



Feminine Sensibility in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* by Shashi Deshpande

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Abstract

In literature, feminine sensibility has an inspiring quality. In their writings, almost all Indian writers convey and expose this quality. Shashi Deshpande, a well-known novelist, is no exception in depicting this aspect in her writings. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* offers specimen feminine sensuality. This paper examines the feminine sensuality of the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*.

Key words: chauvinism, plight, feminine, sensibility, responsibility

A girl is the young plant that
Gets neither light nor water.
She is the flower that would
Have blossomed but cannot.
Half fed and half heartedly educated
She gets half wage for her labor.
The country got its freedom
But she continues to be bonded.
(Kamala Bhasian)

In the above-mentioned poetry, Kamala Bhasian aptly captures the plight of Indian girls. The discrepancies between male and female demographic, economic, social, political, and religious indicators are evidence of the consequences of gender inequality suffered by Indian women. Traditional Indian society does not allow for a woman's independent growth. She has to deal with a number of limitations and inhibitions that stem from her controlled existence throughout her childhood, early adulthood, and old age.

Women authors have succeeded in portraying new perspectives on women in their writings since their emergence in India. Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, and others were able to capture the reality of what it's

like to be an Indian woman in a patriarchal society. These authors have given a voice to the female characters they create in order to represent modern Indian females who are still fighting for rights and freedom. Shashi Deshpande has succeeded in developing strong female heroines who refuse to be crushed by their own traumas and tackle life with extraordinary bravery and strength. She is a renowned novelist who is intensely aware of and sensitive to her female protagonist's inner world. She raises her voice against female oppression and elucidates female concerns with such clarity via her characters that the readers are forced to pause and reflect. Shashi Deshpande has a prized place in the annals of contemporary female novelists who are concerned with feminine concerns and their search for identity. Most of her female protagonists are able to overcome their identity issue by looking back on their childhood and upbringing.'

The novel depicts Sarita's life, which is often ignored and neglected in favor of her brother. She is not valued; even on her birthdays, her parents do not express their affection for her. Her brother's birthdays, on the other hand, are joyfully celebrated, including with religious traditions. When her brother

drowns, she is held responsible. Her mother, in particular, constantly scolds her for killing her son; you killed him. Why didn't you die? When he's dead, why are you still alive? (173) Saru begins to suspect if in reality, she killed him as a result of her Mother's accusation. She understands the unintentional nature of her brother's death only later, after rethinking and pondering the situation following her mother's death.

Saru grows up and, despite her mother's wishes, obtains an education. Her ability to reason and question grows as she becomes more educated. She can't tolerate it any longer when her brother and sister aren't treated equally. She recalls the name given to her brother. They had named him Dhurva, and I recall being in a feeling of ecstatic excitement on his naming day, however hazily, weakly. The smell of flowers in the air, a black grinding stone... (152)

The mother has a strong bond with her son. Her attitude is normal; after all, he is a male child, and hence one who will carry on the family bloodline. In another sense, a male child is valued more than a female child since he is qualified to offer "agni" to the dead parents. Otherwise, the dead person's soul would wander aimlessly. When Saru hears of her mother's death, her first thought is, "Who lit the pyre?" She didn't have a son to do that for her. Dhurva died when he was seven years old." (17)

Sarita had witnessed her mother's discrimination against the two when Dhurva was alive. Resentment and hatred motivate her to leave home and aggressively pursue achievement in medical college as she grows older. She meets a college classmate there and marries him against her parents' desires. Her elderly mother, a traditional, and orthodox woman, doesn't want her daughter to marry someone from a lower caste:

What caste is he?

I don't know

A Brahmin?

Of course, not.

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

Saru rebels against her parents and flees to marry someone of her own choosing. Her marriage to Manu provides her with the love and security she has always wanted in her life, as she feels insecure in her parents' house. He's the perfect romantic hero who's come to save her from her insecure, loveless life, and she's desperate for love.

Marital life is nothing more than a strange confluence of forces acting on two human beings in various capacities in order to fulfil their marital ambitions and contribute to society. Both functionally and psychologically, the roles that these two humans are assigned to vary. This is exactly what occurs to Saru when, despite her financial freedom, which is bolstered by the fact that she earns more than Manu, she still feels robbed of her independence as a housewife, i.e., raising children and subserving her husband's interests. She wants to leave the latter since she is tired of both inside and outdoor responsibilities: "Manu, I want to stop working and give up everything... my profession, the hospital, everything." Manu, on the other hand, does not want her to quit her job because they will be unable to sustain their quality of living only on his income: "Are you working on my salary?" Saru, don't be so foolish; you know how much I make. Do you think we'll be able to by on that? (73)

This burden of dual responsibilities is not only a sense in and of itself, but it progressively becomes a force in balancing the marital harmony that is necessary to maintain conjugal connections. Separation becomes unavoidable as a result of this rising sense of disenchantment and imbalance.

Saru hears the news of her mother's death at this point in her life and returns to her parents' house, emotionless. She doesn't feel at ease in her parents' home, where she was born and raised. Despite the fact that the setting has not changed, everything appears strange to her: "On the inside, though, nothing had changed. She used to play hopscotch on the same seven pairs of large stone slabs that led to the front door. As usual, the yard was bare." (11)

Even though she returns to a completely different woman, she finds everything strange. When her father speaks in odd tone she finds

strange about him. The lack of affability in the house swings her back and forth between the two: "He (father) sat gingerly on the edge of his chair, like an unhappy host receiving an unwelcome guest, as she drank her tea... excessively sweet and strong. And I think that's who I truly am. What gave me the idea that I might be able to come back?" (14)

She won't be able to say everything she wants. All of this occurs as a result of her developing a guilt consciousness: "There can never be any forgiveness." There was never any atonement. My brother died because I turned my back on him carelessly. Because I deserted her, my mother died alone. My hubby works as was a failure because I ruined his manhood" (The Dark Holds No Terror 198)

Finally, the wheel comes a full circle. Saru strives to reach an agreement with the circumstance, and the novel closes with a glimmer of optimism for a new beginning. A woman's psyche is given a physical revelation when she is placed in such a position. Manu sends her a letter informing her of his arrival. The sour feelings get even stronger. It is her sense of guilt, not her disdain for her husband or a desire for vengeance that has swept her off her feet. She reacts to every circumstance and becomes hyper-aware of every sound, all the while aware that Manu is approaching the door and pounding. She asks her father not to open the door when Manu arrives, possibly assuming that he has been knocking long enough.

Manu was about to go. Simultaneously, she waits for someone to come to her support: "If only someone would tell her what to do, she would do it right away, without hesitation." After all these years of being in complete control of her life, she suddenly felt a strong yearning to let go. Putting herself in the hands of another." (88)

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