

## A Study of Women's Struggle in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*

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### **Abstract:**

The fight for women, her quest to discover and sustain herself as a wife, mother, and most importantly, a human being, is Shashi Deshpande's primary concern within the framework of contemporary Indian society. Using a perceptual technique, Deshpande often has a heroine narrate her stories. 'That Long Silence' is Deshpande's way of introducing the reader to the narrative of Jaya and Manohar, a married couple who endure life's essential challenges side by side. The author's premise is that middle-class Indian families generally let their women to quietly endure the tyranny of males, and that those who are unwell are often neglected or even killed. The protagonist, a woman named Jaya, ultimately chooses to speak up after keeping quiet for seventeen years. In this book, Shashi Deshpande manages to transform Jaya's anguish into a groundbreaking idea that helps her discover who she is. Suffering is a woman's everlasting insecurity, and it shows. Without considering their wishes, ambitions, and needs, our family and community place an enormous burden on their shoulders. In depicting reality, Shashi Deshpande never meant to go against men. Passionate feminism is another label she goes by.

**Keywords:** *Women's Battle, Feminine Experience, Identity Crisis, Dominance*

### **1. Introduction:**

There has been a meteoric rise in the profile of Indian English literature. The English language has moved on from using it as a standard. Some of its most accomplished writers have won very prestigious prizes on a global scale. During that particular year (1989), Shashi Deshpande was the recipient of the Sahitya Academy Award. A writer with extensive knowledge of female psychology, she has now come into her own. She intends to shed light on the culture of the culturally-bound lady by examining her marriage interactions. Her books shed light on the patriarchal norms in Indian society and the stigmatization that contemporary

Indian women face for adhering to them. The social reality as seen by women is the one she employs. Traditional values and patriarchal legacy were challenged by her heroes who revolted against them (Zanwar, 2014).

### **1.1 Deshpande In Feminism:**

A literary bent of mind was born into Deshpande and developed through her life's events. When writing on the sensitivity and secrecy surrounding people who find themselves ensnared in relationships or circumstances that aren't typically their own, Shashi Deshpande is at her finest. She writes about women and their struggles, triumphs, fury, anguish, and sadness. According to her anecdotes, middle-class women in India sometimes have to settle for less than their hearts want. Unable to reject societal standards or customary conduct, middle-class women are themselves troubled by desire and despair, fears and hopes, love and hatred, withdrawal and dissociation, repression and oppression, marital strife and male violence (Halder, 2005).

In every one of her works, you can see her heartfelt sympathy for the tyranny that women endure. Shashi Deshpande's books all have something special to say about human connections and emotions. Deshpande is a master storyteller when it comes to conveying the emotions and concerns of male characters. Exploring her works is like penetrating the depths of her imagination. Using a style similar to stream of consciousness, Deshpande often has a heroine narrate her stories (J, 2020).

That Long Silence is a metaphor for the protagonist's struggle to express himself verbally. This pause denotes the reappearance of a female figure, as one may see in an epigraph from an essay written by Elizabeth Robins. Deshpande depicts Jaya's late rebellion in That Long Silence, which takes place seventeen years after she has been married. In her time alone, Jaya travels the path to discover who she really is. After being married for so long, she feels that she has lost touch with who she is and is searching for it (Zanwar, 2014). The pursuit of female characters is central to Deshpande's work. The female heroines who narrate her stories often seek self-discovery. This is something they manage to do in their own writing, which ultimately helps them in their life. Of course, they Savor the nostalgia without feeling a thing, but in the end, they get to feel it firsthand. A void is opening up in the lives of women. On the surface, they seem to be prospering, yet deep inside, they are lost and useless.

### **1.2 Deshpande in That long silence:**

By accurately portraying real-life events in *That Long Peace*, Deshpande achieved critical acclaim. From the very beginning, she vividly depicts Jaya's internal conflict as she longed for autonomy. Her hopes and goals from her childhood were dashed when she saw her feelings of loneliness, frustration, and other negative emotions. She seems to be a content spouse at first following her marriage to a respectable guy of social standing. As her husband had hoped, Jaya was able to adjust to her new home and life for a time. An award-winning book by Shashi Deshpande, *That Long Silence* shows women achieving social harmony. She paints a vivid picture of Jaya's protagonist's internal struggle and her search for identity. Women who are oppressed because to rules and customs that were created by males are symbolized by Jaya. Regarding *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande states:

*And then I wrote That Long Silence almost entirely a woman's novel nevertheless, a book about the silencing of one- half of humanity. A lifetime of introspection went into this novel, the one closest to me personally; the thinking and ideas in this are closest to my own.*

Shashi Deshpande examined the issues faced by women from various social classes in India. Her work is logical and, by its very nature, inspires feminist thought because of the honesty with which she depicts women and their inner struggles. Even though Shashi Deshpande claims it is normal to write about women's issues and emotions, the mere title of the book, *That Long Silence*, suggests femininity. The source material is a 1907 lecture given by American actress Elizabeth Robins. Robin says in the novel's epigraph, "If I were man and concerned about knowing the world I lived in, I probably would think it would always make me a carefree seam, the weight of that silence for a long time"—words that Deshpande uses. Novels written by Shashi Deshpande, Sunita Reddy, the author Shashi Deshpande utilizes the protagonist's quiet as a metaphor for her submission and rebellion against the oppressive society that she encounters. Jaya is both serene and troubled in *That Long Silence*. Her 'peace' is distinctly interpersonal. Many people feel really sorry for her. After Jaya undergoes a battery of tests covering Jaya's social, economic, political, psychological, spiritual, and religious dimensions, the narrative delves further into her psyche (Zanwar, 2014).

Despite the prevalence of academic arguments about patriarchy, no powerful female voices are presented. In quiet, she revolts. The character of Jaya is presented as the one who

reconciles her weakness, rather than a defiant woman who wants to rebel. According to her, a lady can never lose her temper. Only crazy, hysterical, and irritated could describe her. Feeling down is also out of the question. Today, nothing but routine and order exists. Something has to give. The next day, she scrubs the bathrooms, tomorrow she sheets, and the day after that, she cleans the fridge (Sharma, 2005).

*“According to Deshpande, “My characters take their own ways.” This is how she portrays reality. There are those who believe that strong female characters should be more prevalent. However, the focus of my work is on women and their experiences.”*

## **2. Literature Review:**

It is the support of women's rights, position, and power on par with those of men on the basis of "equality of sexes" that is referred to as "feminism." The name "feminism" originates from the Latin word "femina," which means "woman." Beginning with the fights for women's suffrage in Western nations at the beginning of the twentieth century and continuing with the subsequent well-organized socio-political movement for women's liberation from patriarchal oppression, the phrase eventually gained widespread use. The influence of Marxist ideology has extended the political scope of feminism. This is because Marxist philosophy enabled sexism and capitalism to be challenged from the perspective of feminism. Both of these ideologies fostered the establishment of a patriarchal system.

One of the goals of feminism, in addition to being a political movement, is to investigate and provide solutions to the many gender-based issues that exist. This raises problems regarding the preconceived notions that people have about the roles that men and women should play in every aspect of life. On the basis of gender discrimination, feminism examines the depictions of gender roles in literary works. These depictions have a tendency to impose societal norms, habits, conventions, laws, and expectations on the basis of gender. It makes an effort to investigate and discover a new social order, as well as to question the age-old tradition of gender distinction (Sharma, 2005).

Woman authors have been given a red-carpet treatment in the literary realm of Indian English literature. As a consequence of this, an increasing number of female authors are developing a corpus of "literature of their own" by expressing their fears and concerns, with a particular emphasis on themes that are specific to women (Bano, 2020). All nationalities, races, creeds, and other categories are irrelevant when it comes to feminist problems. Writers who are female have been expressing their discontent with the world that is dominated by

men and repeating the experience of being on the outs. The predicament of women, their growing issues, their physical, financial, and emotional exploitation, and their mental pain in male-dominated societies in every aspect of life have been one of the primary themes of current literature all over the globe (J, 2020).

It is the primary objective of the majority of nations, the academic community, and the woman forum to bring to light the numerous types of oppression that women are subjected to. The fact that the voice of women is being heard may be inferred from the fact that the feminist movement is being enforced, that several woman study centres have been established, and that numerous support groups have been established. With the use of their work, women authors have been able to project their arguments, imploring, and fighting for a change in the attitude that society has toward women. In order to reach the stage where they are listened to, they have had to go through a lot of suffering. It is a very astute observation made by Paravati Bhatnagar that values, as well as human connections, particularly those that exist inside the family, need to be reinterpreted. Such is the predicament that the middle class finds itself in. A strict devotion to the old ideals has become much more challenging. The development of new values has not yet taken place.

To deviate from the established norm demands a great deal of bravery (and maybe a lack of concern for the consequences). Bhatnagar, between 50 and 57! Throughout their extensive body of work, numerous female authors, including George Eliot, Sylvia Path, Margaret Alwood, Dorris Lessing, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Dalip Kaur Jiwana, Bharati Mukherjee, and Shobha De, as well as a few male authors, such as Thomas Hardy, Mulk Raj Anand, and R.K. Narayan, have provided an analysis of the female psyche, the inner turmoil of the woman, as well as the culture and context-specific issues that women face. There are a number of notable Indian feminist authors, like Shashi Deshpande, who have stated their dissatisfaction with the conventional placing of women and have proven that they are very concerned with the portrayal of women in literature.

### **3. That Long Silence**

In the novel *That Long Silence*, written by Shashi Deshpande, the protagonists, Jaya and Manohar, get married and live together as husband and wife in order to facilitate their separation from one another in the face of some of life's difficulties. It is the author's contention that women in middle-class households in India often endure the tyranny of males in silence, and that if anybody in the family suffers from a particular ailment, they may be

neglected and allowed to die. On the other hand, Jaya is an example of women who have no option but to submit to being led by their husbands, much as Sita and Draupadi did in the past, when they were living in the woods and shrubs, and when they were eventually abandoned by their spouses. "However, for me, now that I had given up on 'Seeta,' there was nothing; or if there was, I had to look for it," she said (Afrin, S, 2018).

When everything was said and done, she was inexorably bound to her husband. Using the suitable metaphor of being tied like bulls, the victim conveyed the message that marriage is unquestionable and that the woman is obligated by agreement to obey her husband. This interpretation of the metaphor was acceptable. As a consequence of the fact that her husband is blind, she is blinder than Gandhari, or else she will have to give up all one hundred of her boys. "At this point, I am able to recall that he had assumed that I would be accompanying him and had taken my permission to participate in his plans for granted. In such case, I would have..." "Two bullocks that are yoked together are more likely to travel in the same direction since it is more comfortable for them to do so. It would be excruciating for the animal to go in various directions; after all, what animal would intentionally choose to suffer? A dozen The meaning of Jaya's father's daughter's name, which means triumph, is Jaya. The feeling of superiority was something that he implanted in his daughter (Bano, 2020). During one occasion, he removed his daughter from the group of friends she had been hanging out with, stating that the females in question "asked for nothing more than the destiny of being wives and mothers." "... Appa had given me the assurance that, Jaya, you are going to be unique in comparison to the other people. "I had known then that it was all Appa's fault," Jaya sighed over her disappointment. For what reason did he make me feel that I was a unique individual? What was it about him that made me feel different from other people? When Jaya's spouse was forced to quit her employment while claims of business misbehaviour against him are being examined, Jaya's health began to deteriorate much more quickly than it had been otherwise.

The presence of her family has caused her husband's reputation to be called into question, and their future together as a family is in jeopardy. Jaya, a writer who was unsuccessful, is recalled by recollections of her in the past (Halder, 2005). The disparity in her spouse, the annoyance she has had during their seventeen-year marriage, the dissatisfaction she has experienced with her two teenage daughters, and the claustrophobia she experienced throughout her youth all start to make sense. Jaya is confronted with these and other realities about herself in her cramped flat in Bombay, where

she is also struggling with her inability to write and her anxiety of becoming furious. Shashi Deshpande provides us with a representation of a lady who has achieved the ideal that essentially seeks to remove the 'long peace' that began in infancy and is focused on her as well as the difficulties that she faces in her life.

### **2.1 Feminism in the book:**

Women have stayed quiet for a very long period, despite the fact that they are not subject to human control, as shown by the book "That Long Silence" by Shashi Deshpande. In spite of the fact that women in India were subjected to the strain of circumstances, norms, and traditions, which all worked to prevent women from achieving their goals, Jaya was concerned with living the life of an independent girl. "I had finally learned it, and there were no questions, no retorts, and only silence about it." The life of a housewife, who has gone from ignorance to wisdom via hardship, was depicted in these words. Her existence was oppressive and dreary. In *That Long Silence*, the main character, Jaya, has a direct confrontation with the enlightened person (J, 2020).

A lady was given a second work and a second position, and the book *That Long Silence* by Deshpande recounted a narrative to express the fact that she was offered a second job. Her viewpoint is that women are often subjected to suffering as a result of masculine aggression and defeat. *That Long Silence* is the title of this book, and it conveys the message that women do not speak up against injustice for a long time. For the sake of her husband and children, the lady suppresses her own identity; yet, she goes on to subordinate herself to their authority. Women are now unable of leading independent lives as a result of the shelter that dates back hundreds of years (Haldar, 2005).

Despite the fact that Jaya is a writer, she has been able to find serenity for such a long time because of this topic, which we refer to as the women's issue. In reality, the novelist and the housewife are coming into conflict with one another. However, the housewife wants her to keep silent since she is anticipating that she would share her thoughts and experiences with the public. While the conflict is going on, the wife of the house is living in the house and is doing study on her family history while also battling for her gift. This allows him to resume his profession as a writer, which he had previously pursued. For the simple reason that they do not bring the fire of her experience to play in her works, publishers do not accept her submissions. She feels disheartened by the actions of her spouse. Because of you, I have decided to withdraw from the writing profession. She goes on to state that I was aware at the

time that Mohan did not care about the fact that I had written a fine novel, a story about a couple, a guy who could not find his way to his wife other than via her body. The fact that others could have thought the pair was really us and that the guy was indeed him was important to Mohan. As a result of being unable to escape this predicament, she had passed away. It is either that she does not develop into the ideal woman that she strives to be, or that she complains or fights against the patriarchal burden in order to establish her independence.

## **2.2 Jaya's emotion:**

Mohan told Jaya she was "only an exhibitionist" and told her she shouldn't write, which devastated Jaya. The reason she stopped writing, she informed Mohan, was because of you. Even though he had shattered her as a woman and a writer, she refrained from risking his annoyance. She admits that she had allowed herself to be consumed by fear, namely the fear of hurting Mohan and the fear of losing her only profession as his wife. As a result, she had let go of ".....all those stories that had been taking shape in me." Due to her inability to let go of her conventional Indian womanhood, Jaya is terrified at the prospect of upsetting her husband and, as a result, his abandonment. In order to go inside, even a worm has to find a hole. As the mother of Rahul and Rati and as Mohan's wife, I had mine. The role of Jaya, played by Shashi Deshpande, encapsulates the ambivalence felt by an educated Indian woman who is trapped in an unhappy marriage and cannot bring herself to leave her husband, who sees her as "a sheltering tree" that she cannot bear to be without. Surprisingly, Jaya's demeanour also changed from 'Victorious' to 'Suhasini,' meaning 'a sweet, smiling, calm, motherly lady,' when she changed her name to 'Suhasini' after her marriage to Mohan. She says, "because no woman can be angry," in response to Kamat's suggestion that she write about her own suffering. Is there ever a story about a young lady who becomes angry?

*“It exemplifies how a wife may feel pressured to submit to her husband's wishes and adhere to societal norms. Like most housewives, Jaya aspires to excel in her role. She subtly opposes Mohan's methods by being silent, rather than questioning them (J, 2020).”*

## **4. Jaya's Character In That Long Silence**

Deshpande used an image of a lady plunging into a ditch to illustrate Jaya's suffering. Jaya is insecure and has problems; she feels disconnected from reality. She has a fear of both writing and failing. Returning to her secure family life is her only option since she is unable

to confront the challenge. An essential topic addressed in *That Long Silence* is the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and the elevation of male-dominated categories; another is the respect and loyalty shown to women in our culture. Following this line of thinking, Adesh Pal says, "This too, is true that they revolt against the social taboos, the cramped wrinkled traditions and value of their ancestors and. ceaselessly question the very concept of love, marriage and sex and feel an urge to redefine human relationship and behaviour;" Tragic tales of Mohan's friendships and Jaya's ties with them have been shared by the author. When it comes to love and sex, Jaya discusses it all. "I always thought it would be like this: first there's love, and then there's sex," she says frankly. It might just as well be the other way around, however, following my conversation with Mohan (Reddy, 2001). Because Mohan did not care about or support Jaya, he had shattered her as a writer and as a woman.

A combination of pain and servitude defines her quiet. She wants to talk correctly, but her mental pain is too much. After seventeen years of keeping quiet, Jaya finally decides to write down all that has been weighing her down: "I am not afraid anymore." That will end the lengthy silence. Everyone is calm now. I had decided that I am Mohan's wife and severed the parts of myself that had rejected that role. I had never idea that type of disintegration was even possible before. With her hands in her pockets, the little girl has accompanied me over the years, and I still feel her presence (Mohan, 2004).

The work deftly reveals Jaya's self-awareness towards its conclusion. A woman's desire for a house with her family should not come at the expense of her individuality. As much as she values her family, she longs for the independence to pursue her passions. She may take action by arresting anyone who try to deny her freedom and ownership. Women are encouraged to speak up and battle for their right to remain silent in *That Long Silence*. Deshpande argues that a woman might be better understood by the act of trampled love. Their hearts are soft, therefore it's only fair that they get kind care (Reddy, 2001).

## **5. Conclusion:**

There is no question that Shashi Deshpande is a writer who has investigated the issues that women face. She details the feelings that women experience, beginning with the aches and pains that a young girl experiences as she grows up and ending with the emptiness that arises when a woman's desires are not satisfied. In the end, Jaya arrives to the realization that marriage is a subjective concept that is also harmful to women. Because of her husband's will

and intentions, she is compelled to comply with them. that she is not entitled to the right to be independent in her own right. Throughout the course of this book, Shashi Deshpande is able to successfully transform Jaya's suffering into a new way of thinking in order to discover her own identity. The sign represents Jaya's effort to uncover and educate herself about herself. The heroine, who is a member of the family's power matrix, goes through a significant transformation by the time the book is over (Mohan, 2004). Her anxieties and insecurities have been replaced with self-esteem, which is an essential component of happiness in the human existence (Chelliah, S. ,2018). Now that she has the opportunity, she would like to exercise her decision; her self-assurance compels her to break the stillness, while her abilities prompt her to discuss her work. In this way, the story documents Jaya's transition from the feminine phase to the male phase as she helped to dismantle the patriarchal system while simultaneously being a part of it (Zanwar, 2014).

Having a second personality is something that every contemporary educated middle class married woman experiences, and Shashi Deshpande has handled this element of her life quite well. As a result of the confrontation between the submissive Suhasini, who is now known as Jaya after her marriage, and the rebellious Jaya, whose animus had been sharpened by her father when she was younger, Jaya suffers through a psychological trauma. During the time that she was married, she had to face the two phases of her personality head-on. In order to preserve her marriage and placate her husband's ego, she had to win over the part of her personality that was more negative. Jaya is compelled to make a decision between the two in order to put an end to a never-ending conflict between the two stages of her personality, which has completely left her frustrated and uprooted. However, as a result of an anticipated conclusion, Jaya is forced to make a choice between the two. In the end, she emerges as a woman who is resolute and strong, and who is now aware of how to find a balance between her family and her identity inside the family (Zanwar, 2014).

Through the conscious-raising voice of the protagonist, who is trying to affirm her femineity, Shashi Deshpande is able to get to the core of life and give vent to a kind of female subjectivity that refuses to reconcile and identify herself with a society that is ruled by men and is patriarchal. It seems that she is trying to communicate the concept that marital polarizations limit human potential and individual pleasure via the female characters that she gives her stories (Chelliah.S., 2018).

In the end, it is sufficient to establish that the woman of today wants bravery rather than escapism or any other kind of escape. It is imperative that she have the bravery to stand

up for what is right for her and to do so with unwavering assurance and unwavering conviction. This is the only way that she can bring peace and satisfaction into her life; she must dive headfirst into the social environment with complete determination (Sharma, 2005).

Deshpande develops a feminist perspective of the issues that women face outside of the context of a primarily Indian environment. The word "feminism" is used in this context to refer to Shashi Deshpande in its widest definition. This is done to emphasize the author's keen awareness of her identity as a woman, as well as her interest in issues that are specific to women. And not in the sense that she positions herself as an advocate for the rights of women in her fiction books. In point of fact, she does not become the torchbearer of women's emancipation apart from the fact that she helps women discover who they are. A good change in women's social standing cannot materialize without first bringing about a shift in women's thinking, she says, despite the fact that she is aware of the gravity of the situation that the Indian woman finds herself in and the fights that have been going on for generations. The author of the book believes that the hope for the woman's salvation from her plight is injected into the story by the heroines' retreating inside rather than relying on any external aids. The positive and humanistic aspect of Deshpande's feminism is shown via the woman's growing engagement in her circumstance, rather than her separation from it, as represented in her books.

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