



WOMAN AND VIOLENCE IN THE NOVEL OF SHASHI DESHPANDE'S 'THE DARK HOLDS NO TERROR'

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Abstract

From years to years the two words woman and violence are travelling parallel, seems that associated with one another as two sides of a coin. This paper focuses on violence travels with woman which encircles physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, economic abuse, psychological and sexual abuse etc. WHO defines violence "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment ...". Shashi Deshpande mainly underlines the psychological violence, as far as concerned it seems that such type of violence is more penetrating and painful than other one. Even every woman encounters such type of violence more or less in her life's journey. Partial attitude of patriarchal society creates the typical situations in which woman cannot even react or oppose the circumstances while facing the violence. The domestic word is very much attached to the woman behind the curtain of household work and duties, she has suffered from the ancient era. Eminent and renowned writer Shashi Deshpande awarded with very prestigious award, targets the domestic and sexual violence in her fictions. Her first novel 'The Dark Holds no Terror' is appropriate example of domestic and sexual violence whenever protagonist's husband feels frustrated and finds himself low in social status in compare to her wife, he abuses his wife sexually and psychologically. Psychological violence is a way of series which has been discussed immensely in Deshpande's novels. Indicating the one form of violence 'silence' that relates to the female protagonists who have been put into the deep darkness and silence, and face psychological violence, makes their life suffocate. They also suffer because of their husband's activity in the outer world. It seems that the silence and violence can never be broken or stopped, for all happenings they are not responsible at all. Violence stirs every core of a woman's marital journey. It feels that how much it is deep rooted in our patriarchal system of society.

Keywords- Woman, Violence, Emotional and Psychological etc.

Violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a woman, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life”.

Radhika Coomaraswamy identifies different kinds of violence against women, in the United Nation’s special report, 1995, on Violence Against Women; Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.

One in three women worldwide experiences physical or sexual violence mostly by her intimate partner. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation, and the immediate and long-term physical, sexual, and mental consequences for women and girls can be devastating, including death.

Violence has very harmful effects on a woman's life, it prevents her from participating in society and creates hindrances in personality development also. Consequently, negatively impacts on family, community and also on the country. Extra pressure of expenses on legal and health care are faced by victims.

At least 155 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, and 140 have legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace (World Bank 2020). But challenges remain to enforcing these laws, limited women and girls’ access to safety and justice. Not enough is done to prevent violence and when it does occur, it often goes unpunished.

Violence against women does not mean only physical violence. It is much broader and includes sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse. The National Plan targets two main types of violence against women – domestic and family violence, and sexual assault.

The laws in each Australian state and territory have their own definitions. While there is

no single definition, the central elements of domestic violence include: acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship; an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear, for example by using behaviour which is violent and threatening. In most cases, the violent behaviour is part of a range of tactics to exercise power and control over women and their children, and can be both criminal and non-criminal; and the threatening or violent behaviour can comprise of physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse.

Physical violence can include slaps, shoves, hits, punches, pushes, being thrown down stairs or across the room, kicking, twisting of arms, choking, and being burnt or stabbed. Psychological and emotional abuse can include a range of controlling behaviour such as control of finances, isolation from family and friends, continual humiliation, threats against children or being threatened with injury or death. Financial or economic abuse includes forcibly controlling another person’s money or other assets. It can also involve stealing cash, not allowing a victim to take part in any financial decisions or preventing a victim from having a job. Family violence is a broader term that refers to violence between family members, as well as violence between intimate partners. It involves the same sorts of behaviours as described for domestic violence. As with domestic violence, the National Plan recognises that although only some aspects of family violence are criminal offenses, any behaviour that causes the victim to live in fear is unacceptable.

Research has demonstrated that violence against women often involves a continuum of violence from psychological, economic and emotional abuse through to physical and sexual violence.

Many of the misconceptions surrounding violence against women centre on its causes. There number of myths that exist, such as: men can’t control their anger or sexual urges; alcohol causes men to be violent; women could leave violent partners if they wanted to; and men experience equal, if not greater, levels of violence perpetrated

by their partners or former partners. Research has shown that the significant drivers of violence against women include: the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women; and an adherence to rigidly defined gender roles and identities i.e., what it means to be masculine and feminine.

Attitudes that condone or tolerate violence are recognised as playing a central role in shaping the way individuals, organisations and communities respond to violence.

Violence and torture are associated with the word 'mother' in *The Dark Holds No Terror*, is considered to be God on earth but here she is a idol of violence. In this regard, Adesh pal rightly says-

"For Saru the very word "mother" stands for old traditions and rituals, for her mother sets up a bad model, which distorts her growth as a woman, as a being... thus the strange childhood experiences false up her inflated ego and her thirst for power over others"

'*The Dark Holds No Terror*' is an appropriate example of violence against woman. At the time of marriage, the bride becomes a victim of many unwanted conditions and rules, not wholeheartedly followed by newly girl and goes through the journey of many upheaval, mental and physical. In many incidents, this core message is conveyed by Deshpande in her novel. In one of the situations, the protagonist mentions that the woman has to follow the man some foot behind.

"not really, until you get married and have children. That's what they tell us. And we have to believe them because no one has proved it wrong till now. But if you want to be happily married, there's one thing you have to remember. Have you girls seen an old-fashioned couple walking together? Have you noticed that the wife always walks a few steps behind her husband? That's important, very important, because it's symbolic of the truth. A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he's an MA, you should be a BA. If he's 5' 4" tall, you shouldn't be more than 5' 3" tall. If he's earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than

four hundred and ninety-nine rupees. That's the only rule to follow 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 isn't worth it. He'll suffer, you'll suffer and so will the children. Women's magazines will tell you that a marriage should be an equal partnership. That's nonsense. Rubbish. No partnership can ever be equal. It will always be unequal, but take care that it's unequal in favour of your husband. If the scales tilt in your favour, god help you, both of you. And so you must pretend that you're not as smart as you really are, not as competent as you are, not as rational as you are, and not as strong either. You can nag, complain, henpeck, whine, moan, but you can never be strong. That's a wrong which will never be forgiven. Don't struggle, don't swim against the tide. Go along with it; and if you drown nevertheless, well, that's an easier death after all. They will tell you about economic independence and an independent identity. Forget the words. If Draupadi had been economically independent, if Sita had an independent identity, you think their stories would have been different? No, these are things that have been voluntarily surrendered, consciously."

In the novel, there are some lines which clearly indicate that how the woman's life is going on under wind of terror and insecurity very much spell by male society. It reflects that a woman must have pleased her husband without taking care of herself and life which shows intense violence against women.

"The butter had been collected into a vessel of water, to be stored until there was enough to make ghee. She wiped her greasy fingers on the chappatis she had prepared. No point in wasting it by washing it off her fingers. Her palms and fingers felt deliciously soft and smooth. She had done this chore often as a child and Mai-kaki had teased her . . . Do this every day and your hands will be so soft and smooth, your husband will never let go of them. Everything in a girl's life, it seemed, was shaped to that single purpose of pleasing a male. But what did you do when you failed to please? There was no answer to that. At least, no one had given her an answer so far."

When Saru received so much respect and regard in a function, seeing this her husband feels so much jealous and tries to put her down in many dimension

“And now, when we walked out of our room, there were nods and smiles, murmured greetings and namastes. But they were all for me, only for me. There was nothing for him. He was almost totally ignored. I did not notice this then. Nor, if I had, would I have known that he minded. For he revealed nothing. But I can remember how he said, ‘I’m sick of this place. Let’s get out of here soon.’ And how it was that, more and more often, I found myself shrinking from his love-making. I thought then, that the fault was mine. It was because I was tired, always too tired after my long day at the hospital. He was the same. Still so eager to love me, so disappointed when I refused him, that I rarely had the heart to do so. And if there were times when he was rough and abrupt with me, I put it down to the ardour of his love. In any case, these occasions were rare enough then. So rare that I could easily forget them. But now I know that it was there it began . . . this terrible thing that has destroyed our marriage. I know this too . . . that the human personality has an infinite capacity for growth. And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the same thing that made me inches taller, made him inches shorter. He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband.”

Saru is filled with grief and troubles which are given by her husband for that nowhere she is responsible. Her life becomes hell instead of all types of sacrifices. Ultimately, she has to leave her husband's house.

‘He says you write to the children, but not to him. He says that even in your letters to them, you never speak of going back. ‘What is it, Saru?’ ‘Shall I tell you?’ It was a challenge. You’ve always avoided things. The truth. Facts. Life. Confrontation. Can you now take this from a daughter you thought you’d got rid of? ‘Yes, tell me. What’s wrong? Is something wrong between you and your husband?’ ‘Something? No, everything.’ And now she could feel a withdrawal in him. He didn’t want to go on. He

wanted to leave it at that. But he surprised her by saying, ‘What is it, Saru? Why don’t you tell me what it is.’

Saru feels her father became a companion of her mother in all process of torturing her. They verbally and non- verbally hurt her mentally and physically. Even after her mother death, she feels that she is torturing her indirectly.

“She cursed me, Baba,’ she said now to her father. “Even her silence at the end was a curse. And you say she died peacefully.’ No struggle, no bitterness. She would never forget that. No, never. ‘Does a death redeem a whole life? Can’t you understand, Baba, that it’s because she cursed me that I am like this?’ ‘Like this? Like what?’ ‘Unhappy. Destroyed.”

When Saru comes to her father's house carrying intense pain in her heart due to the harsh and rude behaviour of her husband. Somewhat trying to make her heart's burden lessen, she explains about her husband to her father.

“Instead she blurted out, baldly, crudely, ‘My husband is a sadist.’ His face, even after she said the words, was devoid of all expression but the expectancy that was already there. ‘Don’t you understand, Baba?’ she asked irritably. He shook his head. She noticed that thought he looked at her, his eyes were focussed somewhere beyond her. ‘Don’t you know the meaning of the word? Was your generation luckier than ours? Perhaps such words didn’t enter your vocabulary. Sadism . . . love of cruelty. How simple and clinical that sounds, doesn’t it? And sex . . .”

In the series of psychological violence in which Saru goes through her mother’s house due to the harsh remarks by her mother, make situations more penetrating to Saru when her father supports her with silence. Her father’s silence in those typical situations crumbles her internally, mentally and psychologically.

“Why not?’ he said and his voice came out husky. He cleared his throat and said again, ‘Why not?’ And then he went on, irrelevantly, she thought, ‘Do you know, Saru, I often feel sorry that we left so many things unsaid, your mother and I.

When she lay dying I wanted to ask her . . . Would you like to meet Saru? Sometimes I think she might have said "Yes". But I never did. Silence had become a habit for us. Now . . . go on, tell me. Tell me everything."

As Deshpande observes in her book *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays*:

"Many women do enjoy housework and find fulfilment within the home. They have every right to do so. But there are the hazards of not being able to support yourself when it may be necessary to do so; glorifying the wife and mother role sometimes hide this ugly reality. To be dependent means to be a burden on another, at times to be forced to endure violence because there is no choice."

All situations and incidents depicted by Deshpande in 'The Dark Holds No Terror' underline the many types of violence which are encountered by woman in her life journey from birth to death. It clearly indicates that Saru suffered from birth till death. Anything wrong happens in the family, she doesn't know how she becomes responsible for that. When her brother dies, her mother always blames her for her brother's death. Saru always has so many grievances towards her father and mother. In one line in the novel, she says that now her mother has died but still she torturing and cursing her. Throughout the novel, the two words woman and violence are deeply entangled and travel parallel.

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