



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

MOTHER, DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP IN *THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS*

Dr. BIPIN CHANDRA UNIYAL

(Assistant Professor)

Head, Deptt. of English, Bal Gnaga Degree College Sendul, Kumar
Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand



Dr. BIPIN CHANDRA UNIYAL

ABSTRACT

Shashi Deshpande a talented Indian novelist has written boldly on man woman relationship, particularly the relationship between husband and wife, father and daughter and mother and daughter. Person to person and person to society relationship are the main concerns to her. In this novel Shashi Deshpande has shown the conflicts between the mother and daughter. Mother is a traditional woman while daughter is a educated modern woman. Sarita the protagonist of the novel hates her mother. She thinks that her mother does not like her. Her mother forced her to stay within the four walls and follow the traditional route but Saru did not accept it. She cannot follow and accept anything without reason. Her mother puts all kind of restrictions on her without considering the fact. Saru is a successful doctor got married with Manohar, a lecturer in college, Saru came back to her father's house after the death of her mother. At her father's house she got the opportunity to review her relationship with her dead mother, dead brother Dhruva, with her children and with her husband as she felt herself terrified trapped animal in the hands of her husband. Although she got married Manohar, the person of her choice, despite the opposition of her family, specially of her mother. She compared herself with her mother. She regarded her mother as a failure – one who had lost her both children and died silently. At the end Saru wanted to be friendly with her children, otherwise there was a fear to lose them. She decided to be a good wife and a good mother although she had failed as a good daughter.

Key Words : Relationship. Conflicts, tradition, review, modern, opposition, failed.

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Shashi Deshpande, an award winning Indian novelist, was born in Dharwad in Karnatak. She is a daughter of the renowned Kannada writer and Sanskrit scholar Adya Rangachar, better known as Sriranga, a play writer. She was educated in Bombay and Bangalore. She has degrees in Economics, Law and Journalism. She has worked as a journalist for some time for the magazine 'Onlooker'. Shashi Deshpande has written four

children's books, nine novels and a number of short stories.

Shashi Deshpande has written boldly on man woman relationship, particularly the relationship between husband and wife, father and daughter and mother and daughter. Person to person and person to society relationships are the main concerns to her. She told an interviewer : " Human relationship is what a writer is involved with.

Person to person and person to society relationships – these are the two primary concerns of a creative writer and to me, the former is of immense importance. My preoccupation is with interpersonal relationships and human emotions.”(1) Relationship is necessary for human being. But there should be equality and tolerance in relationship. As Deshpande told to Vanmala Viswanatha : “ It is necessary for women to live within relationships. But if the rules are rigidly laid that as a wife or mother you do this and no further, then one becomes unhappy. This is what I have tried to convey in my writing. What I don’t agree with is the idealization of motherhood – the false and sentimental notes that accompany it.” (2)

In Indian male dominated society women did not get the proper respect and honour. Society looked upon them as breeding machine. Shashi Deshpande rejected that notion as she says :

“I have a very strong feeling that until very recently women in our society have been looked upon just as breeding animals. They had no other role in life. I have a strong objection to treating any human being in that manner The whole chronology of their life centres around childbirth The stress laid upon the feminine functions at the cost of all your potentials as an individual, enraged me..... May be too much of thinking has made me express a sort of dislike for the purely physical aspects of feminine life, making it seem as if I am totally against all feminine functions which is not the truth at all.” (3)

In this research paper, researcher has tried to find out the fact about the relationship between mother and daughter in the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* written by Shashi Deshpande was published in 1980. The novel has been translated into German and Russian. It was Shashi Deshpande’s favourite work. Shashi Deshpande has dealt with the predicament of the modern educated women in the traditional society. According to R. S. Pathak : “Shashi Deshpande deals with the middle – class Indian woman who represents the overwhelming majority of Indian women and is struggling to adjust in it rather than

get free from the traditional world.” (4). Shashi Deshpande’s leading women characters of her novels are educated, intelligent, professional and understanding women. They recognise and understand the new roles which they want to perform in the new world. Her female characters as wife, mother and daughter tries to discover for herself new ways of living.

Sarita or Saru the main character in Deshpande’s novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* represents the modern or new woman who is confined to the traditional and familial bonds, struggle for her rights and arrives to self analysis. Through the character of Sarita, Shashi Deshpande has presented a realistic picture of middle – class educated urbane Indian woman who despite being educated and economically independent remained a victim of injustice. She told to an interviewer : “ I strongly react against any kind of cruelty or oppression against women. We are all human beings and we should all have the rights to our lives.”(5) The novel reveals the life of Sarita who is always neglected and ignored by her mother in favour of her brother Dhruva.

Sarita a successful doctor got married with Manohar a lecturer in third rate college, despite the opposition of her family. Sarita loved Manohar. But after sometime she realised that her married life was not such beautiful as she dreamt. She felt herself a terrified trapped animal in hands of her husband. She wanted to get away from her husband’s house as she calls it paradise of matching curtain and handloom bed spreads and the hell of savagery and submission. One day when she was informed about her mother’s death by Prof. Kulkarni, she was shocked and came to her father’s house. She got time to review her relationship with her husband, her dead mother, her dead brother Dhruva and her children Renu and Abhi. Her review over the relationship gives her courage to face reality. Her relationship with her mother was not good. She was not informed about her death, as her mother did not forgive her. Saru says : “ What is a mother if she casts you off? We had lived fifteen years without mentioning her. Why should she matter dead when she had never mattered alive ? But at the moment I knew I had to go back. I would

go home and meet baba.” (6)

Saru at her father’s house lost in her past. She remembered her younger brother Dhruva. He called her Sarutai. He was three year younger to her sister. Those three year gave her immense pleasure and advantages. She had ruled over her brother completely. Dhruva had been very loyal to her sister. Whenever Saru tried to avoid him and ran away from him, he called Saru : “ Wait for me. Sarutai wait for me. I am coming too.”(7) One day he died when he was seven year old. He was drowned. Saru was there and she had seen him drowning. She tried to save him but it was useless. When she was asked about Dhruva she has no answer. Later she was blamed for the death of her younger brother. Her mother accused her and said : “ You did it. You did this. You killed him..... Why didn’t you die ? Why are you alive, when he’s dead ?”(8)

Saru’s mother did not like her daughter. There was a full length mirror on the door of almirah in her mother’s room. Saru as a growing girl had to come to look at herself in the mirror and she used to say before mirror that she was ugly. In a vague hope that mirror would tell her she was pretty one. But her mother told her she was an ugly girl : “ You will never be good looking. You are too dark for that. I am ugly. I stood in front of the mirror and mouthed the words to myself. And as I stood there, she came up to me, saying how many times must I call you ? Looking at yourself in the mirror ! I will give you a certificate to say that you are beautiful, will that satisfy you ?” (9)

After Dhruva’s death silence became an essential part of the life of Saru, her father and her mother. It became unbearable to Saru. Now she was longing for freedom. At last she left home and joined medical college. It was not a relief only but a kind of rebirth to Saru to get away from home to the hostel. She remembered those days. Once there came a lady doctor at Saru’s place. Saru was much impressed by her personality. Saru decided that she could be a doctor and that would be the key which would unlock the door out of this life. She was an intelligent girl. She worked hard, gave up all her pleasures and focussed on her studies. She obtained first division in intermediate and that was the passport to medical college. When her father asked

her what subject she wanted to take up for her B. Sc. Saru boldly said that she was not going to do B. Sc. She wanted to do medicine. Her mother rejected that idea and made several questions to her and as there were no friendly relation between Saru and her mother, she had not given the answer of her mother’s questions : I’m not talking to you. I’m not asking you for anything. I know what your answer will be. No forever a ‘no’ to anything I want. You don’t want me to have anything. You don’t ever want me to live.”(10) Saru cried on her mother as if she was the girl of twelve instead of eighteen. She hated her mother. She wanted to hurt her, wound her and make her suffer. But in reality Saru did not know why did she wanted it. The fact is that here is woman’s cruelty to woman.

Her mother disliked her and was always against her. Her mother strongly opposed her admission in medical college. It was her father who has supported her. Her mother was unsuccessful. She tried her best to dissuade him from sending Saru to study medicine : “ You don’t belong to that class. And don’t forget, medicine or no medicine, doctor or no doctor, you still have to get her married, spend money on her wedding. Can you do both ? Make yourself a pauper, and will she look after you in your old age ? Medicine ! five, six, seven God knows how many years. Let her go for a B. Sc. You can get her married in two years and our responsibility will be over.”(11) Saru’s decision to take up medicine as a career stunned her mother who opposed it tooth and nails. But she knew the truth and says : “ Yes I’m a girl but it’s more than that I’m not Dhruva.....Is that all I am a responsibility ?”(12). In fact our society structures is made like this that females work against of their own gender. In traditional societies girls cannot live with their parents after a certain age. They are regarded *paraya dhan* – something to be given to the rightful owner. Girls were not allowed to choose their own way, they were compelled to depend on others. Saru’s mother was a traditional woman, so she always tried and compelled Saru to follow this route. But Saru was an educated modern woman. So she could not follow the traditional route. Being an educated woman she cannot accept anything without reason. Maria Mies rightly says : “ The non

– conforming conduct of the woman is not the consequence of an external necessity but of changed consciousness. They are not satisfied with the rhetoric of equality between man and woman but want to see that the right to an individual life and the right to development of their individual capabilities are realised in their own lives.” (13) She remembers that her problem had started right from her childhood. Her childhood was dominated by her mother. She realised that happiness in life cannot be gained only through dependency on marriage, parents and on others and there are other things also which make the life worth living and happy.

Since her childhood Saru has always felt that to her mother, she herself was nothing as compared to Dhruva. Throughout her life, this was childish grief of being unwanted. Once in a year she was more important than Dhruva. It was the occasion of her birthday. Her parents celebrated her birthday. “ The one time when she became more important than Dhruva. The daughter of the house who could apply attar with tiny attar – drenched swabs of cotton to the backs of women’s hand, sprinkle rose – water over them and distribute the flowers and Dhruva crying ‘ let me I want to Ai, look, she won’t let me. Sssh Dhruva, let that alone. It’s not for you. That’s for girls, putting out her tongue, making a face at him, triumphant..... [and] exultant. So there ! Not for you, only for girls’.(14). After the death of Dhruva there was silence in the family.

There was always puja on Dhruva’s birthday, while there was no puja on Saru’s birthday. It was only her fifteenth birthday that she got a gold ear ring from her mother as her birthday present and she was happy as she got her birthday present. But she became disappointed when she came to know that her mother has given the ear rings as she was now a big girl and she had wear something nice in her ears. After Dhruva’s death her birthday was not celebrated, her mother accused her for the death of Dhruva and refused to be reconciled till her death. She said : “What daughter, I have no daughter.” (15). Her mother’s attitude created an adverse effect on Saru. She developed hatred towards her mother who always came in the way of her progress. After the death of Dhruva her

mother had given up celebrating Ganpati festival. But her mother performed her morning puja for an even longer time with closed eyes and Saru asked herself : “ Is she praying to god that I should die too”. (16) She fell in love with Manohar and decided to marry him. Her act of marrying Manohar a young promising poet is another step to show her strength. Being traditional her mother was not in favour of this marriage. She condemned this rudely : “ I know all these love marriages : its love for a few days then quarrels all the time. Don’t come crying to us then. To you ? God, that’s the one thing I will never do. Never !” (17). And again she says : “What caste is he ?

Idon’t know
A Brahmin ?
Of course not.
Then cruelly

. his father keeps a cycle shop.

Oh, so they are low caste people, are they?” (18)

Through the characters of Saru and her mother, Shashi Deshpande conveyed an important message that subjugation, suppression and exploitation are not confined to the male – female relationship but exist between a female – female relationship as well. It is a conflict between the old and young and the traditional and modern. Saru represents a modern women while her mother represents traditional women. Saru was brought up in a traditional society and atmosphere but the education she got made her a changed woman with a rebellious spirit towards social taboos and tradition. She was educated so she cannot accept anything without reason. Her mother forced her to stay within the four walls but she did not accept it.

Saru compared herself with her mother. She asked herself, was she an unnatural mother ? She had sworn that she would never fail to her children in love and understanding as her own mother had done, that she would be to her children all that her own mother had not been to her. She regarded her mother as a failure – one who had lost her both children and died silently. Saru wanted to be friendly with her children, otherwise there was a fear to lose them. Saru decided to be a good wife

and a good mother although she had failed as a good daughter.

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