

PARENTS-CHILD RELATIONSHIP IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS* AND *THE BINDING VINE*

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Family plays a big role in the Indian society. Traditionally in all societies marriage and family are considered to be its most sacred institutions. In family parents and their children hold a special relationship with each other. The relationship between parents and their children have a great effect on the children's life. As social reality doesn't consist of perfection and uniformity, neither the parents nor children in the novels of Shashi Deshpande are entirely ideal. Parent-child conflict is a problem found in several novels of Shashi Deshpande. Her novels present a wide range of types both in respect of parents and children and their relationship varies accordingly. The present paper makes a study of one of the dominant themes in Deshpande's novels-*The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *The Binding Vine*-the parent-child relationship. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* presents a picture of the traditional Indian household. In this house Sarita's mother exercised power over the domestic domain. This novel exhibits the trauma of a girl-child who has suffered bullying and rejection by her mother. Sarita grows up as a victim of her mother's biased nature towards her, which further reduces her later life into a desperate struggle. In her childhood she observes that her brother Dhruva is treated somewhat differently and given love and care which are denied to her. For instance, her parents always performed puja on Dhruva's birthday but never on her birthday. Her mother always made her to understand that she is a girl and she is inferior to her brother, in every way. Hence Saru's lively, full of life, is gradually suffocated by her mother's constant criticism and fault finding. She is always made to feel ugly, unwanted and undesirable. "I was an ugly girl. At least, my mother told me so" (61). If a mother cannot empathize with her own child then who would the child turn to? Was it her fault that she was dark and ugly? Usually, mothers serve as a role model for their daughters; they present examples of how to be an individual, a wife and a mother. In this novel, Sarita is deprived of the motherly love, care and affection. She is always ignored and neglected, in favor of her brother. We also find, mother praying for her daughter's unhappiness and the daughter saying, "If you are a woman, I don't want to be one" (63). Her mother shows extreme hatred

and enmity towards her. After the death of her son she blames her for his death. She says, "...Why don't you die? Why are you alive and he is dead?" (34) She also says, "...Daughter? I don't have any daughter. I had son and he died. Now, I am childless" (196). Her mother opposes her going to a medical college. When she marries outside her caste her ties with the parental house are snapped for 15 years. Even when her mother suffering from stomach cancer dies, she is not informed. Sarita is also denied from her father's love. Fathers play an essential role in their daughter's lives. A daughter relationship with her father is usually her first male-female relationship. But, we find that Sarita and her father don't share healthy relationship. Even they do not communicate properly. He enjoys only the privilege of being the master or head of the family. He is not much concerned about his daughter's problems. She neither gets her mother's love nor her father's care completely. She starts to hate her mother. She holds her unhappy married life, just to show her mother. Once she said, "I hate her, sapping me happiness, of everything. She's always done to me...taken happiness away from me. She does it even now when she's dead" (109).

Sarita is wife, mother of two children and also a successful doctor. As a working housewife she is doubly burdened with duties and responsibilities both at home and work place. But she is failed to balance her both roles and leads to separation and all the relations are uprated making it a psychological problem. Her professional life starts creating problem in her personal life. She is unable to give time to her husband and children. After her parents' bias treatment, she has decided to not be like them. She wanted to be a good mother, but when she becomes mother she fails to handle her role as mother. Her children Renuka and Abhijeet both find their mother busy in her professional life. Her daughter Renu is silent girl. She spends her most of time in her room. She does not share anything with her mother. She is reserved and even doesn't talk to the children of her age. Sarita, as a mother fails to understand her daughter's odd behavior. She appointed Jankibai to look after her children. But, still they long for motherly love and care. This represents the harsh reality of city life, where most of the parents appoint a maid to look after their children. But we cannot deny the fact that nobody can take the place of mother in the family. There are many instances in the novel which clearly indicate children's longings for their parents love and care. For example, once Renu draws a picture with black crayons. It is like a dark deep forest, in which trees are almost tall and straight. When Sarita sees this painting, she feels that unlike other children Renu does not draw a colorful picture, but a dark one. Usually children of Renu's age draw colorful pictures, but Renu draws a frightful one. Thus, the picture shows child's psychology. This picture can be seen in different ways. On the one hand, the crayon, which is of a child, may be considered as Renu. She expressed her loneliness or uncaring child's attitude, longing for mother's love through her drawing. This picture shows her state of mind and sense of loneliness very clearly. It shows her emptiness of childhood. On the other hand, we can infer

the girl in the picture as Sarita. Sarita always thinks that her children do not know about her loneliness and suffering which she has experienced as a child and still facing every night. When she sees Renu's picture she starts thinking about her life's loneliness and darkness. She did not receive love as child and now she has children, but she is not able to give them love and take it back.

There is another character Madhav, who is a student and lives with Sarita's father. He helps in odd household work and also plays carom with him. However, Madhav's parents are living, but he lives with Sarita's family. His father is priest and he forces his son to follow his footsteps. He asks him to learn Sanskrit. He is not much communicative with his children. Madhav does not feel comfort to talk with his father; even he dares not to write to him when his brother Satish is about to ruin his own life. He does not pay any attention towards his children what they think and feel. He does not give any choice to his daughter about her marriage. When Satish runs out from home, he blames his wife for this and refuses to eat anything cooked by her. He imposes his views and traditions on his children. He is insensitive and conservative. He does not want to face practical life, where he can see the changing father and children relationship. On the other hand Madhav's mother is more practical and communicative. She tries to understand the feelings of her children. But she is mild and follows traditions of her husband. Madhav is a modern boy. He is studious and independent minded. He chooses accountancy instead of Sanskrit against his father's wish. He does not have a good relation with his father, but he feels confident enough to communicate with his mother. Thus, we see that parental-child relationship in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is not based on understanding, but on traditional roles of parents, who are unable to feel the problems and wishes of modern generation.

In *The Binding Vine*, Shashi Deshpande again shows bitter parent-child relationship. In this novel, Priti leaves her parents in the United States and comes back to India alone. Her mother is alcoholic. She pays no attention towards Priti. Her case illustrates the brittle nature of parent-child relations in the affluent families. The other characters Vanaa and her daughter present cases of parents failing to satisfy the demand of children. Vanaa is a working woman. But her daughter Mandira does not like her mother going to work. She feels that her mother is not giving much time to her and her sister Pallavi. Her mother has employed a maid, Hirabai to attend them but she thinks that a maid is not substitute for mother. On the other hand Vanaa seems all these unreasonable. Her mother was too a teacher, but she did not feel wrong. She is very fond of her mother and proud of her. But Vanaa is not satisfied with her father. She feels that her father did not love her as Urmi's did love Urmi. Urmi had spent her childhood living with her grandparents and does not have a close relationship with her parents. Urmi's father is old fashioned. There are two major incidents which are evident of his thinking. When Urmi was a child, her mother went out leaving her with a trusted male

attendant Diwaker. When her father came to home he found her crying. He got angry on her mother and deemed it an offence on the part of her mother to leave the child alone with a male servant. He does not want to repeat such type of incident again, so he sent her to Ranidurg to live with her grandparents. However, he later feels guilty about it. He did not like her idea of marrying Kishore initially, but beside all this, it is fact that he loves his daughter. He is affectionate and cares for her. He feels guilty for his behavior. He himself feels that he did not look after her when her son Kartik was born. Urmila does not like her mother. She blames her to send her away to Ranidurg to be looked after her grandparents. This leaves a negative impact on her mind. She perceived it as indication of rejection. She expressed her anger in many ways. For example, she prefers the old-fashioned, ill-fitting dresses made by her grandmother to the expensive ones sent by her mother. Even as a grown up woman she continues in the same vain. Her brother tries to make her understand that it was her father who sent her, not her mother. But she does not believe it until her mother reveals the truth that it was her father's decision to send her to her grandparents' house. This revelation makes their relationship smoother. All these characters belong to rich families. But there are some characters that belong to poor family. One of them is Shakutai; she works in a girl's school in the Principal's office. She has three children-Kalpana, Sandhya and Prakash. She is an affectionate and caring mother. She is poor, but she does not want to deprive her children of anything. She wants to fulfill her children's wishes. She does not like that her children go to other people's houses to watch T.V and being treated like beggars by them. So she has brought even a T.V set for her children. Kalpana, the eldest daughter is her favorite among them. She likes to talk about her most of her time and permits her to buy what she calls 'rubbish'-hair clips, bands, bangles, nail paints etc. she permits kalpana to keep a cat too. Kalpana is smart, stubborn and secretive, she has learnt how to speak English and found a job at a shop for herself. Though Shakutai appreciates and pampers kalpana, but she is also afraid that her living style will invite trouble for herself. She suggests her to keep a low profile. She warns her that young girls provoke boys by appearing in attractive dress and make-up in public. In this male dominated society women are not allowed to choose their own life-style, because of this, the mother-daughter relation becomes uneasy. Kalpana does not believe all this. She starts hiding things from her mother. Even she does not tell about her salary to her mother. She does not want to give her earning at home. All these little things create a big misunderstanding between them. When her father leaves her mother for some other woman, she blames her mother not her father and when kalpana is raped, Shakutaiblames Kalpana for this. She asks Urmila, "I wanted her to have all that I never had- education, a good life, a good marriage, and respect from others. Look at me- what am I? I don't want my children to be like me," 'Did I do wrong, Urmila, was I cruel to her?'(112). The other daughter, Sandhya, is a sweet girl. She is docile and helpful to her mother. She does all household work and

keeps the home in order. Prakash shows his manly nature. He is critical of his mother and defiant. He believes what other people say about the sad plight of Kalpana and holds her mother responsible for the rape of his eldest sister. He is also among those people who hold the silly view that the rape occurred as his mother had permitted Kalpana to get out of hand. His mother asks him to see her daughter in the hospital where Kalpana remains admitted, he goes once but after that he refuses to go the next day. Shakutai tries her best for her children but she fails to maintain harmony in her family. Kalpana's father who remains unnamed in the novel, appears only once before us. He is not an ideal father. He leaves Shakutai and his children for another woman. So he is far from performing his duties as a father.

Shashi Deshpande's novels focus mainly on middle class families. Hunger and malnutrition are not the problems there, but the children in such families often miss their parents' love and concern. Some parents are sensitive to the emotional needs of their children and some of them are careless and irresponsible. Shashi Deshpande depicts relations and emotions in a very effective way. In an interview with Geeta Gangadharan, she acknowledges that relationship and human emotions are of importance to her. She says, "Human relationship is what a writer is involved with. Person to person and person to society relationship these are the two primary concern of a creative writer..." (Interview with Geeta Gangadharan, 252). *The Dark Holds No Terrors* presents a picture of dominated parents, which makes Sarita to search life outside her family. Her love marriage and taking admission in medical college indicate her longing to exit from such dominating and tortuous atmosphere. Madhav also very depressed because of his father's restrictions. He wants to make his career according to his interest, but his father forces him to take a subject of his choice. Shashi Deshpande has shown some common problems faced by parents as well as children. First, is the working parents, in both novels Sarita and Vanaa are working women. They are busy in their professional life so much that they are unable to give time to their children. Their children long for mothers love and care. As a result Sarita's daughter Renuka becomes an isolated child who always stays in her room and does not talk to anyone. Vanaa's daughter Mandira too feels lonely and shows her anger and irritation towards her mother. Secondly, in both novels parents keep maid to take care of their children. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita appoints Janakibai and in *The Binding Vine*, Vanaa also appoints Heerabai to look after their children in their absence. This now very common in our modern and working society, where both parents are working. They don't even have time for their children, so they hire maids to take care of their children. Thirdly, in both novels Sarita's mother and Shakutai are against girl child. Sarita's mother does not show any concern and love towards her, except getting her married and fulfill their responsibility as parents. She always keeps scolding and criticizing her. On the other hand Shakutai did not want that she gives birth to a girl child, she reveals her preference for male children but she gives reason behind this. She

does not want that her daughters face any misbehavior of male dominated society. That is why she often scolds Kalpana for her dress and make-up. She asks her not to highlight so much. It shows mothers have their own reason for the male child, they are afraid that their daughters will have no better prospect than their own. So, both the novels depict the present society's and people's attitude towards children and parents as well. The novels of Shashi Deshpande present the harsh realities of society and relationships and also a promising glimpse of the changes taking place around us. We find the children striving to assert themselves on one hand in different ways, on the other the parents to grasp the reality and realize the demands of the new age, the sensibilities and aspirations of the new generation. There lies the hope for the future, though a lot remains to be achieved.

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