



The existence of Women in Married Life

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Before starting the paper, we should know some facts about the author, **Shashi Deshpande** is an award-winning Indian Novelist and a well-known name in the field of Indian literature. She was born in Dharwad Karnataka, in 1938. She is the younger daughter of the Sanskrit scholar, novelist, actor, and dramatist R. V. Jagirdar (1904-1984) and his wife Sharda Arya. Under the name of Adya Rangacharya, and also under the pseudonym of Shriranga, he published a huge literary composition that includes translations of Sanskrit plays. Deshpande did her education in Bombay and Bangalore in Education and Law. She also pursued a course in Journalism at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan in Bombay and also worked for some time as a journalist for Onlooker, a popular magazine. A novel by Shashi Deshpande deals with the inside thoughts of Indian females. She is a well-known author who has arisen as a writer possessing deep insight into the female psyche. In her first award-winning novel, *The Dark Holds no Terrors* (1986), she introduces this aching subject that had already been there, as marital rape, in one of her early stories, "The Intrusion", later follows it up in *The Binding Vine* (1992) and *Shadow Play* (2013). For *That Long Silence*, she also got Sahitya Akademi Award. Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence* (1988), which she says is her most autobiographical one, makes silencing, by the family and society, its main theme. Deshpande, the idea shows the reality of urban society with the help of social layers but her interest comes to centre more and more on women of the middle and upper middle classes; well-educated women who fight for their own space, for their place in the family and their social and their cultural setting. This setting is the backdrop to her stories, action remains private, even with rape which is, after all, private only to a certain degree. Shashi Deshpande presents all the minute levels of women's feelings that they have experienced by social domination. Deshpande's work creates an actual draft of communal relationships. Self-searching is the main theme of Deshpande's all works in which they find their own space. Her style is tremendous to present the issue of gender disbalance. Shashi says, "I think

it is certainly making a difference over the years. And I think my books have been very empowering for women because I have more and more women coming and telling me about how they felt kind of liberated after they read, and I think they say it does give them courage, And I also had a man who wrote me a long letter saying that I never know what women thought of until I read your books hopefully. It has opened up certain areas”.

The novel *That Long Silence* shows many layers of relationships as well as the suffering of married women, everyone wants something from them on behalf of their relations, due to being a woman who expects to her that she should sacrifice her entire identity for her loved ones without any hesitation. In the novel, there is no strong female voice against patriarchy rather only psychological conflict were depicted. The whole society discriminates between gender: male and female, Specially in Indian societies, on behalf of social rituals or behalf of family pressure these discriminations take place on some other level where the ultimate aim of a person's life is marriage and this novel represents very beautifully various themes which revolve around the centre term “nuptial” or “marriage”. Marriage is a substantial term in Indian society where a man is superior to a woman already declared and this superiority gives him the power to suppress even minor thoughts of a woman, In *That Long Silence* very first conversation between Jaya (protagonist) and her husband Mohan, “There's no need to hurry,” Mohan often said when were getting ready to go to a movie. ‘At the worst, we'll miss the ads, and who wants to see them anyway?’ I did, but I never dared to confess it to him. What if he too said, ‘What poor taste you have, Jaya? (03) She could not watch even advertisements without her husband's permission. Deshpande beautifully describes and underlines the circumstances that come after marriage over Jaya's married life where Jaya says her married life is like, “A pair of 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 animals would voluntarily choose pain?” (11-12). Human relationships are a favourite section of Deshpande for writing in which man-woman relationship is one of the most interesting areas of her work she picks up this again and again in her numerous novels. *The Binding Vine* again exhibits the same fondness for this theme. The validity of marriage becomes totally shattered when the organization of the wedding raises the question. In marriage, men think they had unavoidably the right to assault women whether it would be physically or mentally. Even the innermost feelings of women like Urmi in terms of their sexual feelings have been pointed out clearly. In *Roots and Shadows*, Indu likewise faces a calamity in her conjugal relationship and has navigated the arduous and thorny road of self-exploration before she is at peace with

herself. Deprived of realizing it, her connection with her husband has declined into a similar kind of unfilled outdated relationship between husbands and wives that she has always hated. After their marriage with Jayant, Indu has always realised and is ready to compromise her choices for Jayant on many topics. Very soon, she realises that she was forcefully adjusting with him in the name of love to save her marriage. She has adapted her lifestyle and her ethics accordingly, as she was not the first to do so, every girl was expected to do so, even though he never questioned herself to do so. She has even compromised her writing, substituting honesty with flattering days. She knows “(she and Jayanta) that they are on different levels... he chooses his level. And I try to choose the one he would like me to be” (90/25).

Deshpande in her novels reveals the embarrassments handled by the leading role who puts her lifespan and herself allowed for her repressive husband to have autonomous life. When a woman marries a man, she has her dream relatively new life, a new space, new charm which she hopes to come into her life with her life partner. But the new life becomes deserts her of all their dreams, and of this appreciation, goes their husband's unresponsive attitude and nature. The condition of women in India is even more pathetic, society gives some well-known names to women like mother, sister, wife and so on, and with these names they try to spirate their women into the cage. “A woman cannot exist outside the boundaries of married life and motherhood, otherwise she is perceived as useless and unworthy according to traditional Indian views... Indian women do not appear to have their independent role in society...” Clara Nubile in *The Danger of Gender*.

The existence of women is already restricted everywhere but becomes more suffocative when they enter married life. Deshpande, in her various novel, describes this she is a genuine novelist whose thoroughgoing work deals with women's existences. In *The Dark Hold No Terrors*, she gives some parameters for women to their happy life and what they should do, ‘A wife should always be a few feet behind her husband. If he is an M.A you should be a B.A. If he is 5'4'tall you shouldn't be more than 5'3'tall. You should never earn more than four hundred and ninety-nine rupees if he is earning five hundred rupees. That is only the rule to follow if you want a happy marriage...No partnership can ever be equal. It will always be unequal, but take care it is unequal in favour of the husband’ (137). Society always treated a lady or woman as Devi they think women exist as ‘honour of the house’, ‘symbol of purity, ‘pride of a particular cast’, and so on but women do not consider as women as living people of another gender who has her own life, own wish own world and along

with these, they (women) contributed a huge part to make society but still, society raise question on women existence.

After marriage character calamity also becomes a question for women. Deshpande's fiction explores the quest for the identity of women to fulfil themselves as a human being, independent of traditional roles as daughter, wife, and mother. Deshpande expresses how a man can change his wife's name without thinking a little about her identity, 'Actually, my name is not Jaya at all. Not now, I mean. It's Suhasini (15).' Where did that come from? 'Marriage, It's the name Mohan gave me when we got married.' Although Jaya has optimistic views on life before marriage her father always encouraged her by saying "I named you Jaya' he said, 'Jaya means victory" (15). But after the death of her father, 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 "Suhasini" as he wanted her to be a 'Soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman' (16). Jaya's life is not for herself even for a little. She has to make parallel herself sacrifice the whole thing of to encounter the tastes and expectations of her husband, "Cut your hair up to here, his hand lightly brushing my shoulder" (96). Even though they had no normal or natural relation after that, she always makes an effort to show her concern for her husband, she has entirely affianced her life only to keep Mohan pleased.

Marriage is one of the most dominating institutions in which women are considered as the second gender and she had to perform their lowest effort to maintain their relationship with their husbands, it is a surprise that for such type of effort, they don't even get appreciated rather women are blamed that there must be something lacking in them that a man is doing this. Mostly it is observed that when a man and woman in marriage are not able to fulfil each other's expectations then the result of marriage is filled with misery which causes pain and conflict between outdated borders and contemporary objectives. There is no end to novels that show the actual condition of females after marriage from Shobha De's *Second Thought*, attractively donating the failed expectations of a lady Maya. She ties the knot with Ranjan as she is fascinated by the prospects of settling down in Bombay, the city she loves. But after some days of her marriage, she realises about dreary condition which comes in front of her. She is aroused from her slumber when she comes to know that Ranjan had sex even before marriage and that he married her only to satisfy her mother. In the novel, Maya is a nice-looking adolescent who wants to move to a glam city in Bombay with her husband after marriage from Calcutta where she feels suffocative, Maya's husband Ranjan, is a handsome, ambitious man

who has an American university degree and a wealthy family background. Maya tries to be an ideal wife she gives her best to make her husband always contented but she finds herself stuck and muted by the confines of her arranged marriage to a man who, she realizes her husband is rigidly conservative and completely indifferent to her desires. In Mumbai suburban, she feels great loneliness due to her husband's behaviour. This loneliness and suffering become the destiny of a woman because, in married life tolerance of domestic violence and being silent are the primary ornaments for any woman and from girlhood, these ornamental chapters have been taught by a mother. Sufferings, miseries, and compromises become destiny for a lady after marriage.

Deshpande critically analyses the institution of marriage in the modern context with *That Long Silence*. Through this simple story of Jaya, Deshpande has raised many issues related to matrimony and questioned the concepts of love and marriage. This is what S.P. Swain means when he says: "A sensitive and realistic dramatization of the married life of Jaya and her husband Mohan, it portrays an inquisitive critical appraisal to which the institution of marriage has been subjected to in recent years." (2004:87). In married life tolerance of domestic violence and being silent, are the primary ornaments of women from girlhood, these ornamental chapters have been taught by a mother. Sufferings, miseries, and compromises become destiny for a lady after marriage. How a woman becomes a victim of domestic violence, here Deshpande mentions with her mouthpiece Jaya who tells an incident once, where someone's husband wants fresh rice hot and untouched but with that, but she served processed chutney, and for that, he deliberately throws a heavy brass plate on the wall, after that she again started to prepare fresh food for him without any feeling, without any next thought about which he did with her because she thinks only about duty towards her husband without any attachment and endless silence enter the marriage life where there is no love but only compromise. Whenever Mohan finds Jaya's behaviour odd towards him and his family, he says, "My mother never spoke against my father, however badly he behaved to her" (83). According to Mohan woman could not be angry if she does so, she becomes unwoman. Gradually he started to impose his wishes or tradition on her and forced her to follow these strictly, Jaya regression to following everything blindly which her husband expects from his wife. Like the mythical Gandhari in the Indian epic Mahabharata and Sita in the Indian epic Ramayana, Jaya never questioned anything her husband did, "Mohan had managed to get the job. I never questioned him on how he

did it. If Gandhari, who bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband, could be called an ideal wife, I was an ideal wife too. I bandaged my eyes too. I bandaged my eyes tightly. I didn't want to know anything." (61) but still Mohan never loved her soul he was always conscious about her figure Jaya marks: 'he said, 'I'm glad, Jaya, you haven't put on any weight. Most women get shapeless at your age, you're still the way you were when we got married (85). As a woman grows, she is inculcated with the ideas of self-abnegation, pride in patience, of the need to accept a lower status through the mythical modes of Sita, Savithri and Gandhari. Mohan had managed to get the job. I never asked him how he did it. If Gandhari, who bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband, could be called an ideal wife, I was an ideal wife too. I bandaged my eyes tightly. I didn't want to know anything. It was enough for me that we moved to Bombay, that we could send Rahul and Rati to good schools, and that I could have the things we needed...' Following these models, she is taught to be, gentle and dignified as a person pure and faithful as a wife and selfless, loving and thoughtful as a mother. The images of a woman in Indian civilization, culture and mythology are as diverse as the geographical, historical and other influences that have shaped them. The classical Hindu wife has to conform to the concept embodied in the famous 'sloka', Grihinim Sachivah, Sakhim Mithah Priya- Shishyalalite Kala Vidhu meaning that as a wife, a woman has many roles to play. She must not only be a wife but also a counsellor, the playmate to the partner;

Karyeshu Mantri, Karaneshu Daasi,

Rupecha Lakshmi, Kshamayaa Dharitri,

Bhojyeshu Mata, Shayentu Rambha,

hat karma Yukta, Kula Dharma Patni.

In the novel *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande unveils several foremost and inconsequential problems women face, especially after marriage. Jaya can never come out of that sorrow which she realizes only when she feels love and respect. 'Ai' her mother does not support her. This thing made Jaya weak and extremely vulnerable. Her mother always gives first place to her son even though she transfers her ancestral

property to her son which is the Dadar flat where not even give a single place to her daughter Jaya the name of the ancestral emblem. **As the critic Usha Tambe puts it, in Indian society;**

“A son is much more welcome than a daughter.”

If a woman wants to do something she stopped with the world ‘waiting’, ‘for women the waiting game starts early in childhood, “wait until you get married, wait until your husband comes, wait until go to your in-laws’ home. Waiting until you have kids,” yes, ever since I got married, I had done nothing but wait (30). The conversation between Jaya and Nayana shows that even a born child can’t be free from gender discrimination, it was more important for Nayana to have a son for the safety of her own life, this was said to her husband that if she does not have a son after two daughters now – ‘this time it is going to be a boy,’ she said, passing her hand tenderly over her swollen tummy. She had four children, two girls who lived and died soon after birth. This craving for a male child... ‘why do you want a boy so much? I (Jaya) had asked her once. I had heard her cursing men - her husband, brother, father- as wasters, good-for-nothing drunkards (28). Nayana also wants a son but she has some other purpose to have a son, she feels sorry for the birth of a baby girl so she wished it would be better to bear a son: why give birth to a girl, Benji, who’ll only suffer become men all her life? Look at me! My mother loved me very much, she wanted so much for me... a house with electricity and water, shining brass vessels, a silver waist chain, silver anklets ... and what have I got? No, no, behnji, better to have a son. ... I knew it meant her husband, ‘... He says he’ll throw me out if I have another daughter (28). The other incident of woman misery comes after the death of her husband when a woman becomes a widow’ they are surely discriminated against by society all the rights, position and living parameters have been changed they all cook in pots and pans, ‘all her frantic scurrying that had not even resulted in a good meal’ (84), the difference between married and widow mentioned by Jaya: ‘Ai was a widow. There was something positive, something definite about widowhood. Ai looked earnestly into the mirror, applying her kumkum with the tip of her ring finger, gently spreading the red power, making the circle larger and larger, and finally, a large, perfect re-circle shining in the middle of her forehead – that was marriage. And then the blankness, the space – how large Ai’s forehead was, how white and bony – that was widowhood. A clean, definite line between the two, (139). There is no value in women’s dreams her detriments no one is interested to listen to them and finally a long very long silence comes in her favour. Vimala, Mohan’s sister who suffers from an ‘ovarian tumour’ sank into a coma and died a week later, her silence intact (39). Mohan’s mother also

died due to an abortion. Deshpande's concern and sympathy are primarily for the women. While revealing the women's struggle to secure self-respect and self-identity, the author subtly bares for the multiple levels of oppression, including sexual oppression experienced by the women in our society, they could not even express their feeling toward romance. Jaya says, 'I married Mohan; the truth is that he had decided to marry me, I had only to acquiesce'. Further, she mentions, we had never spoken of sex at all... the only words between us had been his question, 'Did I hurt you?' and my answer, 'No'. Each time, after it was over the same question; and my reply too invariably the same, 'No' (95)

Shashi Deshpande presents many women characters in her novels like Jaya, who was an educated girl, as Vimala, Sudha, Prema as her widow aunty, and as well as Saru but Deshpande is never able to portray even a single woman character who was satisfied in her married life with her conditions. Jaya the protagonist whose writing was fully affected by fear of her husband's anger and the other hand publisher denied her manuscript just because she does not bring excitement to her work through the experiences. She is discouraged by her husband, who mentioned; "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) and on the other hand, Saru protagonist of *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, whose marriage is under stress at this particular time because her successful career evokes her husband's jealousy, Saru is better paid than her husband Manohar who is a college lecturer. Manu's attitude towards his profession and society's more successful wife is full of ambiguities. He likes the comforts; her money brings to them but resents her superior status. This bitterness is generally voiced only within the discretion of their home, as openair it he lays on the cover of a proud and permissive husband. Manu's resentment finds expression in the manner in which he savages Saru's body. In this most intimate aspect of the husband-wife relationship, her husband humiliates Saru. Still, she maintains a silence on the perverse punishment, the act of love.

She writes about specific concerns in her manner. Her writings, especially fiction have periodic visualizations. Shashi Deshpande's major concern is to depict the anguish and conflicts of the modern educated Indian women between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand and the self-expression, individuality, and independence for the women on another hand. Whenever the context provokes conflict with

her husband, she throws herself in silence which, for her, is the easiest way out, “I saw a struggle so bitter that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender” (36). Her silence carries a purpose; for her, silence is the emollient for the smooth running of the machinery of the family. Her marital life appears to her as a meaningless exercise of being together. Her frustration is visible through her words. “We lived together but there had been only emptiness between us” (185). Jaya feels that women must assert themselves and they must be resilient to take up the old roles assertively and not silently. She realizes that escapism is not the ultimate solution to the problems instead women should try to voice their silence. As C. Anna Latha Devi puts it: “The relationship between spouses thrives only when it is a partnership between them. Once the superiority-inferiority equation enters into it, the rift sets in. Fear and apprehensions replace trust and confidence obstructing the path to a genuine understanding between them. The psychological block between them leads to a lack of communication and there is plaintive silence.” (157). Instead of all circumstances, Jaya strikes a balance between preferring to be a modern woman with absolute freedom and accepting the oppression of life in the name of marriage. However, she resists the blind submission to the traditional role and prefers women to break the long silence. Her marriage period comprises a confrontation between two phrases of her personality where the latter had to be triumphant to appease her husband's ego and save her marriage. And in the end, she comes out to be a decided and determined woman who now knows how to strike a balance between her family and her identity in the family, and at last like a typical married woman she also decided to give a wholehearted chance break the silence, with the hope she mentions; ‘I have to plug that ‘hole in the heart’, I will have to speak, to listen, I will have to erase the silence between us.’ Like this willingly, she starts waiting again and this is the existence of women in marital lifespan nothing else.

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