

ANGST OF AN ALIENATED SOUL IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THE DARK HOLDS NO TERROR

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ABSTRACT

Shashi Deshpande paints her female protagonist in a female perspective but not in a feministic perspective. She deals with a genuine problem of a common woman with out exaggerating an embodiment, who fights and challenges the patriarchal society. Her characters are neither modern nor tradition but simple whirling with all flaws and aberration, a silent sufferer who strive hard to live a complete and satisfied life. Sarita of The Dark Holds No Terror makes ceaseless effort in search of her place not in society as always people do but she seeks in the family because society begins in family. Isolation whether forced or self-imposed, is in many ways a calamity. When Saru was alienated by her parents she seeks refuge from Manu, when the same thing repeated with him then she turned again to her father but no place was provided to her there, where she can go again is to Manu. Because family is a circle, where a person can only revolve around it again and again and seek solution from the source of the problem. Deshpande has made an honest portrayal of agony, suffering and frustration of an alienated mind of Saru and her great courage to face the challenges in search of her place in family.

“Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human.”

(Aristotle)

Aristotle gives a perfect purview of a man, is by nature (social) animal and an individual is very much unsocial by nature and he lives an isolated life in the society. The detached life from the society is absolutely subjective. A self-estrangement is an important reason for an alienated mind. Sometimes this problem of existence becomes a choric disorder and stays with the person through out his lifetime. This alienated mind develops an emotional isolation and

dislocates from the society and takes a refuge in a narrow and rigid mind and makes its own asylum.

The Dark Holds No Terror, portrays difficult endeavors of Sarita, the protagonist. It visualizes the struggle of a woman's survival and quest of her place in the world which never shows an easy path to walk. Shashi Deshpande fervently attempts to present the angst, depravation and struggle of women characters as neither modern nor traditional, this placed them in a chaotic state and they strive hard to assert their individuality in carping situation. Existing in an alienated society is not marginalizing oneself but existing in centre with well build glass wall around oneself. Alienation is very ambiguous capable of providing different dimensions at different outset.

In The Dark Holds No Terror, alienation takes an important role to play in two women characters, Saru (Sarita) and her mother kamala. Only the concept of alienation puts the names together but both of them dwell in their own isolated world as two different poles of earth. The problem of existence has become a part of Saru's psyche and it is inculcated in her very early by her mother's indifference especially after her brother Dhruva's death and her father's disinterest approach to her. He left it all to her mother and she never cared. For her mother Saru didn't exist but died long before she left home, "We were like the three points of triangle, eternally linked, forever separate". (TDHNT 141)

Loss of her place and lack of attention from her own family which propelled her to make a move to pursue medicine after a long fight, there she met Manu (Manohar), from him Saru experienced love and affection for which she yearns for years but unfortunately it lasted till their marriage after that she again become a deserted child. She always feels that she should not be like her mother to transfer this detachment to her daughter Renu (Renuka) and son Abhi (Abhijit). In a long run she started resembling her mother and Renu started resembling herself. The Void relationship of every one around her made her life empty. She never lives her life but exist in it. She feels like any other well-trained animal, capable of making the right noises and the right gestures automatically. In every sphere of her life, Saru has a daughter, has a wife, has a mother lives an alienated life.

Marriage gives a girl both happiness and pain, pain is to get detached from her parents but for Saru there is nothing to be get detached because it is already done and thus she is ready to defy her parents and family and to resolve to get married in spite of their disagreement, "It's going to be painful for you" (TDHNT 39). When Manu spoke to her with compassion, she replied instantly like a rude child, Suffering? Painful? I was impatient with the words because they meant nothing to me. After my last confrontation with my parents, I had already detached myself from them. For me they were already the past and meant nothing. (TDHNT 39).

She argues more on this in a very rigid and firm tone,

Do you know, manu, how easy it is to cut the umbilical cord and separate the baby from the mother? Ligate, cut and its done. There's scarcely any bleeding either. It's as if nature knows the child must be detached from the parent. No, manu, for me there will be no trauma, no bleeding. (TDHNT 39).

Absolutely no trouble and no pain in separating a baby and mother by cutting umbilical cord but it is a terrible agony for a daughter to get detached from parent by psyche than physis. But Saru never experience neither of it because it's already done to her by her parents, Saru was pushed in to an isolated world literally after Dhruva's death. In her mother's perspective Saru is

the sole reason for Dhruva's death, "You killed him. Why didn't you die? Why are you alive, when he's dead." (TDHNT 191).

The eternal separation of son from mother made herself to separate gradually from Saru and eventually Saru dislocated from her family and started an alienated life. She was alone, alone in the darkness like Dhruva, but he lies in eternal emptiness and Saru lingers in the deep void between life and death.

From the reality of darkness, she entered in to an illusionary colorful world of marriage with unconditional love and expected the same, but in return it gave her unconditional dreadful nightmares. The loveless sexual life once again betrayed her. Changes in her marriage life made her to fit in a well locked iron cupboard, "Some time, some day, I thought, the truth will out and I will know I was never loved." (TDHNT 66).

Gloomy clouds of marriage made her cold and stiff and even more rigid. If her marriage had been an arranged marriage, her Baba would have stood with her in her great calamities. Since it is her decision to marry Manu, she was left alone to brood on her guilt and as well as pain. She recollects her mother's words, "I know all these 'love marriages'. It's love for few days, then quarrels all the time. Don't come crying to us then". (TDHNT 69). Even marriage made her stand alone in the society with no place and no face of recognition, "There was no place to go, no room to breathe. There was nothing and nobody". (TDHNT 219). This sense of alienation was cursed to be with her throughout her life, earlier from her mother and now from her husband. Sometimes it is strange on her part to long for unconditional love from her husband and feel deserted from her mother with whom she never attached. She realized it after a deep exploration of their relationship, "Nobody likes me, nobody cares for me. Nobody wants me" (TDHNT 83). To venture the reason behind the isolated life of Saru, silence plays an unavoidable role. She allowed the silence to grow and grow to build a huge bulwark towards every one, especially with Manu, "One day I will be walled alive within it and die a slow, painful death." (TDHNT 96).

Silence is a genetic disorder in every woman. Part of Saru's alienation was provided to her by her mother, for her mother it must be from Saru's grandmother. This silence and detached attitude towards life can be witnessed in every woman's nature whether she is Indian, American or African. Whether a women of modern era or of myth, the unchangeable character in them is silence. To reckon few Sita, Draupadi, Gandhari and Shakuntala the list may go on and on. They are encouraged and praised for their unrestricted love, voluntary surrender and conscious subjection to their pati. Women are projected like a blindfolded sheep to follow their shepherd what ever and how ever they are. They take great privilege in destroying themselves to achieve meaningless modesty and unmeaning heroism; this is born out of the self sacrificing mythical female martyrs, "All the indignities of a woman's life, borne silently ...stupid, silly martyrs, she thought; idiotic heroines". (TDHNT 107).

Alienated life is not just the theme of contemporary literature but it is as old as human civilization. It is perfectly portrayed in the great epic Mahabharata, especially in Duryodhana, he is a paradigm of an isolated life. Duryodhana was left alone at the very end of the battle; he was allowed to dwell in his alienated life. This shows us the raw reality and true face of lonely life. Though man is a social animal, he comes to the world alone and exist the space between life and death with monotonous dissociation,

To be alone? Never a stretching hand? Never a comforting touch? Is it all a fraud then, the eternal cry of...my husband, my wife, my children, my parents? Are all human relationships doomed to be a failure? (TDHNT 194).

Saru gave a thought to her mother's reference to Duryodhana, when Kauravas were defeated, he was alone waiting for his enemies to come and kill him, but Saru in her long alienated life she allowed her own enemies to desolate her life. This detachment was purposely transferred to her with immense darkness, "Daughter? I don't have any daughter. I had a son and he died. Now I am childless". (TDHNT 196).

When Saru's happiness was snatched by every one around her particularly by her mother and she does it even after when she's dead. Saru was never given her own place. The extreme acknowledgement given to her is, "Is that all? A painted tray. An empty house. One child dead. Another alienated". (TDHNT 105).

She could never find any refuge but as a well trained animal practiced to dwell in darkness. Dark holds no terror because, terror is not isolated from Saru's life because isolated life itself is a terror. She could neither fit herself in a given marriage frame nor a frame of a daughter. Saru broods over the angst even after she escapes her marital home and deserted to dwell in a doomed darkness but gradually realizes walking out will not solve her problems. She wishes to shed her shell as a silent sufferer to live an independent and dignified life with a brave mind to grimace the modern tribal society. Shashi Deshpande rendered a clear portraiture of Saru's alienated life by unmasking the rich and jazzy veil around the isolated world of an educated and independent woman. Though Saru by profession a doctor, a self-reliant and well balanced in thoughts but with all these she lacks something major in her life is a loveable and emotionally attached family. Family is the predominant for any human, at the end of the novel Saru begins her actual journey in to a drab clouded terrifying nightmare to give and receive a genuine love. The Dark Holds No Terror is a veracious traverse of an agitated and frustrated alienated soul of Saru.

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