

Gender Discrimination in Shashi Despond's the *Dark Holds No Terror*

P.Pushpa

Assistant Professor of English
Department of English (SSP)
G.T.N. Arts College (Autonomous)
Dindigul-624005

Abstract

The novel portrayed the quest for Identity, Discrimination and suppression encountered by Sarita from her childhood till death. In this story well educated and economically independent woman Sarita searching for her identity which leads her to discover self realisation and hidden strength within her. In this novel Saru faced many problems with her parents and husband. Saru anguished discrimination in her entire life which made her stronger than before. As a confidant and self-reliant woman Saru is ready to face the challenge in her life. The Moto of this paper is to expose the real intention of Deshpande, women's sufferings in their own home and how women treated by their family members. Women marginalised by their gender and colour. Deshpande is disclosed the physical, emotional and financial exploitation of women. Deshpande's purpose is to take earnest step in emancipate women from male chauvinistic society. Deshpande succeeded in her novel through the protagonist Saru. She regained her self-esteem and finally won the race.

Key words: Identity, Discrimination, suppression, exploitation

Introduction

Deshpande is a prominent women writer in English. Deshpande's leading characters are women. She is one of the celebrating women writers in English. Her works deeply involved in sensitive and realistic portrayal of the Indian middle class women. Her revolt against the suppression of women is reflected in her novels. Deshpande's works exposed the human emotions, fears experienced by women.

Shashi predicted that women have all the potential what man can do. In male chauvinistic society women have been forced to believe that they are weak. They make them to believe they are weaker sex. Women hide their potential and if they are exposed their potential men felt weak. Woman is the pillar of the family but man is the head of the family. Deshpande explore the problems encountered by the contemporary Indian women. Deshpande's characters victims of the gender discrimination not only in their parental home and also in

their law's home. Deshpande's characters are unaware of social inequality, injustice, suppression and discrimination.

Deshpande beautifully pictured the patriarchal society. Deshpande depicted the true colour of the patriarchal society through the characters of Saru's parents. In Indian society male get more preference than female. They strongly believe that the male will take care of their family in future. It was imposed in the minds of Indian men and women.

Gender Discrimination

Saru the protagonist of the play received ignorance, the situation favours to her brother Dhruva. He got unconditional love from their parents. Her Mother took care of her son. Her Father also pampered his son. Saru is longing for their parents love and affection. Dhruva's birthday was celebrated like a religious festival but saru's birthday was out of their memory it showed the negligence of their parents. They pouring love to Dhruva they never consider her daughter.

Saru was discriminated because of her dark complexion. Deshpande portrayed the colour discrimination through her characters. Saru's mother never let her to play outside with her son Dhruva. If she played in the Sunlight she will become dark in complexion. The groom will demand more dowries. Shashi depicted the mindset of Indian women.

Don't go out in the sun. You'll get darker.
Who cares?
We have to care if you don't. We have to get you married.
Will you live with us all your life?
Why not?
You Can't.
And Dhruva? He's different. He is a boy (DHNT,40)

After Dhruva's death her mother senselessly accused her for her brother's death. She always scolded her. After the death of his brother Dhruva everything becomes worst. Her mother accused her. You failed to save your brother's life.

"you killed him. Why didn't you die? Why are you alive, when he is dead?"(The Dark Holds No Terror 07)

After her brother's death she was prohibited, neglected and condemned from doing anything she likes. Being a mother she failed to do her duty. Saru was alienated, when she was attained puberty. Her mother frightened her instead of take care of her and explaining the process.

Saru realised the situation she never bother about her gender and colour her intention is to become a doctor. Her childhood experience taught her quest for power over others. She focused in her studies to become a doctor. She had a clear idea about her life and studies. She is not like other students dreaming about love. Her aim is to become a very successful doctor. She knew the reality of life so she worked hard to achieve her dreams.

Saru's dreams come true she joined medical college. She concentrated at her studies but after meeting Manohar she fell in love with him. She thought he will fulfil her longing and expectation throughout her life. But Saru without knowing the impending danger she decided to marry him. She expressed her desire to marry Manohar to their parents. They opposed the marriage because he belongs to lower caste.

What caste is he?

I don't know

A Brahmin?

Of course not

Then .. his father keeps a cycle shop

"Oh, so, they are low caste people, are they? (DHNT,96)

Their conventional mindset exposed but she is very stubborn to marry Manu. She used to it because everything denied for her love, education, care, respect and freedom. Saru with their disapproval she married Manu.

In her early marriage life was happy and peaceful. Manu showered love and care, what she was longing for her entire life. Saru popular in her area. Her love and care attracted the people. Saru is very sincere in her profession. Wherever she goes out she gets lot of greetings. This makes Manu jealous. This leads the problem to their marriage life. Manu noticed everything but Saru is very dutiful. She is very busy in her work. Sometimes she is unaware of Manu's desire. So his behaviour gradually changed. He become rude and sexually assaulted her. But Saru was upset because of his strange behaviour.

Economic independent makes women self reliant, but Saru's economic independent makes Manu insecure, inferior and it hurts him. This reflected in his behaviour. He was normal in day time but cruel rapist at night. Saru realised the true character of Manu. He is also belongs to male chauvinistic society. She ready to give up her profession But Manu disapproved the idea of Saru.

"I want to stop working. I want to give it all up...My practice, the hospital everything" (DHNT,79).

Deshpande explores the strain and agony of women. This will lead the woman to find out the true worth. Deshpande's protagonist encountered many problems her hard work and

self reliant never let her down. Saru achieved everything because of her hard work and will power. She knew how to achieve her aim in the patriarchal society. So she enriched her social status through education. She became doctor and got married whom she fell in love. Deshpande portrayed the character of Saru, women is not weaker sex they are expecting the opportunity in the male dominated society.

Conclusion

Shashi Deshpande portrayed the contemporary Indian middle class women status in her novel. The protagonist saru come across all the hurdles in her life. In her childhood she was ignored, neglected, suppressed, forbidden, demotivated, and underestimated by her parents. Saru was marginalised in her maternal home. Saru enriched her social status through education. She is well known and successful doctor in her locality. Her problems make her stronger than before. Now Saru is economically independent self-reliant woman. She succeeded in her carrier but Manu got jealous of her popularity and economic independent. In our male dominated society women marginalised by their gender and colour. But she was suppressed by her husband due to her economic independent and reputation in the society. Women have courage to overcome all the hurdles. But her family is not ready to appreciate her true worth. In India women proved their strength in the ages. Saru also proved her ability she achieved what she wants in her life. Saru's self analysis will make her to resolve the problems. The darkness is not fearful, it makes the things unclear. She is not afraid of darkness. She has clear idea about to see the things.

References

- Deshpande, Sashi. *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Penguin books: New Delhi 1990. Kavitha. "The Dark Holds No Terror – An Introduction". *The India Review of World Literature in English*. Vol2, Noll, 2006.
- Devika, Ramana." *The Dark Holds No Terrors: A Postcolonial Reading*. *Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*. <<http://www.rjelal.com>>