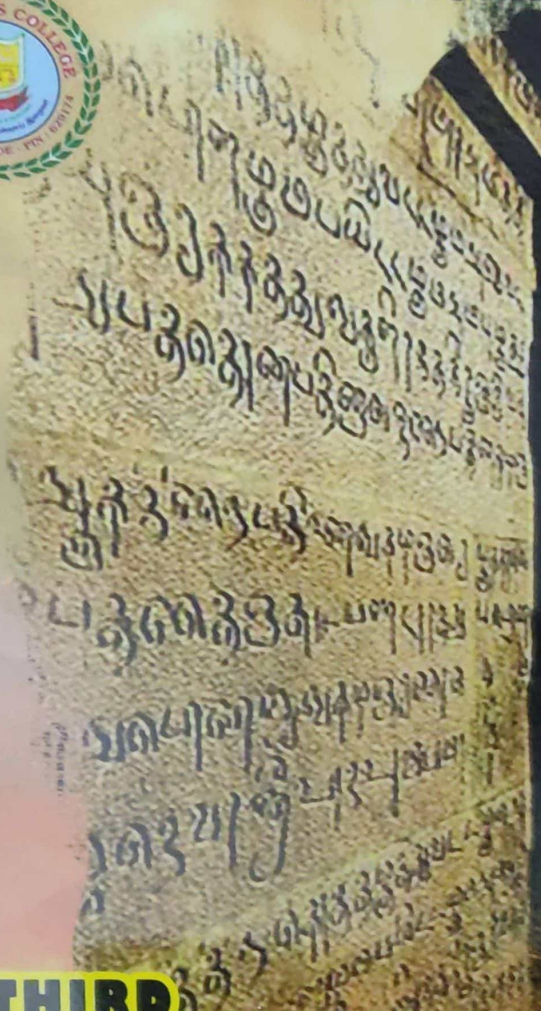


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REVELATIONS OF
EPIGRAPHIC
EXCAVATIONS



கல்வெட்டு அகழ்வாராய்ச்சிகளின்
வெளிப்பாடுகள்

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SELF-ACTUALIZATION OF SARITA IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS*

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ABSTRACT

The Dark Holds no Terrors is a powerful novel of Shashi Deshpande which depicts the life of Sarita (Saru) a lady doctor who is successful in her profession and a failure in family life. She happens to escape to her father's house in the beginning of the novel as a result of her husband's sexual tortures and abuse on her. Saru's parental house brings back the strange experiences and horrible memories including the cruel attitude of her mother. This paper depicts the traditional concept of women who are aimed to please and satisfy men and Shashi Deshpande's craft of the reality of men and women as the victims of the society with reference to the self-realization of the protagonist Saru. Fiction became a powerful tool of literary expression in late half of nineteenth century. The women novelists were responsible for the new image of women characters which projected the oppression and problems faced by women. The image of women as a custody of extra ordinary morals and her quest for identity became the archetypes.

The modern Indo-English was proud with the fiction writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, RajaRao, Manohar Malgonkar, Bhabhani Bhatta and women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahagal, Ruth Pravar Jhabvala, Shashi Deshpande and others. These novelists focus on the problems of modern women in their novels. The writings of these writers were based on the observations. The first one is the external behavior and the second one is the internal journey in the psychological and feminine sensibilities. A few women novelists like Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande make a straight journey into the psyche of women characters that are torn on the account of tensions generated by the discord between the individual and surroundings. Shashi Deshpande is a celebrated Indian women novelist who has a great concern for the welfare of the women society. The unspeakable problems were clearly portrayed in her novels. Deshpande's fiction has generated great interests and her novels has received tremendous responses from the critics.

Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* deals with the problems of a working-class woman and her marital constraints. The story opens with Saru's (Sarita) return to her parental house after fifteen years she had left her home with a vow never to return. The last phase of Saru's life brings her face to face with her own self. The home coming after fifteen years helps to realize her own problems and to analyse her life, to review and re-examine her crisis. Standing in front of her father's house Saru thought herself as Suddama in rags. She was aware for what she came to her house. "It was not to comfort her father that she had come. It was for herself. What she had hoped to find" (38).

Saru comes to her father's house after fifteen years in the name of comforting her father on hearing the news of her mother's death. In reality she came there just to be free from the torturous life she was facing with Manu. The escape from all the demanding roles gave her a sense of relief and an opportunity to reflect her own life. She realizes the stressed fearful life she had lived all over the years. She realizes to have a freedom from all these clutches. Saru

recalls the different roles she had faced in her lifetime. She remembers her childhood where her brother was given more importance than her, his death, the outcome and the break of relation with her mother. Similarly, Saru remembers her married life with Manu where she was once treated by Manu as a queen and how she eventually became a trapped animal after their marriage. She recalls the insults made by Manu on every nights. The first few years of their marriage life was a happy one. After the economic and educational upliftment of Saru problems arose in their family which made Saru to be a master during the day and slave at night.

When she was in her father's home, she got time to analyse herself by relating to her past. Saru knows that somewhere in the journey of her life she lost her reality which lies obscured if completely lost. She wanted to peel away the multiple roles in which she has swaddled herself before she detects the truth about herself. She regrets over her present condition as a wife and she yearns for security and emotional attachment. She wants her father's support on this issue and to react in favor of her against Manu's brutal behavior towards her. She even wanted to open her mind to Manu, but he hurts her and she blurts loudly and crudely stating her husband is a sadist. She even talks openly and more privately to her father about her husband's torture at nights. Saru states that she spoke more openly to her father than that of her mother. Saru speaks to her father not as a daughter but as a woman to man. Saru's father appreciates and accepts the privacy talk which even had not occurred with his wife. Saru's father says silence was the weapon with his wife at all times.

Saru explains her father about Manu's brutality and wants her father to be with her and to give her a moral support. Saru express her marriage life with Manu as: "I couldn't fight back. I couldn't shout or cry... I could do nothing. I can never do anything. I just endure" (201). She requests her father to support her. She recalls the

effect of his father's help stating that it was he who helped her once to go to Bombay to meet Manu and to marry him.

Saru's father did not respond to this issue. Saru was highly grief stricken by the reaction of her father. She wanted to shout and scream to her father that: "Baba I am unhappy. Help me Baba, I'm in trouble tell me what to do" (44), but she kept her feelings inside. In her father's house at times she thinks of her children Renu and Abhi and the present condition of them. In all her memories her husband doesn't figure at all. Her visit to her father's house is a kind of solace from her daily routine and to have a peaceful life in her house. The whole day in her parent's house is completely dedicated to her own desires and comforts. She also reminiscences about the kind of life she had lived as a child.

Saru analyses her own self in her second visit to her father's house. Her heart explodes and she becomes so restless. She objectively analyses her share in her marriage turning out to be a disaster. Her ruminations made her to think, "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 deserted his manhood" (217).

Saru remembers the love of her brother on her. She remembers her brother calling her with love as "Sarutai" (35). She compares Madhav with Dhruva and thinks that Madhav has attained the place of her dead brother in her father's mind. She further thinks that she has made an injustice towards her brother and thinks that if she would turn herself back she would have saved her brother from death. After relieving memories of her brother's death when she was a child, Saru is now able to confront her deeper problems. She receives the comfort of her father in her role of her brother's death.

Saru further more regrets over her hatred towards her mother. Saru analyses her mother's relationship with her and comes into a conclusion that her mother did not hate her. The traditional typical Indian

thinking has made her mother to show a difference among her son and daughter in the name of Gender discrimination. Saru was highly irritated by her mother's attitude. In her second visit to her father's house Saru analyses the strained relation with her mother and justifies her mother stating her mother Kamala has followed a proper and a correct strategy of life. The love on Saru made her mother, Kamala to think on her daughter's future and to safeguard Saru. Her mother's decision on the refusal of her higher studies is to avoid the financial crisis that would occur at the time of her marriage. Her deep love on Saru made Kamala to think and condemn the act of Saru going under the sun and hence she would have a dark complexion and there would be a trouble in getting a suitable life partner.

Saru after analyzing the attitudes of her mother and brother she was deep grief struck on her attitude towards her mother and brother. Saru feels that she was the whole cause of her mother's and her brother's death. Saru's father asks her to forget her thoughts regarding these issues. Her father advises that she should learn to encounter adversities as they come along in one's life, and must be prepared to meet the present problem of her husband and she recalls Manu.

She analyses Manu as a lover and as a husband. She finds out that the inferiority complex has rose up in Manu after she became a popular doctor. She analyses Manu's mentality and comes into a conclusion that Manu doesn't want himself to be superior to Saru instead he wanted to have an equal strand with her. The real problem between this couple arouse after the question of a Journalist in an interview: "How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but the bread as well" (36).

Saru analyses Manu's problem and finds out that the attitude of her made Manu to have an inferiority complex. She recalls about the mistakes committed by her due to the attitudes of Manu. She thinks that she had done an injustice to her husband.

The visit of Saru to her father's house has not destroyed the sense of alienation but she was able to think sensibly and logically. Her self-confidence is revealed when Saru says: "All right, so I'm alone. But so's everyone else. Human beings ... They 're going to fail you. But because there's no one else, we have to go one trying. If we can't believe in ourselves, we're sunk" (220). The valuable advice of her father helps Saru to realize the reality. He thinks that "She can't run away this way" (216). Saru's father advises her to face the situation. He says: "Give him a chance. Stay and meet him. Talk to him. Let him know from you what's wrong. Tell him all that you told me ... Don't turn your back on things again ... Turn round and look at them meet him" (216).

In spite of the roots of Indian culture, Saru realizes that she is no longer a "guilty sister, undutiful daughter, the unloving wife" (220). Saru desires to liberate herself from shackles of tradition and exercise her right to reveal her individual capability and realize her feminine self through identity assertion and self-affirmation.

Saru actualizes the purpose of life and she realizes the value of life and decides to cope up with the reality. Saru's change in her thoughts is understood when she asks her father to tell Manu to wait and to inform that she will come soon. "Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait. I'll be back as soon as I can" (221). The utter despair in her and her call for profession steadies her and gives her courage to the confront reality. The words of Saru to her father stands as a proof of the assertion of her individuality and her willingness to confront reality. Saru has an assertion to her profession and she does not make a compromise for that. She comes to a clear state of mind that she will no longer remain as an object to Manu to vent his frustration on. Thus, Saru emerges as a new woman who can control herself and shed her passivity.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms *Raeshma Godsen* of
Dept. of English participated in the Third International Conference of Lemuria
Research Forum on "REVELATIONS OF EPIGRAPHIC EXCAVATIONS" held at MUSLIM ARTS
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Sarita in Shashi Deshpande's The Dark Holds No Terrors


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