



## ***DARK HOLDS NO TERROR: A STORY OF MARITAL EXPLOITATION***

**Dr. Pandurang V. Shinde**  
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada  
University, Aurangabad,  
Maharashtra, India

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Abstract:**

*We have society divided into different castes, religions, classes. There is violence against men or women, men against men, women against men, women against women. An important aspect of violence is uncontrolled discrimination. Violence is also the secondary treatment, constant control, refusal to make decisions, denial of freedom, not asking for opinions, not being allowed to express consent, not respecting opinions etc. Apart from these, there is sexual violation by outsider or insider of family. A large number of women are talking about sexual harassment in family relationships. Many women reports they have sexual harassment by their brother-in-law, father-in-law and husbands and even by their own father also. It is little try to give voice to their unbearable, horrible and untold experiences.*

**Keywords:** *Sexual harassment, Feminism, Discrimination, Control, etc.*

The structure of our society is patriarchal. Also we have society divided into different castes, religions, classes. So those who have power and control in their hands are seen to be doing violence to other elements. There is violence against men and women, men against men, women against men, women against women, but in our society, men are important and women have always been given a secondary place. Due to such discrimination, most of the violence against women is taking place at different levels. Violence against women is not just beatings; perhaps beatings are noticeable form of violence. Violence is also mental harassment, abuse, degrading treatment, violence while using technology (social media), sexual harassment, and harassment. An important aspect of violence against women is uncontrolled discrimination. Violence is also the secondary treatment of a girl or a woman, discrimination in all matters, constant control, and refusal to make decisions, denial of freedom. Not asking for opinions, not being allowed to express consent, not respecting opinions is a very violent experience for women.

Since the sixteenth century, it has not been recognized that women exist separately from their husbands in judging women's family issues before the judiciary. 'The dedication of the wife to the husband at the time of the marriage ceremony in terms of consent, contract in the marital relationship, this dedication cannot be withdrawn. Therefore, a husband cannot be convicted of sexual assault on his own wife.' This statement was made by Sir Matthew, the Chief Justice of England in the sixteenth century. In the society of that time, women did not have an independent existence. The idea that a woman's own opinion and decision about her body and mind should be considered important did not yet exist. The wife is safe under the husband's umbrella, he is also her breadwinner. This was the mentality of the society and hence the seniors in the judiciary. So that the thought was prevailed 'What is wrong if you taste the fruits of the garden you cultivate?'

Today, a large number of women are talking about sexual harassment in family relationships. Husbands are also acknowledging that they themselves are forced to do so at some

point. Yet marital rape is kept out of the law. In fact, legal intervention should not be required in a marital relationship. But if there is no love, respect, care in that relationship and there is only sexual harassment, persecution, then should it be wrong for the victim in that relationship to seek legal protection?

Many of the women who report domestic violence report sexual harassment by their husbands. If she is very tired, sick, even during menstruation, she can't refuse to have sex with her husband, even if she don't want to, if the husband refuses to take the initiative or if the wife takes the initiative for sexual intercourse as per her own will, the husband's behavior changes. The next day, many women report no conversation, stress, throwing away, being suspicious, insulting in front of everyone, beating on occasion. This is bound to happen in the husband-wife relationship, what to complain about, everyone has to bear it. As such, these types are tolerated by many. Some of them even speak openly. When it becomes unbearable, she also asks the police and the judiciary.

DMK's Kanimozhi had pointed out that married women in India face rape by their husbands, according to a report by the United Nations Population Fund. Kanimozhi had asked whether the UN Committee on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women had recommended the provision of criminalization of rape by the husband and whether the criminal law would be amended accordingly. Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Haribhai Chaudhary clarified this, She said, "There is no proposal before the government to make rape a criminal offense committed by a husband. Although the concept of marital rape is universally accepted, it will not be accepted in India. This is due to various factors like illiteracy, poverty, social norms, values, beliefs, mentality of the society as compared to foreign countries." Even the Law Commission, in its 172nd report after reviewing the laws on rape, did not recommend that sexual intercourse by a husband after marriage be defined as rape. The Home Ministry had also said that rape by a husband would hurt the values of the Indian family system. The Central Government clarified in the Rajya Sabha, since marriage is considered a sacred bond, the concept of rape of a wife by a husband is not acceptable in India and therefore there is no proposal to criminalize it. As marriage is considered a sacred bond, the concept of rape by a husband is not acceptable in India and therefore there is no proposal to make it a criminal offense.

It is general assumption that a husband cannot sexually violate his wife. To make understand it we have to know what is violence against women? Violence can be defined as the act of knowingly or unknowingly inflicting physical or mental harm on any person. Sexual harassment means forcing a woman to have sex against her will, with or without using physical force. This includes forced intercourse, Rape, Rape under marriage, Tampering, Physical touch against the will, Forced marriage, Sexual harassment in the workplace, Deliberate use of sexual language, Injury to the genitals, talking / sending obscene pictures and videos on mobile, on facebook, on email, on whatsapp (by pretending to be in love) and showing the lure of marriage, showing porn movies, having sex with the lure of marriage, taking photos of a woman's genitals against their will / without their knowledge etc.

The women of new thought are picturing the incidents which were kept away from the literature. Out of those writers Shashi Deshpande is an eminent Indian women novelist, who acquired confident voice to explore individual and universal mess through the female psyche. She is aware of the fact that women's voice is absent from history, culture and literature. She articulates the anguish, agony and conflict of the modern, educated Indian women who are caught between tradition and modernity and struggle for self-expression and individuality. She speaks her truth gently, but firmly. Feminism is at the core of her novels. Her depiction of women's world is authentic, realistic and credible. Her emphatic claim that she is a feminist came gradually to her as her main literary concern, mainly out of her own thinking and experiences and feelings. A very comprehensive picture of the Indian women belonging to different educational and economic levels emerges on the canvas of Indian English literature that Deshpande chooses for her novels.

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* is the story of a successful wife and unemployed husband. Therein the novel, a traditional Brahmin couple who has two children one daughter Sarita (afterwards she is called Saru) who is protagonist of the novel and son Dhruva. Saru's mother is a typical Hindu mother who is orthodox, anxious and furious in nature. She is very rigid on hers belief of Hindu religion and correlated things to the religion. But she has given birth to a difficult daughter who is revolting and questing by nature. She thinks son of the family is more important

than the daughter of the family. On the death of Dhruva, she alleged and supposed to be responsible Saru for the death of Dhruva. She never understands it was an accident but her traditional love towards son and hatred towards daughter made her compelled.

Saru narrates her childhood, adulthood and womanhood experiences when she stays in parental house. Through her narration Saru reassessing her relationship with her husband, her dead mother, her dead brother, her own children and father. Her earlier memories are about the gender discrimination shown by her mother in favour of her brother. As her sense of reasoning and questioning develops, she feels she is unable to tolerate the preference shown towards her brother. She feels jealous of her brother when he gets all the parental care and attention. Baba, her father used to sit Dhruva on the small seat specially fixed on the bar of the cycle. There is always a puja performed on Dhruva's birthday. Dhruva's birthday and other religious rituals are given top priority but Saru's birthday is only a matter of displeasure for her mother. Saru, her grief laments as, "It was always a fascinating thought ... I was born. But of my birth, my mother had said to me once ... 'It rained heavily the day you were born. It was terrible'. And somehow, it seemed to me that it was my birth that was terrible for her, not the rains" (Deshpande, *DHNT*, 169).

Saru engulf and digest blame but life becomes more desperate. There is no celebrations at home, religious rituals and her birthdays pass off in silence. Her mother never tolerates her presence. At every opportunity Saru's mother snubs her. This sense of rejection by her mother fills the adolescent Saru's mind with feeling of hatred towards her mother.

Saru hopes for a miracle to happen and that day risen. "I got it at last—the passport to medical college – a first class in my Inter Science" (Deshpande, *DHNT*, 140). Saru with a dream of autonomy entered in the medical college at Mumbai, where she takes the shelter of girl's hostel by defying her mother. Now Saru has her articulate space where she met Manohar. Manu was a post-graduate student. He was not only good student, but also secretary of the literary association, an active member of the Dramatic Society, a budding writer and a poet. Saru meets Manu when he is directing a play for the College Day. Smita introduced Saru to Manu for a little role therein the drama. After that day, Saru starts fantasizing about Manu. Sometimes she imagines him to be a great writer, a poet, thronged by people offering him gifts, praise, adulation. Saru and Manu start meeting each other quite often. It seems incredible to Saru that she can evoke so strong an emotion in someone that anyone can care for her in that way and to that extent. The intensity of Manu's love sometimes makes her passionate. Possibly, it is the fear of sex. Saru was quite aware of their relationship; they have never gone beyond holding hands till they get married. Perhaps it was happen due to the middle-class self-consciousness of Saru. Saru's quarrel with her mother reaches its peak when she decided to marry Manu. Her choice of a boy from a lower caste is a sign of her rejecting the traditional ways and values of her orthodoxy family. For long, she had unconsciously used her mother's standards, judging by her mother's convictions.

The word her mother had used, with the disgust, hatred and prejudices of centuries. Instead of disapproval of Saru's family she marries Manu. The marriage opens the door of all enjoyment for Saru. In the beginning, Saru and Manu are quite happy. Saru finds it hard to believe that she could find so much happiness in life. Such things happened only to girls in movies and books, not to girls like her. Saru's life with Manu has an encouraging beginning. She comes away from her parents in a passion of excitement. There can be no turning back. The anticlimax comes in the form of the lack of a house to live for Saru.

Saru is a well educated and successful doctor but husband, Manohar is a teacher in a college. She has two children a daughter, Renuka and son Abhijit. But Saru feels suffocating in her married life because she got married to her lover against the wish of her parent. She rejects her mother to become a doctor, and she rejects caste to marry outside. These moves are possible her because she is economically independent and it gives her courage to take an action against the social order. She wants to become self-sufficient and her every effort in life is towards this goal. When she earns Manu's love, she feels that it is her great achievement. However, she is not a passive woman she always tries to prove her individuality as a doctor. Saru is aware of the fact that Manu is anxious. She feels trapped when Manu speaks of their marriage. Saru thinks "Was this Manu, whom I loved and who loved me?" (Deshpande, *DHNT*, 38). The love and attachment which Saru longs gradually disappear from her life. Manu to whom she loved and for whom she left paternal home behaving something changed. He is considering himself inferior to his wife. Incident

after incident distance between them going to be widen. Saru is watching gradual changing nature of Manu towards her.

The next evening, I had scarcely got home when there was a knock at the door. Manu opened it. ... 'Is the doctor at home?' ... Manu called out, 'Saru, someone wants you'. It was a woman whose child had diarrhea. I examined the child and wrote out a prescription. The next day it happened again. 'Is the doctor at home?' And the day after. And the day after that. And there came a day when, hearing a knock at the door, Manu said, 'Open it, Saru, it must be for you'. I could not see his face, I was washing up the tea things then but his tone was certainly odd. An affected indifference ... (Deshpande, *DHNT*, 41)

Almost every morning or evening there is knocking at the door enquiring about lady doctor. When they walked out of their room, there were nods and smiles, murmured greetings and namastes. But they were all for Saru only. There was nothing for Manu. He was almost totally ignored. Frequently Manu asks Saru 'I'm sick of this place. Let's get out of here soon'. [*DHNT*: 42] It is because, Manu is feeling humiliating of Saru's superior status in society. Saru was tired after her long day at the hospital. Manu was at home and eager to love her but Saru refused him. Manu never listen her and behave rough and abrupt with her. Saru's economic independence makes Manu feel thoroughly insecure and Saru's success highlights Manu's failure. Saru thinks her status as doctor and economically independence made her inches taller and made him inches shorter. Saru works out an interesting parallel from algebra to illustrate her point, "a + b they told us in mathematics is equal to b + a. But here a + b was not, definitely not equal to b + a. it became a monstrously unbalance equation, lopsided, unequal, impossible" (Deshpande, *DHNT*, 42).

Saru's dream of finding happiness in marriage is soon shattered. Saru does not share a cordial relationship with her husband. Saru contempt the word love and refuses to believe that such a thing can ever exist between man and woman. She starts hating the man-woman relationship which is based not on love but on attraction and physical need. Saru's experience with Manu was a normal loving husband during the day and a monster at night.

Towards the end of the novel, Saru tells her father of the sadistic behavior of her husband. When Saru's father tells her that Manu has written to him, she reacts violently. Manu has not written about their relationship, he has just accused her of not writing any letter to him and not talking of her return. When her father asks her "tell me, what's wrong? Is something wrong between you and your husband? Something? No, everything" (Deshpande, *DHNT*, 198). Baba feels that they should talk like mature persons. He asks Saru to tell her everything. In an apologetic tone Baba admits that he does not know much about sadistic behavior, so he thinks Saru would have to tell him everything very plainly. Saru says "He's cruel to me ... in bed" (Deshpande, *DHNT*, 200). Saru carry on the topic, till the day they were a normal husband and wife, like any other normal couple till one day a girl came to interview her for a special issue on career women. As they were talking Manohar came into the room and the girl asked him. "How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?" (Deshpande, *DHNT*, 200). The interviewer's query undermines Manu's confidence since at that time Saru was earning more than her husband. Though the three of them laughed that time, the question hurts Manu and a lover husband turns into a rapist.

He attacked me, she said. 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. ... I never knew till then he has so much strength in him. I couldn't fight back. I couldn't shout or cry. I was so afraid the children in the next room would hear. I could do nothing. I can never do anything. I just endure. ... It happened again, again and again yet again. I've lost count (Deshpande, *DHNT*, 201).

Saru does not take long to realize that Manu's literary talents and ambitions have reached a dead end. He is no great poet, no Shelley. Manu's salary barely covers their expenses and Saru has

to miss out on all the activities of student life the parties, the eating out, the movies, the casual trips. The worn out way of their living begins to hurt her. She realizes that without money life becomes petty and boring. She wishes to have a house of her own where she can fulfill her dreams.

In Indian society, woman is not expected to be independent, having her own identity. Woman is treated as cow. The women are shown subjugated. This subjugation is for her being economically dependent on her male counterpart or her emotional subordination towards him. A woman can never be liberated till she frees herself from emotional dependence on man. But in Indian society there are women like Saru who are capable of finding her own way. Economic independence gives them ample scope to fight subordination and suppression. Saru had made economic independence the goal of her life. Saru seems bold enough to handle the situation. The humiliating incidents in a woman's life, leads fear for existence and a sense of powerlessness. Because of cultural coding she cannot talk about her pain in public. She considers herself to be a victim of 'Legalized rape'. The novel explores questions like, "Who is the victim and who is the predator? Are the roles so distinct, so separate? Or are we, each of us both?" (Deshpande, *DHNT*, 144) Saru analyses further:

...there is something in the male that is whittled down and ultimately destroyed by female domination. It is not so with a female. She can be dominated, she can submit, and yet hold something of herself in reserve. As if there is something in her that prevents erosion and self-destruction... Does the sword of domination become lethal only when a woman holds it over a man? (Deshpande, *DHNT*, 77)

Manohar is possessive, pompous and pretending in nature. His mannish ego gets hurt when people respect and honorably speak with his wife. He feels inferior to his wife in respect of social status. He is helpless when people give more importance to his wife and get unstable and disturb. He thinks, he has no existence before his wife, and seems fade image before wife's bold image. Day by day his wife being taller and his shortness prick his mind. His outer behavior is much different than inner, he seems happy and smiley outwardly but he is under tremendous pressure. He seems he gradually losing control over his wife and family. Nobody respects him in presence of wife, where as he has lost his value because of greatness of his wife.

Actually, Manohar is unknown that he is thinking on his own behalf, his wife is his working and earning for their family. His wife is not blaming or teasing or disrespecting him that he has meager salary and doing nothing for their family. It is his psychology; it is his thought that 'husband existing on the earning of wife.' There is no fault of Saru, if somebody speaks or thinks like this, that Manohar is inferior to Saru. Manohar with plagued mentality takes sexual revenge on her in bed at night. He attacks her like an animal, and bites her like stray dog.

Yaksha asked to Yudhisthira in the Mahabharata, 'Who is the best friend God has created for a man?' Yudhisthira had answered him, 'His wife'. If this answer given by Yudhishtira thousands of years ago and accepted even in the present times, the marital relationship will gain the dimension of friendship, it will also help in reducing crisis in husband and wife. Marriage is not just about two people but about two personalities. Intimacy also reveals the negative side of a couple's personality. This is bound to happen. Therefore, both of us should see how we can adjust to each other without letting go of frustration, anxiety, anger and resentment. Satisfied sex life plays a vital role in a happy and prosperous marriage. If the husband and wife should share in the joys and sorrows of marriage, then why should it be considered as an enjoyable thing in sexual life? If she expresses her desire emotionally, she will be considered a bad-tempered Kamini and on rare occasions she will show dislike, but as a godmother, what kind of justice is it to have sex against her will?

### References

- Atrey, Mukta, Kirpal Viney. *Shashi Deshpande: A Feminist Study of Her Fiction*. Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 2011. Print.
- Bai, K. Meera. *The Women's Voices: The Novels of Indian Women Writers*. New Delhi: Prestige, 1996. Print.

- Bande, Usha. *Writing Resistance: A Comparative Study of the Selected Novels by Women Writers*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2006. Print.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949 rpt. 1976. Print.
- Bhalla, Amrita. *Shashi Deshpande*. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2006, rpt. 2010. Print.
- Bhardawaj, Rajul. (Ed) *Indian Writing in English*. Jaipur: Rawat, 2002. Print.
- Bhat, Yashoda, Rao Yamuna Raja. (Ed) *The Image of Woman In Indian Literature*. Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1993. Print.
- Choubey, Asha. (Ed) *Women on Women: Indian Women Writers' Perspectives on Women*. Jaipur: Aadi Publications, 2011. Print.
- De Souza, Eunice, Pereira Lindsay. *Women's Voices: Selections from Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, rpt. 2011. Print.
- Deshpande, Shashi. *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1990. Print.
- Gaijan, M. B., Prasad Amar Nath. (Ed) *Indian Women Writers: A Critical Reinterpretation*. New Delhi: Sarup Book Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 2009. Print.
- James, S. *Feminism in Philosophy of Mind: The Question of Personal Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- Jha, Kali Nath. *Modernizing Women: Searching Their Identities*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2005. Print.
- John, E. Mary. (Ed) *Women's Studies in India: A Reader*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2008. Print.
- Krishnaih, B. *Image of Woman in the Recent Indian English Fiction by Woman*. New Delhi: Prestige, 2011. Print.
- Ledger, Sally. *The New Woman*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1997. Print.
- Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. New York: Abacus, 1970. Print.



This is an Open Access e-Journal Published Under A Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

**To Cite the Article:** *Shinde, Pandurang*, “Dark Holds No Terror: A Story of Marital Exploitation”. *Literary Cognizance*, II-3 (December, 2021): 52-57. Web.