

INDEPENDENCE OF MIND, SPIRIT AND BODY TO END PATRIARCHAL DOMINATION: A STUDY OF “*THAT LONG SILENCE*” BY SHASHI DESHPANDE

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Abstract:

Indian women writers of the twentieth and twenty first centuries always try to elevate the issues associated to women with a new viewpoint. These women writers have presented life through literature with great intensity. Among the feminist writers, Shashi Deshpande gets a important place in later part of the twentieth century. Deshpande's novels often deal with the problem and sufferings of women in middle class family, which reflects the reasonable picture of the contemporary middle class family life. The present article evidently declares the dejection state of middle class women as portrayed in Deshpande's *That Long Silence*. Jaya is the focal character of this novel. The silence between Jaya and her husband further deteriorates the position. She realizes at the end that she should break the silence and try to accomplish her identity as an individual through self-realization and self-assertion. Feminism is always destined for independence of mind, spirit, and body. Its theory is that both men and women should be equal politically, efficiently, and socially. To sum up, it can be said that Deshpande's *That Long Silence* provides an estimate of Indian marriages which hinders the free communication and appearance of women. It exposes how the rampant patriarchal practices help in feminine marginalization, and how women's mind has been tones through centuries of predisposed conditioning.

Keywords: Accomplish, contemporary, destined, intensity, predisposed.

Indian women writers of the twentieth and twenty first centuries always try to elevate the issues associated to women with a new viewpoint. These women writers have presented life through literature with great intensity. Among the feminist writers, Shashi Deshpande gets a important place in later part of the twentieth century. Deshpande's novels often deal with the problem and sufferings of women in middle class family, which reflects the reasonable picture of the contemporary middle class family life. The present article evidently declares the dejection state of middle class women as portrayed in Deshpande's *That Long Silence*. Jaya is the focal character of this novel. The silence between Jaya and her husband further deteriorates the position. She realizes at the end that she should break the silence and try to accomplish her identity as an individual through self-realization and self-assertion.

God created men and women in the same way, but the women's rights were limited to small. Feminism as a movement might have originated in the West, but with the corrosion in the status of women in India and the consequent efforts made during the freedom struggle to overlay the way for equal admittance to education and equal status, there arose a need for feminist studies. The feminist movement advocates equal rights and equal opportunities for women. Feminism was portrayed by many writers of English literature and one among them is Shashi Deshpande (1938). This paper examines the feminist viewpoint of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* (1988). This novel won the Sahitya Akademi award in the year 1990. In this novel, the soul protagonist is 'Jaya', whose entire control was taken over by her husband Mohan, after their marriage. Deshpande convincingly depicts the personal conflicts of Jaya and her quest for the self or identity. This novel is about gender prejudice and inequality rampant in society.

Feminism is always destined for independence of mind, spirit, and body. Its theory is that both men and women should be equal politically, efficiently, and socially. Shashi Deshpande derives the title of her novel "*That Long Silence*" from the classic sarcasm by Elizabeth Robins in her speech to a world body. This novel "*That Long Silence*" comes moderately close to the real-life experience.

In this novel, Deshpande deals with the burning issues regarding women's place in the family and the society. The prime character of the novel 'Jaya' is the impeccable revelation of the modern women of today. She can be intercepted as a present time women of indecisive who waves between family and self-assertion. She is an intellectual woman with graduation in English, a writer, and a columnist who had a intense career. Regrettably, none of these attributes would offer her a sufficient position in the eyes of her husband Mohan, who had socialization in a idiosyncratic traditional environment. Jaya always recollects her days before and after marriage, and her adorable memories of childhood.

Before marriage Jaya has hopeful views on life as her father always encourages her by saying "I named you Jaya' he said, 'Jaya means victory' "(TLS. 15). This makes Jaya feebler and more vulnerable. Her mother always prefers her son and she even gifts their innate property i.e. the Dadar flat to her son to some scope than her daughter Jaya.

And after marriage, Jaya lives in the family life thinking about her family and her husband Mohan. On their wedding, Mohan renamed his wife Jaya as "Suhasini" as he wanted her to be 'Soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman' (TLS. 16). Her period of marriage life comprises of discrepancy between two phrases of her traits where the later had to be exultant to appease her husband's ego and to save her marriage. And in the end, she comes

out to be a determined and strong-minded woman who now knows how to strike a balance between her family and her uniqueness in the family.

Deshpande beautifully described Jaya's married life as, "A pair of bullock yoked together. It is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. To go in different directions would be painful and what animals would voluntarily choose pain?" (TLS. Pp. 11-12).

Without any regard or love between them, the bullocks subjugation together and divide the impede between them. In the same way, the boredom, explication, and loneliness enter the marriage life where there is no love but only conciliation. Whenever Mohan finds Jaya's conduct to be weird towards him and his family, he tells, "My mother never spoke against my father, however badly he behaved to her" (TLS. 83). Thus, he regularly pushes her into the traditional world and reveals his expectations from her. Jaya repentantly accepts the fact that she had accepted everything about Mohan by blinding herself to the consequences like Gandari and was also ashamed of her unawareness and functioning.

This feeling of Jaya reminds of Virginia Woolf's fiction "*A Room of One's Own*", in which she presents her demand for a room for her inspired work. The narrator believes that with money and a room she could have been a writer as existing condition always affects one's creativity. Jaya also wishes to keep on writing. She breaks her silence of seventeen years in her writings, with which she expressed the plunge of yearning identity of herself. She writes the responsibilities and social bondage in her view has been a failed writer and the universal voice is not heard in her works.

Shashi Deshpande efficiently expounds the aim of individual happiness in marriage. From the instigation Jaya developed fear of speech for fear of reticulate from males *Appa*, her father, who always prevents her from doing any chore of her taste. Her father and brother criticized whenever she got opportunities to reproach. Due to all these she jumps into silence which becomes easier to her. Later she maintains the silence with Mohan also and the reason in the rear this was liberty and freedom revealed in threads. The helplessness to find words loads Jaya to get on upon a long silent journey. Finally she holds silence, the utter silence "But the words remained unsaid. I know his mood was best met with silence" (TLS. 78).

Her traditional rearing makes her to forfeit herself on the altar of marriage. Through the characters of Jaya, Asha, Mukta, Kusum, etc., Deshpande depicts the complexities of Indian women of the modern age. Marriage plays a essential role in the life of Indian women and it changes their entire life. The husbands are glad in their life carrying no precursor of being married. Jaya meditates why women thrust into the marital life and keeps burning wordlessly. The reason that she finds to her is, "We're all frightened of the dark, frightened

of being alone” (TLS. 102). For women in the Indian society, it is both a individual weakness as well as a social destiny.

The present novel is ingrained in the ethos of an urban middle class household and chiefly deal with Deshpande's domestic concerns. The author is fretful with human relationships as they follow a marriage. In her novels, most of the time, marriage collapses due to lack of indulgent between man and woman. This leads to the suffering and the divergence between traditional limitations and modern aspirations. In the present novel, Deshpande significantly analyses the institution of marriage in the modern context. She reflects upon the situations and circumstances in which a woman lives intertwined between the authoritative currents of tradition and patriarchy, of terror and containment. Deshpande illustrates this concept through the character of Jaya, the female protagonist, who has internalized the image of dispossessed femaleness that persistently hinders her growth towards betterment. Jaya represents those Indian women who want to split the barrier of a long silence created around them by male dominion. Deshpande seems to question the established traditional norms and strongly points out the women's need for self-expression.

Deshpande, through Jaya, seems to say that self-realization is a process of asserting an weirdness that is repeatedly abandoned and shorn of in a woman's life. Jaya says, “Self-revelation is a cruel process. The real picture, the real you never emerge. Looking for it is as bewildering as trying to know how you really look. Ten different mirrors show you ten different faces” (TLS. 1). At the time of catastrophe, Jaya and her husband get shifted to their Dadar flat momentarily. During this time, Jaya goes into a deep introspection of her life and gets lost in the images of those experiences which she witnessed during her married life.

After seventeen years of playing out her many-faceted roles of a loyal wife and conscientious mother, the silence becomes noisy. The lingering memories of her astringent experiences with Mohan bring disenchantment in her life. Jaya appears to be a contented housewife who is married to an in fact caring man but internally she feels a void in her life. Her normal routine gets disturbed when they come to a new flat. At this point of change, Jaya look into herself and tries to find out her identity. She doesn't want to be like Mohan's mother and sister who always compromised. But still she has to put forward to Mohan's likes and dislikes as she has been told not to refuse to abide by her husband. Now she feels as a stereotyped housewife who is “nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support” (TLS. 76). Though, she seems to live a content life, in reality, she has concealed many aspects of her personality that were not fit for her role as an ideal wife and mother.

Through Jaya, Deshpande has depicted the quandary of a married woman who is supposed to behave according to ethnically constructed norms. Deshpande seems to

recommend that the man-woman relationship, in an endeavor to go by the norms of society, gives opportunity to pretense and treachery to come into relationship. Human beings, more frequently, desire to wear a pretense of an ideal person rather than being truthful to themselves as individuals. Appearances have to be maintained at any cost.

The novel reaffirms Deshpande's belief that a woman should affirm their impending to achieve self-identity. It also shows that economic independence is an important measure to give confidence to a woman, helping her to previous understand her true potential. But Deshpande is also aware of the compromises that a woman has to make in order to make balance between personal and professional life.

Jaya's attempt to review her own predicament as well as of others, then her emergence as a strong woman, gives the novel its feminist stance. Though Deshpande highlights coarse inequality that prevails in our society yet she denies being called a feminist. In her interview with Malini Nair, she says: "The women in my books are people who come to realize what it is to be a woman in the process of their own lives and the situations they face, not through books and theories. I think, feminism is entirely personalized perception. It is when you start questioning preconceived notions about your roles. I don't think there is anything 'inherent' in a woman apart from the fact that she can conceive. All other things are equally important for them as they are for men". (TOI, Nov, 1989).

It is to be noticed that there are no villains in her novels. She does not take side of Jaya, but presents her as close to the reality as possible. She portrays her strength as well as weakness. To sum up, it can be said that Deshpande's *That Long Silence* provides an estimate of Indian marriages which hinders the free communication and appearance of women. It exposes how the rampant patriarchal practices help in feminine marginalization, and how women's mind has been tones through centuries of predisposed conditioning.

For her writing pieces, she is unanswerable to Mohan, which means that she does not have autonomy and liberty both in her delicate and her professional life. The creative and artistic enthusiasms free her from her dubbed familial roles. When she realizes this, she makes her mind to be silent no more; she has the right to divulge her genuine feelings and emotions. So, she resolves to break her silence by putting down on paper that entire she has concealed in her seventeen-year silence. In conclusion, she expounds:

"The panic has gone. I am Mohan's wife I had thought, and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan's wife. Now I know that kind of fragmentation is not possible. The child hands in pocket, has been with me through the years." (TLS. 191)

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