

A Mother-Daughter relationship in Shashi Deshpande's 'The Dark Holds No Terrors.'

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Abstract :

Indian writing in English has contributed significantly in the world of English Literature. So many novelists have served Indian English Literature by their innumerable writings. Shashi Deshpande is one of such writers. She has occupied the significant place in the realm of Indian writing in English through her masterpiece novels. She has basically focused on the plight of the women more particularly the middle-class women with rare competence. Shashi Deshpande has brilliantly portrayed the predicament of the middle-class educated Indian women, their inner conflicts, identity crisis, issues of parents-children relationship, marital disharmony, the exploitation and disillusionment through her novels in a very fine way.

This present paper is an attempt to focus on the mother-daughter relationship in the novel entitled 'The Dark holds Terrors'.

Keywords: significantly, plight, middle-class women, predicament, parents-children relationship marriage-problem.

Introduction:

Shashi Deshpande has emerged as one of the leading women novelists on the Indian English horizon. She has reflected the realistic picture of the typical middle-class Indian woman. The woman, she has portrayed, is undoubtedly a fore-runner of the 'doomed female' of the modern India. Deshpande has represented the old, orthodox image, as well as a modern westernized woman. Her novels deal with the problems of women in terms of illiteracy, ideological brainwashing in patriarchal societal structures, the problems of dowry, the complexities of the issue of so called caste and economic status. Though not a blatant feminist, Deshpande has successfully captured in her writings the intricate emotions and the dilemma and conflicts of the modern Indian woman. Her main concern is nothing less than human predicament. She knows very well the mentality of Indians and seriously attempted to focus on the changing Indian society. She has succeeded to make acquaint the readers with a realistic picture of the middle-class educated woman who though financially independent, and is still facing the problems of adjustment between the old and the new, tradition and modernity, and idealism and pragmatism. Family relationship is one of the themes of her novels.

Mother-Daughter relationship in 'The Dark holds No Terrors':

'The Dark holds No Terrors' (1980) is the most prominent novel of Shashi Deshpande. It has been translated into German and Russian. This novel portrays the life of the main protagonist-Sarita. She is a lady doctor return to

her parental house to look after her widower father. Though she has returned to her father's house, she has escaped from the nightmarish brutality, the sexual harassments of her husband-Manohar or Manu. This novel has divided into four parts. The first part deals with the vicious, prejudiced and cruel attitude of a mother, a strong product of patriarchal society who considers her daughter solely responsible for the tragic end of a lonely son -Dhruva. While living in her parental house she reflects on the events of her life and the novel gets unfold and she recalls the past memories of her childhood life which she later compares and contrasts with her present day life.

The novel reveals the life of Sarita or Saru, how she was ignored and neglected in favour of her brother- Dhruva. Her domineering mother-Kamalatai-gives much more importance to her son-Dhruva- three years younger to Saru. Saru is not showered the parental love even on her birthdays also. In contrast, her brother's birthday was celebrated with great enthusiasm. Kamalatai often hates her only for being a daughter though; she was also a girl a long ago, without considering the emotions and the feelings of 'her own daughter'. This novel deals with deliberate, preconceived, cruel attitude of a mother, a strong product of patriarchal society who considers her daughter solely responsible for the drowning of her only son. Saru was blamed for that mishap. Saru recalls repeatedly the drowning of her brother in a nearby pond while he was playing. Being three years elder to him, she takes advantage of dictatorship on him. Because of her mother's love and affection towards Dhruva, Saru hates him and the struggle for importance goes on.

Mother firmly believes that, Saru has killed the 'Kuldipak' of her house and Saru put herself in the dock. Rather, she never refuses the charge of murder only in the confession made to her father. Because she had in a way passively watched her brother to die and she supposed that she has contributed to his tragic end.

Mother used to blame Saru for Dhruva's death. She speaks out Saru's intentions and not the deed. Saru was used to be scolded by her mother for being responsible for her son's death:

"You Killed him. Why didn't you die? Why are you alive, when he's dead?" (173)

Here the mother is emotionally attached to her son. Her attitude is very clear because after all he is a male child who is having more importance than a girl child in the typical orthodox Indian family. Being a 'Kuldipak' of a family, he has the rights to give 'agnidag' to his dead parents. If the dead does not get 'agnidag' from a male child, the soul of such people would wander to get 'moksha' is the rational thinking of the people. Her mother-Kamalatai-is typical traditional Indian woman who strongly believes that, it is her duty to remind her daughter that she should behave according to her growing age. And she proved it later when Sarita for the very first time experiences the menstruation. That is very horrible to sensitize for Saru. The mother further frightens her more with the fact that Saru would bleed for years and years. In such profane period, she is not allowed to enter not only in the kitchen, but also in the 'puja room' by her mother. Being an orthodox traditional minded woman, Kamalatai-her mother- compels Saru to sleep on a straw mat. A separate plate is given to her for her exclusion to complete. This situation is still continuing in a rural part of a nation. A woman is considered unholy during the menstruation period.

The mother's intrinsic behaviour with Saru, her discrimination between the two children is very prominent with Saru. When she grows up, to get rid of the resentment and hatred; she leave home for higher studies in medical college. There she falls in love with a classmate named Manohar or Manu and marries with him against her parents wish. Kamalatai, being traditional orthodox woman, does not want Saru to marry a person who is not of her caste and belongs to lower caste as compare to her.

"What caste he is?"

"I don't know".

"A Brahmin"?

"Of course, not".

"Then, cruelly.... his father keep a cycle shop". (87)

A power-struggle between a mother and a daughter can be seen in this brilliantly written novel. A mother is a spokesperson of a male point of view. Whereas Saru breaks the umbilical chord-leaves home. Saru's mother

condemns her for her decision. She denies to call Saru as her daughter.

Saru rebels and get married with a person of her choice without caring what her mother thinks about her husband. For Saru, getting married with Manu means to get love and security which she misses at her paternal home and she desperately needed it as she is feeling insecure in her parental house. She thinks that Manu-a professor of History in a local college- is a romantic hero, a superman who has come in her life to rescue her from the insecure, suffocation, and loveless existence. Later in her life, Saru succeeds and emerges as a successful, well-known lady doctor. But unfortunately, everything is not going smoothly in her married life. Her matrimonial life begins to collapse under the burden of her success in a medical profession and her husband's failure of getting success in teaching profession. The economical independence of Saru crumbles her married life. People come to her, surround her and ask her and give respect to her. These things her husband who is of her choice, who a long ago used to love her, cannot digest. He feels jealous for her, for her growing popularity.

"How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?"(182)

These words of a girl, who comes to take an interview Saru, triggered a kind of sadism in Manu's sexual relationship with Saru- once again hurting, disenchanting her.

When Saru hears the news of her mother's death; she visits her parental house but she is emotionless. She does not feel at home at her parent's house, the place where she was born and brought up.

Conclusion:

In this way, the entire novel is full of various incidences which show how and what kind of relationship is there between a mother and a daughter. It also shows the woman's disparity. In the Indian culture, a mother is first and the best friend of a daughter especially in her adolescence age. A daughter without any fear can share her emotions, her problems with her mother. And to respond to this, a mother equally tries to be very friendly with her and suggest the solutions to her various problems. But here in this novel, such kind of healthy relationship between a mother and a daughter is very tough to find. Kamalatai fails to establish such friendly relation with her 'own daughter' and feels that she is solely responsible for the drowning of her only son-Dhruv- in the pond. Due to hatred, illusions, she denies Sarala's existence in her life. She fails to be a loving, caring mother. She curses her own daughter. Kamalatai unequally treats her kids. A love for a son and a hated for a daughter. Shashi Deshpande succeeds in showing the gap between a mother and daughter relationship. It is a kind of conflict between old and young, traditional and modern. Kamalatai

shows immense hatred and enmity towards her only daughter after the tragic death of her son when she says

"Daughter? I don't have any daughter. I had a son and he died. Now I am childless...I will pray to God for her unhappiness Let her know more sorrow than she has given me". (178)

Saru being a modern woman, the education she receives makes her rebellious. She boldly rejects the restrictions which her mother- a traditional, orthodox woman-imposed upon her. The thrust in this novel is not on man's cruelty to woman but it is woman's cruelty to woman, the internalization of the patriarchal cruelty by woman. Thus the novel tries to show the hatred between a mother and a daughter.

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