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Reforming Beliefs

FAMILY, A MANACLE OF FEMALE: AN APPRAISAL**Dr. A. Parvatha Varthini****ABSTRACT**

This paper aims at bringing self-determination to female from the accountabilities given to them or forced on them even by women sometimes with or without their own knowledge. Shashi Deshpande, an evident novelist to deal with familial life and women's predicaments is taken for this assessment. The novels of Deshpande illuminate disharmony in man-woman relationship. Indian woman has carried the burden of family, slaved for her husband and children, without minding whether the family is extended or nuclear. Sarita alias Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is an apt example who earns more than her husband Manu that is the cause of her despair in life. Another novel of Shashi Deshpande chosen for this evaluation is *A Matter of Time*, a three generation story in which Kalyani is one of the most important characters in her novels. In this paper feministic approach is applied to bring out female's pathetic condition in the patriarchal society. Even though in this twenty first century it seems that female are given freedom to acquire more space in all the fields like astronaut, politics and so on, they are not considered human beings and their feelings and emotions are not appreciated properly

Family, a backbone of the societies but a handcuff of females, it has made them lost their identity, individuality, independence and recognition. They are burdened in the name and fame of family and society. Men, free birds after shouldering their responsibilities on the women at home, live gladly whereas women lead their life who pass their time by doing work after work without having time to even panting. Women's dreams are hallucination and their life is illusion. It is especially marital relationship that leads to or causes many problems in family. Shashi Deshpande, a prominent novelist in Indian Writing in English was born in 1938 at Dharwad in Karnataka – daughter of renowned Kannada writer and Sanskrit scholar Adya Rangachar – known as Sriranga, has been giving her voice for women's quandaries. She is not against marital life but she has just shown the difficulties in marital life in her novels.

Shashi Deshpande has said in an article that: "Many women are silenced by lack of time". Even though women are literate and employee now in the modern society, there are not more changes in their attitudes. Many women go to work because of economical conditions to meet with men. Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is an apt case who earns more than her husband Manohar alias Manu that is the cause of her desolation in life. She is an educated, self-confident and professionally competent who is conscious of the difficulty in the patriarchal Indian society. She is trapped herself in the net of family who earns for her family, feed them including her husband and at the same time, a victim of Manu, her husband. The reason behind her victimization is patriarchy and men's egoism. Here Manu's egoism causes her more troubles and he torments her physically. Here, the feministic view is functional to display women's position in this male-dominated social order.

Saru's mother has made her feel a stranger in her own house and perpetuated patriarchy by discriminating against her own daughter. Her mother shows male child preference that is the reason for Saru's hatred towards her mother. Saru, against her mother's will has chosen medicine for her higher studies and married a man from low caste of her own choice. Her husband is also a hindrance to her who slays her peacefulness and happiness. His inferiority complex kills him slowly and torments his mind that has made him torture his wife physically in bed at night times. Even though Saru comes to know his misbehavior, she is in the position of not taking any action against him as a female as well as it is her choice cited by her father at the time of her approach in need of his suggestion for her problem. And she is afraid that their quarrel in the family may affect her children's life and their growth. This is what an Indian woman's situation that suppression of feelings and emotions and thinking that expression of those will affect others - an obstacle to her growth and individuality.

The novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* endeavours the post-modern dilemma of a woman Saru who strongly resents the ambush on her individuality and identity. Saru's mother and Manu represent the values and norms established a patriarchal society. In relation to her brother Dhruva, Saru's status is belittled in the family. When he is alive, he is the apple of her mother's eyes whereas Saru is neglected. Saru is affected much by her mother's male-child preference. Later she is blamed for his death. The guilt is stamped on her mind that even after long years she

is guilt ridden. Her mother once again torments her by projecting the values of a male-dominated society. Saru smashes the umbilical cord once for all and departs home. She unties herself from one trap and enters into another. So, a female is not able to escape completely from the handcuff cursed on them in the male dominated society.

Saru's husband is a sadist who bullies her while she provides bread and butter to her family. He feeds on her earning and tortures her both physically and mentally. Manu's male ego is hurt by his inferiority complex. He cannot bear people greeting his wife when he is not given respect by the same people. His masculinity asserts itself through nocturnal sexual assaults upon his wife. Saru qualms the permanence of human relationship and familial ties: "It is all a fraud then the eternal cry of ... my husband, my life, my children, my parents? Are all human relationships doomed to be a failure? [176]". She wants to get relieved from her husband's torture of sexual abuse. So, she goes to her parental home after fifteen years of married life where the story of the novel begins.

Saru comes to know that neither her husband nor her father can be her refuge. There is never a comforting touch or a stretching hand to help her that is required to face the situation courageously. She wishes her father to help but he points out that it is she who has to decide herself, and advises her not to avoid facing her problems. Yes, for female life is full of problems from birth to death. How many of female infants are killed per day and every day, somewhere the female are harassed, seduced and murdered? Why is female alone victimized most of the time, because of her secondary place or biological weakness? Here, Saru is victimized because of her husband's dissatisfaction of male ego and inferiority who could not tolerate his wife's identity in this society.

Female has education, economic independence and marital well-being but in most of the cases marriage seems to have failed or reached destruction in their life. Saru suffers right from her childhood as she has avarice for power that Premila Paul has observed that: "Saru is highly self-willed and her problems ensue because of her outsized ego and innate love for power over others [61]". At the time of her brother Dhruva is given first preference, she begins to rebel against patriarchy and develops her skills. She overtakes her husband as a famous doctor whereas he is an average lecturer in a college. She could not come across the secondary place of

female in the society as well as at home, given by her mother. The suppressions of prolonged feelings and emotions come out once she is degraded and ill-treated by her mother and tormented by her husband through which she has shown her feminism of quitting both places.

Shashi Deshpande's another novel *A Matter of Time* is a three generation story, the first generation is represented by Kalyani, the second is led by Sumi, Kalyani's heir, and the third by Aru, Sumi's daughter. The major part of the novel is devoted to the attempts of the relatives to find out why Gopal has deserted his family so irresponsibly. Kalyani is one of the most important characters delineated as "a weak, feeble creature", who returns to her birth place as "a deserted wife" and "a disgrace to the family [154]", her mother says. Her marriage with Shripati, her maternal uncle, is an arranged one purely on relation of convenience to avoid the property from going away. She is compelled by her frightened mother to marry her uncle. Her married life is a failure with the lose of her mentally retarded son, Madav whom Shripati has thought his heir next to him and loved him as he is the only male child of their generation.

Shripati, the youngest brother of Manorama, is rendered help by Vithalrao, as he has no son of his own. Vithalrao recognizes Shripati's intelligence and ambition making him a lawyer by educating him. It is Manorama, Kalyani's mother, who exploits this indebtedness of her brother and in order to prevent the property going away from her family, gets her daughter married to him. The dispossession of the family of a son prolongs through Kalyani and Shripati to Sumi and Gopal, the second generation couple. Because of the lack of male-child, Sumi's destruction of life is also same as Kalyani's. Gopal has been longing for a son that is understood through his words with the lawyer, Surekha, the best counselor of Aru. He has thought that son will be with him forever, being his best companion in his old age, unload his burden in the name of male's responsibility whereas daughters are belonging to another family who will take the role of wives and being a burden of parents in many families and in the society. This type of male's thoughts and given secondary place make female to revolt for their identity against patriarchy. The patriarchal modes of thinking and norms subordinate women in familial, religious, political, economical, social, legal and artistic domains. This patriarchal ideology teaches women to internalize these concepts in the process of socialization.

The discrimination between a male and a female is more pronouncedly taken up by the novelist that is said: "... the examination of the intersections of gender and class as experienced by Indian women, point an attempt to articulate notions of community and 'parameters of solidarity' and simultaneously suggest 'strategies of resistance' [Naik 54]". Besides, portraying gender discrimination and violence against woman, she makes severe attack on the arranged marriage. Urmila in *The Binding Vine* calls arranged marriage an absolutely cold blooded affair because in such a marriage the girl's feelings are ignored and she suffers and remain vanquished throughout her life. Here Kalyani's marital life is also a miserable one and she is neglected by Shripati. A woman pines for love and understanding in marriage. Instead, she is made to suffer of fear. Kalyani is the best example for this category. Deshpande implies that a marriage based on fear can never be happy.

There is a term called Sanyasa in Indian society especially for men and it may be a final stage in their life, makes their escaping from familial responsibilities or ties easy. Here a reviewer of the novel has mentioned that: "Gopal's desertion of his family signifies of the renunciation freeing himself of all bondage [Keerthi 22]". Gopal's action of desertion is not just a misfortune; it is both a shame and a disgrace to the family. Sumi, Gopal's wife in this novel, a victim after his departure feels dead and parasite of her parents. In her life, it is the first time that she searches for a rental house in order to give a good and comfortable life to her daughters as well as to drop off the burden of her parents in the age of forties. Her only support after Gopal is her first daughter Aru, very young, elegant and smart girl of modern age too suffers with her mother. She crushes her desires by uploading the familial problems into her mind. And also she has lost the interest of getting married after witnessing her grandmother and mother's life abandoned and spoiled by their husbands respectively, Shripati and Gopal.

Kalyani of *A Matter of Time* is the most pathetic character who has made the readers' mind melt and heavy who lives under the same roof as a derelict wife of Shripathi for more than thirty years. He has neglected her from his life but not from the homely responsibilities. She is always doing work after work, roaming around the house, taking care of her members in the family, friends of her husbands and relatives. How the responsibilities in a family changes the fate of females and turn their identity totally is shown through the characters Kalyani, the first

generation head, Sumi, the second generation leader and Aru, the third generation heroine in this novel and how get them upset and lost their harmonious life for the sake of the rest in the family. The novelist conveys an important message that suppression, depose and exploitation are not confined to the male-female relationship, but exist between female-female relationships as well. Girls are considered as belonging to a different family altogether. In this way women are underestimated that they are parents' burden to drop to another family and nothing is beneficial of having female children and to say something proud of them in the male – centered society.

Thus, a girl has to adjust herself twice first in her father's house and then in her father's - in-law house. A woman is not having any choice of having her own house or home and not allowed to live alone in the society. Her hands are tied tightly with thick iron like gadget of social norms enforced by men and sometimes by women too. Who is the safeguard for their identity and individuality and ready to listen to her words of feelings and emotions? In the fast moving world even non-living things are given much importance rather than the women's feelings, emotions and desires. It is in every woman's hand to give voice for her own troubles and to get it solved.

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