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THE TREATMENT OF MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP IN THE NOVEL OF SHASHI DESHPANDE WITH REFERENCE TO “THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS”.

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ABSTRACT

Shashi Deshpande has explored man-woman relationship from sexual point of view. It is a fact that sex is the pivot of conjugal life. It affects day-to-day life or some events and conflicts affect sexual relations. In turn, the complete life gets disturbed. In her novel ‘The dark Holds No Terrors’, she has analyzed the complex relationship between doctor wife Saru, a successful woman and her husband Manohar, a victim of inferiority complex. In the beginning, both have happy married life but gradually it turns to hell because of Saru’s high personal and social status. It is a tragedy both wife and husband who were unaware of future nightmare causing a disturbance in their happy married life. Saru who suffered discrimination in childhood and got ignored in the presence of her brother Dhruva , entered in the arms of Manu to get solace. Ironically, her husband felt ignored and back-footed as Saru climbed the stairs of progress, popularity. Now the cycle revolves in reverse direction. He psychologically felt dominating in sexual activities and behaved brutally from the view point of Saru. She could not bear such harshness in place of smooth and private relations. She becomes a rebel but at last surrenders to traditional kind of man-woman relationship.

KEY WORDS: inner conflict, relationships, inferiority complex, discrimination, brutal, domination.

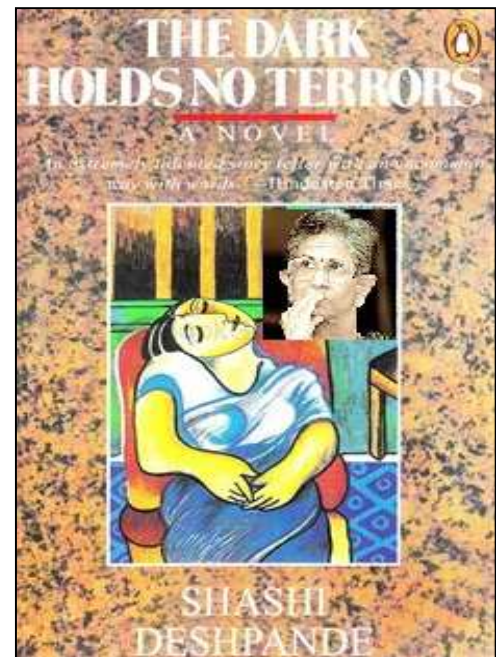
INTRODUCTION:

It is impossible to separate the family, marriage, and the individual. Marriage is an universal, delicate and complex phenomenon. Excluding family and the individual, marital relationship cannot be understood.

D.H. Lawrence points out:

The greatest relationship for humanity will always be the relation between man and woman. The relation between man and man, woman and woman, parent and child, will always be *subsidiary*.¹

“It is on the axis of the mutual relationship between man and woman that world revolves. This cannot be *changed*.”⁽²⁾ As a writer Shashi Deshpande is possessing deep insight into the female psyche, her novels reveal



the man-made patriarchal traditions and uneasiness of the modern Indian woman in being a part of them. She fights for the recognition of women as individuals.

“The Dark Holds No Terrors” her first novel published in 1980. The novel centers’ on gender inequality, as Saru, the protagonist, is repeatedly made conscious of her gender even as a child. Her thoughtless relationships with her parents and strained relations with her husband lead to her agonizing search for herself. The tradition – Oriented Indian society has experienced various changes in the last six or seven decades. The widely affected area of this change has been the vital relationship between man and woman. Promila Kapur, a sociologist analyses the change:

with a change in women’s personal status and social status has come a change in her way of thinking and feelings and the past half century has witnessed great changes in attitudes towards sex, love and *marriage*.³

Psychoanalysis of the Theme of Man-Woman Relationship.

The Dark Holds No Terrors tells the painful story of Sarita, the protagonist. It is said that marriage is the most problematic of all relations. Saru grows up in a traditional Brahmin family where parental care and favors go to the boy children, only as familial heir where as girls are meant only to get married off. Since childhood, Saru endures her mother’s discrimination with her brother Dhruva. As she grew up, hatred drives her to leave home and obsessively seek success in medical college. There she falls in love with a college mate Manu and marries him against her parent’s wishes. As she always feel insecure in her parents’ home, her marriage to Manu is a means of that love and security which she had always lacked in life. And she is hungry for love: “I was hungry for love, each act of sex was a triumphant assertion of our love of my being love. Of my being *wanted*”.⁽³⁵⁾

Saru succeeds as a successful and reputed doctor. In the beginning of their married life, Saru’s happiness cannot be disturbed by the meager income of a teacher (Manu). She is happy until she begins to establish herself as a doctor. Now the situation undergoes a change. Till now, “he had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my *husband*”.⁽³⁷⁾ The equilibrium of their marital happiness marriage loses its balance when Saru climbs up the ladder of success as a lady doctor. Manu, her husband, cannot tolerate people greeting her and ignoring him. He cannot express it openly but says out of irritation: “I am sick of this place. Let’s get out of here *soon*”.⁽³⁷⁾ He does not love her the way he used to earlier. The main cause of failure in their marriage are Saru’s career, the hectic schedule in hospital, which makes her neglect her home and children and the Inferiority Complex of Manu. Now Saru realizes where the shoe pinched. Shashi Deshpande sharply focuses the problem.

a + b they told us in mathematics is equal to b + a.
But here a + b was not, definitely not equal to b + a.
It became monstrously unbalanced equation,
lopsided, unequal, *impossible*.⁽⁴²⁾

In reality, the working women are doubly burdened, with duties and conjugal relation at home and work place. The aspect of doctor in her, was more often seen than that of the wife and the mother in her. She detached from her children and husband through her profession.

Saru realizes it : “now I know that it was there it began – this terrible thing that has destroyed our *marriage*”.⁽³⁷⁾ She starts hating the man-woman relationship which is based on attraction and need and not love. Marital relationship played a predominant role in this novel. Marriage is an honest recognition of the native equality between man and woman. Man and woman have to share between themselves the joys and the

responsibilities of the joint venture. For both partners marriage is and equal necessity. The key to marriage is the ability to endure and go on but in many marriages women are dominated by their husbands. They also don't find freedom and space in their marital life. Saru, in this novel belonged to this category.

She feels a gradual disappearance of love and attachment which she had once developed. It is now replaced by a psychological conflict which is inevitable as the situation prevails between them. Saru is unable to attend her duties towards her children and husband, as she gets late in returning home. The husband sits waiting : " I came home late that night – when I came home I found him sitting with a brooding expression on his face that made my heart give painful, quivering little *jumps*. "⁽⁷¹⁾ while there is a decline in her conjugal relationship, her status in society rises day by day.

Manu's inferiority complex burst out when a girl raised the question against Manu, "How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as *well*. "⁽²⁰⁰⁾

All these things combined together his ego. Manu started to attack his wife every night with sexual brutality.

He attacked me like an animal that night. I was Sleeping and I woke up and There was this ----- the man hurting me ----- I could do nothing against him. I could not fight back. I couldn't shout or cry I was so afraid that children in the next room would hear. I could do nothing I can never do anything. I just endure (201).

It became usual for all nights and he became a normal man, a loving husband in all the morning. This has been done in an unconscious state. Like a caring husband, he would ask the maid to wake her up if she was in the bed and give her a cup of tea. Manu was a complete failure due to the idea of Indian Masculinity. In order to restore his manhood and to assert his power, he sexually assaulted his wife. Saru left her husband and, children in order to escape from her husband's sexual brutality. She used to recall her pre- marriage life when she was in her parent's home.

Marital life is nothing but a queer combination of several forces acting upon two human beings in different capacities to fulfill the marital ambition and play a vital role in society. Saru is a "Two-in-one-woman"-- ---- a successful doctor in the daytime. "Terrified trapped animal at night.

The novel clearly showed that family institution began to disintegrate when a woman achieved greater economic or social status than her husband. The problem faced by Saru was the problem of many learned and professional women of our society. Indian society was still bound by traditions and superstitions No. one is ready to change the male-dominant society. Saru's marital life was not a happy one even her marriage was a loved one. This was only because of Saru's professional status.

The burden of double duties is not only a feeling in itself but gradually takes on a force unbalancing the marital balance that normally sustains conjugal relations. With this growing feeling of disenchantment and imbalance, separation becomes inevitable. At this juncture, of life, Saru hears the news of her mother's death and goes back to her parent's home. Saru says that she has come here to escape "the professional role". However, it is actually to escape the role of being a wife. Due to the sexual sadism of her husband so she returned to her parental home. But she couldn't express her feelings or pains to her father. The father was not interested supported enough. "Like an unwilling host entertaining an unwelcome guest." *The Dark Holds No Terrors*,⁽¹⁸⁾

In Indian society, married woman are not supposed to return to her parental house without her husband. They are supposed to stay in the house of her husband till the last day of judgment. Baba frowned his eyebrows when he found his daughter standing alone with her suitcase. When she revealed her husband's sexual torture to her, then he showed eagerness to solve the problems of his daughter. Sarita was ready to leave her house when she came to know that her husband would arrive to her parental house. Baba asked her to face the problem instead of running away from it.

Saru had a chance to review her past, her own psychology, her own place in relation to others in the family and in the society. She decided to confront the problems when she realized her own self. She rejects the

traditional role models of sister, daughter, and wife. But now she accepts all these selves as they are, and not as models, without which she cannot become whole, and there is something more than all these. Education invokes in her a consciousness, which was not present in the older generation.

Deshpande thinks that a woman's life is her own and the time has come when a woman must think as an individual and not merely as a woman. Unless she forgets the old traditional role models, she shall always find herself guilty. The modern woman is something more than her familial roles. Saru finds the connecting link in her life.

She is now her own refuge, and will not blame other. She must open the door to her husband and confront him fearlessly. She rebels against the traditions but ultimately tries to compromise with the existing reality. This manifests that traditionally, woman is expected to play a subservient role. A happy marriage is consolidated in traditional kind of man-woman relationship. (354)

CONCLUSION:

The theme of man-woman relationship has been the focus of many literary works in contemporary Indian English fiction. The present study has critically examined the treatment of the theme of man-woman relationship in the novel of Shashi Deshpande. Her novels are mainly concerned with man-woman relationship and women's quest for herself. All her heroines are married, educated economically independent and belong to middle or lower middle class society. One of the most significant themes of modern Indian fiction is that of man-woman relationship.

The Dark Holds No Terrors is totally a different novel in the sense that it explodes the myth of man's unquestionable superiority and the myth of woman being a martyr and a paragon of all virtues. It is based on the problem faced by a professional woman.

The protagonist, Saru suffers not only the physical violence, but she is often emotionally hurt and crippled through his arrogance, cynicism and indifference. He never admires his wife's services and sacrifices for the family. She is belittled or silenced. She gathers strength not to surrender, not to run away from the problems, not to commit suicide, in a word, not to accept defeat. Rather she accepts the challenges so as to prove herself a good daughter, a good wife, a good mother, a good doctor, and a good human being.

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