



Impact Factor: 4.081

Guidance of Misfortune and Opportunity in Shashi

Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terror*

T.Vasanth

Assistant Professor of English, BDUC
Arts and Science College, Trichy, India.
amt.vasanth@gmail.com

Dr.K.Sundararajan

Associate Professor of English, AVVM
Shri Pushpam College, Poondi,
Thanjavur, India.

Abstract:

Shashi Deshpande, a renowned novelist in modern Indian literature in English. She has appeared as a writer holding acute awareness into the female mind. It is an accepted fact exhibited by the characters in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terror*, that opportunity and fate performed a vital role in their lives. Deshpande inclined to be disastrous in her novel as she defined the destiny of a girl. Sarita or Saru, the heroine of her novel, suffered without any responsibility of hers. Deshpande had narrated how she has alienated herself from her parental house, how she became a physician, how she got engulfed in the love of Manohar. Events and accidents occurred in such a way that she couldn't have bliss in her life. She expressed to herself in a moment of depression, "why is unhappiness always so unreal? Why does it always seem an illusion? It is grief that has a bulk, a weight, a substance, and stays real even after years. Happiness is so evanescent, nothing is left" (DHNT 40-41).

Keywords: Fate, opportunity, bliss, alienation, admonish, endeavour.

Introduction:

Shashi Deshpande, a prominent Indian novelist was born in Karnataka. She is the second daughter of well-known Kannada writer Shriranga. She migrated to Bombay and Bangalore for her higher education. She had published many anthologies of short stories and novels. She introduced Sarita as Saru who was the protagonist in *The Dark Holds No Terror*. She reflected an ordinary, simple, modest, humble, sensitive, middle-class woman, was aware of her own limitation but lacks self-confidence. She came across numerous hurdles from the beginning of her life. She grew up as a victim of her mother on gender-based preference. She played a secondary role in her family. Apart from the other problems that her own mother never excused her daughter for being alive even after her brother Dhruva had been drowned because of her, so she symbolized a victim of fate. Her mother's hysterical outburst, "You did it. You did this. You killed him ... You killed him. Why didn't you die? Why are you alive, when he's dead?" (191)

The words brutally tortured her for days, months, years, and all her life. Her mother cast a very weird and complex character in a relationship with her daughter. As a fate that she tried many attempts to save her brother but she couldn't succeed because she was a small girl then. So she was called a murderer and words wound her till the end. She never allowed her to go outside the house. Once Saru got the opportunity to go with her friend to the theatre and showed her anger toward her

parents for not giving any space. Deshpande observed how teenagers very frequently show their anger against their own parents, Saru also did it. Her ill-luck or fate completely deserted from her parents. Her mother admonished her again and again that she was the killer and that she should die. As a school-girl, she could not comprehend and tolerate the illogic accusation and became the symbol of sin for her brother's death. She completely stopped all her communication with her mother, while her mother stood against her in every possible way. Later she completed her higher education with the good marks and wished to join Medicine in Bombay, but her mother said that "What do you think ... your father's a millionaire" (142). He saved money only for his daughter's marriage, not an education. The protagonist could not get any single affection and love from her parents from childhood. These incidents were the real cause of her life to become a miserable one.

She was a thirst for love. She was a girl of great willpower and self-control. But chance it was that she met Manohar and fell in love with him at the very first look. She was not interested in cultural activities, but her friend Smita took her to the school function. She was attracted by Manohar's look and style; she observed "straight dark thick eyebrows. A firm chin ... Full lips, almost as full as a woman's. And that mannerism of his, of pushing his hair back from his forehead with one hand, showing off his slim and long fingers" (51). The fortune favoured in Saru's life perpetually through the meeting with him. But her aim was joining in the Medical College, so she escaped from the house. She recollected, "Reality was different and I never let it go, not for a moment. And that was my approaching exams, my studies, likely questions ... the reproductive system of a frog ... and what if I did not get a first class, after all?" (54)

Saru suppressed the feeling of friendship and love. By means of willpower and endeavour and her father's support, she joined the Medical College in Bombay. She had the prospects of becoming a doctor and lived a life of blissfulness. But misfortune played a crucial trick with her. She met Manohar in the college canteen where he was least expected. He was not a medical student but fate had sent him to her life to reopen the love in her heart. She met him in a canteen often and got the man of her dreams. She had never expected that he would react to her emotion so quickly. She recollected the words came from her own mother several times that she was not good-looking to attract anybody. She remembered her mother, "you will never be good looking. You are too dark for that ... Looking at yourself in the mirror! I'll give you a certificate to say that you're beautiful. Will that satisfy you?" (61)

Saru was naturally loved by the man of her dreams who came into her life. But she loved him blindly because she never had time to understand his character and his attitude. In fact, fate made her trap in his hands. One day Manu asked to her whether it would be more painful for her to be alienated from her parents, but being in blind love, she dismissed the fact entirely, "Do you know, Manu, how easy it is to cut the umbilical cord and separate the baby from the mother? Ligate, cut and it's done. There's scarcely any bleeding either" (39). She could speak in this manner only because she had been already isolated herself from her parents. They were already the past and meant nothing. The fate had created such environments that she was left with no chance to see things in the right perspective. She married a man who could not

afford to pay an amount to his house and also would not live a happy life. They lived a middle-class life in a rural environment. She remembered after things went twisted “I was eleven again and trapped in that strange room with those strange men and that friend of mine” (37).

The fate played in her life against her happiness absolutely. She was not allowed to live in peace even in the chawl. Her neighbours spoke about her life and stayed in the midst of the place. They openly asked for some help and took advantage of her condition. Unusual time, people knocked at the door and inquired Manu whether the doctor was at home. They wanted to consult the doctor for their children; Saru got respect and honour from the neighbours that made Manu suffer from inferiority complex. So her husband felt depressed and smaller than his wife. This happened almost daily. Later she realised that “this terrible thing has destroyed our marriage ... the esteem with which I was surrounded me made me inches taller. But perhaps, the same thing that made me inches taller, made him inches shorter” (Mohan 134).

Sarita had a busy time with her patients in her clinic. Naturally, she went home with tired and exhausted, and sometimes late too. Once there was an emergency case in a hospital so she was unable to convey the message to her husband about the situation. She reached home at late night and saw her husband in a silent mode, not spoke a single word. Her husband could not understand her situation and her feelings. Once again fate played her life in a different manner; this time made her husband at an inferior level in a public place. Saru’s correspondent daughter asked him openly how he felt when his wife earned more salary. Later she became M.D and opened a consult room in her house which gave a respect and status in the society. These incidents made her husband mentally and physically suffer. He could not walk casually in the road because his neighbours enquired about his job. But Saru was not the reason for that situation, the only reason was her fate.

Sarita was happy with her patients but in her house lived in a dejected state. She could not bear the violence from her husband every night. He looked at a common man in the daytime but at night he was different. He used his hands, nails and teeth to afflict pain to her physically and mentally. She could not escape from the situation because he appeared more powerful during the night. She could not even cry because she didn’t want the children to know about her pain. She wanted to leave the house completely and escape from the torture. She wanted to meet her father and had not thought about divorce from her husband. She could not think about physical pleasure with another man. She analysed the question to herself “wasn’t it always the solution for a woman who found no happiness with one man to try and find it with another” (DHNT 132). She had acknowledged herself to the chance and suggests a clear answer. She had feared that the quest for the common pleasure and joy might finally end up in shameful extra-marital sex because she knew that “the code word of our age is neither love nor romance, but sex” (Sree 59) which was completely a dirty word for her. Therefore she had to leave her hope on love and romance in her life which she had been the impressions to her, “suddenly I felt cold as if I was left alone in the middle of nowhere, one more hideout discovered, one more illusion destroyed” (DHNT 133). She had strengthened herself against the hands of fate.

Saru said to herself that her husband was a sadist, a wreck, a ruin, yet the question arose, 'divorce'. But she knew that it was not possible for her to do that for several reasons. First, she would not like to speak about the incidents happened in the bedroom. Her children named Renu and Abhi would be shocked by the discovery that would devastate their happiness. She didn't know what she should do. She was in such a state that if someone had told her what to do, she would have done immediately, without a second thought. But fate would not let her be free from the burdens of an insane husband. Finally, she took a decision to escape from him and had come live with her father, but she was treated in a hostile way in her father's house. Openly she asked her father, "Baba ... does it troubles you to have me here? Tell me if it does. I can go to a hotel" (18). But she entered the house with her father's silence sign. She moved towards the room but her father told that the room which was belonging Madhu's. The fate had created every situation in her life. So she entered the puja room and stayed there. She remembered her mother who had no room in her house.

She retreated into the kitchen to dress up, she sat in the dirty room to comb her hair and apply her kumkum, she slept in her bed like overnight guest in a strange place. And I have so much my mother lacked. But neither she nor I have that thing 'a room of our own'. (135)

She informed about her husband and her children. Her husband was mentally suffering from a sense of being inferior to his partner. She agreed, "Perhaps there is something in the male, she now thought, that is whittled down and ultimately destroyed by female domination" (85). She said sorry to everyone that had occurred to her brother Dhruva, her own mother and her husband, "my brother died because I heedlessly turned my back on him. My mother died alone because I deserted her. My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood" (217). Though she had not done anything knowingly, it is absolutely due to the fate which she had undergone. She was regretful because she had involved in all of these calamities though she was not responsible and purpose to do any harm any of them. It was completely due to fate, which was beyond her control.

Later she got the intimation that Manohar was coming from Bombay to fetch her; she packed her clothes in a suitcase to escape from her house. She informed her father that she was frightened of him not for what he has done to her, but for what she had done to him. Then, she requested her father not to open the door to her husband. Later, a boy came to her, tried to drag her by his hand, saying that his sister Sunita had fits and she would die if she did not go to his house immediately. Like a good doctor, she could not withhold herself from going there. But in this flurry of activity, it stuck to her that her husband Manohar was also a sick man, requiring treatment and that it would be doctor-like to desert him. Therefore, as she was leaving for retreatment, she informed her father to ask Manu to wait for her if he came in her absence. The chance of fortune had altered the course of her life by the chance of coming of Sunita's brother. Through her novel, the fate and chance played a very important role in every character's life. The protagonist Saru had been the target of fate. She could not live a happy life because happiness always escaped her. It was clearly proved that Shashi Deshpande's protagonist always tied in the hands of fate.

Works Cited

- Deshpande, Shashi. *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1980.
- Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1973.
- Mohan, T.M.J. Indra. *Shashi Deshpande: A Critical Spectrum*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2004.
- Sree, Sathupati Prasanna. *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande: A Study*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2003.