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THE DARK HOLDS NO TERROR: AN URGE FOR CONFRONTATION

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The Dark Holds No Terror: An Urge for Confrontation

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Abstract – The very article aims at interpreting Shashi Deshpande's novels – The Dark Holds No Terrors from the feminist perspective. It won't be wrong to claim that most of Indian novels which deal with woman's issues offer various problems pertaining to women and end up glorifying the stereotypical virtues, like devotion, patience and meek acceptance of whatever is meted out to a women. Women, who constitute a half of the world's population, are not treated equally with men. They are made to suffer meekly in a male dominated society. Women are supposed to behave as their parents and husbands demand. They are not expected to give their opinions on several issues.

Keywords: Woman, Adolescent, Sex, Liabilities, Embarrassment

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The Dark Holds No Terrors is a sharp voice against the traditional concept that everything in a girl's life shaped to that single purpose of pleasing a male. The very title of the novel strongly, presents the need for confrontation in point of light and darkness. The novel describes the story of a marriage which is on the verge of end. The protagonist sarita (Called Saru) the "Two-in-one woman" is a successful doctor during day time, and a "Terrified trapped animal" at night. Her husband, Manohar (called Manu) an English teacher, who saw the world from a male-centered perspective, proves a shocker to Saru. She craves to become an independent and wants to have an identity of her own. She says : "My life is my own". (p.220) Somehow she feels as if she had found it now the connecting link . " It means you are not just a strutting grimacing puppet, standing futilely on the stage for a brief while between areas of darkness"(p.220)The novel opens with Saru after fifteen years to her father's house. The rest of the novel is flash back of past things and a short confession to the father whom she had occasionally communicated before. The stay at her father's home after a chance to her have a look her relationship with the husband her dead mother, dead brother Dhruva and her children. Although Saru remains unchanged till the end but she gets a better look of herself and others. She becomes enough courageous to cope with the world. The dark which used to be a horror for saru, no longer holds any terror to her now.

It is noteworthy to watch that Saru's change in attitude towards marriage related and sex. Although Saru had known and loved many but still she was quite afraid of the thought of marriage. It was perhaps the fear of sex, or loss of liberty. But the reality proved difference.

In spite of shabby atmosphere of their small room, sex seemed a clean act. As an adolescent, sex was a shame then an embarrassment, then a source of pride, and after marriage a matter of enjoyment.

Saru feels much insulted at the thought of being used and reduced to "a dark, damp, smelly hole". Saru observes sex as a dirty word and the experience a terror, in fact an insult to her, with her hectic schedule, and domestic liabilities, she recoils from Manu's love making, and he takes Saru's ignorance of sex as rejection of himself.

So Saru comes out as a new woman who can control herself and shed her passivity. Describing free woman, Maria Mies says:

'The non-conforming conduct of the women is the consequence of an external necessity but of changed consciousness. They are not satisfied with the rhetoric of equality between man and women, but want to see that the right to an individual life and the development of their capabilities are realized in their own lives'. (Mies : 32)

The novelist is aggrieved to notice ways of subordinating women by male members of the society. Economic dearth and rape are main instruments engaged to curb the impulsive growth of a woman

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