



## MAN WOMAN RELATIONSHIP IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *THAT LONG SILENCE*

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Indian Writing has been entered a new phase in finding the New woman, a dissatisfied woman with the cultural and sexual roles assigned by the patriarchal society. The new woman attempts to rebel against the cultural and social oppressions. On the other hand she cannot reject the cultural social background in total. The conflict between tradition and modernity has been formed in the minds of the new woman and gradually she moves towards the modernity. Shashi Deshpande has treated this conflict in her novels and has created her protagonists at the cross roads. The women in Shashi Deshpande suffer to overcome the cultural barriers on the way to 'self-identity'. They are mostly urban educated middle class women, who are in search of their 'total personality' that is fragmented in the shattered images of various roles in family and society.

Shashi Deshpande deals with man woman relationship with the parameters of family and the contemporary social set-up. She has presented the real picture of the Indian orthodox family in her novels. The modern education has given the Western ideas to the women but at the same time they are not in a position to come out of the barriers of tradition.

In *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande presents the educated but traditional woman Jaya. In the case of Jaya, the choice of her marriage and career are done by others. Jaya stands in a critical situation where they find it essential to reflect on their own past. This reflection or self-analysis gives them now 'light' to overcome the 'darkness' and 'silence'. The novel presents the different conflicts faced by the New Indian woman and the answers they find at last in redefining the 'Identity'. The novel presents the self analysis of the protagonists as the author implies the first person narration in them.

In *That Long Silence* Jaya has been deserted by her husband in the critical situation and she is left all alone to analyse her problems in career and in family. She is a typical Indian housewife, and lovable mother. Jaya is a modern woman **rooted in tradition**, whereas her husband, Mohan, is a traditionalist rooted in customs. The difference between their outlooks is so great that they fail, repeatedly, to understand each other.

In this novel, Deshpande presents a woman who is not revolting tradition but going along the current, accepting the role given by the society. She reconciles with her lot. But she never finds a solution to her inner tortures. She endures her turmoil in silence. She wants to be a traditional wife leaning towards the wish of husband. She has molded herself to match the expectations of her husband. But she wants to break her silence with her husband at last. She decides to be herself after her self-assertion in the Dadar flat. In her analysis her findings about her past life bewilders her as she has spent her life fully to do trivial things of household works.

It is not only her own silence that Deshpande is highlighting but the silence of each and every character in the novel from different Strata of society. The novel describes the turmoil of the previous generation women too. There is a detailed picture of the silent endurance of Mohan's mother. Deshpande describes the despair and resignation of women like Mohan's mother, Jaya's servant. Jaya has mentally disturbed about her cousin Kusum. It also deals with Mohan's silence, which is the silence of a man who speaks but can find no one to listen to him.

Jaya has been a bird with wings and know how to fly but unable to use the wings in the sky. She is aware of her talents but cannot project it to ensure the happiness in the family by adjusting her 'self' to the wish of Mohan. She always remains silent, which indicates that the traditional roles of women still have primacy over all the newly acquired professional roles.

Women in India suffer in silent accepting their destiny. They never attempt to overcome the boundaries laid by the culture. The character of Mohan's mother is the typical example of a tradition wife. When Jaya shows her resistance in the beginning of her marriage, Mohan says the life style of his mother and the repeated words of Mohan and his sisters make Jaya to be in silent like her mother-in-law.

Jaya has been named by her father as 'Jaya' to mean 'victory'. He expected Jaya would get a foreign degree or do something great. But after his death, Jaya's life has met a tragic turning point where she has turned into an ordinary girl accepting her fortunes in the marriage. She has accepted Mohan because she has no reasons to reject. Mohan married her because she knew English. Thus the marriage of them is customary as it is the case of many Indian women. They have been united not of love but of fate. Women are not allowed to choose her life and this is a violation of culture to do so.



At the very outset the problem of identity crisis comes to the fore in *That Long Silence*. The dilemma faced by the protagonist is highly intriguing when she says the words come to her freely but “Self revelation is a cruel process”. For her “the real ‘you’ never emerges”<sup>1</sup>.

It is customary in Maharashtra to change the name of the bride when she gets married, which means a change of identity. One is identified by their name and changing that name means changing the identity. Mohan wants to rename her as Suhashini meaning a lovable woman. He wants her to be a ‘loving wife and caring mother’ not of a ‘revolting woman’. He wants her to be Suhashini not Jaya. But Jaya never accepts this proposal to change her name. This shows her resistance to maintain her identity.

Even when she faces the dilemma of being a homemaker devoted to her husband and being a writer, she asserts herself by saying that she was the one who took decision to stop with the two children. The indifference shown by her husband to her was a recurring process he never bothers to show interest in anything, which is of no concern to him. Though they are married for seventeen years with two children they ought to have understood couple for the outsiders. But in reality they were different persons. Her frustration at being neglected is reflected when she says, “Reconciled to failure?” But she quickly says, “That seems cruel, but it is true”<sup>2</sup>.

Mohan, the husband of Jaya has least concern for the family. But he poses himself or believes that he is the one ideal husband. He wants to give his children what he did not get as a child. He is clear about himself. “He was a dutiful son, he is a dutiful father, husband, brother” Jaya gets frustrated when he says, “It was for you and the children that I did this. I wanted you to have a good life. I wanted the children to have all those things I never had”<sup>3</sup>. Jaya is rather honest and she could not persist the hypocrisy shown by her husband. For anything that happens, which is good the credit is taken by him but if some harm happens Jaya is blamed for that. Jaya gets angry.

Jaya, can be considered as a mouth piece of Shashi Deshpande herself. The way of thinking and opinions of Jaya is indisputably that of Deshpande. This novel also teaches the reader that the real empowerment comes from our inner will and the capacity to reach beyond restricted and guarded forts. She insists on the self assertion to reach the self identity. Breaking away from the family is not the way of finding solutions. Knowing themselves will provide the permanent solution. She successfully makes her readers realize that all path-breaking discoveries are the outcome of faith, which helps, mankind like a ladder to reach the zenith. The journey to wider horizons requires an innovative effort. What she has said in *That Long Silence* is true of all times in the history of mankind.

The entire novel brings out the stale married life in a middle class home and Deshpande tells the story from the point of view of a wife. The women in Mohan’s family were so definite about their roles and duties. But Jaya has no clear cut idea about her role in that family. Her new life shows her duties as a dutiful wife in the orthodox family. She has not given any significant role in the family. Her only duty is to do the wish of her husband. She has learnt to tell the answer what ‘he’ expects to hear. She never opens her heart to him. She has maintained total silence even in her writing career.

Concerned only about the tastes and interests of Mohan, Jaya has lost her authenticity as a human being. She has shaped herself to the wishes of Mohan. Mohan kept her away from her likings. She was forced by Mohan to give up the job she wanted to take, the baby she wanted to adopt and the anti-price campaign she had wanted to take part in. Jaya’s journey through the rough road of her nuptial life, she learns at last: “no questions, no retorts: only silence”<sup>4</sup>. In accepting everything mutely, she thinks she resembles Sita or Draupadi. In her view, the truth is that it was Mohan, who had a clear idea of what he wanted; the kind of life he wanted to lead, the kind of home he would live in, and I went along with him”<sup>5</sup>. Woman should get rid of the fear on her part that allows the oppression to continue. It is not only man who subjugates woman. She is also responsible for her own predicament and should struggle to achieve her own identity. Adjustment should be made but not a servile one. “The realization that she can have her own way - yathecchasi tatha kuru - gives a new confidence to Jaya. This is her emancipation”<sup>6</sup>.

Deshpande’s Woman- centered novels and short stories give us a psychological insight into the working of a woman’s mind. Ever since Jaya got married, she has done nothing but wait.

Waiting for Mohan to come home, waiting for children to be born, for them to start school, waiting for them to come home, waiting for the milk, the servant, the lunch carrier man... This mechanical process of waiting fills her life with existential nothingness. Related to the theme of nothingness is the existential theme of death. Her monotonous, boring and isolated days made her to realize this,



Shashi Deshpande's novels contain the seed of definite quest for a true and authentic self. By making her heroines undergo stages of self-introspection and self-reflection Deshpande makes them evolve themselves into more liberated individuals that what their gender of culture have sanctioned.

The self-quest of these women is triggered off by some crisis in their lives. These women strive heroically and overcome their cultural conditioning and the barriers created by society in matters of tradition and manners. They finally emerge as free, autonomous individuals, no longer content to be led but desirous of taking a lead. Rather than falling into Western Feminist slot, these strengthened Indian women, work out their own individual paths towards liberation and in the process discover new facets to their selves which had been latent in them. In this discovery of selves and consequent self- fulfillment, these women pave the way for a better understanding of themselves as well as others. In charting the course of such unconventional women, Mrs. Deshpande seems to make an obvious plea that traditional society must re- mould itself in order to accept these emerging new women.

#### **REFERENCE**

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