

Social and Cultural Values

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ABSTRACT

The goal of the paper is to provide a discussion of the predicament of women in modern society. In *The Dark Holds No Terror* narrates the story about protagonist Saritha, she is a successful lady doctor. She has faced many problems in her life. In modern society Women are educated though they are educated they are easily affected psychologically. Women are suppressed in male dominated society and face many problems such as loss of identity, male domination, gender discrimination, marriage disintegration, etc... They were unable to take their own decision. Indian society does not want female children only wants male children, parents thought that male children would take care of their parents at a later time. So they counted the male children as property. Through Deshpande novel *The Dark Holds No Terror*, this paper has made an attempt to trace out the predicament of women in modern society.

Marriage is the destiny of the women to remain unmarried is considered as a shame to the women's family. It is the parent's social obligation and moral responsibility to get their daughter married before she passes the marriageable age. For the sake of social approval and her parent's happiness, the goal has to go through the humiliating inspection where she is examined by the boy's relatives as if she is a saleable commodity. They denied to freedom to choose, she is forced into marriage rituals neither her parents nor her husband asks what she wants. Her determination makes her overcome the initial stage of hovering between anger and remorse, and moves towards the stage of understanding of life and her role as an individual in it.

Keywords: predicament, destiny, social obligation, humiliating inspection, examined, saleable commodity, suppressed, male domination, gender discrimination, marriage disintegration, hovering, remorse.

I. INTRODUCTION

The novel displays the trauma of a girl-child who has suffered the bullying and curtailment of activity by her mother. The girl-child Saru grows up as a victim of her mother's gender-based bias. Saru is an unwanted child and her brother's death makes her all the more unwanted. She is at perpetual war with her mother who can never forgive her for being alive when her brother is dead. Growing up in this environment of hatred and hostility, she nurtures seeds of rebellion within her. While one could accept a mother's preferences amongst her children, it seems rather incredible that she should live and die with curses on her lips for her female child, especially in the Indian context. Society treats the male-child, the son as an ultimate solution to all problems, the girl-child, and the daughter is always treated as unwanted burden, as she cannot fulfill the parental need.

This novel exhibits the cruelty of undue gender discrimination of mother's inflicted on their girl-child. Saru, is actually aware of her mother's preference for her brother, Dhruva, even as a child. Her mother's hatred for her and preference for her brother, Dhruva is clearly evident from her actions. This creates a rift between the mother and the daughter and forces Saru to Mad on the path of rebellion. This bias is so deeply engraved in her mind that all her future actions are marred by this. Saru cannot tolerate the preference which her mother gives to her brother, Dhruva, simply because he is a boy. A girl can't help but feel inferior when everything around her tells her that she is worth less than a boy. Saru recalls that there was "always a Puja on Dhruva's birthday. A festive lunch in the afternoon and an Arti in the evening my birthdays were almost the same - but there was no Puja"

Saru starts hating her mother, her values and tradition. She cannot tolerate the inequality shown between her brother and herself this prejudice sows the seed of hatred towards her mother. Saru's mother also would have been a victim of the same partial prejudice. Hence, her strict rigidity towards her daughter is a gratifying feeling for her. It is women who usually do not accept the autonomous nature of their gender and Saru's mother is an example of it. Getting enraged whenever she is shown that she is inferior to her brother, Saru always tries to break away from the cocoon built by her mother. She recalls one of her conversations with her mother, who imposes severe restrictions,

Don't go out in the sun- you'll get darker

Who cares?

Who has to care if you don't? we have to get you married

I don't want to get married

Will you be with us all your life?

Why not?

You can't

And Dhruva?

He's different. He's a boy(P.45)

It is evident that parents do not look at their children with the same eyes. Even in childhood a girl and a boy are taught that they are different. In the choice of colours, toys, and in manners they are treated, the distinction is made between girls and boys that project certain prejudices and preconceived notions on the child's mind.

First, she carries within her the effects of gender discrimination, which springs out as a reaction to the psychological setup of society at large and her parents in particular. Saru also has the deep-rooted complex being an unwanted child and added to this is the physical trauma of sexual harassment that she tragically suffers, and which leaves an indelible impact on her psyche.

This gender sensitivity remains a significant factor in the Indian social set up. According to the research conducted by S.Anandalakshmi, Director, Lady Irwin College, Delhi: "The supremacy of the male is so well established that the average Indian is surprised to even be queried about it. Whatever the ecology of the social group, even in communities where the women are the breadwinners, the male is considered superior. Within the family the sense of inferiority of the female is pervasive. The sex ratio is unfavorable for girls and forces us to conclude that the survival of the girl is a matter of indifference in a considerable number of families. The birth of a son gives a woman status and she invests herself in her son's future, creating a deep symbiotic bond". The discrimination shown by her another towards Saru and her constant accusations developed in her a sense of guilt that stood in the way of happy communication between Saru and Manu.

Her novel THE DRAK HOLDS NO TERROR depicts the journey of a modern woman who carries herself forward towards financial independence, emotional balance, and social recognition. It is the story of the gradual changes in the life of the Indian girl who lives during the mid decades of the twentieth century. The women then had no separate identity for themselves. The distinction is apparent even in the custom of naming them. The sexual politics, as constituted by men, has it that men are always the privileged donors of names and women are its receivers: a father's name or a husband's name become hers.

Manohar who is an active person during his college days turns to be a college teacher. Their happy married life is shattered by an interview. In the interview the reporter comments on Manu that, "How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but the bread as well?" makes a drastic change in the life partner Saru. The comment hurts the ego of Manu, who starts assaulting her sexually. Saru is totally bewildered by the two-dimensional personality of Manu. Manu behaves like a normal person during day time and bestial and monstrous during the night. Saru starts to sustain her husband's harassment silently. Her hope of contentment begins to fade gradually.

The problem begins to slowly creep in the moment Saru is recognised as a doctor. Her economic independence makes Manu feel thoroughly insecure and this casts a shadow on their married life. The seeds of jealousy are sown in him when there is an explosion in the nearby factory. Burnt and mutilated bodies pour in where Saru has to attend on them. After this incident, Saru emerges as a successful and reputed doctor almost every morning there is a knock at the door and her visitors demand her medical attention. Saru, young and quite unused to her profession is thrilled with her new job but Manu's behaviour begins to change. he feels totally ignored as Saru gets all the attention. Saru initially fails to notice this change in Manu but later realises 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”.(42) The warmth between them cools off and the harmony is disrupted. [(Woman in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande: A Study- Sathupati Prasanna Sree)]

Though she is an educated, lady doctor, she is unable to make a decision on her own. Her inability to act hurts her to a great extent. She acts like a dual person. As a professionalist, she attempts to prove that she is a person with a lot of individuality. She suffers as a daughter and then as a wife. It humiliates Saru to a great extent. Kamala her mother hampers Saru's development and changes her mind. Manu, on the other hand, assaults her physically. He turns as a sexual harasser of his own wife because of his ego.

As a result, slowly there begins an imbalance in the relationship between husband and wife. Their opinions and action begin to differ from each other, which result in temperamental incompatibility. At this point, Saru hears news of her mother's death and goes back to her parent's home. To her parent's home, she feels isolated. Everything looks strange though there is no change in the setting.

Her father's response shows as though she is an unwelcome guest. Also like a traditional Indian father he is not concerned with the troubles of family-members, enjoying the privilege of being the master and head of the family as we know from Sarita. "He had always been so much man, the master of the house not to be bothered by any of the trivial of daily routine." Of course, the Indian woman has also been used to this kind of behavior. The father frowns and knits his brows in case the married daughter dares return to her parental house having quarreled and divorced her husband. A married woman is thus supposed to stay in the house of her husband till death. She wanders in her house as a lonely individual. Saru's return to her house helps her to gain a 'reunification' of the self in her.

She introspects philosophically and reaches to the conclusion that escape is a ridiculous idea. There is no escape. It is an individual own life. One will have to shape as well as face the events of one's life. There's is no refuge, other than one's own life. She realizes that she cannot attain happiness through anyone else, be it a husband a father or a child. She can attain peace of mind by her own effort. No one gives peace. It has to be created within. Thus free from her and pain, the final picture of Saru is appealing indeed when she confidently waits for what used to be the greatest terror of her life. Her husband? She is ready to face him. She is ready to face life.

Saru the "two-in-one woman" is a successful doctor during day time, and a "terrified trapped animal" at night. This traumatic experience necessitates her to carve for freedom from domineering influences. She wishes to become a free individual and wants to have an identity of her own with a purpose in life. Saru, as she understands the meaning of the name, loves living as human beings. She says: "My life is my own" (220) Somehow she felt as if she had found it now the connecting link. "It means you are not just strutting grimacing puppet, standing futilely on the stage for a brief while between areas of darkness". (220)

Thus, the novel ends with a note of hope. It shows Deshpande's efficient creative power in dealing with the faces of modern women. Deshpande's Saru, who is full of convulsions and psychological conflicts, slowly realizes her womanhood, her individuality by her decision of reunion. Reunion is not mere surrender. Saru decides to set right her life on her own wish, she is not compelled towards it. Saru succeeds by deciding by adding to lead a life of her own. As such

we see Saru as the representative the plight of Modern women and the solace waiting for them to set their life in the right direction(works of contemporary writers).

II.WORKS CITED

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