

## Silence, Selfhood, and Patriarchal Pressure in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*

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### ABSTRACT

What is the value of being a woman in a society that values you on your skin colour, your obedience and the ego of your husband? *The Dark Holds No Terrors* by Shashi Deshpande is an unsettling question that is answered in the book's psychological examination of Sarita's progression to become an abused wife and her quest for identity in the absence of a voice. Through the character of Sarita, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* examines the themes of gender discrimination, emotional trauma, marital abuse, silence and self-discovery. It examines the role of patriarchy in forming women's identities from childhood and how it continues to impact women's lives as they get married and into society. Sarita's experiences as an unwanted daughter, a professionally successful woman and an exploited wife highlight the psychological consequences of gender inequality. Deshpande employs silence and darkness for the purpose of not just symbolizing pain but also spaces of introspection and transformation. The novel is structured through psychological realism and introspection as Sarita moves from fear and guilt, towards self-awareness and self-acceptance. This paper discusses the connection between patriarchy, silence and identity formation in the novel and suggests that the book by Deshpande shows an internalisation of women's empowerment instead of an external protest. The novel is also a significant novel of feminist discourse in India as it reveals the significance of Indian women in relation to oppressive structures, and their quest for freedom and dignity.

**Keywords:** *Patriarchy, gender discrimination, silence, identity formation, feminism, psychological realism, marital violence, self-actualization, Indian women, empowerment.*

Literature, as is well said, is the mirror of the society, so, it showcases the antagonism and dichotomy prevailing in the society. Indian women writers have used literature to disclose the mindset that control women's lives and restrain their liberty. Among these writers, Shashi Deshpande is special for her ingenious portrayal of the psychological struggles of women in the domestic environment. Rather than presenting dramatic revolutions against patriarchal power, she explores the subtle emotional and social mechanisms through which women

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experience oppression and attempt to reclaim their individual identities. Published in 1980, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is one of Deshpande's most consequential novels. It is about the life of Sarita (Saru) who is troubled by emotional neglect, social discrimination and marital abuse. The novel explores the complex themes of personal identity and expectations of society. Follows Sarita's journey from a child who longs to be cared for and nurtured to an adult who deals with her own hidden identity. The journey reflects the complexities and different aspects of a girl child being torn between the expectations of society and her aspirations, which is a result of the internalization and inculcation of patriarchy at a young age. Silence is one of the main themes of the novel. There is some training of women to keep their mouths shut to uphold social peace and family values. But, Deshpande takes silence to a different level. It's used as a form of repression, psychological load, and ultimately as a process of self-understanding. In the novel, dark also represents terror and enlightenment. It conceals truths we may find difficult to face and also offers us an atmosphere for our hidden feelings to emerge. This paper examines the critical examination of gender discrimination, family relations, marital violence and the silence and identity formation by Deshpande. The novel reveals the emotional effects of a patriarchal culture through Sarita's experiences and offers the reader some ideas of self-discovery and empowerment. Self-referentiality of women is an important feminist message, and the assessment suggests that it is the protagonist's ultimate recognition of her self-worth that brings about this message.

### **Literature Review:**

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* by Shashi Deshpande has garnered many accolades for its themes of gender inequality, psychological struggle, silence and female identity in a male-dominated world. The novel has been read from feminist, psychoanalytical, sociological and post-colonial viewpoints and has been noted for its realistic and sensitive portrayal of the inner lives of women. Previously conducted critical studies reveal that the novel is not simply personal but reflects on the condition of women in the present day of Indian society at large.

One of the early critical issues in the novel is its portrayal of the family's attitude towards discrimination. Roopnika Katharapi believes that Sarita's emotional pain is rooted in her childhood when she was constantly made to feel inferior to her brother due to her gender. Katharapi says the way her mother has treated her shows the strong patriarchal values and practices that value boys over daughters. Such discrimination modifies Sarita's personality, which in turn plays a large part in her insecurities and emotional conflicts.

In the same way, B. Gopaiah and Anshu Tewatia examines the connection between gender roles and the process of identity formation in the novel. She describes the psychological burden in the name of patriarchy on women, restricts their opportunities to express themselves and govern themselves. Her assessment sheds light on the recurrent assault on Sarita's identity and independence from a society that constructs women's identity mostly around their domestic existence and roles.

According to critics, identity crisis is caused when an individual's aspirations clash with cultural norms of femininity. Numerous academics have written about the psychological nature of the novel. Prasanna's non-linear approach to the novel's layout, reflecting the narrative's disjointed nature, is enticing (Prasanna, 2003). However, what this gloss ignores is the intent behind Deshpande's use of flashbacks. They don't only serve as signs of trauma, but are also a technique in the telling, a way to get the reader to feel the confusion on Sarita's own, not as an observer. She says that the reason for Sarita's emotional distress is because of the trauma she faced in her childhood, guilt over her brother's death and fear of marital violence. The novel itself is non-linear, mirroring the heroine's split personality and her journey toward self-awareness.

One of the other important research themes is silence as a main theme. Meenakshi Mukherjee, a critic, has said, "Critics such as Deshpande highlight the 'suppressed voices' of women, demonstrating women's silent survival of the patriarchal oppression (Mukherjee, 2010) but the novel also depicts the silent as a tactical retreat and as a place where Sarita slowly asserts her agency, as when she confronts Manu at the end.

Apart from being a symbol of oppression, she states that silence is also a psychological state that shows that women do not have a way to openly express what has happened to them. Deshpande's journey from silence to telling is what makes Sarita a compelling and powerful tool to reveal the emotional truths concealed.

Marital violence has also been pointed out in the novel. Manu's violent actions are sometimes viewed as an expression of masculinity that is being threatened by the feminist interpretation of the story. Sarita's career as a physician disrupts the gendered norm of male superiority in terms of their social and economic status, and the status quo in the village. Sarita's success as a doctor shakes the village status quo and society's notion that men should be superior to their wives in terms of their social and economic status. Some scholars discuss Manu's violence on the grounds that it is a patriarchal attempt to reestablish the power relations when they are

disrupted. This makes the novel a focus on the emotional and physical effects of the imbalance between men and women in marriage.

The novel has been critically examined at a more macro level, in relation to other cultural and social frameworks, by postcolonial critics such as Ramana Devika. Through her studies, Deshpande attacks not only oppressive individual acts, but also the social institutions and traditions that perpetuate inequality. It is a novel about women's lives, influenced by traditions, family demands and cultural values which restrict freedom, and conformity as a virtue. Thus, these analyses situate '*The Dark Holds No Terrors*' in a broader context of gender and social change in postcolonial India.

Deshpande's other significant contribution to criticism is her unique feminist viewpoint. Chaman Nahal considers her novels to be free of dichotomy between oppressed woman and oppressing man. Social conditioning is complex as the female characters themselves often contribute to upholding patriarchal values. This view differentiates Deshpande's writing from the more traditional feminist accounts and sheds light on her focus on psychological realism.

Together, the present research confirms that *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is a powerful look at the conflict with gender discrimination, silencing, trauma and identity formation. While numerous papers have touched upon these issues individually, few papers have examined the complexities of silence, sexual harassment and identity crisis in relation to Sarita's quest for self-realization. However, the present study tries to address this gap by exploring the interconnection of the structures of patriarchy, silence and the construction of female identity in the novel in depth.

### **Gender socialization and construction of female identity**

Sarita's identity crisis stems from her childhood experiences. She is brought up from a young age that she is valued in the family based on her gender. Her younger brother Dhruv receives affection, attention and respect while she receives none of those. She gets neglected and criticized, Dhruv receives affection, attention and respect. This unequal treatment makes it clear that it is a bad thing to be a woman. Sarita's mother tells her many times that a girl's appearance determines her destiny. Concerned about her dark complexion, her mother prevents her from spending time in the sun as dark skin can affect her marriage prospects. These attitudes express a way of treating women as mere objects having the sole purpose of marriage, which are developed in a patriarchal society. A daughter's personality takes a back seat to her potential as a bride. Sarita remembers her mother saying:

“Don’t go out in the sun. You’ll get even darker. Who cares?”

We have to care even 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’s different, He is a boy.” (TDHNT,45)

The celebrations around Dhruv's birthday further highlight the gender inequality. Religious ceremonies and family gatherings emphasize Dhruva's importance, while Sarita's birthday is not given the same importance. Due to these experiences, Sarita gradually begins to develop a sense of alienation and dissatisfaction. The family becomes a place where patriarchal values are propagated and strengthened.

There was always a puja on Dhruva’s birthday. A festive lunch in the afternoon and an aarti in the evening during which Dhruva as an infant, sat solemnly on Baba’s lap, and as a child, by his side, while I helped mother to do the aarti. My Birthdays were almost the same...but there was no puja. (TDHNT, 168-169).

The most traumatic event of Sarita's childhood is the sudden death of her brother. Instead of being consoled, she becomes the victim of her mother's blame and hostility. The accusation of holding him responsible for Dhruv's death leaves a deep psychological wound on his mind. The guilt becomes deeply ingrained in his mind and continues to affect his relationships well into adulthood. ‘You did it. You did this. You killed him. Why didn’t you die? Why you are alive, when he is dead.’ (TDHNT, 191).

Deshpande shows that gender discrimination is not limited to social institutions only; It starts with the family itself. Emotional wounds sustained in childhood shape Sarita's ability to understand herself and the world around her. She internalizes feelings of inadequacy, as well as develops a desire to resist the expectations imposed upon her. She hates everything about her mother, even womanhood. “A kind of shame that engulfed me, making me want to rage, scream against the fact that put me in the same class as my mother. “(TDHNT ,55) This makes her determined to make an identity for herself. Becoming a doctor gives him that satisfaction, and people's appreciation of his achievement consoles her hurt mind.

When we walked out of a room, there were needs and the smiles, murmured greetings and Namastes. But they were all for me, only for me. There was nothing for him. He was almost totally ignored. And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller, made him inches shorter. (TDHNT, 36-37)

The novel also shows how women can become participants in patriarchal systems. Sarita's mother enforces traditional values despite experiencing the limitations imposed on women herself. Their actions are a reflection of the complicated intergenerational transmission of patriarchal ideology. Thus oppression is not only male-dominated, but it is also a cultural system that is maintained by men and women.

### **Marriage, Masculinity and Domestic Violence**

“Sarita's decision to pursue higher education and become a doctor is an attempt to break free from the constraints of her childhood. She became obstreperous to hurt her mother, she says, “I hated her, I wanted to hurt her, wound her, make her suffer.” (TDHNT,142).

Her professional achievements are evidence of her intelligence, determination, and independence. However, the novel suggests that one's success in the economy does not bring freedom from patriarchal control. Marrying Manohar initially seems to provide emotional support and personal freedom to Sarita. By marrying against her family's wishes, she challenges traditional expectations and asserts her autonomy. However, the relationship gradually begins to deteriorate as her professional achievements begin to tarnish her husband's reputation.

A confident doctor during the day becomes a helpless victim of her husband's atrocities at night. And that's why she runs away a second time, leaving her husband and children behind. Ironically, this movement between the husband's home and the maternal home also highlights the limited space for a woman in the patriarchal system. He has no home of his own where he can live without any fear and speak openly about his needs. Saru is surrounded by women who suffer silently in one way or another. She misses her grandmother who was abandoned by her husband but never complained as she accepted it as her fate.

“It was written on my forehead “(62) In fact there is a complete loss of identity as she asks Saru “Why am I ,a fat old, unwanted woman left alive when he (her husband) so useful, so much wanted was taken away? Why am I alive when he is dead?” (TDHNT, 69)

Imbalance in social recognition creates tension in marital life. Men are traditionally expected to hold positions of authority and success in society. Sarita's fame as a doctor challenge these expectations and threatens Manohar's sense of masculinity. Instead of celebrating Sarita's achievements, Manohar experiences insecurity and humiliation.

After being a Doctor Saru does not achieve that equality and self-worth for which she is craving. Her anguish comes through an imaginary letter which she writes to girls in her friend Nalu's college:

“A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband....That's the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. Don't ever try to reverse the Doctor-Nurse, Executive-Secretary, Principal-Teacher role.... If the scales tilt in your favour, God help you, both of you.” (TDHNT, 124) She can see her friend Smita becoming a puppet in her husband's hand as he changes her name to Gitanjali and hates anyone calling her Smita. Also, she has to borrow money from Saru because her husband has given her “just enough to buy a small gift for the baby” ,indicating at his penchant for control. (TDHNT, 107)

What makes Manohar's violence so psychologically devastating is not its intensity, but its inconsistency. By day, he is the affectionate husband Sarita chose; by night, he becomes a predator within her own bedroom. Deshpande uses this split personality not merely to condemn Manohar as an individual villain, but to expose a darker truth: that patriarchal violence does not announce itself. It hides inside love, making the victim doubt her own perception of reality. A mechanism now recognized in modern psychology as gaslighting. This contradiction further increases Sarita's confusion and emotional isolation. She struggles to reconcile her beloved husband and the violent man who terrorizes her.

One is the inclusion of the concept of marital rape. One aspect of violence the novel brings to the fore that isn't usually discussed in marriage-related contexts is the violence of poverty. Women's social norms can stop them from talking about intimate abuse openly, to conceal Sarita's suffering. She is silenced by the fear of condemnation, and social stigma. Sarita's experiences reveal to the reader the link between patriarchy and the notions of masculinity and dominance. Wherever the established order is threatened, there is a danger of violence being used to restore order. So, the novel condemns not just the behavior of the individuals but their cultural values that normalize and validate male privilege and female subordination. Thus, domestic violence is both personal and political in the novel. It is a reflection of the general attitude of the society towards gender roles and power relations. Sarita is unable to talk about her experience, which illustrates how many women, who are suffering, are invisible in so-called respectable family relationships.

The politics of femininity is the subject of Cultural Expectations. Cultural Expectations is about the politics of femininity.

The novel depicts the Indian society as one that has rigid expectations with respect to women's behavior. Women are supposed to have the primary role of raising the children, put their own needs last and let the men rule. These expectations affect all areas of Sarita's life and play a major role in her emotional struggles. The drama of Sarita's success is that it doesn't affect anything at home. In the clinic, a female doctor's work and dedication are applauded, while her husband doubts her in the dinner table at his home. In a sardonic observation, Deshpande captures this painful paradox, through Sarita's, who must always earn. It's not a joke, it's a condemnation of a culture that regards diminishment for a woman as a proper form of marital harmony. Ambitions for individuals can pose a threat to family harmony. Because of this, women that succeed in their careers have been met with criticism and skepticism. It is clear in Sarita's experiences how these cultural norms are potentially restrictive. She is successful in earning money from her profession as a doctor but society continues to restrict her freedom. Her success is not empowering, instead it is a dispute to the rules of the game that are set up with the gender. Her success is not empowering but rather a challenge to the rules of the game set by the gender. The novel also reveals the symbolic devices that are used to manage women. Customs related to marriage, menstruation, domestic responsibilities, and social standing reinforce women's subordination. Such practices regulate women's bodies and behavior, while presenting inequality as natural and desirable.

Deshpande emphasizes that discrimination occurs collectively. Patriarchal values are perpetuated not only through individual actions but also through cultural traditions, social institutions, and community expectations. Women often become enforcers of these norms because they too have internalized these beliefs. Customs, menstrual restrictions, dowry expectations, and the imperative to be a "good wife" are used to control women's bodies and desires. As Sarita herself says in her speech:

A wife should always be few feet behind her husband. If he is an MA, you should be a BA. If he is 5'4'tall you shouldn't be more than 5'3'tall. If he is earning five hundred rupees you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety- nine rupees. That's the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage...No partnership can ever be equal. It will always be unequal, but take care it is unequal in favor of your husband. (TDHNT,137)

Sarita's resistance and accommodation are a sign of the precarious situation for many women. Resistance can result in alienation, and accommodation requires identity to be subsumed.

Overall, the novel does not depict empowerment as simply an opposition to the tradition, but rather a negotiation. Through the interplay of the ideals of femininity in the culture, Deshpande invites the reader to examine, explore, and challenge the assumptions of the culture about gender. The story also speaks of the price of conformity, along with the need for autonomy and self-respect.

### **Silence as Survival and Resistance**

One of the themes in this novel is silence. Sarita is a teacher in her life to be silent about her feelings, desires and sufferings. This silence starts in childhood, persists into adulthood and is another way of life for her as well as an affliction.

Deshpande demonstrates how in a patriarchal family, women's silence is not their own, but instead is created. When Sarita is compelled to sleep on straw during her menses and eat alone, her mother will give no reason, the natural process is considered to be shameful contagion. This enforced wordlessness isn't just modesty, it's the first lesson she learns in a life that is a problem, not a celebration to be enjoyed. Consequently, women have to learn to reconcile resentment so that they can be accepted within their social setting. This is the way Sarita thinks. She isn't often confronting discrimination, but instead she is stomping down her displeasure. She is unable to communicate openly and this can cause her to feel lonely and isolated. Emotional wounds remain unresolved because they cannot be expressed.

The novel also connects silence with physical experiences. During menstruation, Sarita faces restrictions and rituals that emphasize shame rather than understanding. Her mother offers no meaningful explanation, further reinforcing the notion that women's physical experiences should be kept hidden and untold. Such practices promote negative beliefs about femininity and self-esteem as Sarita has to sleep on straw and eat alone, and soon learns not to trust her body and its actions. These rituals reinforce silence as a gendered imperative where women suffer but never speak. Ironically, her growing up 'became something shameful', placing restrictions of dress on her, '... you had to be ashamed of yourself even in the presence of your own father.' (TDHNT, 62).

The mother's handling of the girl's discomfort at menstruating heightens her sense of shame. Many years later, her husband's violation of her body reinforces this early image of herself as 'a dark, damp, smelly hole.' (TDHNT,29)

Yet, Deshpande refuses to portray silence as merely oppression. When Sarita returns to her childhood home, the silence provides an opportunity for introspection. Away from daily pressures, she begins to explore her memories and confront painful truths. The absence of external distractions gives her the opportunity to connect deeply with her inner self. In this instance, “silence” becomes a transformative element. It allows you to reflect on yourself and even to be emotional without it turning into a serious issue. Sarita is able to make a gradual shift from her assigned family and social roles to her sense of self, through introspection. When at first there is nothing, there's the potential of something. In the novel, silence is therefore redefined as a multi-layered and dynamic force. It is at once an oppressor and a resister, a weak and strong. Often meaningful change starts in a quiet moment of introspection, rather than in a loud and public moment of action, says Deshpande.

### **Psychological Trauma and Rebuilding the Self**

The psychological is the most important aspect of the novel in its feminist outlook. Sarita's past of neglect, guilt and violence has left her with a profound emotional wound that has affected her identity. Thus, her fight is a social as well as psychological battle. Memory is an important way in this process. The story is often told in a non-linear fashion, showing how the past can affect the present. Rejection as a child, Hostility from the mother and the abuse of marriage have still been a part of Sarita's consciousness. The dark represents this psychological baggage that we all have without knowing. It is a symbolization of unexpressed fears and truths that call for recognition. The nightmares and fears experienced by Sarita point to the fact that trauma lingers on and emotional healing is hard to come by. The heroine slowly understands as time goes on that by avoiding painful memories, she becomes stronger. Ultimately, someone needs to confront them for recovery to take place. She starts to create a sense of self and experiences through introspection. One of the key steps in this process is to take personal responsibility but not blame. Sarita is aware that many of her problems are due to social structures that she can do nothing about. This realization will help her confront her inner guilt and cultivate self-compassion. The psychological realism of the novel is focused on the fact that empowerment is a process of the inner self. Emotional healing and self-understanding are missing elements from social liberation. Feminism, then, is not only a political weapon of resistance but a psychological transformation, says Deshpande.

### **Identity Crisis and Search for Self**

Identity is the theme of *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. Sarita's life stories illustrate the challenges women face when trying to assert themselves outside of the social norms. During the course of life, other people tell us how we should be and how we should conduct ourselves. As a boy, he is likened to his brother. As a wife, she should make her husband's needs the first priority. Despite his professional achievements, this doesn't fill him with complacency as social attitudes continue to impact personal relationships. This leaves Sarita with a sense of disconnection, disorientation and disjointedness. Deshpande is dismissive of superficial ideas of identity. Self-identity is not determined or given, but is a process of experience, reflection and choice. On the journey of Sarita, she challenges the beliefs passed down to her, and learns to know her better. One crucial part of this is to embrace that solitude, to feel it. At first, not knowing what happens to us if we aren't in a relationship gives us a lot of anxiety. But, in the end it is liberating as it helps to foster independence and self-reliance. Sarita's insecurities slowly begin to realize she does not solely rely on family approval and social recognition to prove herself. True self-identity comes from within and not from outside of us. This epiphany becomes a turning point in her development and gives her a greater emotional buoyancy. Here, identity is conceived as an evolving negotiation and process of discovery, thereby challenging the traditional idea that women can only be domestic workers. The novel stresses autonomy of the individual and is aware of the limitations imposed on them by patriarchy.

### **Feminist Consciousness and Social Change**

In the novel, the author condemns the patriarchal system, but refrains from simplistic ideological approaches. Deshpande's feminism is based on complexity and psychological realism. His character is neither a good nor a bad guy, more like a common man or woman in a tough situation. The family in the story is in a conflicted situation. It is the source of oppression, and the conditions for the development of self-awareness. The experiences of Sarita demonstrate that personal relationships can hurt, but also help to grow and to reflect on one's self. Deshpande's feminist approach is one that focuses on consciousness and not just confrontation. The first step in social change is for people to be aware of and challenge oppressive beliefs. Women learn to break free from the restrictive norms and to envision other possibilities through self-examination. Another aspect of the novel is the importance of collective change. In the absence of generally changing attitudes toward sex, individual empowerment will be restricted. There must be a change in the culture, institutions and interpersonal relationships to achieve gender equality. Deshpande is also an embrace of ambiguity and uncertainty. Pain does not go away with empowerment nor does it guarantee

happiness. In fact, it is a matter of courage to deal with reality squarely and at the same time to be human. This subtle grasp of nuance sets his writing apart from fiction providing either quick and easy answers to complicated issues.

### **Outer Darkness is Metaphor for Inner Awakening**

The novel as a whole is symbolic of darkness. Initially, it appears to be associated with fear, danger and insecurity. When Sarita is being mistreated at night, it scares and makes her anxious. Its symbolic significance slowly increases, however. For darkness is also a symbol of unexpressed feelings, suppressed recollections and unexplored parts of self. This turns into a psychological terrain, which Sarita must traverse in order to become self-aware. So the road of darkness is an inwards path. Sarita's struggles with difficult truths lead her to understand her experiences and feelings. Without uncertainty there is no opportunity for reflection and growth. Finally, darkness doesn't seem so threatening. The place that used to send shivers down the spine is now a place of revelation. This will help the heroine to see her strength and overcome her own constraints and to take the control of her life back. Usually, darkness doesn't represent loss, it represents change. Symbols are used throughout the novel in order to enhance the main message of the book which is overcoming the obstacles of liberation by facing some uncomfortable situations. Growth is not through denial, but through passing through the unseen aspects of experience. In the end, it is darkness that is speaking— revealing truths that are not discernible in the normal daylight.

### **Conclusion**

There is no revolution for Sarita at Deshpande. She gives him something else – something rarer – clarity. Towards the end of the novel, Sarita is not free of patriarchy - she is, in fact, a nameer of patriarchy. In a world in which women's voice is a prerequisite for its comfortable functioning, perhaps this is the most radical among all acts of naming. Through the characters of Sarita, Shashi Deshpande exposes the emotional and psychological implications of patriarchy, and offers a strong view of the feminine self-discovery.

The novel depicts the process of how a woman's position is degraded from the family to marriage, cultural norms and social systems. The experience of Sarita's childhood neglect, marital violence and forced silence leads to a sense of "fractured self". But Deshpande doesn't let her main character, a woman, be seen as a victim. Instead, she offers a slow process of reflection and questioning to which Sarita responds, engaging with trauma, questioning her own internal beliefs and building her identity. Silence is a key theme and a key symbol on this

journey, as is darkness. They both represent oppression and suffering, but can also be a place of reflection and transformation. These somehow help Sarita to embrace her fears and reassert herself as a voice. She realizes that she has control over her own life and that her life is worth living. Deshpande's feminist approach puts the emphasis on being aware of oneself, emotionally flexible and autonomous. The novel doesn't demand a straightforward act of rebellion but contrasts the multifaceted journeys which women take on their way to becoming decent and free in a society of constraint. This continues to resonate with modern readers and make an impact on feminist literature and debates on gender, identity and empowerment, so '*The Dark Holds No Terrors*' remains a significant work of feminist literature and is an important book for contemporary readers.

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