



Quest for Identity in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*

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Abstract

The paper analyses the battle of the female character maintain her identity as wife, mother and most importantly as a human being is explored in Shashi Deshpande's *That Silence*. The research paper is to examine Jaya's search for identity in *That Long silence* by Shashi Deshpande. The work concentrates on the theme of gender distinction and the dominance of masculine as well as the silence and submission that woman is forced to endure in society. A fascinating portrait of Jaya, a housewife from the middle-class educational background is frequently seen as being in quest for her own identity is painted by the author. Shashi Deshpande presents an extraordinary skilful portrayal of her own limitations and those her life

Keywords: quest for identity, alienation, women, husband, housewife, children.

Introduction

Shashi Deshpande is one of the most accomplished contemporary Indian women writers in English. Shashi Deshpande born in Dharwad, Karnataka in 1938. She is the second daughter of the famous dramatist 'Shriranga'. She received an English education at the protestant mission school in Karnataka. She was exposed to and influenced by British classical texts at a very young age. She studied Economics in Bombay and graduated in law from Bangalore. The very title of the novel, *That Long silence* given by Shashi Deshpande, suggests the failure to communicate and assert one's own self. In this novel, she uses first person narrative to unfold the mute tale of Jaya. The novel tells the story of an Indian housewife, Jaya, who maintains silence throughout her. Exactly like Adele king's review in her article, the inner perception of Jaya, a woman who "finds her normal routine so disrupted that for the first time she can look at her life and attempt to decide who she really is". The novel ends with her resolve to speak, to break her silence. Jaya is the in character *That Long Silence*.

Jaya is the educated woman in her middle years. The entire narrative centres on her life and the changes to which she has made an uncomfortable adjustment. This is not just one woman's narrative; rather, it is the story of countless women aspirations, sentiments, and feelings are being shattered by social expectations. Again, this is a tale of a couple communication breakdowns and how it ruined their relationship and family life. Jaya is an extremely intelligent youngster who excelled in her academics from an early age. Jaya is inquiring a lot about everything. Her grandmother was really angry with because of this tendency. She believed that girls should always be silent and obedient. They don't have any right to ask so many questions. Jaya's father was very fond of her daughter and he used to support her always to follow her dreams of being a successful writer. But, after his sudden death, Jaya became alone no one ever tried to understand her feelings and emotions. She

started suppressing her desires in order to satisfy the criteria of our society. In the subsequent time, she got married to Mohan. Mohan was a good man, but he was also a man and just like every other man in our society. So, he never bothered to ask about her views from small to big decisions. They shifted to Bombay and there Jaya gave birth to her son Rahul and Rati. Her world revolves around her family.

Mohan's employment abruptly suspended due to some claims. As a result, they left their opulent apartment and into the little house they had lived in at first. Then Mohan attempted to talk to Jaya about his problems, but she was at a loss for words and how to comfort him. She has neglected to communicate her thoughts because of her quiet throughout the years. However, Mohan reasoned she was acting in this way because he had lost his job. Jaya's quiet left spaces that communication begins to fill. After a significant altercation with Jaya one day, Mohan left the house and did not come back for a number of days. Both Jaya's physical and emotional health deteriorated. Without Mohan, she has no idea how to survive. She was merely a follower for all those years, and she never learned how to make her own decisions. Jaya reviewed her actions and went back inside her head. She then realised that by following others, she had only lived her life to the half. She was the mother and a wife, but she wasn't herself. She made that decision to end that lengthy silence and speak up after Ragul got lost. At last she received a telegram from Mohan that, he is fine and he will return home soon. The narrative highlights not just Jaya's remarkable change but also the struggles faced by a number of other women from various socio economic and age-related backgrounds. We shouldn't condemn her grandmother because the grandmother is traditional and favours male domination. The mother-in-law of Jaya also led a similar lifestyle while remaining silent about her violent husband's treatment of her and her basic rights. After Jaya and Mohan got married, she wanted to be physically and emotionally close to him. But Mohan never wanted to emotionally connected with his wife. More significantly, Jaya was unable to express her ideas and feelings to her husband. All of Jaya's wishes were submerged in some recess of her heart as a result of Mohan repeatedly imposing his wishes on her. The saddest aspect is that she simply let of all her wishes to be crushed and silently accept her change. Day by day, her voice started to disappear. She tried to write about her feelings and communication gaps between a couple because she was highly interested in her writings both before and after marriage. But her husband didn't give her any credit for her outstanding writing. Instead, he was advised not to write this kind of stories which are considered bad in our society.

Submissive nature of women

That Long Silence traces the passage of a woman through a maze of doubts and fears towards her affirmation. Looking at the man-woman relationship objectively, the novelist does not blame entirely the men for the subjugation of women. She sees how both men and women find it difficult to outgrow the images and roles assigned to them by the society. The novel deals with female quest for identity aptly the female protagonist longs for self-identity and self-dependence because she suffers from silence and lack of communication with her husband. Jaya wants to liberate herself in order to respect her own feelings and desires. She is able to evaluate the expectations of her life, and realizes the emotional frustration and trauma she has undergone over the years by being silent and submissive. She evolves into a woman with her own identity, have gained tremendous fortitude and confidence. On one hand, the novel teaches women to fight the silence and express themselves, and, on the other, it gives a message to the male community to try to understand women in the better way. The novelist feels that men and women can lead a happy, peaceful life by mutual understanding.

The novel is aptly called *That Long silence* and it depicts the plight of an educated Indian woman of our time. In a way the protagonist, Jaya, is like any modern woman who resents the husband's callousness and becomes the victim of circumstance. By implication her character represents the modern woman's ambivalent attitude towards marriage. Deshpande hints at the modern woman's refusal to comply with the wishes of the husband. Jaya is both individual and type and the reader is free to take her in any manner he likes.

Deshpande's fictional achievement is not supposed be seen in terms of her subscription or non-subscription to feminism, for a writer of some substance is committed to human situation and not necessarily to any ideology. She for herself chooses the path of conciliation without succumbing either to absolute acquiescence or to the temptations of embracing the feminist mould, which she would have with slight manipulation of her creative endeavour. However her insights and depth of perception ensure that her fictional creations rise above the stable ideological work , and go on to become serious reflections on the human

condition with particular focus on the perils and predicament of her sex in their world. It is the quest of Jaya for an authentic selfhood and finds through her rebellion against the patriarchal core of society.

Conclusion

It is an expression of the silence of the modern housewife. She realistically depicts the inner conflicts of Jaya and her quest for self or identity. The novel sustains its credibility from the fact that Jaya is a convent educated English speaking lady with a literary taste. It portrays the narrator's split self; the writer and the housewife. It is the representation of the modern Indian wife which has turned her into a non-entity. Shashi Deshpande says about the *That Long Silence* is almost entirely a woman's nevertheless, a book about the silencing of the one half of the humanity. There is sufficient proof that the silence will be broken at any time and articulation and assertion are only hinted at as the novel ends. Mohan leaves home due to his failure in his career and to avoid the situation of "two bullocks yoked together" which is indicative of a loveless couple. By the end of the novel, Jaya gets back to her destined role of being present to the happiness of the family and ready to subdue her emotions.

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