

Is Family Relationship an Art?

- Marie Evangeline H

Abstract: This article discuss about the relationships in the novel of *The Dark Holds no Terrors* by Shashi Deshpande. She depicts the woman's voice and describes the limited choices available for her protagonist against the overarching presence of the tradition. Moreover she clearly states the conflicts between father and daughter, mother and daughter, husband and wife, even brother and sister. She discusses about the major or minor issues in between these relationships. She clearly depicts the role played by each character in her novel. She presents a picture regarding the possibilities of change through her protagonist who successfully overcomes the immediate obstacles on her way to self-fulfillment.

Keywords: Indian English Fiction, Familial relations, *The Dark Holds no Terrors*

Family: there can be many ways to define this word, but in common we can say it is 'caring'. Regardless of many types, nuclear family, a stepfamily, a single-parent family, or an empty-nest family, it usually consists of related people who care about each other and be nurtured and strengthened from time to time.

Find joy in everything you choose to do.

Every job, relationship, home...

it's your responsibility to love it, or change it.

- Chuck Palahniuk

After all, life is a movement in relationship, otherwise there is no life at all, and if that life is based on an idea, or a spectacular assumption, then such theoretical living must inevitably bring about a relationship which becomes a battlefield. Relationship in a family between human beings is based on the image-forming. In all our relationships each one of us build an image about the other and these two images have relationship, not the human beings themselves. The wife has an image about the husband – perhaps not consciously, but nevertheless it is there – and the husband has an image about the wife. One has an image about one's country and about oneself. We are always strengthening these images by adding more and more to them. And it is these images which have relationship. The actual relationship between two human beings or between many human beings completely ends when there is the formation of images. Such formation of images are well developed in between the characters in the novels of Shashi Deshpande, whether it to be father, mother, sister, brother, or husband and wife. Each build an image regarding the other and tend to believe it to be true. Family to Deshpande is an important institution responsible for the predicament of the woman. She depicts her heroines as a sensitive, intelligent and career – oriented. She finds them caught up in a conflict between their family and professional roles, between

individual images and social images. In Indian society women always plays a major role in the family. She acts as a connecting bridge to all. Deshpande's women characters believe in traditional values and compromise for the sake of the preventing the domestic harmony rather than revolt which might result in the disruption of family relationships. In the male dominated society, woman is supposed to be an ideal wife, a mother and an excellent home-maker with multifarious roles in the family. As a wife and mother, service, sacrifice, submissiveness and tolerance are her required attributes. The innumerable adjustments she makes in her life faithfully and obediently are always her admired qualities.

In the novel *The Dark Hold No Terrors*, the novelist expresses the frustration and disappointments of women who experience in the social and cultural oppression in a male dominated society. All the relationships, whether they be the property, ideas or people are based essentially on the above said image-forming, and hence there is always conflict. A daughter's relationship with her father is the first male-female relationship. In this novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* one can find that there is no proper communication between the heroine Sarita and her father. Like most of the traditional Indian father, he enjoys the privilege of being the master and head of the family. He is not concerned with the problems of his own family members. "He had always been so much a man, the 'Master of the house', not to be bothered by any of the trivials of daily routine." (TDHNT, 20) When a girl is born, it is considered that she is a debt and when a boy is born he is believed to be an asset. Girls are always considered as a burden, to be married off at a great expense. In this novel one can notice that the mother acts cruel and hostile towards her daughter and treats her with a sense of rivalry. Sarita's mother always wishes her to be dead, especially after her son's death. Her mother shows inveterate hatred and enmity towards her daughter, after the death of her son, Dhurva, assuming that Sarita is responsible for her brothers death. She says, "... Daughter? I don't have any daughter. I had son and he died. Now, I am childless". (TDHNT, 196) Usually the relationship with a female child and her mother is like a flower with pleasant fragrance. The mother always considers her female child as her own image. Whatever she lacked in her life she tries to fulfill it in her daughter's life. Apart from this, in Indian society male child is always given importance rather than female child. Sarita's mother right from the beginning insists her to understand that she is a girl and she is inferior to her brother, in every way.

Don't go out in the sun. You'll get even darker. | Who cares? | We have to care if you don't. We have to get you married. | I don't want to get married. Will you live with us all your life? | Why not? You can't. And Dhruva? He is different. He's a boy. (TDHNT, 45)

Sarita is deprived of the motherly love, care and affection. She is just treated as a playmate and governess for her brother Dhurva. She is always ignored and neglected, in favour of her brother. She is not given much importance. When Sarita becomes a mother of two children, she wishes not to be like her mother. Being a successful doctor she couldn't balance her duties both at home and work place. This imbalance leads to the

separation and all the relations are uprooted making it a big problem. She finds herself placed at her personal level, she feels gradual disappearance of love and family attachment. Moreover she then and there is reminded of herself with her brother, when she encounters her kids fighting.

Do we travel, not in straight lines, but in circles? Do we come to the same point again and again? Dhurva and I, Renu and Abhi...is life an endless repetition of the same pattern? (TDHNT, 173)

Observing ourselves and our relationships we see that at levels of our being there is conflict - minor or major - which brings about very superficial responses or shocking results. When most important family relationship problems are encountered, it is always better to make a common attempt of control strategy. You try to get the other person to change or just accept them as they are. If both of these strategies are not possible try to change yourself. As a mother Sarita fails to understand her daughter Renu's odd behavior. Once she finds her daughter drawing a picture with black crayons. It is like a dark forest trees which are almost tall and straight. We can understand that child's psychology is expressed through the picture. May be she feels lonely and longing for her mother's love, since Sarita is busy in her profession and appoints a maid, Janaki Bai to look after her kids. Deshpande depicts Sarita as the symbol of many women, who live their lives in loneliness in one form or the other. If we are going to try and find out the process of understanding ourselves it is not an isolating process. It is not withdrawal from the world, because you cannot live in isolation. To be is to be related, and there is no such thing as living in isolation. It is the lack of right relationship that brings about conflicts, misery and strife; however small our world may be, if we can alter our relationship in the narrow world, it will be like a wave extending outward, all the time. Many relationship problems can be solved only by viewing it internally. One must understand that the problems are nothing but a reflection of a part of yourself that you dislike. As long as you keep looking outside yourself for a solution you may never find one. But once you start looking inside yourself for the problem, it may become easier to solve. When you alter the mental relationships within your own mind, your physical world will change to reflect it. This is what happens when Sarita begins to understand her husband Manohar. Sarita marries him against the will of her parents. On later stages she becomes more successful than her husband. This becomes the main cause of her sufferings and physical tortures. She is independent and a woman in the outside world, but inside she doesn't know how to deal with her husband's sexual tortures. Here we can understand that the family begins to fall apart when a woman achieves greater economic or social status than man.

How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but the bread as well? (TDHNT, 35) But perhaps, the same thing that made me inches taller, made him inches shorter. He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband. (TDHNT, 42)

One must understand that no other human relationship is as intensely bilateral and mutually enjoyable as the partnership between a man and a

woman. When she returns to her father's house, she has time to think about everybody. She then feels that she has done injustice to her mother, husband, children and everybody else. She utilizes this opportunity to examine and reinforces her indispensability by thinking sensibly and logically. She finally thinks that escaping is not a permanent solution to the problems and she has to accept all. Finally when she says to her father, "Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait. I'll be back as soon as I can". (TDHNT, 221) we understand that she already is out of frustration and is ready to face the realities of life.

Since man is a social animal he is always linked to family. He tends to do anything to keep the relationships strong among the family members. One can notice that the line of hierarchy and authority shaping structurally and psychologically complex family relationships are clearly drawn only in the Indian households. All family members are expected to accept the authority of those ranked above them in hierarchy. In general, elders rank above juniors and among people of similar age, males out rank females. Daughters of a family command the formal respect of their brother's wives, and the mother of a household is in charge of her daughter-in-law. Thus a daughter in law has to establish herself in the family first by means of her good conduct. We must be aware that all family relationships are interlinked. To have a strong family relationship one must consider the five 'L's, *Learning* (values, skills, behaviour), *Loyalty*, *Love*, *Laughter* and *Leadership*. We can very well notice that Sarita the heroine, in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* tries to understand life and along with these five 'L's, qualities like commitment, appreciation, communication, spending time together, spiritual wellness, coping together when situation arises and flexibility builds a strong relationship among the family members. Many people are not aware of the importance of improving their family life, but most people value their families. It takes hard work to make a successful family. The workout for making the family stronger, however, can be well worth the effort, to make it an admirable art.

References :

- J. Krishnamurti, (1999). *Freedom From The Known*: Edited by Mary Lutyens. Krishnamurti Foundation, India.
- J. Krishnamurti, (2001). *The First And Last Freedom*: Krishnamurti Foundation, India.
- Shashi Deshpande, (1990). *The Dark Holds No Terrors*: Penguin Books, India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, India.
- *WriteYourWayTo Success – Essays*, (2005) Black Rose Publications, Delhi.

Webliography:

- <http://www.stevepavlina.com/blog/2006/01/understanding-family-relationship-problems>
- <http://writer101.xomba.com/the-importance-of-family-relationships>
- <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/1229?task=view>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intimate_relationships
- <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/types-of-intimacy.aspx>
- http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_relationship.html

