

Tribhuvan University

Ambivalent Female Identity in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*

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Abstract

Problems of the adjustment and conflict in the minds of protagonists who ultimately compromise with the traditional rules even as they assert their individuality are the most dominant issues throughout Deshpande's novels and *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is no exception. The protagonist of the novel Sarita presents herself as a woman who wants to undergo self-quest and be free from the restrictions imposed by society, culture and nature. Her search for release from the constraints of the tradition-bound institution of marriage makes her realize that complete autonomy is hard to achieve. The perception of the predicament of the human existence of alienation and isolation makes her come to terms with society. Hence, the tension between compliance and rebellion creates an ambivalent position on part of the protagonist. This position of ambivalence from which Sarita wants to come out is resolved as she learns to trust her feminine self. The expression of the assertion of her individuality, her willingness to confront reality and not to run away from it displays courage, commitment to herself, and an affirmation of life and society.

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