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## **Journey from Self- Alienation to Self- Realization: Shashi Deshpande's the Dark Holds No Terror**

**Krishna Veni Ganti**

Research Scholar, Andhra University. Andhra Pradesh, India

**Abstract:**

*In the way a huge corpus of Post colonial writings Indian English Literature has been generally preoccupied for the last few decades with the marginalized and underdogs. When Dark Holds no Terror was published in 1980 by Shashi Deshpande, it contributed to the corpus of woman's writings in Indian English Literature where the focus naturally falls on the women and their precarious predicaments under the male – centric society. The novel focuses on woman's awareness of her predicament, her desire to be recognized as a person than as a woman and her desire to have an independent social image. This paper studies the protagonist's intricate journey from self – alienation to self – realization through different phases of her life (childhood, youth and adulthood).*

**Keywords:** Marginal, Women, Alienation, Realization.

From time immemorial- Indian woman- the symbol of unending love and emotion, hope and patience- have been revered in all the disciplines of knowledge. Many Indian female authors like Kamala Das, Ruth Praver Jwabvala, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapoor, Mahesweta Devi and Shashi Deshpande and many more others in fiction have left their everlasting imprints on the golden annals of history.

Indian women novelists in English and in other vernaculars, strive to delineate the pathetic condition of hapless women caught in the mesh of sufferings which they are forced to endure throughout their lives. The feminist perspective in Literature deals with the universal issue of male chauvinism, sexism, psychological and physical exploitation. Indian writing in English, especially Feminist writers have beautifully and quite equivocally voiced not only their feminist dimensions but also on other various issues. Shashi Deshpande's novels present in-depth readings, which portray various aspects of her writings. She focuses on women's autonomy and selfhood, protest in form of resistance and reconciliation in human relationships. Shashi Deshpande's protagonists are modern, intelligent, educated, and career-oriented middle class women who are sensitive to the needs of the situation and also to the changing times and situations.

Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terror* is a vociferous portrayal of one woman's fight to survive and exist in a world that provides no easy means. Sarita, the protagonist seeks freedom without compromising on her obligations and responsibilities and achieves harmony in life. The novel has two predominant points, the first being how silence and passivity can mar the conjugal life of man and woman. Secondly, it meticulously analyses the protagonist's self-assessment, her traumatic expedition through the lingering darkness which is pitch dark and finally her perilous quest ends triumphantly with self-realization.

'*The Dark Holds No Terror*' begins with a self description of Sarita, also called Saru who is pondering on her past endeavors to trace the germ, the root cause that brought her to this pathetic plight. Saru's deep contemplation helped her in a way to bring about a positive conclusion which dispelled all darkness from petrified her so long. Finally she declared that "the dark no longer held any terrors".

Saru is portrayed as an individual and also as a female simultaneously. The novel commences with Saru visiting her father after a gap of fifteen years. The protagonist underwent a nightmarish experience of rape at the brutal hands of a stranger, which she later comes to know that her own sadist husband who derived pleasure on inflicting brutality on saru. This compelled her to run away from him which coincided the tragic news of her mother's death. Saru's visit was not to pay her condolences but a timely escape from the harsh reality of her married life. Her stay led her to self contemplation and as she brooded on her past, the dark clouds seem to vanish in thin air.

Saru's present miseries can be understood only when one traces her childhood. Her childhood was not a peaceful one. Her mother has been an orthodox, old-fashioned and strictly adhering to the rigid customs and rules of the society. She brought up saru very strictly. Saru's mother's strong inclination for her brother drives to a sense of restlessness and alienation. She became rebellious in nature.

Saru, in turn, bore the brunt of alienation at the death of Dhruva, her brother who drowned in a pond accidentally. After discovering the body Saru's mother completely held her responsible for his death. Her mother's constant accusations, taunts, jibes and rejection cast a deep wound on the mind of Saru. In the process Saru nurtured a deep resentment towards her mother. "I hated her, I wanted to hurt her, wound her, and make her suffer."

The conflict between Saru and her mother symbolized the clash between the old and the new, the tradition and the modern. Her mother was an obstacle in the path to self realization of Saru. The feminine self put forth by Deshpande seems to be an admixture of being- acceptance and rejection, flexibility and rigidity, rebellion and reconciliation and tradition and modernity. All these features can be found in Saru, typical middle class women. As new emerging women of modernity, she revolted against women's refinement in the four walls of her house.

Life in college provided Saru with much needed freedom to pursue her will. Under the ecstasies of her youth, she fell in love with Manu, who was a renowned student, poet and author. Despite knowing the fact that Manu is not a Brahmin, she decides to marry him. She marries him against her parents wish and receives their ire. By asserting her will against her parents' wishes, she got an opportunity to hurt her mother and prove to her that she can be happy against her wishes. After her marriage Saru is hurt to hear her mother say, "Let her know more sorrow that she has given me".(197) But gradually her attitude towards her mother turned from negative to a positive one. She even sees her mother as an embodiment of creative essence of feminineness. She makes effort to understand her mother and identify her with her mother. This is crucial stage where Saru shows the very signs of her self-Realization with her 'self'.

Meanwhile the conjugal life of Manu and Saru became very bitter, acrid and dreary. They hardly had time to spend with each other in privacy. They showcased a camouflaged life, miles away from reality. Manu's fake mannerism irked Saru very much and she despised his aggressive, virile and vain masculinity which was only a facade. Still Saru began to stand tall against the toils of her conjugal life with panache. She began to face her life's problems with a positive, optimistic attitude. From Darkness she came to Light.

Towards the conclusion of the novel "The Dark Holds No Terror" Saru receives a telegram from Manu where instead escaping from him, she makes up her mind to meet him up. This courageous act of Saru helps her to overcome her fear, swallow her pride and egoism and meet the reality, however harsh and brutal it may be. It is evident that Saru has now decided to take control of her life by shedding her passivity and ego.

Deshpande's superb characterization of Saru opens up new horizons of development of personality, where from a coy, timid and introvert orthodox Brahmin girl to a successful career women in whom one can find the female roles of a daughter, mother, wife and a woman. She metamorphosized into a strong resilient women. She realized, "I have been my own enemy", and learnt from her own experimental reality the philosophical truth: "if we can't believe in ourselves, we're sunk".

As Dr.S Prasanna Sree comments: "Saru desires to liberate herself from the shackles of traditions and exercise her right to reveal her individual capabilities and realize her feminine self through identity-assertion and self affirmation." Realization dawned on Saru about her existence, she was her own refuge. Saru epitomized this struggle for the liberation of the self.

In the words of S.P.Swain:

"Saru's journey was a journey from self-alienation to self-identification, from negation to assertion, from diffidence to confidence, she learns to trust her feminine self."

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