



**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF NOVEL RESEARCH  
AND DEVELOPMENT (IJNRD) | IJNRD.ORG**  
An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

# CONCEPT OF ALIENATION IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *THAT LONG SILENCE*

**Akansha Khatri, Dr. Swati Sharma**

M.A. II English, Assistant Professor

Department of English

Lingaya's Vidyapeeth, Faridabad, India

**Abstract:** Women have been alienated as a result of being disadvantaged in patriarchal societies. Alienation is described as "a term used with various meanings in philosophy, theology, psychology, and the social sciences, usually with emphasis on personal powerlessness, meaninglessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation, or self-estrangement" in the Encyclopedia Britannica. An individual's sense or state of separation from himself, others, and the outside world is implied by the term "alienation." "Anomic" and "anomia" are two of the Greek terms meaning estrangement. "Anomie" relates to social alienation, whereas "anomia" stands for self-alienation. The two most fundamental types of alienation are, in fact, alienation from oneself and alienation from society. A situation of alienation from oneself or is said to exist when a person's spontaneous individual self has been stunted or suppressed. An alienated individual is stranger to both himself and to other people. Both anomie and anomia affect the major character of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*.

**Index Terms-** Alienation, Indian literature, Women

## INTRODUCTION

Women have been denied the freedom to live as they choose from ancient times. Women have been made to live a life of dependence under the authority of males. Even education has not fundamentally altered their life, despite the fact that it has brought about certain changes. Whether they are housewives or working women, they are not living lives of their own choice. Although, there have been changes with the times, at least in the case of educated metropolitan women; from being little more than puppets, yet there is scope of betterment.

## Estrangement in Deshpande's heroines

Generally, the characters of Deshpande are contemporary Indian women who are very sensitive, clever, and educated. They experience alienation because, if they follow their hearts and minds, they are labelled as unworthy daughters, sisters, and wives, and they become estranged from society and other family members. On the other hand, if they adhere to male ideals of the traditional woman, they experience internal alienation. Deshpande's heroines therefore attempt to choose a middle course so that they may carry out their household or social responsibilities without significantly sacrificing their personal goals and ideals. As a result, Deshpande's handling of estrangement in her female characters has a unique complexity. Unlike Anita Desai's characters, her heroes either commit suicide nor go into self-exile as a result of a crippling sense of alienation.

For a man to be conscious of himself as an individual, alienation may be a necessary condition. It allows him the chance to answer questions about his fundamental identity and what he should do or not do in a more general sense. On the contrary, "heroines of Shashi Deshpande" are put on the path to self-discovery when specific conditions are met. Their sense of estrangement from both oneself and people around them serves as the starting point for the process. Beyond a secondary sex, everyone tries to understand who they are. Younger generations of Deshpande's women reject the stereotype of staying at home to care for their spouse and children while submissively taking whatever comes their way. They favor taking charge of their own destiny. Even if they sometimes struggle with it and are forced to make concessions, they finally come to a greater knowledge of who they are and what their lives are all about.

### **Patriarchal Society and Women**

Although women have taken up professional professions, they are nonetheless bound by the roles that patriarchal society has historically allocated to them. Their minds are now split as a result of this. The female characters in Shashi Deshpande's works experience a prolonged period of mental anguish and self-doubt as a result of this crisis, but they eventually manage to get through it and achieve a state of mental stability. They neither entirely abandon the established order nor do they lose their uniqueness. Charu Chandra concurs with Deshpande's definition of feminism, in which achieving one's own identity is weighed against family and work responsibilities. However, harmonizing the relationship between men and women as equal partners is necessary. "Beauvoir's understanding of complicity in *The Second Sex*, before evaluating Susan James's interpretation of complicity in terms of seventeenth-century accounts of slavery and republican freedom, which emphasizes the dependent situation of women as the primary cause of their complicity." (Knowles 243)

For women in Indian society, patriarchal discrimination is a more complex phenomenon. Despite the fact that this topic has received much debate at conferences, panel discussions, seminars, etc., prejudice still exists across the globe. Few women attempt to overcome these challenges despite the bias. These women seek to establish themselves in all of the traditionally male-dominated industries. It is evident that many women succeed in the twenty-first century in a variety of sectors, including literature, art, politics, science, and technology. Only when certain feminist writers began exposing the unseen hardships of the impacted women, these changes become apparent. Many women continue to experience pressure. In Indian society, prejudice is still a problem

Shashi Deshpande through her writing style speaks up in support of women and thinks that women are also humans just as males. She speaks on behalf of the cause, emphasizing the need for focus in order for the oppressed women to escape. She explores the internal struggles of her heroines and presents the truth of their circumstances. "The correspondence columns of women's magazines provide good examples of what they talk about; one can hardly imagine a 'lonely hearts' column for men only; men meet in the world, which is their world, while women have to define, measure, and explore their social domain; their correspondence deals especially with beauty counsel, recipes for cooking, directions for knitting; and they ask for advice; through propensity for chatter and self-display genuine anxiety sometimes emerges." (Rathi 31)

### **Exploration of Women's Challenges through *That Long Silence***

Deshpande utilized "silence" as a symbol in her book *That Long Silence*, which is the patriarchal emblem. The story of man's supremacy and the idea that women are the embodiment of all virtues are both explored in the book. Eloquence and loudness are not considered to be characteristics of Indian women in the society, which is clearly male-oriented. In the end, the lady controls herself to remain silent and endure everything, which causes her to go extinct. Through her book, Deshpande encourages the protagonist to flee patriarchy and the realities of life. Jaya, the main character, is shown as a writer who has started a typical role of a woman today as a wife and mother has hidden her existential self. Because expressive women characters must endure in a culture of quiet, they are very challenging to create. By giving her protagonist a wealth of creative skill, Deshpande has been able to overcome this challenge.

Women are educated to understand that this second-class status is not imposed on them automatically by their naturally 'feminine' relatives but rather by powerful, historically male-dominated environmental factors that have shaped societal norms and educational systems. In other words, woman is nothing without a man and is therefore only permitted to adopt a committed, submissive, or subordinate position in the dominant phallogocentric culture, also

known as patriarchy, which is a society that is dominated or overly controlled by males. The woman has obviously been continually exploited and marginalized, which has led to the restriction of her social, political, intellectual, emotional, and economic independence. Shashi Deshpande aims to highlight the ethical norms that have steadily deteriorated in marriage by concentrating on this connection. The current custom teaches women to take up subordinate roles in the home. Her books depict the prevalent patriarchal system and the enormous battle that newly empowered Indian women face in order to be a part of it.

The heroine Jaya, a middle-class, middle-aged Bombay housewife, tells her story in *That Long Silence*. The dissatisfaction and isolation felt by Indian women are intended to be shown by Shashi Deshpande. The clash between modernity and tradition affects her characters. Their issues adjusting to marriage and their search for identity are the root of this alienation. Women who are seeking their own voices are the protagonists in Shashi Deshpande's works. For both men and women, marriage is crucial. However, women do not have same freedom that males have. Patriarchy frequently use it as a tool to put pressure on women. One of the oddities of Indian life is the meaninglessness of husband-wife relationships. Many times, only women make an effort to strengthen the relationships. Women are the ones who must endure all hardship while yet making an effort to keep the marriage together in quiet. The heroines of Shashi Deshpande look to marriage for some form of security. Women choose marriage over the bondage that society forces on spinsters since it is not only required by the family but also seen as a better option by the women. They quickly become aware of their loss of freedom. With new duties come new bonds, to which people must become used to for the rest of their lives. They experience a sense of loneliness and are left feeling empty because they are caught in a struggle between the conventional role of the wife and a search for individuality.

Shashi Deshpande's female narrators go beyond their gender to examine the masculine mentality, as several critics have shown. It is debatable if Shashi Deshpande is a feminist or not because she dislikes having her writing categorized as feminist fiction. Typically, a book is the author's own work and vision, which is entirely subjective. The personal opinions of Shashi Deshpande on marital discord are presented in *That Long Silence*. There is truth in the statement that each Indian woman may discover her own silence in Jaya's silence.

Jaya, the novel's narrator and protagonist, is the major subject of attention. A smart lady with strong academic credentials and a job as a writer, Jaya is this novel's heroine. However, none of her attributes earned her a decent standing in Mohan's eyes. Despite the housewife and unsuccessful writer Jaya's delicate emotional swings, pleasure and misery, she is constantly at the quiet level in the story. While Mohan, her spouse, is a conservative with deep roots in traditions, and Jaya is pro-modern, they are diametrically opposed. Due to these disparities in viewpoint and attitude, they are unable to comprehend one another. Regarding the place of women in families, Mohan holds a traditional viewpoint. His image of the perfect lady is one that prioritizes her family above her job and takes care of the home. But Jaya believes that being married is like living in a cage. They are separated by the tension between being oneself and playing the traditional roles of "good daughter," "good mother," and "good wife." The husband and wife's quiet grows longer as they retreat to their Dadar flat. In an instance of workplace corruption, Mohan is engaged. He is the subject of an investigation, and is instructed to remain silent until the matter is resolved. As a result, they are staying hidden in a little flat in Dadar.

She is given the chance and time to think back on her life. She considers her importance in Mohan's life as well as her position as a daughter-in-law, sister, wife, mother, friend, and writer, among other things. She has also taken her kids Rahul and Rati on trips. She feels isolated as she views her marriage as a pointless exercise in being together. She seems frustrated, and it comes over in her remarks.

“We lived together but there had been only emptiness between us.” (Deshpande 185)

Jaya has concerns about her own identity and her marriage. As Jaya delves deeply into her old memories, she comes to the realization that she has lost herself. In many respects, Mohan (her husband) has crushed her desire to forge her own identity. He has also changed her environment and connections. Mohan has diminished her sensitivity, she realizes. The hollowness of contemporary Indian life is demonstrated by Shashi Deshpande in this masterpiece. Jaya finds refuge in her neurosis and shirks responsibilities rather than dealing with a difficult scenario.



Self-discovery is sparked. Her aloofness in this difficult familial circumstance has the effect of making their marriage unstable. Jaya would frequently laugh aloud, but she would never dare to laugh in front of Mohan. Jaya, a brave and daring individual, attempts to be like Suhasini, a helpless lady who always need male assistance. What actually makes her feel sorry for herself is that she engaged in behavior for which she would ordinarily feel ashamed.

The reader is deeply uneasy as a result of Jaya's heartbreaking stillness. She is so preoccupied with the issue of who she is that she is unable to identify herself. Her wavering mental condition reflects her feminine problem. She is committed to ending the "Long Silence." She has two children and is a married woman named Mohan, yet she lives alone. She is tormented from the inside out because her husband cannot comprehend her emotions. It is challenging for a modern, educated woman to grant her husband's every request. Jaya's character may be seen in the majority of Indian women. "Jaya, the happiness of your husband and home depends entirely on your." (138) In spite of her rejection of the stereotype of conventional women like Sita, Savitri, and Draupadi, Jaya wants to play the part of the silent victim.

"No, what have I to do with these mythical women? I can't fool myself the truth is simpler. 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)

In order to describe the Indian marital system, Shashi Deshpande chooses appropriate imagery.

While considering her marital life, Jaya realizes about her frustration and isolation. Arrangements were made for Jaya's marriage. The pair did not communicate, just like in other Indian marriages. In spite of financial pleasures, her marriage life devolved into a pattern of routine. Over the course of their 17-year marriage, she has been a submissive, quiet spouse. She struggles with being stupid and mute after the marriage. "My mother never raised her voice against my father however badly he behaved to her." (83) The mentioned statement depicts the situation of a woman who did not have courage to raise voice against behaviour that she did not deserve just because she was born a woman.

"We can always hope without that, life would be impossible. And if there is anything I know now it is this; life has always to be made possible." (193)

All characters seek a companion within the boundaries set by society since they are all in need of love and affection. Isolation is a side effect of the breach between oneself and companionship. All of the characters; Jaya, Mohan, Kamat, and Rahul—find it difficult to break the silence that serves as a barrier to developing cordial relationships with others and experience psychological estrangement as a result. People appear to find it difficult to express their emotions in the ordinary world since it seems to be filled with feared regularity and boredom.

## Conclusion

In the world of the 20th century, this is a frequent image that alienates people on a psychological and spiritual level. Not only are they left alone physically, but also emotionally. Shashi Deshpande emphasizes not just her personal quiet but also the stillness of each and every character in the book. The work is not just about Jaya's attempts to break the stillness that is strangling her, as Veena Sheshadri clearly points out in her remark. Additionally, it deals with the hopelessness and resignation of women like Kusum, Jaya's mentally ill cousin, Jaya's servant Jaya, and Mohan's mother. Shashi Deshpande has examined how temperamental and emotional mismatch affect man-woman relationships. Women's feelings of suffocation, estrangement, and quiet suffering are depicted in *That Long Silence*.

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