
THE SELF- REALIZATION AND THE SELF – ASSERTION IN THE NOVEL *THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS*

R. Vadivukarasi,

Assistant Professor of English, A.P.C.Mahalaxmi College for Women,
Thoothukudi, Reg.No. 18122024012003,
Manonmanian Sundaranar University,
Tirunelveli – 627012.

C. Geetha,

Assistant Professor of English, Sri KGS Arts & Science College,
Srivaikundam, Manonmanian Sundaranar University,
Tirunelveli – 627012

Abstract

Shashi Deshpande as a contemporary Indian writer in English became one of the well-known Indian women writers in India in projecting the Indian sensibility particularly the feminine sensibility of the Indian woman. Shashi Deshpande through her characters portrays the real situation of the Indian women in the Indian context. In this novel she conveys the fact that each and every Indian woman try to get consolation from parents, brothers, friends, husband etc. but all their attempt become a queer consolation because nowhere women get consolation to expect to be themselves by realizing their strength and marching towards it. The attitude and the mindset of Indian women are depicted through the character Saritha alias Saru, the heroine of the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. Saritha's life before marriage and after marriage is with lots of expectations. She was not given fair treatment by her own mother who pampers her son Dhruva, not Saritha. The mindset of women is constructed forcefully by the patriarchal society. The importance is given to the boy child, not the girl child. Braveness and boldness are associated only to the men society, sacrifice and submissiveness are meant for women society. Saritha's friend Smitha loses her identity after her marriage. The article explores the notion of the Self – Realization and the Self – Assertion of the Indian women in moving forward in the patriarchal society where always men want to be in the center and push women to the submissive margin. The only solution to all the discrimination of women is the self –realization and self-assertion of women in realizing her strength and strengthening it. Self-assertion in promoting themselves and moving forward in life would be the best option instead depending or expecting consolation from the men.

Keywords: Indian and feminine sensibility- Idiosyncratic Consolation- Self-Realization and Self-assertion – subservient to husband-wife as a possession.

The Dark Holds No Terror is a treatise on the state of Indian women by Shashi Deshpande. She is internationally recognized as the Commonwealth prize winner for her writings. Her novels are about women and their struggle for identity. She has presented a variety of women characters in her novels to show how they have to suffer for being women. This novel depicts the Indian sensibilities such as the psyche of Indian women, mother bringing up son and daughter with many differences, women are to live to the expectation of men, a wife has to be submissive to her husband, women have to be careful in maintaining the appearance at least before the marriage to get the attention of the men. Women must have qualities such as patience, humbleness, submissiveness, tenderness, ready to sacrifice anything, soft-spoken, not being very frank, should not laugh aloud. Women are restricted and controlled by the patriarchal society in all aspects.

As it is in all Indian homes, Sarita's brother Dhruva was given preferential treatment. Accidentally Dhruva died while Sarita was with him. So her mother declared that she had killed him. Sarita's mother is an example of a typical Indian woman who is partial to sons and considers daughters as a burden on the family. Shashi Deshpande has described the mental and physical changes of women in every stage. The changes in the body of a growing girl and the feeling of strangeness beings at an early stage of a woman. Her mother said to her that she was then a woman, which she hated to be. When there was the biological change the society said: "You are a woman now"(Deshpande 123). Sarita felt that when she had a male look at her.

"She had heard her mother say. Don't go out in the sun, you'll get dark..to her girlhood when every look in the mirror had been a vague search for reassurance.. do I look nice?.. it had been a furious attempt to please someone else. At first everyone, then a generality of males, then a nebulous 'right man', who would someday miraculously fall in love with her, thinking her beautiful."(Deshpande 123-124) .Here a woman is considered as an object made for men and each and every aspect of a woman is determined for the men, by the men, and of the men. Sarita at a certain point stopped using make-up and wanted to be herself. She started objecting the concept of the feminine nature, a woman must have the attributes of attracting a man.

Sarita's problem was that she was a rebel of sorts in a custom-ridden society. Words of her mother made a deep cut in the heart of Sarita. " You killed him. Why didn't you die? Why are you alive, when he's dead?"(Deshpande 191).Sarita revolted against the injustice of her mother for hurting her feeling. Sarita was determined to prove her identity and establish herself. Her mother doesn't want to spend much on her studies but for her marriage. This the common traits of all the Indian mothers, that their primary duty is to get their daughter into a marriage and not allowing them to continue their higher studies. Her mother stands for tradition and Saru stands for modern and contemporary life. Saru started to revolt against all these restrictions. To establish herself and prove her identity she went to Bombay and studies medicine. The purpose of her selecting medicine at Bombay is to find consolation in her studies and to forget the humiliation.

Sarita married Manohar knowing that he was a man belonged to different caste and community. Thinking that marriage would give her consolation, she fell in love with Manohar who writes poems and later became a college professor. He loved her but couldn't tolerate her professional growth because Sarita became a lady doctor and Manohar was just a teacher in a

third rate college with a meager salary. She was defeated when she was ill-treated by her husband. In her speech to the college girls, she advises “ A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. This shows that all her expectations became a queer consolation.

Finally to get a consolation she goes back to her father as an unwelcomed guest. With lots of hope, she went back to her father who has totally changed. In her own home where she was born, she was not welcomed. She found herself as an alien. Even her bedroom was occupied by Madhav, a boy who lives with her father. She slept in the puja room. This shows a woman is not welcomed without her husband. After marriage, a woman has to be with her husband at any cost and the one who violate this would be considered as a bad woman. So a woman totally depends on man for everything and she doesn't have her own room and her own thoughts. The wife is always considered as the possession by the husband in the Indian society.

Later Sarita realized the purpose of her life and the only consolation would be facing the life boldly. “Don't turn your back on things again. Turn round and look at them. Meet him.”(Deshpande 216) . She gained her confidence and determination in not searching for the consolation which would become an idiosyncratic consolation. Deshpande concludes the novel with the optimistic words:” Her mind ranged over all the possibilities”(Deshpande 222). She understood that to give life to others is her purpose in life. She had a self –realization and she self-assertion at the end of the novel which brought the change in encountering the life meaningful. For any woman, the self-realization and the self-assertion are important to lead a life without any difficulties.

Work cited:

Deshpande, Shashi. *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. New Delhi: Vikas publication,1993.Print.

Reddy, Y.S.Smita. *A Feminist Perspective on the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*. New Delhi Prestige Books, 2001.Print.