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## CRAVE FOR EMANCIPATION IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

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### ABSTRACT:-

**T**he Shakespearean notion, 'Frailty thy name is woman' has undergone a tremendous metamorphosis from time to time in her odyssey of self exploration and emancipation. The western concept of feminism though triggered centuries back, its sway on Indian woman has



rocked from 20th century. The literary titans especially, women writers of India have wielded their pens to unearth the inner inhibitions and psyche to assert themselves as women of libertine sensibility in their struggle for existence and quest for identity in the tradition bound male chauvinistic Indian society. Shashi

Deshpande is no doubt a feministic writer in her thought and expression in creating women characters of middle class, crusading against established traditions and customs to vindicate themselves as women of exemplary valour and vigour in moulding their personality. The present paper outshines and analyses some of the women characters in the two selected works of Shashi Deshpande who significantly crave for emancipation from the shackles of dogmatic taboos and rigid social disposition.

**KEYWORDS:** Frailty, woman, metamorphosis, emancipation, feminism, sway, inhibitions, libertine sensibility, middle class, crusade, tradition.

### INTRODUCTION :

Since ages, it has been a perennial question whether woman has succeeded in emancipating herself from the social and cultural barriers prevailing in Indian society. Shashi Deshpandy, who is considered to be a writer gifted with enormous capabilities of feeling the pulse of Indian Woman, makes an earnest attempt in her novels to delineate the women characters and their struggle to establish their identity in the male-chauvinistic social order. In the process, they undergo traumatic experiences and conflicts to wage a war against deeply rooted traditions and customs. As a result, they crave for emancipation which appears really a herculean task to fulfill their inner urge to break the existing bastion of male ego and aggressiveness in inducing the women striving for liberation to have a breather to assert themselves their desire for self-realization. The present paper deals with the woman characters of Shashi Deshpande from the two selected works who experience indescribable agony and poignancies in their endeavour to free themselves from the stifling grip of inner turmoil. So to go about, in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, the predominant theme is marital discord. Through the life of the protagonist, Saru, the writer highlights the trauma of a woman who is made the victim of her husband's frustrations, ultimately craving for emancipation. Whereas, *That Long Silence* focuses on the trauma of an ostensibly contented

housewife, who is smothered under the weight of male dominance in a traditional society and finally urging for self-realization to reach the shore of peace and harmony in her life.

### The Dark Holds No Terrors

It is a novel which brings out the element of crave for emancipation of a woman who belongs to a middle class community. Sarita, the protagonist, suffers a mental conflict and undergoes excruciating experiences in her life journey especially, at first in the hands of her own mother, she becomes a victim of gender discrimination, but silently bears it with much latent potentiality of a woman. This is due to her mother's attitude towards her brother in giving much prominence to the male child besides neglecting the female child, considering her a liability and burden to the family. On the other hand, the mother degrades and denigrates Saru as she is dark complexioned even to marry her in life time. In this context, it is apt to quote the conversation of Saru with her mother:

*"Don't go out in the sun. you'll get darker".*  
*"Who cares".*  
*"We have to care if you don't. we have to get you married".*  
*"I don't want to get married".*  
*"Will you live with us all your life?"*  
*"Why not?"*  
*"You can't".*  
*"And Dhruva?"*  
*"He's different. He's a boy". (40)*

However, in spite of many odds, she continues her medical education much against the will of her parents. There, she happens to meet Manohar, another medico and in course of time, she develops love towards him and desires to culminate it in marriage, though he belongs to a different cast. Accordingly, despite the resistance from her mother, as a token of her defiance, she weds him and walks out with a vow to no return. Of course, their marital life continues in a way happily by having two children. Later, she starts practicing her profession as a doctor and her husband works as an underpaid lecturer in a third rate college. Soon, dissensions have crept in their salubrious life owing to male egoistic tendency. As a result, Saru undergoes a sense of alienation and deprivation. In the mean time, she opens her own clinic with the help of Boozie and earns name and fame in no time. As adding fuel to fire, Manu (Manohar) gets into a kind of depression and becomes green with jealousy, consequent upon he nags her and turns her a victim of his enormous sexual sadism. Recalling the disastrous condition of her marriage, Saru says: He had been the young man and I his bride. Now, I was the lady doctor and he was my husband. (42) As days roll on, Saru entertains the idea of moving away from the single room dingy apartment to a more decent flat. There, she finds time to introspect herself about her pathetic married life. It enables her to recapitulate her past experiences and prompts her to free herself from the storm of over powering thoughts. Ultimately, she takes a firm decision to go to her father as her mother is no more. Ironically, after reaching her parental home, the stark realities of life inculcate her a sense of self-abnegation tantamounting to self-realization. She finds the so called refuge in herself not anywhere else. It reminds the words from *The Dhammapada*:

*You are your own refuge.*  
*There is a no other refuge.*  
*This refuge is hard to achieve. (Epigraph)*

This way, Saru seeks a kind of redemption and returns to her husband to ensure a fountain of solace and serenity in her life. More so, the terrors of darkness dispel from her wounded heart and she rightly emancipates herself from the bondages. She feels herself confident and trusts in herself to confront reality.

### That Long Silence

*That Long Silence* is said to be the magnum opus of Shashi Deshpande for which she has annexed the highly reputed Sahitya Akademy award. It reminds the reader the conflict of Shakespearean Hamlet even in Deshpande's protagonist, Jaya. Of course, Hamlet swings between 'to be or not to be' but Jaya displays a tremendous inner conflict of 'silence and surrender' in her marital life. In the novel, reacting to her husband's account of his mother's bitter experience with his drunken father, Jaya observes:

*I saw despair. I saw a despair  
so great that it would not voice itself.  
I saw a struggle so bitter that silence was  
the only weapon. Silence  
and surrender.(36)*

As a matter of fact, the conflicting element finally lands her in a state of introspection and stimulates her to emancipate herself from the shackles of the tradition bound Indian society.

So to scan her odyssey of life, it is worth noting that she is brought up as an 'individual' bestowed with stupendous social awareness, exuberant confidence and unremitting capability of free will. The convent education provided to her has transformed her way of thinking and endowed her with caliber to unleash herself with her creative potentiality. Adherent to tradition, she married Mohan and begets two children, Rahul and Rati. As a daughter-in-law, she performs her duties and wins the hearts of her in-laws, Aai, Ajji, Kaka and all other relatives. On the other hand, as days go on, the monotony of her seventeen years of silent life as tireless mother and sincere wife receives a rude jolt to her carefully constructed edifice of an ideal family. The suspected embezzlement of Mohan's financial activity sparks off a crisis which consequently to avoid any untoward incident. She follows Mohan to a small Dadar flat to hide themselves. There, she introspects and confronts her husband about the circumstances leading to his unmindful and unlawful act. Responding to her, he replies that he has done it for the sake of her and children. As a result, she succumbs to self analysis and excavates her own self in the family.

She ponders over deeply and generates in her the pathetic plight of her existence and sense of isolation in every aspect. It serves as a prelude to start her creative writing expressing the existential predicament of human beings in general and women in particular. Ironically, she happens to meet Kamat, a widower and an advertiser by profession. She is drawn to him as he doesn't distinguish between the domains of man and woman. Added to this, he encourages her creative talent. Her art of writing reflects her inner conflict and long suppressed emotions of her smiles and tears. At one stage, Mohan reacts negatively for a story which he thinks resembles their own family life. After that, attributing a pseudonym, Jaya continues her writing to avoid the wrath and censure of society and her husband which results in women characters demonstrating a kind of passivity and suppressed anger. Hence, her writings do not receive the expected outcome. So, to find the reason for her failure, Kamat comments that her writings are devoid of the natural emotions of a woman's anger. For that Jaya says: A woman can never be angry. She can only be neurotic, hysterical, frustrated.(147). However, she keeps on her earning by writing. In the mean time, Mohan's position becomes deplorable and he develops a kind of depravity, as a result, he walks out of home in a seemingly permanent way. Coupled with this, Jaya learns the news of the sudden disappearance of her son. Altogether, these events compel her to experience a poignant and traumatic mental aberration. In such an agonizing state, she recapitulates the past memories and undergoes purgation in her catastrophic life. Dramatically, her son returns home and Mohan sends her a telegram of hope stating 'All is well'. By this, Jaya emerges victorious with self realization after seventeen long years of her eloquent silence. Almost she dismantles the structure of her flood of emotional outburst and redeems herself as an emancipated woman to set the wheels of her life on right track to move forward with much felicity without any frailty. In this context, Subhash Chandra rightly points out, "By permitting her story she has achieved articulation of her predicament, her constraints, her anguish and has thereby broken her silence"<sup>1</sup>.

### SUMMING UP

It is evident from the evaluation of the two novels – *The Dark No Terrors* and *That Long Silence*, in respect of craving for emancipation, Saru and Jaya are the replica of struggling for identity, ultimately paving way to emancipation. Saru as a protagonist surrenders herself to the sense of reality of existence to unite with her family for co-existence and eternal happiness. As well, Jaya though undergoes a traumatic experience in her seventeen long years of inner turmoil, finally, emanates herself as an exemplary woman to compromise with her family, realizing the quintessence of life and its everlasting value to enjoy its eternal bliss.

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