



***MEN'S PATHETIC CONDITION ON WOMEN'S RIGID DECISIONS PORTRAYED IN THE
NOVEL
THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS***

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ABSTRACT

A human being cannot survive in this world without life skills in this modern globalized world. The most vital life skill which each human being should possess is Decision Making. It plays a vital role in most personal as well as professional life. In families, wrong decisions in crucial situations have ruined the whole family. So here is the query, Does the rigid decision taken by a woman affect the man in the family in many ways? Does it affect the harmony of the family? If so, what could be the remedy to overcome it? The quest for the responses of these queries is explored in the renowned writer Shashi Deshpande's novel 'The Dark Holds No Terrors' (1980). Her novels express the need for emancipation, education and decision making of women and condition of men in today's scenario; Thereby Shashi Deshpande's novel 'The Dark Holds No Terror' is placed in discussion to get a better understanding of topic "Men's Pathetic condition on Women's Rigid Decisions".

Keywords: decision making, independent decisions, psychosomatic traumas, wrong decisions, psychological insight, crucial situations, family harmony.

INTRODUCTION

Man, to survive, he needs Life skills without which even a well - versed scholar cannot survive. It possesses a very valuable position in life, the most renowned life skills which each person has to possess after 'Communication' is 'Decision Making'. Decision making is the thought process of selecting a logical choice from the available options. When trying to make a good decision; a person must weigh the positives and negatives of each option, and consider all the alternatives. For effective decision making, a person must be able to forecast the outcome of each option as well and based on all these terms, determine which option is best for that particular situation.

'Decision - making' stands as the foremost skill in the life skills according to WHO which is identified by 'Delphi Method'. Making decisions in life is a difficult job. Throughout our life, we've to make decisions that affect our future. In fact, the decisions we make today will not only affect our future, but also the people around us. Decision making involves thinking, talking and searching

information related to the problems. We can do this by talking with others who can help us or knows about the topic, we'll go to the library or we'll discuss two or more solutions. This is common in business and studies. But when deciding things comes in a family, we should use it wisely with them knowing the values of each and every family member in mind. Decision making usually occurs when the events, habits, and patterns of our life change.

When it turns to favor one member and turning down the other, destroys the family. So here is the inquiry. Does the rigid decision taken by a woman in a family affect the man in the family in many ways? Does it affect the harmony of the family? If so what could be the remedy to overcome it? The quest for the responses of these queries is explored in the renowned writer Shashi Deshpande's novel 'The Dark Holds No Terrors' (1980).

While talking about women characters, Shashi Deshpande states about the decision taken by the women in this society as follows in an interview to Vanamala Vishwanath:

"My characters take their own ways. I have heard people saying we should have strong women characters. But my writing has to do with women as they are. Most of the women I've known are like that – their decisions are made for them. Due to being overprotected, they are people think one way and do another. (235)"

Shashi Deshpande is one of the most proficient Contemporary Indian Women writers in English. She was born in Dharwad, Karnataka in 1938. She is the second daughter of the famous dramatist 'Shriranga'. She was exposed to and influenced by British classic texts at the very young age. Her first collection of stories *Legacy* was published in 1978. Some of the important novels of the author are *The Dark Holds no Terrors* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come up and Be dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1988), *The Binding Vine* (1992), *Matter of Time* (1992) and many. In that '*That Long Silence*' won her *Sahitya Academy* award in 1990 made her visible to all.

"Her novels eclectically employ the postmodern technique of deconstructing patriarchic culture and customs, and revealing these to be the man-made constructs". (Atrey, Mukta, and Kirpal, 15)

Human relationship and their issues and consequences play a vital role in most of the Shashi Deshpande's works. The cultural norm and customs of the society when stops a woman's progress, clearly affects her physically and psychologically. This system of our society is clearly deconstructed in most of the novel of the author is clearly mirrored to us, from the above lines. This man-made customs and their traditions affect not only the women but also the men in the society. Some of the customs make men too to be submissive in certain situations which later reflects in them in various ways.

P.D. Nimsarkar accurately positions the theme of author's novels thus

"Deshpande is concerned with people, the women and their relationships with others, like husbands, parents, children and sons and daughters. She has faithfully tried to construct womanhood in the contemporary context, society and the world" (P.D. Nimsarkar 114).

In her novel 'The Dark Holds No Terrors' (1980). She redrafts the role of women and the search for their own self and the quest for their life. She portrays the future of each woman in this novel, their

decisions twist and turns in their life based on those decisions and also portrays how the customs play its role in their decisions. But the role it plays in the life of each man in her novels was less portrayed. So this is a new stab to focus the problems faced by the men in families. Every decision was taken by a woman always has its impact on the man in the family; it may be a positive impact or the negative one. In this novel. Each and every decision is taken by Sarita and her mother, the men in the family and the men around them suffer. This paper especially limelights the problems faced by men characters like Manu, Saru's father, Madhav, and Padmakar by the unbending decision taken by the women characters Saru and Saru's mother in this novel.

DISCUSSION

In this novel, 'The Dark Holds No Terrors' (1980) the author portrays the psychological traumas faced by Saritha the protagonist of the novel. The role played her mother, father and her husband (Manu) and her friends Smitha and Nalu on Saru's decisions and how it frames her future. But, here our study focus falls on the victims of the female character's rigid decisions and how it affects the voiceless male in the family. The condition of a male was showcased with the help of the male characters Saru's father, Manohar (Manu), Madhav and Padmakar from the novel "The Dark Holds No Terror" (1980)

"No, no, nothing like that. But I didn't know..... I mean, I never imagined.....'. His words trailed away. Suddenly she knew. It was his loyalty to the dead woman. He could not welcome her because that meant treachery to the dead" (*The Dark Holds No Terror, P.19*)

The above lines were uttered by Saru about her father when she returned home. Saru felt that her father doesn't welcome her wholeheartedly when she came home. She felt that even though her mother is dead, her father was still under her words. Saru's mother hated her and never welcomed her back till her death. She felt that he also felt the same, as letting her in, would hurt his wife even after her death. Even though he loved his daughter, he never said any word against his wife's decision about Saru once. Avoiding Saru until the time of her death is acceptable, but even after knowing about his daughter and her family, their place of existence he never tried to reconcile with them at least once. That's where the strong decision of Saru's mother played its part with Saru's father.

"She had quarreled with all of Baba's family after his father's death Yet it left its mark on our lives. We never had uncles, aunts, cousins as other children" (*The Dark Holds No Terror, P.26*)

He never crossed her decisions in any situations. It happened once that Saru's mother fought with all her husband's relatives for a piece of land which lead Saru and Dhruva to grow up without any relatives. But, that is no big deal for Saru's father; he too didn't meet his relatives after that incident. Saru's mother decided that no one in her family will be meeting his relatives, even knowing that the mistake is on his wife's part, he accepted it, without opposing it but, that made him a weak character.

"you know I have two children?"

.....
 'I know'" (*The Dark Holds No Terror, P.20*)

When Saru came back to her father's home after fifteen years, she said that she's having two kids. But she's engaged for a second when she comes to know that her father is aware of her family. Those words 'I know' infuriated her. Even knowing the details about his daughter's family he did not take any step to reconcile. Not even tried to convince his wife once to visit them, the worst scenario was even after his wife's death he never tried once to visit or reach them. In accordance with his wife's rigid decision he never met his daughter or her family for a very long time.

"Father neither prescribed nor favored my trip. Instead, he said, 'Ask Bimmy'." (Mango – colored Fish. P.3)

As Shari's father, Saru's father too failed to take important decisions in his daughter's life. Both the fathers failed to support their daughters in the most crucial situations. Because of their silence both the daughters suffered in their lives. Both the fathers did not speak when they were much needed and anticipated by their daughters. Both Shari and Saru longed for their fathers' support and agonized lacking their support in their lives.

"As long as you can have your own way, you aren't bothered by anything at all. Your own brother.....
'No,' he said loudly.
'..... she let him drown..... '
'I said no!'" (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.145)

Saru's father did not stop her mother from blaming Saru for Dhruva's death. Even though he knows that it is an accident, he never tried to bring his assumption to his wife's knowledge. He fought back with her decision for the first time for Saru's higher studies. Meanwhile in that argument too Saru's mother won. He could send Saru for her higher studies. But he could not let her live in peace on relieving her from the blame his wife cast on her. He helped her to reach her dreams to become a doctor, but he couldn't present his daughter a peaceful life. He did fight for her studies with his wife but not for Saru's marriage, which made all to suffer in various ways.

"Would there never be someone who cared? Would it always be this way..... a stranger watching her torment

He stared at her for a few moments then walked away" (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.183)

The above words were the thinking of Saru, she told her real purpose of her arrival to her father. The truth broke him, but his reaction to her argument made her feel so. She felt unsecured. Even though he helped her to become a doctor, he failed as a father, because he made her feel that way of not being cared, not being supported even at the time of distress. He decided once, that changed her life, gave her a family, but the peaceful life lost its air because she's not supported by her father.

"The authoritarian character of the traditional joint family entails decision making powers concentrated, in the position of the eldest male members" (Rao 1982)

As stated above by Rao mostly the eldest male holds the decision authority in most of the families. But being the eldest male of the family Saru's father could not decide anything on his daughter's issues. If he had decided something at the right time Saru would not have suffered this loneliness or trauma which was making her life miserable. He too would have spent valuable time with his

grandchildren. Being the eldest male of the family he failed to hold the decisional authority of his family. He failed to discuss the positive and negatives in his wife's decision. This made his daughter to suffer a miserable life and his position critical.

“I never blamed you’

He stressed the ‘I’ now for the first time, she looked up at him.” (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.193)

Saru's father broke out for the first time seeing his daughter's distress. Her helpless condition made him come out of the decision zone built by his wife. For the first time, he said that he never thought that she was responsible for her brother's death. He said that he believes that, she is innocent and that was just an accident and he also consoled his daughter saying not to take the blames for which she is not responsible. He also tried his best to bring her out of the guilt.

“That's all past and done with, I'm speaking now. I'm asking you, pleading with you.
..... Don't go without meeting your husband. Talk to him. Tell him what's wrong.”

“I told you once Saru..... Your mother is dead. So is your brother. Can't you let the dead go?”
(*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.217)

At last, only her father's words consoled Saru, made her reconsider her decision to not meeting her husband again. He opened up saying that he never was there for her or taken care of her and confesses that he left all the decision to her mother in her life. But he reconsiders his decision and opens up to his daughter. He advised Saru not to take the blame for her mother's or brother's death. He explained the scenario to her and that helped her to come out of her psychological trauma which stopped her from talking with her husband. Reconsideration of Saru's father's decision obviously saved her as well as her family from getting destroyed.

“It was heaven, in spite of the corridors smelling of urine, And we were happy.”
(*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.40)

Manu (Manohar) is a loving husband and a very responsible father being a literature student in his college and being a professor, he lives in the fancy world. The above lines were Saru's explanation about her happiness on her married life with Manu. In spite of all the inconveniences, they were leading their life happily in Bombay. The problem aroused when Saru became famous in their place, it first started affecting their privacy. Later her fame made him feel truncated. It made him weak, which he always tried not to reveal in front of other people.

“How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?
.....
And even then, when that girl said it, we just laughed, all three of us.”
(*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.200)

It all started with that interview that made things worse, the woman who came to take an interview of Saru, she desperately mocked Manu by showcasing Saru as the major breadwinner of the family, made him feel truncated. He was psychologically down. He never revealed his thoughts or his inferiority that haunted him from inside. He was very casual in that interview. But his inferiority complex took another form to reveal itself. It made him a sexual sadist, made him assault Saru physically every day. That made her condition worse.

“‘If you had married a doctor,’ the wife said tartly, You’d have gone to Ooty too.” (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.111)

He started to assault Saru every night that made their life miserable. Whenever somebody talks about his earnings and mocks at it, he becomes violent and starts to attack Saru. He thinks of himself as a failure and low in standard. He gets an inferiority complex whenever his wife was praised for her profession or on her income. He never talks about that to his wife. But it led him to a different level of psychological trauma. But the most important fact is that he never knows what he does to Saru at night. If she has bruises due to the attack on the previous night, he will feel bad for that and without knowing the fact will advise her to be careful while doing her work.

“Another occasion of the release of unpleasure, which occurs with no less regularity, is to be found in the conflicts and dissensions that takes place in the mental apparatus while the ego is passing through its development into more highly composite organizations. Almost all the energy with which the apparatus is filled arises from its innate instinctual impulses.” (Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure principle*, P.4)

It is clearly stated by Sigmund Freud that when the ego of the person reaches its extremity in his mental apparatus, which if not properly treated with the reality, will affect the person in a peculiar way. The same happened with Manu. His ego was not served properly with perfect explanations and when he ate many mockeries his situation becomes worse. He thinks that all the decision Saru takes was due to her superiority in earning. As he loves Saru and family he never revealed his inner thoughts to her. That made him reveals his anger and frustrations to burst out in the most psychological way.

"We don't have to worry about a loan anymore.

Why?

Boozie's me the money.

All of it?

Yes, all of it

Why? The word, the question seemed to hang in the air" (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.87)

Poor Manu loved his wife and family suffered inside from not talking about his problem to his wife, especially when it comes to money. When she is doing her masters in medicine her professor Boozie helped her to study, he also helped her to open her new clinic for which he paid the whole rent money. This puzzled Manu a lot but he could not question her decisions or decide on his own in preventing her from getting money from him. His inferiority complex started to haunt him after this incident; it made the situation much shoddier. Even though he tried his best to reconcile with the normal situation, each time it takes its new form and haunts him. Thus it makes him another victim of the decisions made by the woman.

“A pair of bullocks yoked together ... a clever phrase, but can it substitute for the reality?”(That Long Silence, P.8)

As mentioned above the husband and wife should be like the two bullock carts yoked together for the family cart to go on the right path without any problem. In reality, it does not work the way it

was mentioned above. Even when Manu considers them equal the society splits them in the name of status (financially). Even though he does not shows his feeling of affront outside. It really hurt him a lot from inside. It is true that if both the man and woman are to run a family should be in equal status or else it affects them not only physically even mentally (especially when women earns better than men). This state is clearly portrayed in Manu's behavior.

“Women play a crucial role in the economic welfare of the family..... they are involved in and many other factors.” (Reddy and Narayan 1987)

Women of these days not only help their husbands manually but also financially. The financial support offered by husbands were taken as the most normal one in our society but if the help was offered from his better half it is not considered as a normal one. Even though Manu do not bother about the financial difference, the society questions him and makes fun of him of lower financial support from his side. That builds a trauma inside him. It reflected in each and every action of his. Thus even the small decisions of Saru started to affect him and brought a drastic change in his behavior. It made him feel inferior.

“I had refused to think about it, but I knew I told myself, sickened at the same time by my complacency.” (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.130)

The above lines were uttered by Saru about her friend Padmakar, another weak male who pawns at the hand of a female, again falls for her decision. He is a famous doctor could not reason out her approach or her avoidance over him. He is totally into her when she decides to spend time with him. Later when she decides to end their meeting, he revealed his pathetic situation that he really needs Saru in his life. But he never questioned either her attachment or her departure from him.

“It gives me pleasure, Sarita. It’s an innocent happiness after all, isn’t it?” (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.132)

It becomes a habit for Padmakar to visit Saru. He could never justify his habit nor resist himself from it. He desperately wants her to be with him. He cannot give a binding intention of what he does, but when Saru refuses and put an end to their meetings, he couldn’t question her on her decision, yet surrendered to what she said. He proves himself weak at this point of the novel. Saru’s decision takes the priority in meeting him too. It has become a habit for Padmakar to visit Saru but he could never justify his habit nor resist himself from it.

“‘Madhav’s father,’ Baba went on, ‘is a priest and a very learned man, he wanted Madhav to follow in his footsteps. But Madhav,’ and now he smiled at the boy, ‘has his own plan’” (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.30)

The above lines portray another most important character in this novel. Madhav, the boy who lives with Saru’s father for five years. He studies in college. Madhav’s father was a priest; his father wanted him to be a priest too. But Madhav loved to become an accountant. So he walked out of his home against his father’s wish and decided to study what he wants. Madhav was a common friend between Saru and her father on the starting days of Saru’s arrival. Saru first saw him as a rival but later accepted him into her family. He made her talk with her father. He helped them to reconcile.

“No,” he said putting the towel away. His face was grim. ‘Satish has disappeared’.” (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.207)

Being a very wise person, he could not decide what to do with his brother. Whenever he tried to reveal about his brother to his father. It is his mother who always stops him from saying things to his father. Even though he is clever he could not go against his mother's decision at his home. This led his brother to leave the town, and he gets scolding from his father because of his mother's decision. He never even spoke against Saru's mother's decision in the house in which he lives now.

“I can't spoil my life, because of that boy. It's my life after all.” (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.208)

Even after getting the scolding from his father, Madhav's mother wants him to go to Bombay in search of his brother. But this time he never accepted her decision instead, he said to his mother that he will try and come back. His decision was very clear this time. He said he is not wasting his time searching the boy. He also said that it is his life and he does not want his mother's decision to spoil his career. His wise decision gave Saru a positive inspiration to lead her life.

CONCLUSION

All the men characters in the novel revolve round and round the decisions are taken by the female characters in the novel. Saru's father, if once had discussed or questioned about the decision taken by his wife or the assumptions she had about Saru, they would not have spent their 15 years aloof without anyone to look after. They would have even had some good time spent with their daughter and grandchildren. If he discussed with Saru's mother earlier she would have had a chance to see her grandchildren before she died. Maybe Saru's mother would have forgotten all the grudges she had on Saru if she had met her grandson Abi who resembles Dhuruv (her dead son). All this went in vain only because they resisted themselves from discussing the decision taken by Saru's mother and following it without questioning. Later Saru's father rectified his mistakes and helped his daughter to walk out of her psychosomatic trauma and helped her reconcile with her husband and children.

“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.” (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.199)

The above lines of Saru's father clearly portray the inner voice of each male character in the novel. This suits all the male characters in this novel. If Saru's father asked his wife to reconsider her sturdy decision of not meeting Saru, she would have had a chance to meet her grandchildren at least once before her death. If Manu discussed things openly especially the money issues or the other complexities he had with Saru at least once or shared about the inconvenience he experienced when she decided to receive money from Boozie. They would have ended up with a better solution. The inferiority and insecurity would have been easily rectified. Padmakar if decided wise, he would have found the happiness from his own family. Even Madhav did not escape from his mother's rigid decisions but later he framed his own future by deciding wisely. The condition of the men characters clearly portrays that men suffer due to women's rigid decisions. The very solution is instead of accepting all the decisions given by the woman of the family as such, it can be analyzed and discussed so that it stops serving the ego of the decision maker, instead works for best to the family's positive progress. The decision taken in the families affects the individual psychologically more than

the decisions taken at the workplace, as the former is personal and the latter is professional, so nourishing and healthy discussions should be endured and wise decisions should be taken by both the man and woman for the welfare of the family.

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