

Human Life in Patriarchal Society in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terror* and *A Matter of Time*

Neha Parbhakar

M. Phil Research Scholar, Indus International University, Una

Abstract: Everyone's life is shaped by many kinds of external factors. But the one external factor, the patriarchal system has become such an important fact/ part of human life that human has forgotten his real existence in this world. Shashi Deshpande is renowned novelist in Indian Writing in English. She has discovered the real life behind the curtain of patriarchal society. She has described the human life in patriarchal society in many of her novels. Deshpande has described the human's life's main issues like profession, marriage, education etc. She has described how patriarchal structure affects human's humanity and makes him/her the cultural product. The present paper makes a study of the human life in the patriarchal society in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terror* and *A Matter of Time*. This paper highlights the clash between modern and traditional life in the patriarchal society.

Keywords: Woman's humanity, Education, Profession, Marriage, Suppressed desires, man's respect.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present study has focused on influence of patriarchal society on human life in Shashi Deshpande's two novels. . Shashi Deshpande's characters' all activities have effected from patriarchal society. Some characters' activities are directed towards freedom and some characters' activities are bounded within the patriarchal structure. The present study aims at point out the positive as well as negative attributes of Shashi Deshpande's characters in this patriarchal society.

Shashi Deshpande is renowned novelist in Indian writing in English. Many authors of Indian writing in English have focused their attention on human life . While dealing with human life authors cannot ignore the woman's subordinate position in the society. They have explained the woman's position and woman's psyche in this society. Shashi Deshpande is one among them. By read Shashi Deshpande's novels one gets the full understanding of human life with reference to woman's position in this patriarchal society. Deshpande has touched the various issues that are related to man-woman relationship and parent-child relationship.

Although Deshpande has described the human life in her various novels, but in *The Dark Holds No Terror* and *A Matter of Time* she has described the various aspects of human life in the patriarchal society.

In *The Dark Holds No Terror* Deshpande has described the story of Saru, the protagonist, who wants to represent herself as normal human being. She faces the many hardships in her aim to represent herself as successful normal human being in this patriarchal society. Society reminds her of her gender role. Her gender role becomes the hardship in her aim to become individual.

It is strange thing that she first faces the hardships from her own parents not from outsider. Just only because of her gender mother ill-treats Saru. Mother becomes strict to treat her daughter in this patriarchal society.

Mother teaches her daughter the various norms of an ideal daughter like to become beautiful, submissiveness, being inferior to man, to remain within the four wall of the house, to become beautiful for marriage's success. Mother does not show any love towards her daughter but she uses the various methods to improve her daughter's gender role.

Although Deshpande has described the mother's bad treatment towards her daughter but she has also described mother as victimizer in this patriarchal society. Mother burns her natural love towards her daughter due to the patriarchal society.

Woman in the role of mother teaches other woman and man to follow the gender role. Traditional mother does not care of her children's wishes. Mother teaches her daughter to become inferior and son to become superior over woman. Mother imposes her assumed norms among her children. Through the character of mother Deshpande has described, "The Indian society, so begged down by tradition, could not remain proof to the new awaking that had started making inroads into the minds of people". (Mitra 30)

Even on daughters' birthday parents especially mothers feel shame. Mother's responsibility towards her motherhood increases with the birth of daughter. It is the duty of mother to teach the primary lesson of life to her children. Saru's mother teaches her daughter the hardships of girl's life in the patriarchal society.

Mother feels guilty for becoming the mother of girl child. After the death of son mother says to others that she had only son who is not more. Due to son's preference in the society mother hates her own daughter after son's death. After her son's death Saru's mother says to her daughter, "Why did not you die? Why are you alive, when he is dead?" (Deshpande 29-30). Mother holds responsible daughter for son's death.

The girl is supposed to play the assigned role. If she does not play that assigned role she is looked up with low standard. She is not allowed to express her wishes. When Saru expresses her desire to study medicine, mother criticizes her. Moreover, as quote,

"Mothers, being women, were themselves conditioned by their mothers first and the society at large next. Mothers take it as their duty to condition their girl child into the norms of the patriarchal society. The sooner the process is begun, the better it is for the daughter". (Choubey113)

Later when Saru expresses her desire to marry low caste Manu, mother opposes her. The patriarchal structure has burnt the mother's natural love for her daughter. In this patriarchal society Saru's behavior as modern girl affects mother's psyche in such a way that she begins to hate her own daughter. Mother hates her own daughter as man or society hates woman.

Mother's bad treatment has affected Saru's psyche badly. Saru feels jealousy of her own brother's preference in the family. As G. Dominc Savio points out that, "Dhruva's demise had always been her subconscious desire and there is a very thin demarcation between her wish and fulfillment". (610) Saru's mother's behavior has affected Saru's relationship with other persons like father, brother, husband and her own children.

Mother teaches her daughter the various norms like being beautiful, submissiveness, being an ideal without any insistence. But modern Saru proves that only being beautiful and being inferior is not necessary for girl's success. Saru works hard in her study and insurances to get admission in medical college in Bombay. And with the help of her father Saru is able to go to Bombay for medical study. And in spite of her ugly look she is able to attract Manu. She marries Manu in spite of his low caste. This shows that she wants only love. Thus she gets an opportunity to get rid of the role of daughter. She enters into the role of wife with great expectations. In this novel man and woman relationship has also been described in detail.

After becoming wife Saru experiences the hardships of wife in this society. She experiences that professional woman cannot become successful wife in this patriarchal society. Through the character of Manu Deshpande has described that man also feels caught by the society. The society demands from him the superior role over woman. Although Manu can understand his wife's individuality but his male ego does not let him to do so. He is in between the two situations. Amar Nath Prasad in his book *Anita Desai: The Novelist Par Excellence* writes that, "The irony of fate is such that he neither allows her to lead the life of a simple house-wife subordinated to his superior wisdom, not does he tolerate her higher 'status'".

Through the character of Manu Deshpande has shown that even education could not change the male's psyche. After becoming a doctor Saru gains her inner identity but she fails to become an ideal wife according to her traditional husband.

Deshpande has also described the meaning of marriage for man and woman. Manu uses the marital right to dominate his wife. But woman like Saru seeks solution in marriage from traditional parents' gender based discrimination. Woman like Saru sees marriage as the source of love.

Just only to become like other man in the society Manu dominates his wife. At one moment Saru wants to give up her profession. But Manu does not let her to do so. This shows the man's psyche who wants his wife's submissive role within the profession.

On hearing the news of mother's death Saru goes to her parents' house. At first father seems unwilling to accept her. Slowly she is able to develop her close relationship with her father in the absence of her mother. Mother always kept away from her father. With the help of her father Saru is able to ignore the Society's outlook and becomes self-dependent. That is why in the end she agrees to go to her husband's house to solve her problems through her humanistic outlook.

In *A Matter of Time* Deshpande has described both types of human relationship i.e. traditional relationship and modern relationship. Traditional relationship between parents and child has been described through Manorama and her daughter Kalyani. Modern parent-child relationship has been described through Sumi and her three daughters like Aru and Charu and Seema. The relationship between Kalyani and Sumi is neither traditional and nor modern.

Manorama does not recognize her daughter's good qualities. Manorama deprived Kalyani of her education on some doubt that she has an affair with someone in the school. Moreover Manorama got married her daughter Kalyani to her uncle Shripati only to fulfill her own ambition.

Next generation mother Kalyani is somewhat free from the traditional behavior of mother. She does not want her daughter to suffer as she herself has suffered in her life.

The next generation mother Sumi is modern mother. She encourages her daughter to become bold. She never forces them to become submissive and follow the role of traditional daughter.

The main point that Deshpande has described through parent-child relationship in this novel is that deserted daughters become the tension for their parents. Traditional Manorama becomes angry with her daughter when she is deserted by her husband. Next generation mother Kalyani gets upset when her daughter is deserted by her husband but she does not curse her daughter for this as Manorama had cursed her. She goes to Gopal and requests him to come back.

The effect of parents' imbalanced relationship on children has been recorded by Deshpande in this novel. Aru's situation is the example of this, who begins to hate marriage and declares that "I am never going to get married" (Deshpande 76) Moreover she wants her mother and grandmother to break the silence and to revolt against their husbands. Thus in this novel mother's passiveness is transformed into the daughter's activeness.

In this novel *A Matter of Time* Deshpande has described the man-woman relationship also. While dealing with man-woman relationship in this novel Deshpande has described the husband's desertion and its effect on wife. First Kalyani is deserted by her husband for some misunderstanding that she is responsible for the loss of son. She faces her husband's desertion silently. And when he comes back she faces her husband's silence.

Sumi is also deserted by her husband without any reason. Husband Gopal deserts her when he feels the emptiness in his relationship with his wife. This also shows the man's psyche. Gopal is first male character of Shashi Deshpande's novel who feels like woman that there is an emptiness in man-woman relationship in this patriarchal society. He is of the view that man and woman's life long journey is only a coincidence. Later after some years Sumi also realizes the same emptiness.

In this novel Deshpande has not only described the wives' psyche but the psyche of husbands also who are irresponsible in spite of their important place in the society. This can be seen through Gopal and Shripati in this novel. If Sumi or Kalyani desert their husbands the reaction of the society would have been different. It seems that the responsibility is made only for wives or women. "Shashi Deshpande demonstrates successfully and convincingly the sources of traps and violence awaiting women at various stages of their existence and also suggests some ways and means of how they can possibly overcome the same through courage and confidence" (Reddy 51)

Deshpande has also described that respectful man becomes so much irresponsible. Sumi in this novel remains silent yet she is hurt by her husband's desertion. But she accepts her fate with great courage. She discovers her own way of living. She discovers her own writing talent. Like Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* by Hawthorne, Sumi changes her emptiness into meaning.

Through Sumi's writing Deshpande has described Sumi's independent psyche. Sumi writes about Surapanakha who does not care about the society. Sumi writes about Sarupankha, "Female Sexuality. We are ashamed of owing it; we can't

speak of it. Not even to our selves. But Surapanakha was not, she spoke of her desires, she flaunted them”.(Deshpande 191) Though Sumi remains silent after her husband’s desertion but her writing shows her inner voice. Deshpande has not only described the modern wife Sumi but the traditional wife Kalyani also. Deshpande has described the Sumi’s activeness through her writing and Kalyani’s passiveness through her silence. It is also seen that through silence woman does not get any sympathy or love. Silence has Destroyed Kalyani completely. She becomes blind towards her individuality.

Traditional woman like Kalyani does everything to please her husband. She carefully writes her name as “Kalyani Bai Pandit”. It is strange thing that man tortures the same woman who remains submissive to him. Deshpande has also described the traditional wife like Manorama who herself tries her best to remain submissive to her husband.

Deshpande has also described the hollowness of law. The modern Aru, the daughter of Sumi, tries to get justice from the law against her father. Aru could not get justice from law.

In this novel Deshpande has shown that with the passage of time woman’s attitude towards her relationship with others is also changing. Every new generation is more willing to change the unequal situation. Deshpande has shown that the type of woman’s struggle to live in this world is changing. First generation Manorama believes in becoming the totally traditional and inferior woman. The second generation Kalyani believes in becoming the silence towards the dominate behavior against her wishes. And the third generation adopts the way of profession to live in this world. It is the irony of the fate that Sumi is caught up by accident and death when her destination to become self independent reaches its peak. “Sumi’s death is entangled in a moment of awareness with her father” (Fabiano 130)But it does not mean that Sumi (woman)’s struggle has ended but it is carried on by Aru ,her daughter, who runs to her grandmother and says , “Amma, I am here, I am your daughter, Amma, I am your son, I am here with you”. (Deshapnde 233)

2. CONCLUSION

To sum up in these two novels *The Dark Holds No Terror* and *A Matter of Time* Deshpande has described the human life by discussing the two relationships i.e. parent-child relationship and man-woman relationship. Deshpande has described the traditional and modern human life in the patriarchal society. Deshpande has described the human’s life especially woman’s life’s main issues like education, marriage and profession etc in the patriarchal society. Education is the main fact between parent-child relationships, because education is provided by parents to children. Traditional parents discriminate between the son’s education and daughter’s education. The another important part of human life is marriage. Woman seeks the emotional bonding in marriage, but man seeks his powerful authority in marriage. Profession is supposed the part of man’s life. That is why Deshpande’s modern professional woman like Saru suffers in the patriarchal society. Deshpande holds responsible patriarchal structure for imbalanced human life.

REFERENCES

- [1] Choubey, Asha. “Mothers and Daughters: A Comparative Critique Of Fasting Feasting and Difficult Daughters”. Indian Writing In English. Ed. Rama Kundu. Vol. 1. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2003. 107-118. Print.
- [2] Deshpande, Shashi. *A Matter of Time*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1996. Print.
- [3] *The Dark Holds No Terror*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1990. Print.
- [4] Fabiano, Mark. “Householders Disintegration and Awakening of Feminine Consciousness Shashi Deshpande’s *A Matter Of Time*”. Muse India: Essay on English-Language Writers from Mahomet to Rushdie. Ed. Chetan Desh Mane. N.p:Mc Farland, 2013.125-134. Print.
- [5] Mitra, Reena. *Critical Responses to Literature in English*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher and Distt, 2005. Print.
- [6] Prasad, Amar Nath. *Anita Desai: The Novelists Par Excellence*. N.p:Sarup and Sons, 2007. Print.
- [7] Reddy, Y.S Sunita. *A Feminist Perspective on the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2001. Print
- [8] Savio, G. Dominic. “A Woman’s Heritage of the Commonwealth: A study of *The Dark Holds No Terror*”. *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*. Ed. Suman Bala. New Delhi: Khosla, 2001. 55-66. Print.