

**Empowered Women: An Analysis of *The Dark Holds No Terror* by Shashi  
Deshpande and *Dahanby* Suchitra Battacharya in the light of Feminist  
Educational Theory**

**Sreelekshmi.S Reseach Scholar, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women,  
Coimbatore**

**Abstract**

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” says Nelson Mandela. The uses of educating a woman are many. An empowered woman is capable of bringing socio-economic changes. They assist in economic development and prosperity, economic empowerment, improved life, improved life, improved health and alleviate poverty. Apart from the social aspects education also helps a woman to hunt down gender issues and social evils lurking around her. The paper aims to analyse *The Dark Holds No Terror* by Shashi Deshpande and *Dahanby* Suchitra Battacharya in the light of Feminist Educational Theory. *The Dark Holds No Terror* presents the psychological trauma of Dr.Sarita who is terrorized by her dark past. The novel revolves around her emancipation from the fear which houses in her heart. The novel *Dahan* presents contrast between Romita, a housewife and Jhinuk, a schoolteacher. The contrast is brought about by the confidence and empowered status that education bestows on an individual.

“You educate a man, you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a Generation”  
-Brigham Young. Education is the most powerful tool for women’s empowerment. There is a famous Sanskrit quotation which reads: An educated man is worshipped everywhere. Wherever he goes he is offered a place of honour. He is given a seat of authority. Men because of his greater education has been enjoying everything. Whereas women had to spend their entire lives being the silhouettes of men. Men ill-treated her because she was voiceless. Those were the dark ages in the history of womanhood. She was thought to be the child bearing machine, a docile being thwarted as per the wish of men. She was stereotyped as the “The Angel of the house” (Coventrypatmore), the epitome of supreme sacrifice who would strain herself for the betterment of the family without any desires for herself

In historical perspective, women have been silently neglected right from local to global level, though when given an opportunity she stands second to none. Even in the modern age, the percentage of independent women is very low. Dowry evils, Sexual harassment, Violence etc., inflicted on women and crimes related to women are increasing at an alarming rate

This pitiable condition changed when some strong hearted feminist fought for women’s rights. It all started with Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of rights of women* (1792). Starting from that point we have Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*(1949), Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* (1970), *Helen Cixous’ The Laugh of Medusa* (1975), Showalter’s *A Literature of their own* (1977), Gilbert and Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Toril Moi’s *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985). Starting from these theories the different forms of feminism like Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism, Marxist Feminism and Socialist Feminism, voiced for gender

equality. With the first wave of Feminism women wanted their voice to be heard in the male chauvinistic world. With the passing of second wave women wanted to compete with men. With the passing of the third wave, women realized that it is not necessary to compete but they cherished being woman. They began to describe what it means to be a woman.

Anne Eliot, the protagonist of *Persuasion* (1818) says “Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands.” The paper aims to analyse *The Dark Holds No Terror* by Shashi Deshpande and *Dahanby* SuchitraBattacharya in the light of Feminist Educational Theory.

Feminist Educational Theory stems from the four key tenants

- Creation of participatory classroom communities
- Validation of personal experience
- Encouragement of social understanding and activism
- Development of critical thinking skills/ Open mindedness

Feminist educational theory derives from the feminist movement, particularly that of early 1970s, which prominent feminist Bell Hookes defined as “A Movement to end Sexism, Sexist exploitation and oppression”

ShashiDeshpande was born in Karnataka. Her famous works include *The Dark HoldsNo Terrors*, *That Long Silence*, *Shadow Play*, *If I die Today*, *Roots and Shadows*. *The Dark HoldsNo Terrors* is about a doctor who fights the inner conflicts within her. The Protagonist Sarita/Saru is a lady doctor who suffers from sexual sadism of her husband. Saru returns to her home after fifteen

years. She eloped with Manohar, who was then a dynamic leader and drama person, because she thought he would provide her with the affection and love that she craved for. But Manohar had lost his aura, he was working in a third rate college and was known as Lady Doctor's husband. This made him an animal at night whom she feared and terribly wanted to leave. Saru, for outsiders had a picture perfect family loving husband, a daughter and a son but internally she was exhausted fighting the sadism of Mano. Saru had a sad past, her brother Druva accidentally drowned and her mother was distanced from her after the Incident. She had asked, "Why are you alive when he died." Saru's Baba somehow convinces her to open up to Manohar, who was coming to take her along with him. She decides to run away from home but later realizes her position and duties for the society. She, the doctor has cured many patients and it is in her power to fight her miseries. The novel ends in a positive note where she is mentally prepared to confront Manohar.

The second novel chosen for analysis is *Dahan* by Suchitra Bhattacharya (1950-2015). She has written novels like *Close to me*, *The wall of Glass*, *Bird of Autumn*, *Another Spring* etc., She had written the novel *Dahan* in Bengali and it is translated into English. *Dahan* revolves around stories of two women Romita and Jhinuk. Romita is a cultured housewife, she has to undergo marital rape every night but never complains about her husband Palash. After shopping one evening she is molested by group of rogues. Both she and Palash are beaten and they try to kidnap her. Jhinuk, the school teacher intervenes by trying to fight throgues. Her actions kindles the mob to chase the rogues. Jhinuk reports the incident in the newspaper. She is eulogized in the media whereas Romita undergoes Character Assasination. Jhinuk's boyfriend Tunir who is One of the Rogue's employee is tempted with an offer to go abroad which might give a hitch to his career if

he could convince Jhinuk to change her witness statement in the court. Jhinuk receives late night calls from an unknown person who does not speak. On the day of the trial the couple deny the occurrence of such a harassment on the street to save the family name from further shame. The trial turns out to be in favour of the rogues. Romita's father tells Jhinuk that his daughter is a coward and it was she who used to call her but never had the courage to speak. Even after the incident Romita's life proceeds in the same pace. Whereas Jhinuk become even stronger. Romita's harassment in the public compels her to question the fragile nature of her relationship with her husband. Dahan which means to burn, is the eternal anguish of every woman who dares to step out of the narrow path specified by the society.

The characters portrayed in the paper Sarita, Romita and Jhinuk throw light on how women react to various situations in life. Sarita and Jhinuk had the advantage of Education and the decisions they undertake in the course shows it. Romita merely succumbs to her trauma whereas Sarita, through her Profession emerges as a Phoenix from the ashes. She is ready to start all over again where as Romita stays at the same point. There are chances that she remains at the same psychological trauma the entire life. Jhinuk, is a role model for other women to follow. She fights for others, which erects so many problems in her own life but she never succumbs. Her Relationship with Palash is affected, she is often praised which she never likes, there is family pressure from parents and relatives. The paper tries to prove that educated women have stable mind and the fearlessness to rise against the pressing problems.

Importance of educating women are educated women are capable of bringing Socio-Economic Change. They aid in

- Economic Development and prosperity
- Economic Empowerment
- Improved life
- Dignity and honour
- Improved health
- Justice
- Choice to choose a profession of her choice
- Alleviate poverty

According to the principles of Feminist Educational theory, when girls are brought up in classroom communities where they learn to express their opinion , also when they participate with social understanding in political and social activities, when they have a critical bend of mind which leads to open mindedness , it is sure that she might not become a victim. The education system molds her into a Victor. Even when life has challenges for them, they will not panick or adopt shortcuts like suicide but face them boldly and emerge victorious. Education is that powerful tool which refines the personality of the learner thereby bringing out the best in her.

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