

## **Conflict of Self in Shashi Deshpande's the Dark Holds No Terror and Margaret Laurence's a Jest of God**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is an attempt to state the role of women in the two novels. There are two novels taken into account to state the obstacles confronted by woman in the society. The dilemma faced by woman is vividly expressed through the character of Saru in 'The Dark Holds No Terror' and Rachel in 'A Jest of God'. The arena is different. But the voices of the protagonist is same. They just wanted to come out of the stress they underwent for the past few years. Margaret Laurence portrayed woman character as self-willed, strong and capable of overcoming the situation. The characters themselves find ways to sort out the issues. They may think that they are the reasons for being a victim in the society. In the course of time, they refuse to be a victim. Rachel who is a spinster, started searching her identity in the midst of her commitments. Saru in 'The Dark Holds No Terror' shatters by the behavior of her husband. She boldly decided to face her husband and determined to question him openly for his change in his behaviour. At the end of the novel she was grit to break the silence between her and her husband. There is an affinity in the discussed two novels. Both writers speaks about the relationship of the protagonist with their mothers. Mother and daughter relationship is pictured in a two different environment.

**Keywords:** alienation, rapport, sufferings, loneliness, dilemma

Today fiction has received a universal approbation and distinction. Fiction is the most influential form of literary expression which has attained a significant stand in Indian English literature. Most of us agree that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experiences and notions in the context of our time. Fiction writings in India occupy its suitable position in the arena of literature. The emergence of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao was the most noteworthy event in the monarchy of Indian English fiction. They heralded Indo-English fiction. These novelists initiated writing in the middle of 1930. Bhabani Bhattacharyya, a contemporary novelist but he began fiction writing in the post-independence period.

The writings of the mentioned novelists paved the right way to the English fiction in India. They put forth a correct direction to the Indian English novel. They found an entirely new atmosphere for Indo-English fiction. They recognised the possibilities, the methodologies, the conception of the character, theme's qualities which identified the Indian novel with its distinctiveness. They laid a strong foundation for fiction form. Each aspect supports to impart Indian experience with its rareness and individualism.

Among the other novelists experimenting with Indian writing in English, Shashi Deshpande has a distinctive place in the Indian writing in English. She is uniquely Indian, and her use of words presents the customs and traditions of the people of India, and she does not write for foreign readers. She is fundamentally Indian and writes for the Indians.

Deshpande is a prominent and prolific writer in India. Her themes attract considerable interest among the readers. She communicates not only themes such as human problems but also their issues through her novels. It efficiently conducts the readers as they correlate with their life experience. She successfully interprets the Indian women as she handles the unique themes affecting the lives of womenfolk minutely, courageously and sensitively. Her works are an essential asset of Indian writing.

Shashi Deshpande was born in Dharwad in 1938. Dharwad is a small town in Karnataka, India. She has received awards as an Indian novelist. The second daughter of the most famous Kannada dramatists cum writer called Sriranga is Shashi Deshpande. Her father was called as 'the Bernard Shaw of the Kannada theatre' who was the famous playwright in Kannada theatre. She was educated in Bombay and Bangalore and received her post-

graduate degree in English from the University of Mysore. Her husband was a neuropathologist. She visited England with her husband in the year 1969. The visit to England influenced her stories. She recounted all her experiences through her short stories. The visit to England helped her to gain these experiences. Deshpande got her degrees not only in law but also in economics. She pursued a course at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on journalism and worked as a journalist in the magazine 'onlooker' for two months.

Her novels generally have females as the central character. They are directed readers to call her a campaigner of feministic view. She did like being named herself as a feminist writer. She feels that it may limit her works with the label. She states that she writes novels which analyses the experiences of people in exact settings. She did not write her novels for any debate or for doing any argument and does not have any intention of making it into a thesis. The view of feminism on her works may label or imprison her works with the same.

The human relationship in Shashi Deshpande's novels are lovely and beautifully drawn. She presents the middle class educated woman in her novels. It may be the reason that she hails from a middle-class family or the larger section in the Indian society, which fill with a middle-class woman. Generally, her novels begin with an actual marriage which leads to the problems of alienation, accommodation and adjustment

Deshpande has magnificently depicted an existing, cultured, career-conscious middle-class woman. They are shrewd to the shifting era and surroundings. She reveals an incredible perception into a woman's psyche by representing a woman in different roles-daughter, wife, mother and an individual who search for her individuality. Shashi Deshpande contributes by depicting the problems and dilemmas, trials and misfortunes of the women who belong to the middle class of Indian society. She does not give her female characters a handy result for their situations from dejection to hopefulness through a route of self-searching and self-examination, through boldness and flexibility.

'The Dark Holds No Terror' (1980) is her first novel which won the Sahitya Academy Award. The novel deals with the problems of a career woman and her marital limitations. The novel is translated into Russian and German. Deshpande shows marriage as a male-controlled intuition subjugating women to a lifetime of male supremacy. While revealing the exertions of the educated, married woman in contemporary Indian society,

Deshpande wants to picture the educated men who are snobs and prejudiced.

In 'The Dark Holds No Terror', Sarita's life is always mistreated and disregarded. Manohar's male ego tries to control Sarita eventually results in the breakdown, that Sarita is an individual not a dependent but a being capable of enduring trails in life alone. Her identity is no longer in terms of the identity of her male counterpart. She epitomises the middle-class working woman in modern India who tries to rebel against the traditions but ultimately tries to compromise with the current reality.

The novel 'The Dark Holds No Terror' is about the reflection of woman's aspirations. In other words, it mirrored the image of the discord and disillusionment of an educated woman who came from a traditional background. It also talks about 'Indian society' which is the theme of the novel, in a louder way. The heroine of the novel is perplexed with the dilemma and a long drawn contemplation. The prime idea or theme of the novel is women's exploration for quest for identity. The writer in an interview shared her view about the characters existing in the novel. As for as the characters are concerned, they are with their 'selves' and they learn to be genuine to themselves.

It is prominent to talk about Indian society. The society have many faces. It is built by men and for men. It is imposed with many restrictions and rules. All the rules and regulations applicable for both. But the implementation of those is only for women. In the name of culture and tradition, the so called society limits the growth of women and suppresses them to the core.

Nowadays women are said to have been treated equally and share the rights equally with men, but marriage and motherhood remain the prime goals of a girl's life. Her personal achievements are pales down before her marital status. It shows the dependency on man after her marriage. Marriage is a tool to ensure female suppression and ensure male superiority and prevent any questioning by women. The women portrayed in indo – English novel is fully based on the traditional set up. It was the reflection of an ancient literature of India. They showed woman as a devoted wife and as devoted mother. Marriage is cleverly disguised by sacredness only to confirm male domination.

The story is about a doctor who had a strained relationship with her mother. The rapport they had with each other is not fine. She did not have an identity or at least an appraisal of being a beautiful daughter only to her mother. Neither she is incapable of identifying as a beloved daughter to her mother nor as an attractive girl to please

herself. She searched for an identity. She realized the way as it should be productive. She could easily make her feasible and could have a comfortable living, so she selected the domain of medicine.

Margaret Laurence beautifully handled the challenge which prevailed in the modern society. The themes of her writings are concerned about anti-colonialisms, the problem and helplessness of women, the search for freedom both physical and spiritual. The rapport between equality and communication, the desire for survival of spirit with human respect, love for freedom which is compelled by fear or by the authority of others, dispossessions of the underprivileged and social justice for all are also her themes.

She was born on July 18, 1926, in Neepawa in Manitoba district in Canada. Her father Robert was a barrister. He belonged to Scots family of Wemyss, a branch of the clan Macduff of Burmtisland, Fifeshire, in the Lowlands of Scotland. Her mother Verna Simpson Wemyss was a talented pianist and music teacher too. Her ancestors, the Simpsons, had come county, Tyrone, Ireland.

Margaret Laurence is one of the most accomplished writers in Canada. She has received a variety of awards for her works. They showed her literary talent. She had received a special bond between her work and Canadian readers. In 1960, *This Side Jordan* won the Beta Sigma Phi prize for a first novel written by a Canadian. She was awarded Canada's prestigious Governor General's Literary Award for *The Diviners* and *A Jest of God*. In 1961 and 1962 her short stories received the University of Western Ontario President's Medals. Her works reflected Canada's consciousness. Her unique Canadian voice is heard through the characters of Hagar, Rachel, Jules Tonnerre and Christie, Stacey and Morag and their voices invoke the unique Canadian in her. Readers from across the world understand the dilemmas echoed through her characters. Because the dilemmas that are common and universal to men and women everywhere. She has portrayed multiplicity of cultures in her works which show universal appeal in her works. The significant thing to be noted is, she got succeeded in the shift from biculturalism to multiculturalism in Canada.

In this novel, 'A Jest of God' the writers shows the generation gap which is the largest weapon which spear-headed the war of communication. They did not realise that they came from different period. Rachel thinks that her mother is a pious woman, maintains a high morals for her family. Since she has proved herself that she is good decision maker and does not disturb the family structure.

And her mother too expect the same from her. Whenever her mother uses the term 'peculiar' on her, she gets irritated but never expressed her feelings to her mom. She does not want to ask her about her remarks on her. She is afraid of that it may lead to have misunderstanding with each other. Thus the communication gap between them and its effect on their life is shown in the novel.

Rachel is the daughter of Mrs. Cameron. She is a self-centered mother. She always afraid of her health and fears about pills which she consumes for her illness. Her world is tiny and her pleasures are the small vanities of high heels and bridge parties. She totally depends her daughter for her every need and necessity. Rachel also is neurotic and self-centered. They are bound to each other emotionally. Their behaviour seems to be childish. Both unwilling to grow up and depart from each other. They just want to use the weakness of one another.

Rachel is not neither depicted as a brave girl in the beginning of the novel. She is totally dependent on her mother. Not only Rachel is emotionally dependent but also her mother who is sick. Rachel thinks that her mother is highly moral valued and her decision is always perfect. One thing Rachel forgets about her mother is her ageing. Her mother tries to cripple her daughter's emotions and not letting her to act dependently. Whenever she goes outside, she questions her but pretends not to hear any for being out for some time.

Thus the both writers portrayed two different type of characters who is juxtaposed to each other. Saritha wanted to go away from her mother to pursue her desires. She never think about its consequences. But here in the novel *A Jest of God*, Rachel too wanted to fly independently but her desire is not so strong like sarita in *The Dark Hold No Terror*.

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