CHAPTER-III

DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS: JOURNEY TOWARDS
FULFILLMENT

In Indian society, community is placed above the individual. The membership of community is supposed to be the duty of every individual. The tradition bound patriarchal Indian society forces the women to curb their freedom and condition themselves to suppress their needs and sublimate their ‘selves’ in the martyrdom of self-denial and effacement. The situation gives rises to conflict. Indian society prescribes a feminine mystique syndrome based on long cherished traditions, which a woman is supposed to conform to. The Indian patriarchal society, as a part of the legacy of its cultural codes and traditions depict women as a symbol of reverence, a ‘devi’. Naturally, she is expected to conform to all that the mythical ‘devis’, Sita, Gandhari, Savitri and Parvati symbolize. It seems that in such a situation of reverence accorded to women, the feminist demands are needless. The reality is absolutely different as we find Indian women suffering due to their conformity and complacency to archetypal principles.

The patriarchal community demands that a woman must conform to the traditional feminine image of ‘goodness,’ rooted in self-abnegation

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and self-sacrifice. This social role of attending to the emotional and physical needs of others, ignoring the needs of one’s own self, hinders an ‘authentic selfhood.’ Indian women’s endeavours to reconcile with the traditional feminine becomes conflicting and problematic, though it is a fact that most women conform to the set social patterns of taking on responsibility excluding the self and adopt the feminine convention of self-sacrifice. In a patriarchal community, the development of women autonomy is severely hindered when they look for external validation to position themselves as worthy members of the community. There is another set of women, who in pursuit of an autonomous self and especially when they measure themselves against culturally valued masculine norms, turns to inner validation. In both the cases they meet with discontentment. It so happens because society does not render any social support to non-traditional assertive or competent women. The basic human urge is to live in relationship. Therefore, a community’s ridicule of women in self pursuit renders them unhappy and discontented.

The women protagonists of the novel chosen for the study assert themselves in varied ways. Saru, the protagonist in *The Dark Holds No Terror* exhibits rare boldness in pursuing her career as a doctor so that she may validate the claims of herself. Saru’s mother becomes an agent of the patriarchal set up. She not only displays her partial behavior
towards her by favouring her son but also opposes her wish to continue her studies. Saru’s decision to pursue her career comes as a shock to her mother because she considers it socially undesirable. Saru’s professional success as a doctor makes her pay a heavy price on the emotional side. She is punished by the disruption of relationship with her mother. Saru further aggravates her mother by marrying a man outside her community and the reprisal is very heavy this time. Kamala almost disowns her daughter Saru by declaring that she never had any daughter and Saru is ‘dead’ for her. Despite the fact that Saru is the sole decision maker of her life, she remains unhappy because she looks towards external validation which is denied to her even in its initial phase by her mother. She is dependent on her mother’s assessment of her marriage and constantly endeavours to prove her wrong. There is nothing wrong in Saru’s choosing her career and life partner if seen through the rightful claims of the self. But the tradition bound community does not support such autonomous behavior in girls. Saru’s guilt accompanies her and she is redeemed with her profession to take hold of her life towards the end of the novel.

Saru’s conjugal life suffers from the male superiority complex. Saru is placed on a higher plane than her husband Manu professionally. This makes her life a nightmare and she thinks:
….the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps the same thing that made me inches taller, made him inches shorter…. a+b they told us in mathematics is equal to b+a. But here a+b was not, definitely not equal to b+a …. (42) A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he’s an M.A., you should be B.A. If he’s 5’4” tall, you shouldn’t be more than 5’3” tall. If he’s earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety nine rupees (137).

To restore happiness in her conjugal life, Saru suggests to “stop working. I want to give it all up…. my practice, the hospital, everything (79)” and “stay at home and look after the children. Cook and clean,” like a mother “in an ad, in a movie, dressed in a crispy starched, ironed sari. Wife and mother, loving and beloved. A picture of grace, harmony and happiness (80).” Saru however, has to continue because Manu rejects her plea. Now the question arises, Who is responsible for the failure of conjugal life – the husband or the wife? The answer to the question in not because both of them are the victims of the institution of marriage. Palker observes:

Both men and women are products of their culture and victims of the institution of marriage. It is difficult for the women to
outgrow the images and roles allotted to them by their society as it is for men (Palker 1991:131).

Saru’s ruptured married life and her unforgiving mother culminates into her pessimistic attitude and withdrawal of self. It is only towards the end of the novel that she decides to recast her life and face it bravely. The novel ends on an optimistic note, showing Saru rushing to her neighbour’s ailing child, which is a sign of herself merging with the community.

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* is one of the best novel by Deshpande, up to the level that it is being translated also in Russian and German languages. As the title implies dark not at all contains any fears or terrors but it is the mental apprehensions of the unknown things, man is scared of. Man struggles to reach at its zenith of success but when he finally reaches there he finds himself alone then a kind of mental conflict, to submit himself in accordance of the society, intensifies so much that it starts frightening a man even in his sleep. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita, the heroine finds she shattered and it is her mental state that has devastated her life. So the dark holds no terrors actually but it is the mental state of mind which man is scared of, as Milton has also said, “The mind is its own place and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, or Hell of Heaven” (Milton 254-55)
The novel opens with the dialogue of novel’s central character, Sarita who is called Saru throughout the novel. Through her dialogue she is shown as frightened by the nightmare, she dreams about her beastly husband in the night. The time when she realized that they are not the dreams but the realities themselves, she is seared of. The essence of the title, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* lies in the fact that when the predicaments of life and a conflict of the mind gets condensed they start carrying terror at their own. And then the terror of dark increases and intensifies more than dark realities hold terrors in them. In the night Saru becomes aware of her problems and wants to break everything which terrifies her, “Of a blessed unreality I am dreaming this is not real into the savage reality of a monstrous onslaught. (Deshpande 1990:11)

That night, when she was attacked while sleeping, was an unforgettable terrible night, more horrified than a nightmare. She could have never imagined that a man who love-married her could be so attacking and painful, “He attacked me like an animal that night. I was sleeping and I woke up and there was this…. This man hurting me. With his hands, his teeth, his whole body (201).”The experience was not a death by strangulation which she dreams about but it was the terror of a gradual pain of the rape, it scattered her soul as well, since he is a poet.
and professor and he was performing this barbarous deed with his doctor wife.

The novelist has used the device of knocking two times, i.e. at the beginning and at the end, but of course with a specific purpose of conveying the message of transformation in Saru’s attitude with the first knock she starts a journey of resolution into herself. She is at her father’s home and with her home coming knocking on the door she remembers Sudama’s arrival at Lord Krishna’s palace. Like Sudama she came to her father’s home but did not utter a single word. As the Lord Krishna was with Sudama so Saru’s father was with her. She analyses and tries to resolve the crisis of her life. The cruel reality of her life, that inspite of her being a successful doctor she could have never been a caring mother and devoted wife makes her want to hide herself, as Duryodhana hid himself under water,

Here shall she find refuge and here she shall rest and retire.

The urge to confide in someone to talk to someone was growing in her. Often she had found herself staring at people, weighing them up, thinking…. are you on my side? And, even more often, waking up at night with a start, thinking…. I am alone knowing, with a kind of cold hopelessness, that it was not a dream, but real (43)
The knock at the end opens the new world of the fearlessness, confidence and determination when he says, “The Dark Holds No Terrors, What Chekhov demanded of an artist, between the solution of a question and the correct setting of a question, the latter alone is obligatory for the artist” (Mukherjee; 1985:184).

As far as the quest for her identity is concerned it was the statement where lies the strength of the novel *The Dark Holds no Terrors*. Though seed of the struggle for the quest of her identity initiates since her childhood, when she starts realizing that she is ignored and unwanted at her home-place. She had been always devoid of motherly care and fatherly affection. And on the contrary she grew up with the guilt that she is responsible for the loss of her brother. She is “unable to overcome the traumatizing effect of her mother’s hysterical outbursts, Saru constantly measures her feelings and achievements upto the total loss of inner quietude so unabashedly underlined by…”. (Gaur, 2003:95)

It was her mother who has developed a sense of guilt-conscious in her mind by saying regularly that she has killed her brother, Dhruva, “You killed him. Why didn’t you die? Why are you alive, when he’s dead (191).” Pathos lies in the fact that actually it was mere an accident and nothing more than that but even then at such tender age she tried much to save her brother. Saru equally deserved the sympathy which her parents
were showing towards her brother. She was frightened and wanted a soft pat thinking that she should have died by drowning so that she could have died by drowning so that she could have words of condolence, at least from her mother. Taking a feeling of guilt she returned and kept waiting that her brother might have come back but could not disclose the fact to her mother. Even the now and then her father used to be nice to her by listening and relying upon her. She has felt the weakness of her father, that he doesn’t oppose her mother in favour of Saru not because he doesn’t love her but only because neither he feels her important enough that he should raise a chaos by taking her side, nor he had courage to face his wife.

Malignance of Saru’s mother for her had already been started. So at that time she felt more the importance of education, otherwise she would have been alone. She attains her against education against her mother’s will. And this is her education which makes her able to analyze the discrimination which has been there since her childhood. She can easily remember that her birth date is not in anybody’s mind but the grand ritual was organized at her brother’s birthday. He was named Dhruva, Saru could “remember, even now vaguely, family, a state of joyous excitement that had been his naming day. The smell of flowers, the black grinding stone” (152) As every normal child she underwent
three stages. In such kind of conditions generally, child tries to make a room for him in between his parents, failing doing so he finds himself alone and at last rebels. The same was with Sarita. There was a time when she tried much to earn, though it was her right, her mother’s love, wishing to stay with her throughout her life, but mother refused adamantly, “No, you can’t” (36) as if telling insignificance of all her efforts to establish good relations.

Of course the next curiosity that how can Dhruva stay with her mother? She replies making her feel that somehow her brother is positively different from her, “He’s different. He’s a boy,” (45) as if it is an additional qualification to be a boy and it is a bane to be a girl. She found the notion disparaging as well as discouraging that she doesn’t has any right over her parents even after their death, in their life she is not having any right. The statement, that her brother only have to perform all the rituals, including ‘Shradha,’ so that souls could be placed in heaven, was so deeply instilled into her mind that the news of her mother’s death couldn’t shock her so much as the notion strikes to her mind that who would lit the pyre of her mother, “who lit the pyre? She had no son to do that for her. Dhruva had been seven when he died (21).”

The feminine strength lies in a way that the predicaments of her life don’t make her fell into a bout of depression or suicide but they
motivate her to do something in her life instead. And she did, i.e. she got an admission in an eminent medical college, whose young student leader makes her fell in love with him, that what is a cause that Saru accepts a man who was not only of the lower caste but of the lower strata of Society? Then we may reach at the conclusion that directly or indirectly her mother is responsible for that. Had she loved her she would not have maintained a blank space in her heart to fill in by anybody. Since he gave her everything, either false or authentic, which any girl can crave for i.e. false appreciation sense of security feeling of superiority complex, illusory love and of course a commitment of marriage. A girl child who could never get even a drop of love, when she gets a nectar of it then definitely she would love to be loved. The same is with Saru, turning mad in his love, where she used to find her identity and importance in, she surrenders herself fully to him.

At an issue of marriage her traditional and orthodox, devoid of love, mother reacts like anything and Manohar’s lower caste becomes an issue at which that so called union was to be broken, “What caste is he? I don’t know. A Brahmin? Of course not. Then, cruelly…. his father keep a cycle shop (76).”

Against all this, though her father agrees with her, she decides to be with Manohar. Disclosing it to her mother, she makes her understand
that it’s all an illusion and after a certain period of time there remains, only a conflict. But the pre-occupation of her mind with hatred and her vehement craving for autonomy over Manu make her go against her mother, when her mother says, “I know all these ‘love marriage.’ It’s love for a few days, then quarrels all the time. Don’t come crying to us then (69).”

Saru’s deed, of running away with Manu, was not as important as the cause of it, which was so powerful that she could have never think to stop forward. Instead of that she went pregnant of lots of hopes and aspirations from her forthcoming marital life. Her thrust of love was so strong in her that his each and every act makes her feel that she has an importance. Now, finding herself absolutely satisfied, happy and complete Sarita naturally puts her best in all her arena of life and then begins a season of fruits, i.e. she emerges as a successful and eminent doctor.

From here begins the feminine sensibility that until she was a faceless identity, just Mrs. Manohar, wife of a college lecturer her married life was running smoothly but the day people living in her building realized that she is a lady doctor, she started getting respect and her separate identity was established. Now her marriage starts crumbling down under the burden of her profession. Now there is a drastic change in
the attitude of people and the reaction and treatment to them was totally different. Earlier, “He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband (69).”

The incidents in the life of Saru and Manohar as revealed by Shashi Deshpande depict the story of every other man and wife where relations suffer due to ego problems. “Deshpande’s novels suggest that women are taught to inculcate self-abnegation, submissiveness and self-effacement in order to suit the needs of men (Gaur 2003:97).” In this instance, the time when he liked her it was a sense of superiority complex that he had been in a possession of a qualified and well settled wife. But the time when socially her superiority start over powering him then he realizes it but couldn’t react harshly so that he could not be blamed by anybody. As being a normal husband he can’t bear that he should be known by her name and he is irritated when he sees others to greet her. This was the time when he started feeling ignored and frustration came out of his mouth spontaneously. “I am sick of this place. Let’s get out of here soon (80).” And her so called education and experience of childhood make her realize enough that she doesn’t have much time to impart to her husband and children but at the same time it is his ego and sense of insecurity which is baffling Manu badly and it may lead to the end of her
marriage, “Now I know that it was there it began…. this terrible thing that has destroyed our marriage (69).”

She does not know what to do? At any cost she didn’t want to lose her relationship with Manu. The kind of life she led, those expectations with which she married and the cost she paid for it on the cost of her mother who never permitted her for this relations. But she realizes that man-woman relationships is based on need and attraction and not upon love. It is each-others necessity which supplements each other’s need and makes them feel like loving each other and nothing more than that,

Love…. how she scorned the word now. There was no such thing between man and woman. There was only a need which both fought against, futilely…. turning into the thing they called ‘Love’ It’s only a word she thought…. Take away the word, the idea and the concept will wither away (72).

This was the time when she analyses the whole thing. The way mother prohibited for marriage doesn’t permit her to return. Had it been an open conflict of dying love Saru must have reached at some conclusion. But it was an ostensible kind of fight which doesn’t exist at all but still was destroying everything. Manu doesn’t say anything nor he be normal as he used to be earlier. And her children don’t allow her to even think of divorce.

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No theirs was not a case of love dying nor even of conflicts. Instead it was as if a kind of disease had attacked their marriage. A disease like syphilio or Leprosy, something that could not be admitted to others. This very concealment made it even more gruesomely disgusting, so that she was dirty and so was he and so was their marriage. She wanted no more of it, but there were the children and she was still hung on to the past, enough to make the word divorce a frightening one (69-70).

Once again the novelist has proved that feminism doesn’t mean to portray woman as a weaker sex always. She has tried to project a complete women, even then with unreasonable compromises. And here lies her feministic flair that she has taken the contemporary at land to make it digestible for everybody. Saru is a modern woman. She gave a right direction to her childhood frustration. Married a lower caste man so that life could be easy and even after marriage earning bread and butter after establishing her own identity.

She is an educated modern woman who has turned away from her traditional background and accepted marriage into a different lower case even if it means living in poverty. She is a woman who has established herself as a successful doctor
and earns not only the bread but also the butter for the family (69-70).

Though she extremely dislikes the distorted attitude of Manu, that getting married means the whole life authority and possession of a wife, her love and her respect. For him marriage is not a commitment which should be thought upon or taken care of but it is a stamp of authority over wife which he just get used to. On the contrary, for Saru it was everything. “What angered her most was Manu’s assumption that marriage, possession, gave him lifelong right to affection, love and respect (69-70).”

Encompassing such kind of attitude it was very natural that he used to take her just as a show piece and something that raises his position in front of his friends. But increasing success, followed by an interview given for a special issues of periodical on career woman, puts Manu in a very uncomfortable situation. When jokingly an interviewer raises a question over their comparative earning for bread and butter. It hurts his male ego a lot, though it was a harsh reality. Now, it was just a beginning of man’s weakness. Further the gap between them widens, since people visited her for different purpose. And the way her financial status accelerates it makes him powerless. Now the only way left there to revive his muscularity and to satisfy his false notion of being a man was his
sexual attacks on her, which woman has always paid for and gets defeated. Manu becomes an animal, a rapist at night but behaves normal and as a very loving husband throughout the day so that the society could not raise a question over his illusory love and care for his wife. It became an issue of everyday and Saru is so terrified that she couldn’t speak about it to anybody, but keep silent, “And every time it happened and I don’t speak. I put another brick on the wall of silence between us. May be one day I will be walled alive within it and die a slow, painful death (69-70).”

Manu’s barbarous guts was not as painful as his normal behavior throughout the day. His style of remaining normal in the morning, as if nothing has happened, gives her enough reason to grapple and to die in units, since, so for she has known of his everyday nature that it has become his sensitive nerve and he deliberately assaults her for the recovery of his frustration. He wants that she should be hurt but at the same time can be more invasive to her if she talks of her suffering. She is not expected to put her point, because he himself has never, “To remember and to know…. it was like being battered by him all over again (69-70).”

Like Nayantara Sehgal Shashi Deshpande’s intense emphasis on the vital importance of healthy communication seems to be quite right as far as this case is concerned. Nobody was malignant for anybody, she is
realizing and analyzing as well their problem, but just due to lack of communication gap this problem reaches at its height. Being a reticent woman and breaking in herself she keeps trying to ignore the storm in their marriage but it keeps increasing gradually. He starts craving for little things by which he can establish and make her realize of his importance. And she, like an innocent person keeps trying to please him and to make him feel that she is always there for him.

She also knows that success in marriage means manipulating and maneuvering her relationship with her husband according to the socially accepted norms and flaunting, it all the time. Her intellect, her achievement, her career and her ambitions are the stigmas she shall have to carry forever like the dear albatross (Gaur 2004:94).

When she was warned by Vidya, one of Manu’s group of aspiring writers and Journalists and stage enthusiasts, Saru realized that somewhere somehow Manu has made others important so that she could feel neglected or unimportant. Actually it was the talk of the time when they were talking about the staging of a drama when Saru had said, “I’ll be down among the audience applauding all of you madly (156).” It was strange and disparaging as well that she being a wife is asking for sitting down among the audience to applaud them and the other lady, Vidya
being nothing is warning her for her husband that Manu would not like it, “See that you stay there, or else Manu won’t like it (156).”

Indeed Manu himself is the mediator between his wife and Vidya. Now the question arises that what kind of picture he has put of his wife in front of the world? How has he presented her? It was nothing but just a way of satisfying himself that he is a real achiever, though he was not. Had he been positive for Saru nobody could have dared to treat her in a way she was dealt. So far she has realized that he is a traditional man and expects her to be the same.

Moreover she is tired of performing both the duties at her home and work place. She knows well that inspite of the fact that she earns more than Manu she is expected to perform all the house hold duties i.e., bringing up children and taking care of her husband’s interest. Since in man’s opinion whatsoever work women are performing outside is a fulfillment of their wishes, instead of struggle or achievement and what are they expected to do at home are their duties. So what about women’s right? Analyzing all these she puts her decision to put aside her job, “…. I want to stop working…. Everything. I just want to give it all up…. my practice, the hospital, everything (80).” But again man’s selfishness heads over. Manu knew very well that he won’t be able to maintain a standard, with his income only, as it is today, “On my salary? Come on, Saru, don’t
be silly. You know how much I earn. You think we can live this way on that? (81)"The kind of efforts she put in to her education and the condition in which she attained admission in a medical college and then secured a job, she would have never wanted to leave job but with his statement Manu has closed all the doors of resolving their relationships. And after that there was only one thing which was left, was their breakup.

But here the novelist has implemented the device of sub-plot again, i.e. at the moment she finds the news of her mother’s death, which overcomes the intensity of the present problem with Manu. She goes but find no change there and she could not believe that this is the place where she was born and brought-up, everything seemed to her strange but in its setting there was no change at all, “Inside here, though, there were no changes. The same seven pairs of large stone slabs leading to the front door on which she had played hopscotch as a child. The yard was bare as always…. (15)” Though she is totally changed but those changes which she noticed there with her father were really strange. He was sitting with her so formally as if she is still unwanted at her place,

As she drinks her tea…. too sweet and strong…. he (father) sat gingerly on the edge of his chair like an unwilling host entertaining an unwelcome guest. And that, I suppose is what I really am. What gave me the idea I could come back (15)?
Saru has been realizing all the situations which are hurting her a lot but she cannot say anything. She had thought to share with her father but couldn’t dare just because she has developed a guilt in her—guilt of being a bad sister, daughter and a wife:

There can never be any forgiveness never any atonement. 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 destroyed his manhood (15).

It shows Saru’s goodness that for each and every thing she finds herself responsible and consequently her guilt conscious keeps accelerating day by day. Had she been willing she would have avoided her family but like any human being and a good mother and wife found herself responsible for the painful situations and realization is always more important than flaunt, “I came home late that night…. When I came home I found him sitting with a brooding expression on his face that made my heart give painful, quivering little jumps (78).”

With all these guilts she has come to her father’s house at the news of her mother’s death. She has come to ponder into her problems but with the pretext that she has come to a person who has lost his wife. But as usual she couldn’t say anything to her father. She finds it quite awkward to put her husband’s changed behavior. And in addition her father
behaves so dormantly and casually that for such a petty reasons, i.e. Baba gets up and bent up and went away to put rice to cook on a stove, as if cooking rice is more important than Saru,

I will break out of it. I will talk to Baba, “But she could not speak out about her suffering. “how could she break into this…. and say” Baba, I’m unhappy. Help me, Baba, I’m in trouble. Tell me what to do (44).”

She was already of the opinion, like a typical traditional lady. It was indeed indecent and illogical to talk of her personal problems, to her father, it was like to publicize her marital problems. “Her dreams are realized, for a brief span, in her marriage…. (Gaur 2005:96)” In such conditions she accepts the superiority of arranged marriages over love marriage. Had she done an arranged marriage she would not have been so confused in putting her problems in front of her father, because then it would have been a failure of her parents’ decision not of her love.

If mine had been an arranged marriage, if I had left it to them to arrange my life, would he have left me like this? She thought of the girl, the sister of a friend, who had come home an account of a disastrous marriage, she remembered the care and sympathy with which the girl had been surrounded, as if she was an invalid, a convalescent And the girl’s face with us
look of passive suffering. There had been only that there, nothing else, neither despair nor shame. For the failure had not been hers, but her parents and so the guilt had been theirs too, leaving only the suffering for the girl (4).

Here was the time of realization of her past and it’s so called blunder starts, which is queer combination of tradition and modernity. If her conventions make her react to the instructive statements of her mother then the element of modernization in her makes her analyse and realize them. She recollects that she was really changed after admitting into the medical college and it was just out of her bad company that the mother made her understand, “You should be careful now about how you behave. Don’t come out in your petticoat like that. Not even when it’s only your father who’s around (62).”

Even before that at the time of admission she was not ready to listen to her mother, since she didn’t find any reason in it, “Saru wanted to escape from the narrow and stifling domestic life as a child by repudiating her mother’s authority (Gaur; 2005:96).” At her mother’s insistence that she should not go out for study and should stay at home instead Saru didn’t find it enough that is a statement which is said by the lady who is her mother, in contray to that she said, “I’m not talking to you…. You don’t want me to have anything. You don’t even want me to
live (62).” And eventually she started hating her own self being for a
woman, “I can remember closing my eyes and praying…. Oh God, let it
not happen to me. Let there be a miracle and let me be the one female to
whom it doesn’t happen (62).”

Undoubtedly her reactions are based on logical reasons yet she
can’t forget that she could not take the natural growth of her body
normally, since it was her body only which made her bold and stand
against the society, “A kind of shame that engulfed me, making me want
to rage to scream against the fact that put me in the same class as my
mother (62).”

Readers can evaluate her helplessness that in a time when she is
secluded from her husband’s side, lost her mother, father is pretending,
burden of her brother’s death is already in her subconscious there is no
other way to make herself responsible for her failures of relationships.
Though she is not yet she is made to, since she is alone and nobody is
there to make her understand that why she is paying for all? Ultimately an
acute solitude and chaos prevail upon her and she satisfies herself making
her feel that she has been unjust to her brother, mother, husband and
children. This sense of guilt reaches at its zenith when receiving a letter
from Manu she says to her father not to open the door, so that tired of
knocking he would go back. With her this statement anybody could
misinterpret her that it must be an abuse or vengeance that makes her ask this to her father, but nobody could understand the way she is killed by the sense of guilt and that was just a way to sweep her feet back, though she was looking for a support,

If only someone would tell her what to do, she would do it at once, without a second thought. It was strange that after all these years of having been in full control of her life, she now had this great desire to let go. To put herself in another’s hands (97).

A kind of temporary treatment she prefers to go i.e. theory of detachment. Now she wants to escape from everybody and wants to stay alone. “After distancing herself from her family she realizes that one has to grow up to know That The Dark Holds No Terror (Gaur, 2005:97).” She is being cold but happy staying with her Baba and Madhav devoid of any attachments. Now she hates, “being touched. Maybe that’s why I am comfortable here with Baba and Madhav. There, is no touching, either physically or emotionally. Each one of us is intact, a separate whole (97).”

Indeed it would not be genuine to call her neither absolutely detached nor involved but actually it is a kind of confused state of transformation-transformation of ideology. “Who is the victim and who is
the predator? And the roles so distinct, so separate? Or are we each of us, both? (159)” There is an ostensible conflict in her mind. Sometimes she makes herself responsible for all failures but at the same time she reacts and sounds against Manu and this is the time when she thinks that they both are partly responsible for it, “Is it all a fraud then, the eternal cry of…. my husband, my wife, my children, my parents” Are all human relationships doomed to be failure? (195)” Now she has ignored useless craving for false materialistic world’s relationship, since all lead to failure.

It is a time of a speech of that person who has never spoken, i.e. Saru’s Baba. It is her father only who brings her out of her cave of guilt and negative thoughts. He narrates his wife’s life history and initiates his journey to the ray of hope and light, holding Saru’s hand in hand. It is known to her then that it was Prof. Kulkarni of Saru’s college who misguided her regarding an affair of Manu and Saru. It is not she alone but her grandmother bore the same, who was exploited by her husband but who had never complained thinking that was written on her foreshed and then her mother’s pains started, she had never, “a room of her own…. Silence had become a habit. (195)”

Finding her mother’s and grandfather’s is suffering more intense Saru is now capable to calm herself as “The traditional society still
defines and explains women with reference to their marriage, (Gaur, 2003:58)” and so guilt disappears gradually, especially when her father compares all human beings to the mythological character, Duryodhana. Then she realized that we all are as alone as Duryodhana was in battlefield:

Duryodhana finds he is almost the only one of them left, he leaves the battlefield and goes into a lake. He waits there for the Pandavas to come and kill him…. Yes, that’s what all of us have to face at the end. That we are alone. We have to be alone (94).

Saru’s Baba made her understand as any other father but the way she took it shows her modernity, spiritualism and pragmatism which makes her a traditionally unconventional woman, who has not crossed her limits maintaining the conventional taboos. It is neither a revolt, as a unconventional woman, nor a submission, as a conventional lady but a sheer understanding of human life,

All rights, so I’m alone. But so’s everyone else. Human beings…. They’re going to fail you. But because there’s just as, because there’s no one else, we have to go on trying. If we can’t believe in ourselves, we’re sunk (220).
Now being hopeful she advents her journey from self-solitude to
world, from diffidence to confidence, from guilt to self-satisfaction and of
course from self-conscious to self-fulfillment. She speaks with
confidence “Baba, if, Manu comes, tell him to wait, I’ll be back as soon
as I can (221).” No doubt that it is her father who is responsible for
revival of thoughts but Saru must have had something in her which
started burning with slight blow of air. At this advice she realizes that it is
her life only and only she can best take care of it, “…. Are you not
sufficient for yourself? It’s your life, isn’t it? (220)” and now she realizes
that how genuine it was to bind herself within the milieu of role models,
“The guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife…. persons
spiked with guilts (220).”

The kind of era of thought Saru is passing through shows in her an
element of modernity. Like a traditional woman she has listened without
any protest and like a modern woman thought over and analyzed the
whole of her life’s so called failures and follow the advice of her father
not to have guilt, not to turn back and to face Manu with clean heart,
“Don’t turn your back on things again. Turn round and look at them.
Meet him (216).” Ultimately the novel ends with a beautiful ray of
sparking hope-hope of self-consciousness, self-assertion, self-fulfillment,
commitment and that too devoid of any guilt Saru tried much to retain her
marriage by proposing him to leave her job but Manohar realized her love for herself and told her to continue with a job. Saru has left all the old parameters of feminism, i.e. self-sacrifice, alienation and detachment from the society. Shashi Despande firmly believes in human relationships and its interdependence with society and so she has made her protagonist a balanced person. She has recognized not only her identity but put efforts also to retain it. And at the basis of her honesty, innocence, courage, confidence and consideration for social value and family, she ultimately attained her individually and makes others to realize that she is existing like any another human being.

The intense specification of the middle class educated and financially independent women character of Shashi Deshpande has played a vital role in the novel. Had Saru been a lower class financially dependent woman, as of Sita of Anita Desai’s where Shall We Go This Summer? or as of her Maya of Cry, the Peacock, comparatively less educated then she would not have put efforts to harmonize her conjugal relations. Because they had no analytical powers as Saru has. So either she would have turned psychic or would have been died. And on the contrary, had Saru been a lady of high society again she would have been kept aside the social taboos but would not have comprised. But Shashi Deshpande’s Saru in such an awkward situation is trying to go for the apt
solution, instead of reacting or complaining. She has been regularly analyzing where is the shoe pinching? Shashi Deshpande’s \textit{The Dark Holds No Terrors} is a fine piece reflecting journey of a modern woman towards self-identity and self-fulfillment.
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