



Cover Page



A STUDY OF WOMEN'S STRUGGLE IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THAT LONG SILENCE

Nidhi Vyas

Research Scholar, S.G.R.R University, Dehradun

ABSTRACT:

Shashi Deshpande is primarily concerned with how difficult it is for women in contemporary Indian society to find and preserve their identities as wives, mothers, and above all as human beings. Deshpande typically uses a heroine as the narrator and employs a perceptual technique. Deshpande recounts the narrative of Jaya and Manohar in "That Long Silence," a couple who cohabit while feeling hopeless about some of life's most fundamental problems. According to the author, women in middle-class Indian households frequently endure the tyranny of men in silence, and if somebody has a particular sickness, they can be disregarded or even abandoned to die. The female protagonist of the story is Jaya, who decides to speak out after keeping quiet for seventeen years. In this book, Shashi Deshpande is able to transform Jaya's suffering into a radical idea that will help her discover who she is. It's obvious that pain stems from a woman's ongoing insecurity. Without taking into account their wishes, wills, or aspirations, our family and community place a huge deal of weight on their shoulders. Shashi Deshpande never intended to oppose men; instead, he only wanted to portray reality. She is also known as a fierce feminist.

Keywords: Feminine, Suffering, Identity, Dominance, Woman's Struggle.

Introduction

Indian English literature is becoming increasingly well-known and acclaimed. It is no longer regarded as a standard of English. Some of its most talented authors have won numerous accolades on a global scale. At that particular period (1989), Shashi Deshpande won the Sahitya Akademi Award. She has established herself as a writer with extensive knowledge of the psyche of women. She aims to expose the culture of the woman who is being prepared to fulfil her role in the family by focusing on marital relationships. Her books highlight patriarchal customs and the disapproval of contemporary Indian women who adhere to them. She employs social reality as it is felt by women. Her heroes rebelled against the patriarchal heritage and conventional ways of existence.

Deshpande was born with a natural penchant for literature, which she developed as she went through life. When writing about the secrecy and incredible sensitivity of men and women caught in relationships and circumstances that are typically not their own, Shashi Deshpande is at her best. Her stories are about women and their anguish, independence, tension, and grief. Her tales imply that compromise is the hallmark of middle-class Indian women's everyday lives. Middle-class women are themselves troubled by lust and despair, fears and hopes, love and hate, withdrawal and dissociation, suppression and oppression, marital strife, and male violence because they are unable to challenge social norms or customary behaviour.

All of her books and short stories show her sincere compassion for women who experience their fair share of oppression. Each work by Shashi Deshpande is distinct and provides insight into human connections and emotions. Deshpande is a skilled writer when it comes to conveying the emotions and feelings that men, as well as women, experience. It's like entering her mind's secret caverns to read her works. Deshpande frequently uses a heroine as the narrator and a style of writing known as stream of consciousness.

That Long Silence, the novel's title, alludes to the difficulty of speaking one's own thoughts. Elizabeth Robins' essay's epigraph reveals that this quiet alludes to the reappearance of a female character. After seventeen years, Jaya finally rebelled in Deshpande's novel That Long Silence. a marriage. Jaya makes a journey towards herself while she is alone. She looks for her identity, which during their many years of marriage seems to have vanished in some way. The search for ladies is a common theme in Deshpande's book. Her books frequently include female narrators.

The search for ladies is a common theme in Deshpande's book. Female characters who are looking for themselves in books frequently provide the narration in her books. To find a resolution in their own lives, they are successful in doing this in their own writing. They undoubtedly like reminiscing about the past and feel nothing, but ultimately, they go through it themselves. Women are feeling a vacuum and empty space in their life. On the surface, they appear to be succeeding, but within, they appear to be aimless and feel useless.



Cover Page



Deshpande's portrayal of actual life situations in *That Long Silence* was successful. She accurately captures Jaya's internal conflict, which was caused by her desire for her own will throughout. Her youthful hopes were crushed when she witnessed the frustration, loneliness, and other painful emotions she had been going through. She initially appears to be a content spouse who is married to a respectable man of social standing. Everything proceeded smoothly for a while, and Jaya adjusted to the new setting in accordance with her husband's wishes.

That Long Silence, an honourable novel by Shashi Deshpande, portrays the women's long-lasting tranquilly in society. She accurately captures Jaya's inner battle and her search for herself. Jaya stands for all women who are oppressed by laws and traditions that were created by males. *That Long Silence*, according to Shashi Deshpande:

“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’s Novels a feminist Study, 38)

Shashi Deshpande examined the issues faced by Indian women from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Her writing is rational and naturally promotes feminist thinking because of the way she portrays women and their personal struggles honestly. Even if the author Shashi Deshpande claims that it is normal to write about women's issues and emotions, the title of the book, *That Long Silence*, naturally conjures up images of femininity. It was inspired by Elizabeth Robins, an American performer, who spoke in 1907. In this book's epigraph, Deshpande quotes Robin as saying, "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." This stillness is used by Sunita Reddy in Novels of Shashi Deshpande, Shashi Deshpande to symbolise the submission and defiance of her protagonist to the oppressive system that is now in place. Jaya is not just tranquil but also in pain throughout *That Long Silence*. Her form of "peace" is interpersonal.

Jaya is not just tranquil but also in pain throughout *That Long Silence*. Her 'peace' is primarily social in nature. She is the focus of great pity. Through Jaya's extensive tests in social, economic, political, psychological, spiritual, and religious realms, the story continues to provide light on her personality. There isn't a strong female voice against patriarchy, and the only disputes that are depicted are academic ones . She rebels, but quietly. Jaya is not introduced as a lady who wants to rebel but rather as the one who accepts her helplessness. She feels as follows:

“A woman can never get angry. She can only be neurotic, hysterical and frustrated. There is no room for despair, either. There is only order and routine today. I have to change. She sheets tomorrow, shrubs the bathrooms the day after, and clean the fridge”. (That Long Silence- 147-148)

Deshpande describes the reality as in this regard, she says:

“My characters take their own ways. I have heard people saying we should have strong woman characters. But my writing has to do with women and how they are” (1987:12).

THAT LONG SILENCE The narrative of Jaya and Manohar, who live together as husband and wife to support their dispersal in the midst of major life problems, is told in *That Long Silence* by Shashi Deshpande. According to the author, women in middle-class Indian households frequently endure the tyranny of men in silence, and if somebody has a particular sickness, they can be disregarded or even abandoned to die. Jaya is an illustration of a woman who has no choice but to submit to being led by her husband, much like Sita and Draupadi in ancient times who were forced to live in a muck of dishonour before being abandoned.

“But for me, now that I had abandoned ‘Seeta’, there was nothing; or, if there was, I had to search for it.” (69)

She was inextricably bound to her husband after all. To communicate the idea that marriage is unquestionable and that the wife is bound by the agreement to follow her husband, the victim utilised the suitable metaphor of being bound as bulls . If the husband is blind, she must lose all 100 of her sons, making her as blind as Gandhari.

“I remember now that he had assumed I would accompany him, had taken for granted my acquiescence in his plans. So had I.....”(11) “Two bullocks yoked together. it is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. To go in different directions would be painful; and what animal would voluntarily choose pain?”(12)

Jaya's father gave her the name Jaya, which means triumph. His daughter inherited his attitude of superiority. He once excluded his daughter from her friends' group, claiming that the females



Cover Page



**“asked for nothing more than the destiny of being wives and mother”. “ ‘You’re going to be different from the others, Jaya,’
Appa had assured me.”(136)**

**Jaya moaned, “I had known then that it was all Appa’s fault. What had he made me feel I was someone special? Why had he
made me feel different from others?”(136)**

When Jaya's spouse was ordered to leave her employment while claims of business misbehaviour against him being probed, Jaya's health quickly deteriorated. Jaya, a failed writer, is haunted by memories of her past as her family's presence has damaged her husband's image and placed their future as a family in jeopardy. All of her husband's differences, their unhappy seventeen-year marriage, her two teenage children's disappointments, and her childhood claustrophobia start to make sense. Jaya confronts these and other facts about herself in her compact Bombay flat while struggling to write and avoiding becoming furious. Shashi Deshpande portrays a woman who achieves the ideal that essentially seeks to end the "long peace" that has existed for so long.

Shashi Deshpande's *That "Long Silence"* demonstrates how women have kept quiet despite not being under human dominion for a very long time. Jaya had an obsession with the life of an independent girl, yet it was inappropriate because women in India were hampered by social pressure, cultural norms, and traditional practises. "I had finally figured it out. No questions, no arguments, just silence" (143). These phrases described the burdensome, depressing life of a homemaker who had undergone hardship in order to advance from ignorance to knowledge. The main character in *That Long Silence*, Jaya, personally engages the enlightened creature.

A woman was offered a second job and a second position in Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence* through the use of a narrative. She thinks that masculine aggression and failure frequently lead women to suffer. *That Long Silence*, the novel's title, alludes to the fact that women rarely speak out against injustice. For the benefit of her husband and kids, the lady compromises her personality, but she still defers to them.

Women are now too frail to live alone because of the long-standing refuge. We refer to this as the women's issue that, despite Jaya being a writer, has allowed her to find serenity for so long. Actually, there is a disagreement between the author and the housewife. The housewife wants her to be quiet, but the author is expecting her to share her thoughts and experiences in public . The housewife is quietly exploring her past during this time of conflict and fighting for her talent. He is able to resume her writing career as a result. Because her manuscripts lack the passion of her experience to play her writing, publishers reject them. Her husband has discouraged her. **“I have given up my writing because of you”**. She further says:

“I had known then that it hadn’t mattered to Mohan that I had written a good story, a story about a couple, a man who could not search out to his wife except through her body. For Mohan it had mattered that people might think the couple was us, that the man him”. (144)

She had passed away since she was a victim of this issue. She either complains or rebels against the patriarchal yoke to liberate herself since she fails to become the ideal woman she strives to be. Jaya is really upset because Mohan told her not to write, calling her **"only an exhibitionist"(144)**. She confessed to Mohan, **"I stopped writing because of you" (119)**. Despite the fact that he had destroyed the writer and the woman in her, she chose not to take the chance of upsetting him [10]. She acknowledges having given up.

“all those stories that had been taking shape in me because I had been scared-scared of hurting Mohan, scared of jeopardizing the only career I had i.e, being Mohan’s wife”(144)

Jaya is alarmed by the mere prospect of upsetting her spouse and, as a result, the husband's desertion since she is unable to shed her Indian womanly identity.

“Even a worm has a hole it can crawl into. I had mine-as Mohan’s wife, as Rahul’s and Rati’s mother.”(148)

With Jaya, Shashi Deshpande has portrayed the conflicted situation of an educated Indian lady who will not leave her husband because he sees her as "a sheltering tree" which she cannot live without, or protest a loveless marriage. Surprisingly, Jaya's personality changed when she married Mohan. While her previous name, Jaya, meant "Victorious," her new name, Suhasini, means "a sweet, smiling, calm, a mother's woman. When Kamat advises her to write about her own suffering she responds, "Because no lady can be furious. Have you ever heard of a young woman who was angry? It demonstrates how a wife becomes more and more dependent on her husband's wishes and societal conventions. Jaya aspires to be the ideal housewife as well. She never challenges Mohan's ways; instead, she quietly opposes them.



Cover Page



JAYA'S CHARACTER IN THAT LONG SILENCE

Deshpande used an image of a woman falling into a ditch to illustrate Jaya's suffering. Jaya is uneasy and unreliable and feels cut off from reality. She is terrified of failing and of writing. She is unable to handle the difficulty and longs to go back to her secure family life. In *That Long Silence*, a significant issue is highlighted, including gender segregation, the reinforcement of masculine categories, and the respect and commitment accorded to women in our society.

Through the usage of the novel, the author has highlighted the terrible tales of Jaya and Mohan's friendships. Jaya discusses the confluence between sex and love. She expresses her opinion.

"First there's love, then there's sex that was how I had always imagined it to be. But after having with Mohan I had realized that it could so easily be the other way round."

In *Jaya*, Mohan had destroyed both the woman and the writer since he did not support and love her. Her quiet is marked by slavery and anguish. Her mental suffering is so severe that she is unable to talk clearly. Jaya makes the decision to end the prolonged quiet that has destroyed her by writing down all she has repressed for the past seventeen years:

"I am not afraid any more. 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 of possible. The child, hands in pocket, has been with me through the years, she is with me still." (That Long Silence, 191)

So, by the novel's conclusion, Jaya's self-awareness had been expertly shown. A woman wants to live in a house with her family without having to compromise who she is. She wants the freedom to exercise her gift and the obligation to treat her family with respect. She has the ability to revolt by being arrested when she is denied freedom and ownership. Therefore, *That Long Silence* teaches women to struggle for silence and speak out. According to Deshpande, a woman can be better understood if she is loved and stomped upon. They deserve gentle love since their hearts are fragile.

CONCLUSION

So, by the novel's conclusion, Jaya's self-awareness had been expertly shown. A woman wants to live in a house with her family without having to compromise who she is. She wants the freedom to exercise her gift and the obligation to treat her family with respect. She has the ability to revolt by being arrested when she is denied freedom and ownership. Therefore, *That Long Silence* teaches women to struggle for silence and speak out. According to Deshpande, a woman can be better understood if she is loved and stomped upon. They deserve gentle love since their hearts are fragile.

Reference

1. Renganathan, Mala. "Indian woman at the cross roads: A study of Shashi Deshpande's heroines." (2012)
2. C.L. Khatri and Sandhy Saxena, "Five Indian Women Novelists – Feminist vision". Yking books, Jaipur India, 2013. PP 91-168
3. Deshpande Shashi, "That Long Silence" Penguin books, Penguin Group Publications: 1989
4. Anuradha, S. "Social marginality in Sashi Deshpande's That long silence." CONFERENCE EDITORIAL BOARD. 2015
5. Reddy, YS Sunita. A Feminist Perspective on the Novels of Shashi Deshpande. Prestige Books, 2001.
6. Bala, Suman, ed. Women in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. Khosla Publishing House, 2001.
7. Latha, T. Sree, and N. Asharudeen. "Success behind the Distress of Women in Anita Rau Badami's Tamarind Mem and Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence."
8. Geetha, P. "Narrative Technique in Shashi Deshpandes Novels."
9. Yesapogu, Dr Venkateswarlu. "The Voice of Indian Women Novelists and their Status in the Contemporary Indian English Literature–A Critical Study." American Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences 23.21 (2016): 4-12.
10. Anu, M. "Awaken of the Suppressed Soul in Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence." Journal of English 6.S1 (2018): 1-4.
11. Sundarsingh, J. "Language and mind style in shashi deshpandes that long silence."
12. Sharma, Ram. "Writing from the Margins: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's 'That Long Silence'." Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English (2006): 71
13. Deshpande, Shashi. "Interview by Vanamala Viswanatha, "A women's world" Literature Alive, 1987.
14. Dinesh, Kamini. "That long silence: The Narrator and the Narrative" Singh Avadesh, 84-88
15. Pal, Adesh. "That Long Silence: A study of Displaced Anger. Language Forum", 21, 1-2 1995, 81 to 87