

## Dilemmas of Women in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*

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### Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to present the problems faced by women in India, especially their position in family and society through the work of Shashi Deshpandes *That Long Silence*. According to Indian tradition, wives are always subservient to their husbands and family. And is seen that a women's life is completely controlled either by her family or her husband. Women sacrifice their dreams and desires for the sake of their families. They are not allowed to share their thoughts or opinions on anything, all they can do is accept the decision taken by a man with great silence.

Jaya the protagonist of 'That Long Silence' represents the 90's women in our society. The title of the novel itself refers to the conditions of women in a patriarchal setup. Deshpande's novel directly deals with the dilemmas of housewives. The novel itself can be said to be an autobiographical novel of Deshpande. Deshpande has mainly focused on the life of middle-class educated women in the late 90s Indian society.

Keywords: Identity crises, Patriarchal society, Lack of freedom, Sacrifices of women.

Various challenges and problems have to be faced by women in our contemporary society, in which Discrimination and Marginalization can be considered the major challenge for women in India. In modern India role of women can be called phenomenal. It is worth mentioning the transition of women from the past to the present. Women who were once said to be masters of home arts are now said to be the forces that make the nation. There was a time women were only cooks and stewards in Indian society. The culture and traditions of India were considered ancient and great all over the world, but still in the patriarchal society women are considered marginalized.

India is considered one of the strongest and largest democratic countries around the world. Women who belong to lower and middle-class family suffers more than the women from higher class family. Sexual discrimination, a higher percentage of illiteracy, female infanticide, and dowry system are the major problems faced by women in Indian society. Most parents consider girls are always a burden to them and female infanticide is commonly practiced in Indian Society. The only reason for this cruelty is the realization of the expenses they have to spend on marriage in the future.

Deshpande is an undoubtedly prominent figure in Indian writers in English. Most of her works are based on a feminist perspective. Deshpande's novel portrays the indignity faced by the protagonist, who puts her life to liberate herself from her monocratic husband to have sovereign life. Most of her female protagonists are educated and exposed to western

ideas. That Long Silence' is the notable work of Deshpande. Through this work, she achieved much more recognition and popularity for its honest and realistic portrayal of educated Indian women in our Indian society. That Long Silence is not just a story but also a real-life portrayal of every middle class educated Indian woman.

Women played a vital role in the history of human development. *That Long Silence* gives us a detailed description of the life of a typical Indian woman. It is an exploration of the cultural construction of the female identity as a wife and mother. Here the protagonist Jaya itself is a good example of a victim of patriarchal society. Jaya is not only a female character but also the representation of mothers and wives who are suppressed or oppressed by the patriarchal society. The story evolved around the marital relationship of Jaya and her husband Mohan, their marital relationship was not a smooth one. We can see that the marital relationship between Jaya and Mohan gives us the psychological, emotional, and social impact of being a wife in a male-dominated society. Jaya is awoken in a quest for her own identity and self-exploration. Except for the self-assertion of Jaya, the novel also focused on the women's problems, dilemmas, disappointment, and frustrations. The strength of the novel also lies in the consideration of the male traditional bound of women like Kusum, Jeeja, Jaya's grandmother, Mohan's mother, and sister Vimala who opt for the positive recognition in life.

Jaya is a perfect representation of women. Her equivocation and conquest of mental turmoil show us a perfect picture of present women. Jaya was an educated woman who became a housewife. She was a girl full of dreams. But she cannot flourish by quelling her desire to spread her wings and scale and the sky of achievement. Jaya molded herself to become a good wife, obedient daughter-in-law, and also mother to Rahul and Rati. Jaya's life was stable and happy at the beginning of the story. But after that, a sudden disaster came into their life. when her husband was blamed for his involvement in financial malpractice and an

inquiry against him was set up. Here Deshpande has compared the husband and wife to a pair of bullocks yoked together which means two have to go together in the same direction, violation of which would result in pain. We see that the pair of bullocks go together under compulsion whereas, the marital relationship should be based on love and affection. The husband Mohan expects everything from his wife, but he was never showing any feelings or compassion toward his wife. Through Jaya's character, Shashi Deshpande has tried to portray the exact picture of a contemporary educated independent-minded Indian woman who undergoes a mental trauma as she cannot reconcile with her husband in ignorance of her ambition. And also she cannot forsake him simply, because a husband in our society is like a sheltering tree.

Jaya is entirely different from the female mythical characters. We cannot compare her with other female mythical characters. Jaya was an educated woman who wanted to be independent and progressive. And she regretfully accepts the fact that she had accepted everything about Mohan by binding herself to the consequence like Gandhari and was also ashamed of her ignorance and inaction. There were so many people around Jaya, but she lived like an alienated person. Because she lived as a person who is confined to the four walls of the house. She is not able to find out whether she lives for herself or for her family. She is taken for granted by everyone in the family. The fiction depicts the life of Jaya at the level of silence and the unconscious. The married life of Jaya and Mohan is portrayed in a very sensitive and realistic dramatization manner. The novel *That Long Silence* brings us the identity crisis faced by middle-class married women in the patriarchal Indian setup. Through the character of Jaya, the author shows how women are just mere objects. Here the women's identity has always been suppressed and their master changes from father to husband after their marriage. Here Jaya suffers in silence for the sake of society and family. The duty allotted to women is to give birth to the child, take care of the child and their husbands

parents, washcloths, clean the house, entertain husbands in bed, etc. They don't have any right to do anything for their sake of them. They are born to serve others.

Here the character of Jaya and Mohan portrait as the two people in a patriarchal society. We can also see the patriarchal culture and its nature all over the story. The marital relationship between Jaya and Mohan is extremely complicated. Here Jaya was compelled to keep her silence for long seventeen years. She also adopted a socio- psychic nature to her life. As we know that in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of India, the male members of the family gets all sorts of comforts and excuses, but the female members have to sacrifice their life for the sake of the family and its happiness. She keeps her life to be silent and also suppressed her feelings emotions and desires. If gender discrimination provides in a family environment, the love becomes mechanical and artificial. Jaya kept silent for a long period of time. After that, she could break her silence after the support of Kamath but she decided to keep silent and surrender. Because she knows that violence is not a solution for all problems and she continued her silence after that. Women writers of India discuss many women issues in their life in a patriarchal family setup. Because these writers believe that writing is a weapon to break the tradition of patriarchal society.

As we know that Deshpande's women characters are not undereducated and underprivileged women. The women characters of Deshpande are having a good education and good financial status in society. Here the character of Jaya is also an educated woman who was brought up in a well-to-do family. But in the middle part of the story, we felt like Jaya is suppressed by her husband Mohan. She molded herself to the other's comfort zone. Here the name Jaya means victory. This name had been given by her father. But after the marriage to Mohan, he changed her name to Suhasini from the marriage day itself. The name Suhasini means smiling beautifully. And she becomes a new woman with refreshed identity.

She was oppressed by her husband also. She was also an obedient daughter-in-law to the family of Mohan and a caring and loving mother to Rahul and Rathi. There the identity of Jaya was the wife to Mohan and also mother to Rahul and Rathi. She is not treated as an individual. She lacks her own identity in her life.

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* is a very complex novel. Here the name Jaya symbolizes victory. She was an educated woman who finds herself suppressed in her Married life. Mohan, Jayas husband is an engineer who gives more importance to money. For the long seventeen years, Jaya kept silent. She manages to suppress her creativity. She molded herself to become a good wife than a good writer. Here Jaya plays the role of an affectionate mother and dutiful wife to Mohan and obedient daughter-in-law to Mohan's family. Jaya has lost her own identity in the story. She was in search of her own identity throughout the story. The other characters in the story except for Jayas father and Kamath never give any importance to Jaya and they never considered her as an individual. She is only recognized as the wife of Mohan.

It means she has no identity of her own. This is common to every woman in India because their identity or address is always the wife of (w/o) or daughters of (d/o) like that and they have no their own identity or address. Jaya is the representation of a middle class educated woman in 1990s India. She was in search of her identity throughout the novel. The novelist is focused more on the patriarchal set up which became the case for silencing women in India during the 1990s. In the quest for identity, Jaya is trapped in dilemma. She is struggling to express her emotions in a male-dominated society and she lacks her own freedom. Deshpande's *That Long Silence* is a simple yet complex novel in post-colonial literature. It brings a clear picture of dilemmas faced by middle-class married women in the patriarchal Indian setup. This novel clearly shows how women become just an object through the character Jaya. Here Jaya is considered only as an object without any feelings and

emotions like others, but she should take the responsibility for everyone. Women's identity in Indian society is only recognized by her father's name or husband's name. They don't have any individuality as their own personality. Women are always considered as the second sex in family and society.

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