

Protagonist's Dilemma in Deshpande's "The Dark Holds No Terrors"

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"The Dark Holds No Terrors" explores the inner struggles of Saru, who represents the middle class working woman in modern India. Since childhood Saru endures her mother's discrimination with her brother Dhruva. As she grows up, resentment and hatred drive her to leave home and obsessively seek success in medical college. Saru falls in love with a college mate and marries Manohar against the wishes of her parents. Saru's marriage is a means of that love and security which she had always lacked in life. Manu acts as a hero to her, who has come to rescue her from the insecure, loveless existence.

The Dark Holds No Terrors (1980), the first novel by Shashi Deshpande is a totally different novel in the sense that it is based on the problems faced by a career woman, a refreshingly new phenomenon in Indian English fiction. The novel focuses on woman's awareness of her predicament, her wanting to be recognized as a person than as a woman and her wanting to have an independent social image.

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Saru succeeds and emerges as a successful, well known and reputed doctor. At the same time, her marriage begins to crumble under the burden of success in her profession. She is happy until she begins to establish herself as a doctor. Now the situation undergoes a change. Till now, "he had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband." Her inability to procure time for herself and her family upsets her family life. Manu, her husband cannot tolerate people greeting her and ignoring him. He cannot express it openly but says out of irritation: "I am sick of this place. Let's get out of here soon". He does not love her the way he used to earlier. Now she realizes where the shoe pinched. Deshpande sharply focuses the problem through Saru. When she says:

a+b they told us in mathematics is equal to b+a.

But her a+b was not. definitely not equal to b+a.

It became monstrously unbalanced equation, Lopsided, unequal impossible.

The esieetn she earned around her made her inches talier and rim inches shorter. The ego clash became inevitable because Saru became a famous doctor and lie turned out to be simply a lecturer, which made Saru socially and economically his superior.

The simmering inferiority complex of Manu burst out a day when a girl had come to interview her, who asked the following questions to Manu. "How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?"

Manu's male ego is hurt. His masculinity asserts itself through nocturnal sexual assaults upon Saru. Since that day Manu became a sadist. It terrifies and humiliates Saru so much that she cannot speak about them, even to him: ... each 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.

Thus the benevolent, cheerful husband by day turns a rapist at night. While the woman, out of economic necessity, goes to work, this economic independence, this illusory power in a way enhances rejection by her man. Even when she does not take the advantage of this independence, her husband does not appreciate her. Although the status of men may not be an absolute provider, he is still the dominant force and authority in the house. Often a man's frustration at not finding employment, at not being able to get along in the world outside, at being unable to protect either himself or his family from the hostile environment make him a tormentor at home. Saru's situation is explicitly described here : "I had come away from my parents in a fever of excitement after the last battle. The die was cast, the decisions taken, this ridiculous anticlimax." Saru could not get the freedom, which she desires from her marriage. She compromises with the situations. In her utter desperation she addresses the girls in Nalu's college :

... If you want to be happily married, there is one thing microcosm, Coolie is a macrocosm, that is Indian society." The study of Untouchable and Coolie and their context clearly shows how authentic and realistic are the portrayal of poverty and its concomitant misery in India. The writer has very convincingly exposed the evil both of the caste- system and the class-system eating into the vitals of Indian society. Untouchable that turns attention to the evil of caste- system indeed "displays his penetrating thought and human attitude in understanding the grim realities of social life in India." Much more than this, however, the analyses above show that Untouchable is a novel with a universal message about the dignity of labour and the sanctity of duty. If it brings out an insight into the memories of the castaways, it also forces the readers to realise that devotion to duty is the noblest form of worship "and all labour is a kind of creativity." Similarly, Coolie that depicts the deplorable conditions of coolies in India eventually becomes a tale underscoring that problem of class is a universal phenomenon. The two novels thus bring into sharp focus Anand's humanistic love for the suppressed and the unprivileged in all societies.

Believing firmly that stoic-telling is truth telling, Anand attempted to create life's verisimilitude, which is authentic and veritable. He worked it out with devotion, unmindful of the apprehension of being labelled a propagandist. He called himself "a truth addict, to the point of being a prig." In his devotion to truth and its revelation in fiction, Anand did not even mind breaking with conventions as long as they served both art and life. The present text is devoted to examining this very aspect of his art vis-a-vis the conventions of fiction which have been in practice from time to time. Prose fiction, like any other literary genre, is characterized by specific conventions which inhere both the writer's language and his modes. Ronald Carter in 1979 proposed that while studying the style of discourse, attention should be paid to the context-specific conventions of a discourse.

The conventions mentioned in Ronald's scheme are both those that characterize the genre and also the language. The present article, however, focuses on the fictional conventions and Anand's use of them in order to more fully understand his aim in the two novels. That Anand's views of fictional art are very close to Forster's is evidenced by the fact that E.M. Forster consented to write a preface for his first novel, which had been rejected by nineteen publishers. What Anand did in his Untouchable perhaps conformed to Forster's views of fiction. Anand's own formulations in this regard further substantiate the affinity between the two great writers of the age. Anand's view of the novel conforms to the classical nineteenth century conception of it, with the difference that he takes the social responsibility of the novelist even more seriously than the Victorians did. At the same

time, the writer also lets the readers form their impression about the characters from their situation and their dialogues.

The instructive commentary and the direct communication proceed side by side to make the narrative effective. The form and organisation of Untouchable is unusual as compared to that of Coolie. It is not only compact and well knit but more modern in its narration: "in fact Anand acknowledges the influence of 'Stream of Consciousness' technique on his narrative art in Untouchable." However, Anand claims to have modified and adopted the Joycean technique to suit his material and motive.

The fusion of the modes of fiction is best reflected in the structure of Untouchable. Anand has employed a fusion of the Western realistic tradition of the novel with the Indian tradition of the moral fable. This may, of course, be ascribed to Anand's Indian background and Western education. A moral fable exposes and then suggests a remedy - generally at the imaginative level - which may often be nothing better than a fantasy - and briefly hints at a better order, after the particular evil has been eradicated or overcome. The evil which is the subject of Untouchable is the evil of untouchability which makes the protagonist, who is not specially bothered by it at the beginning of the story, its victim.

Anand was very alive to the disconcerting problem of untouchability that had blighted the Indian society for so long. And as a social critic, he often uses the tool of irony to expose social evils. Untouchability is particularly vulnerable to ironic treatment as its practitioners are satanic in their hypocrisy and Pharisaical in their piety. Anand provides a lot of information about India, its historical, cultural and social aspects. At the same time he has succeeded in disseminating those ideas and the ideals that he held on to as a writer and as a social critic. The discussion of the two novels above makes it abundantly clear that Anand, like most Indo-English novelist, did not stick to any one particular theory of the novel. He knew that novel, by its very nature, was a loose genre and allowed the writer to use it according to his purpose and motive. Anand has followed the old age conventions of the novel, but has also departed from them at places to make his works richly appealing. If he has followed the conventional mode of story-telling, he has also chosen to keep it to the bare minimum as in Untouchable, and instead built his novels on character, dialogue and interior monologue. He has also employed deviant linguistic modes to achieve the desired effects according to his intention. Through this freedom of using conventions and modes, Anand has succeeded in truth telling and putting the reality straight.

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