



## The Impact of Andro Centric Ideology on Human Relationships in the Novel *the Dark Holds No Terror*

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### Abstract

*The Dark Holds No Terror*, a powerful novel by Shashi Deshpande is all about the struggle of an educated and professional lady named Sarita or Saru. The novel depicts the life of Sarita, a lady doctor who escapes from the clutches of her pessimistic mother and mute father and is tortured by the sexual extremes of her husband Manohar. The protagonist is trying to revolt against the social taboos and old tradition. She struggles for her freedom, completeness and her identity. Deshpande explores the myth of man's unquestionable superiority in this novel by stringing the incidents powerfully and carefully. Deshpande talks about the world of Indian women in the context of modern Indian society. This paper focuses on the prevalence of the andro centric ideology in Indian family set up. It also lime lights how the ideology spoils the peaceful life of both educated and uneducated women in the modern society.

**Keywords:** Struggle, Superiority, Taboos, Identity, Andro- Centric Ideology.

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### Introduction

In our present day constantly changing social scenario the age –old andro centric ideology, the very backbone of the patriarchal social structure, has been exercising a baneful effect on our familial and social relationship ever since it came into conflict with the modern enlightened ideology under the feminist movement. Shashi Deshpande in her novels has forcefully portrayed the struggle of women who are trying to survive in an andro-centric world. The hold of andro-centric is so strong upon the minds of both men and women that it hinders the progress of women by confining them to the four walls of their house and they are expected to perform the traditional role of a daughter, sister, wife and mother. It is against this andro-centric ideology that Shashi Deshpande's female protagonists raise their voice of protest. She picturizes the plight of emerging women and their struggle to come out of the shackles of their traditional image in the society. A famous critic on women's writing Jasbir Jain writes about Deshpande's writings as follows:

*Worked through historical and traditional contexts, explored psychological conflicts and inner spaces, brought space to create narrative meaning and has related to multiple literary traditions of language, gender and culture.*

The delicate web of human relationships is woven of tender feelings and sentiments. Love, affection,

selflessness, self- sacrifice are the pillars that support the superstructure of human relationships. But when these supporting pillars begin to crumble due to the andro-centric ideology and the new enlightened ideology, the structure of human relationships also begins to face the threat of a collapse. The code of ethics framed for women by this andro-centric ideology was deeply injected in their blood that they naively and quietly submitted to it and never cared to think of anything else but seeking domestic happiness by preserving the sweetness of familial relationship at any cost and at every cost. But with the advent of feminist movement, the minds of women got enlightened enough to peep into the irrationality, injustice ingrained in the andro-centric ideology, they raised their voice in revolt and began to crave to replace it by an ideology based on the principles of equality, personal freedom and justice to all. Thus, the two ideologies came in conflict with each other affecting harmfully warmth and sweetness of relationships.

The clash between husband-wife relationships has affected the warmth and sweetness of the relationship. In the "*Dark Holds No Terrors*", Saru, the protagonist falls in love with Manu and later marries him because she feels that she shares the likeness of temperament and ideology with him. It is love and understanding that draws her towards Manu. The sweetness of their relationship survives as long as the husband supports his wife's struggle for identity search. But as soon as Manu's false male pride born out of andro-centric ideology gains an upper hand over his wife, the love relationship between them gets strained.

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The andro centric ideology provides the role of a bread earner to the husband and that of housekeeping to the wife. But here Saru becomes the bread earner that affects Manu's male pride. The constant neglect and indifference he receives from his wife and from the society breeds in him inferiority complex and how he begins to realize that he is completely overshadowed by his wife. Consequently, the emotion of love in him begins to cool down and is assailed from time to time by such passions as envy, frustration, annoyance, resentment and so on. He gradually withdraws all the support and co-operation that he gave to his wife. He now expects from her the same regularity and efficiency in the performance of her wifely and motherly duties as a common earning husband would do from his non-earning wife. He gets annoyed with her if she comes late from the hospital or if his private life is disturbed by her patients at home. Saru is fully aware of the mental state of her husband that has soured their relationship to a large extent. The fact becomes clear from the following fragment of her stream of consciousness:

*"It is because that I am something than his wife that he has become what he is. If I can go back to being nothing but his wife.....he may no longer resent me" (The Dark)*

As for Saru, she is observed with her ambition for fame and she turns indifferent to love making of her husband. The sense of pride she feels in receiving greetings and applauses from her patients and neighbours also adds its share to cool down the warmth of their relationship. At this point of time, such emotions as love and affection becomes secondary and the achievement of status and fame becomes primary in her mind. As Premila Paul write

*"In her self-centered march to progress, she nullifies Manu's existence and reduces him to a 'zero'....the career becomes an indispensable crutch as it gives her so much importance and power over others."(63)*

This develops a slight crack in their conjugal relationship. This crack continues to wider with the passage of time so much that the husband begins to take sadist pleasure in assailing her feminine tenderness with his sexual assaults. Saru fed up with him and she even thinks at the extent of separating from him. In this way the tie of love which keeps their relationship intact loosens and they get estranged emotionally. Unable to get emotional support from her husband, she hopes to secure it by seeking the friendship of her college friend Padmakar. Her interest in developing friendship with him is but an expression of her strained relationship with her husband. She frankly confesses the fact:

*I had met him, smiled at him, and listened to him. And now I know it had not been thoughtless on my part. I had done it deliberately, coolly, with calculation, because foolishly perhaps I had imagined it would give me an escape route, something that would lead me out of my loveless trap was not it always the solution for a woman*

*who found no happiness with one man to try and find it another man?"(The Dark)*

Thus Manu's andro- centric ideology and Saur's modern enlightened ideology took the form of burning flame that engulfed all the love and harmony of their conjugal relationship. The andro- centric ideology exercises its baneful effect not only on conjugal relationship but on familial relationship. This ideology is deeply ingrained in Saur's mother that it makes her not only indifferent but also hostile to the interests of her daughter. The bitterness in Saru's daughterly relationship with her mother is intensified considerably when Saru notices her mother giving favours and all her love to her brother. Saru's mother frequently daunts her for her ugliness and scolds her for shrinking household works.

*"You will never be good looking. You are too dark for that.....howmany times I call you? Looking at you in the mirror! I will give you a certificate to say that you are beautiful. Will that satisfy you?" (The Dark)*

Saru's hatred gets intensified when the mother unjustly accuses her of Dhuruva's death. As a typical Indian mother, she opposes Saru's admission to a medical college and becomes an obstacle in Saru's way of realizing her dream of becoming a doctor. She loses her patience and shouts at her mother thus:

*"I am not talking to you. I'm not asking you for anything. I know what your answer will be. "No", forever "No" to anything I want. You don't even want me to live. (The Dark)*

The above statements of Saru clearly shows that the rotten relationship between the mother and the daughter. The relationship further gets strained when Saru marries Manu against the advice of her mother. This is not evident from the fact that after her marriage, the mother wants to get any medical help from her doctor daughter nor does the daughter express any sense of grief on the news of her mother's death. Saru expresses her hatred for her mother in the following words:

*I hate her, sapping me of happiness, of everything...She does it even now when she's dead (The Dark)*

The silence of Saru's father over her wife's actions of justice gives her the impression of his mute consent to all those acts and this leads to a communication gap between the father and the daughter. The coldness in their relationship is further noticeable on the occasion of Saru's home return after fifteen years. This meeting evokes no love or affection but only 'familiar irritation' in their hearts.

It may be fairly concluded that the andro-centric ideologies in husband-wife relationship, mother-daughter relationship, father-daughter and brother-sister relationship are responsible for shattering the smooth and peaceful family. Deshpande thus picturizes the Indian middle class family.

## Reference

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