness last till he is a 'handsome young man and she is bride'. When this illusion has lost and the reality confronts them the whole scene changes into a critical problem. The root of the problem has been lying unseen in the mind of Manu. When Saru has been viewed and respected as a lady doctor by the neighbourhood, Manu has felt diminutive. Her increasing popularity has made Manu psychologically affected. His male psycho cannot tolerate the less important position assigned to him in the society. When Saru has emerged as a successful doctor and gained economical independence, Manu's male-ego has been slashed totally. She has achieved the identity as an individual in the society where as Manu has lost his personality as their relationship has violated the age old hierarchies framed for the man-woman relationship. In the traditional view, woman has to be in the second position next to her husband. When there is any reverse in this status there is breach in the relationship. The male psyche of Manu has not allowed him to be subordinate to her in the outer world. But he welcomes her income in order to lead a comfortable life. But the sufferings of the hurt male ego come out in another way. Thus he is a lovable husband in the day time but a 'ravage animal' in the dark. Saru cannot understand and analyse his problem as he is quite normal in the day time unaware of the sadist attack of the nights. She is confused as she has to be afraid of him or to pity him. She can realise that the "esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the same things that made me inches taller, made him inches shorter"¹. His inferiority in him makes him to behave brutally.

Saru regrets that she has not paid much attention to her husband and children because of her profession. As she is busy in her work she has no time to spend with Manu. After her work she returns late at night and this is not liked by Manu. She realizes her fault in maintaining the good relationship with him and she feels guilty as she has the considerable proposition in making Manu, a failure. She is not ready to give up her 'pride' at the same time; she cannot leave her family to safeguard her career. Comparing her family and career, she decides to give up her profession to save her marital life. She expresses this wish to Manu, "I want to stop working. I want to give it all up... my practice, the hospital, everything"². She decides to smoothen their relationship by becoming his beloved wife again. When she wants to sacrifice her career for her happiness in marital life, Manu is not ready to give up her earning and the comfortable life.

She understands that his support to her career is not real. Manu is a traditional husband and he needs a submissive and obedient wife. She does not like his pretention. His brutality at night continues and there is a silent wall built between them. She endures the psycho attack in the dark as it is not his conscious act but an unconscious outcome of his hurt 'self'. She is afraid that how long she can go along this silent endurance. At the same time she is in a critical situation that she cannot put the two men, his tow personalities, together. She decides to be more oriented in her career as she wants to satisfy her ego by achieving a secured life with her financial independence. the conflict of going along with the tradition and opposing it, is there is her mind. When she is asked to deliver a lecture to the students about medicine as a profession to the women she has decided to talk about the traditional way of marriage relationship as woman has to be some inches shorter to man. The unbalanced relationship is essential to balance the life in a happy way. When there is any change in favour of woman the total happiness of the family destroys. She condemns that the women's magazine will tell about the equal partnership in the marriage, but that won't work out in the reality. She says that No partnership will be equal, "If will always be unequal, but take care that it's unequal in favour of your husband. If the scale is till in your favour, God help, both of you"³. Saru, there advices the young girls not to think of equality in the marriage as it may be the destructive force to the happiness of the family. The economic independence of the woman may be traumatic to the husband and so there will be suffering for the two. Even though she has accomplished a successful career she has not enjoyed the fulfillment in her personality. The financial independence is inadequate to shape her total personality.

This concept to attain economical independence and secured life is because of her mother. She wants to show her mother she can work hard to lead a secured life then there won't be anyone to ask 'why are you alive?' .As a child, Saru has received a discriminate treatment from her mother. Saru's mother has shown interest on son as a traditional Hindu mother, because sons are viewed as asset whereas daughters are the responsibilities. The gender discrimination has made a sharp scar in her mind. She wants to get rid of the

traditional clutches from her childhood days in the same manner she wants to get rid of her brother in her subconscious mind. She has not rushed to rescue her brother when he is drowning. When she recalls her past, she is remorse for her brother's death as she has been as guilty sister. Her mother becomes more scornful towards Saru after her brother's death. Her mother often accuses her for her brother's death. Saru has spent her childhood days in want of love. She wants to cut off totally the traditional way of life. To want to be free from the dependent life she chooses her career and to show her opposition to orthodox life she loved and married a low class man against the will of her family.

The change of place brings a change in her attitude towards her own problems. Saru starts analyzing her problems in a new dimension. She is reminded of her profession by the frequent visit of the neighborhood women. They have no complaints of their ailments and they endure the sufferings as their destiny. She is also like those neighbourhood women never attended her feelings openly. she now gets a chance to think over her feelings and all the happenings of her life. She is remorseful about her brother's death and her husband's failure as well as her mother's death. She expresses her feelings as "My brother died because I heedlessly turned my back on him. My mother died alone because I deserted her. My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood"⁴.

After the self analysis, Saru can confront with the problems at a deeper level. She is advised by her father to forget about her part in her brother's death and also the death of her mother. Her father further advises her to be always ready to face adversities of life as they come along. She has to be prepared to face her present problem with her husband.

In her stay in parental home, she met her childhood friends, Smitha and Nalu. Smitha was married and Nalu was spinster. The different experiences of these two women have been described vividly. Smitha being a housewife and a mother of two children was not enjoying any fulfillment in life. She was leading a slavish life as she has lost her identity. Her name was changed as Anju, short form of Geethanjali name given by her husband to show his admiration for Tagore. Saru despises Smita for her total dependency on her husband. Smita was not fulfilled just because she was married and had two children. She herself says, "But that would be as stupid as calling me fulfilled because I got married and I have borne two children"⁵. There was a contrasting experience to Nalu experience of her spinster. Both are entirely different and it was difficult to estimate the happiness and fulfillment of the two. Saru scorns traditional concept that the only purpose of woman in her whole life is to please a male.

Saru remembers the advice given by Maikaki to keep her hands soft and smooth in order to impress her husband that "her husband will never let go of them"⁶. But Saru's husband let go of them because she has failed to please him.

Saru, after her self-assertion and self realization becomes humble. Her father helps her to regain her will power and this helps her to face her life in the real light. She is ready to face the problems of life as, it is her life and there is no need of hiding oneself to others. There is no need of being a silent sufferer. She has been longing for this till then without this realization, she has been alienated from her home and family. Saru realizes that everything in this world is alone and so then is nothing to fear. Her father helps her to come out of her past.

Indian culture also inspires that she feels no longer a guilty sister undutiful daughter and unlovely wife (220).But her father says don't do it again. Saru wants to take another escape route and packs her things without knowing where to go. She prefers to escape from the tangled situation leaving back the old horrors and engaging her mind with the new horrors.

Towards the end of the novel, Saru receives a letter from Manu informing his arrival. Saru is not ready but him and at the beginning she feels indifferent about his arrival. She thinks that Manu will go back tired of knocking of the door she does not want to welcome him. She wants to escape from the situation. She wants to escape from the situation once again. "That is exactly what she wants. She wants to put herself in another's hands"⁷.

When she is in confusion again, there is a call for her profession which she dies her and gives her power to confront the reality. She leaves her plan to run away from home again and asks her father to inform

Manu to wait for sometime till her return she runs to treat Sunita who is sick. Thus her career recovers her power and the new woman in Saru thus says, "Baba if Manu comes, tell him to wait, I will be back as soon as I can"⁸.

These words are the proof to her self-identity and individuality and thus she is bold enough to confront reality. Her willingness to attend the patient is a proof to the assertion of her career and there is no compromise in this. She will not be the victim of Manu's attack anymore. Thus she emerges as a new woman to face the reality as it is. Now she is ready to talk to Manu openly.

In an interview Shashi Deshpande says about her women as "they are not going back to to where they were, they are moving on". They have understood what they are and "there is a change in their mental attitude". Revolution means to Deshpande "facing the situation with a different idea of 'what I am'. This is the biggest revolution"⁹.

REFERENCE

1. Deshpande, Shashi. *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1980, 42.
 2. _____., *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1980, 79.
 3. _____.,*The Dark Holds No Terrors*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1980, 137.
 4. _____., *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1980, 217.
 5. _____., *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1980, 121.
 6. _____.,*The Dark Holds No Terrors*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1980, 163.
 7. Sree, Prasanna, *Woman In The Novels Of Shashi Deshpande: A Study*, New Delhi: Sarup &sons, 2003, 61.
 8. Deshpande, Shashi. *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1980, 221
 9. Sree, Prasanna, *Woman In The Novels Of Shashi Deshpande: A Study*, New Delhi: Sarup &sons, 2003, 61.
-