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Saru: A Victim of Male Chauvinism in Sashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terror*

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Man and women are complementary to each other and one is never a whole without the other. Neither of them can claim any kind of superiority over the other. But women who constitute half of the world's population are paradoxically not treated on par with men in all spheres of human activity. In a male dominated society, women is supposed to be as ideal wife, a mother and as excellent home-maker with multifarious roles in the family. At every stage of her life, she is dependent for her status and survival upon – her father, her husband, and her sons. But now the India women has begin to sir out of their placid stoicism. Arising political and social consciousness has brought out into the open in protest, marching against discrimination and evils like, dowry, deaths, rape and explanation.

Thus most of the women novelist look up the theme of the problem of adjustment, gender-discrimination, quest for self etc. But it was Simon de Beauvior's book *The Second Sex*, first published in French in the year 1949, sowed the seeds for a women's. Movement. And if we consider the contribution of the Indian Women Novelist, the name that first stricks the mind is Shashi Deshpande. She is the only Indian author who has made bold attempt at giving a voice to the disappointments, frustration and gross gender discrimination in a chauvinistic society. So, my paper tends to portray ' Saru A Victim TO Male Chauvinism in Shashi Deshpande's novel *The Dark Holds No Terror*.'

Keywords: chauvinism, identity, gender – discrimination, insecure, suffering.

Introduction :

The role of women has been full of contradictions so far as Indian customs and traditions are concerned. During the Vedic period (2500BC- 1500BC) women were treated with dignity and respect in all matters-religious, social, political and economical. In the Atharvaveda period, people were seen, displaying a strong preference for boys. The birth of a son was welcomed due to status and position of women degraded. Buddhism was in favour of equal status between man and women in society. Where as the entry of Islam made the status of women go further down. This is how human race started discrimination on the basis of gender. But now the Indian women has begin to sir out of their placid stoicism. Arising political and social consciousness has brought out into the open in protest, marching against discrimination and evils like, dowry, death, rape and exploitation.

The Dark Holds No Terror is the story of the protagonist Saru who undergoes great humiliation and is neglect as a child and after marriage as a wife. Deshpande discusses the chauvinistic approach of parents towards their daughter and their desire to have a male child. After her marriage, as she gains a greater social status than her husband[Manohar], all begins

to fall apart. Her husband senses of inferiority complex to Saru's superior position develops sadism in him. Manu her husband vents his frustration on saru in the form of sexual sadism, which has been vividly portrayed by Deshpande.

Shashi Deshpande through her work defines freedom for the Indian Socio- cultural value system and tradition. She has presented the Indian women as facing the very dilemma of having to choose between modernity and convention. Deshpande bases the subtle processes of oppression and gender differentiation operative within the institution of the family and in the chauvinistic society. Man and Women are complementary to each other and one is never a whole without the other. Neither of them can claim any kind of superiority over the other. Right from the ancient time Indian Women has remained silent suffers and faces discrimination first as a daughter then as a sister, wife and mother. Patriarchy compelled the women to be totally subservient to the male, in both the social and economic spheres.

Shashi Deshpande is one of those female writers who possess deep insight into the female psyche. Her novels reveal the uneasiness and discrimination a modern Indian woman faces in a chauvinistic society. Her protagonists are aware of their duties as well as their rights. The novel *The Dark Holds No Terror*, is the story of the protagonist Saru an educated, economically independent, middle-class wife. She since her childhood, had to put up with gender – discrimination. Even her marriage to Manohar does not bring change in her life. The novel opens with Saru's return to her parent's house after fifteen years. Saru's relationship with her brother Dhruva has been highlighted in the novel. Being a girl, no parental love was showered on her. She was ignored whereas her younger brother Dhruva was the apple of the eye. Even her birthday was not acknowledged whereas her brother's birthday was celebrated as a festival, various religious rites were performed. Her birthday was only a matter of displeasure for her mother. Dari says:

“But of my birth, my mother had said to me once...

‘It rained heavily the day you were born. It was terrible.’ And somehow, it seemed to me that it was my birth that was terrible for her, not the rains.”

(TDHNT 169)

Saru had an insecure and affectionless childhood. She tries to attract her father's attention and succeeds only to some extent. Her mother believed a girl to be a liability and a boy an asset which develop insecurity in Saru's mind. As a child, Saru rarely spoke to her father whereas her brother Dhruva and her father used to have long conversations. Her father used to take her brother out for a ride, giving rise to the impression that “daughter their mother's business.” (105)

In Indian tradition a son or we can say a male child is considered more important than a girl, because he is the one who gives 'agni' to his dead parents. The soul of the dead person would otherwise wonder in ferment. So, when Saru comes to know about her mother's death, the first thought that came into her mind was: “who light the pyre? She has no son to do that for her. Dhruva had been seven when he died” (TDHNT 17)

When Saru's mother was alive she used to comment on her daughter colour and didn't let her go out. She used to say that Saru is already so dark and she goes in sun she would become darker and it would be difficult for them get her married. At this Saru recollects her conversation with her mother:

“Do not go out in the sun, you will get darker.”

“Who cares?”

“We have to care if you don't. We have to get you married.”

“I do not want to get married.”

“Will you live with us all your life?”

“Why not?”

“You can't”

“And Dhruva?”

“He is different. He is a boy.” (TDHNT 40)

The above conversation presents how a girl do not have a place of her own in her parents' house. She is brought up to be married. She can never become a permanent member in her parents' home. In Indian culture after marriage a girls permanents address is her husband's house. She can be visitor to her parents house but inheridity the house belongs to the son. This sort of discrimination id due to chauvinistic mind set up which develops in security and hatred Saru, specially towards her mother. She says:

“I hated her, I wanted to hurt her, wound her, make her suffer.”(TDHNT 142)

Saru gets frustrated with the environment in her house and decides to peruse medical as profession. She takes admission in a medical college in Bombay and there she fall in love with Manohar, whom she married against parents wish. In starting the married life was like heaven for Saru but later on as she became a reputed doctor things started changing. Manu her husband was getting frustrated by her success he felt uncomfortable, ignored and neglected and people used to approach Saru for help. Saru observed change in Manu's behaviour and said:

“He had been the young man I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor he was my husband.” (TDHNT 42)

Saru's social and financial status was rising but it had a negative effect on her marital life. In an interview was questioned: “How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?(200)

at the moment Manu merrily laughed and presented as if the question did not matters him. But actually the question humiliated because it was a question which no men liked to answer.

Manu frustrated by the circumstances becomes aggressive and to gain his masculinity he behaved like a beast with Saru at night. Saru was the victim of Manu's humiliation. She expresses her helplessness to her father on her return to her parental house:

I "I could not fight back. I could not shout or cry, I was so afraid the children in the next room would hear. I could do nothing. I can never do anything. I just endure."(201)

For Saru circumstances became intolerable, it was difficult for her to identify Manu as a man who used to love her but now he behaves normal during the land as a rapist at night. This had affected her mentally. When one of her friend Nalu calls her to deliver a lecture on Medicine as a Profession for women, she presents a recipe of a successful marriage in front of the college student, she says:

"A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he is an M.A. You should be a B.A. If he is 5'4 tall you shouldn't be not more than 5'3 tall.

If he is earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety, if you want a happy marriage. Don't ever try to reverse

The doctor - nurse, executive – secretary, principal – teacher role. It can be traumatic, disastrous. And I assure you, it is not worth it. He'll suffer. You'll suffer and so will the children. Women's magazines will tell you that a marriage must be an equal partnership. That's nonsense, rubbish. No partnership can never be equal. It will always be unequal but take care that it's unequal in favour of your husband. If the scale tilts in your favour, god help you, both of you. (TDHNT 137)

Conclusion:

This is how Saru became a victim to male chauvinism she was a educated, economically – independent, reputed doctor but still she was not getting the respect which she worth. In fact she has to be submissive in front of her husband's masculinity. Shashi Deshpande has presented in her novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* that a how a talented and educated women has to kneel down in front of chauvinistic norms of the society. She cannot praise herself or boost about her superiority in front of her husband. Yet Shashi Deshpande does not suggest separation from the spouse a solution in fact she is in favour of tactful averment for self identity with in marriage.

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