

THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THAT LONG SILENCE : A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

To put it plainly, it can be said that Shashi Deshpande has introduced women from every section of the society, in her novel That Long Silence. She has vividly depicted these characters as they are found in real society. Through their characters, Deshpande has depicted the marginal condition of these women. They face oppression, violence, threatening and so forth in their own families.

The passivity on behalf of the women and their succumbing to the traditional jobs of wife, mother, and so forth were similarly responsible for their subjugation. Women should not victimize themselves, they should attempt to eradicate the silence and they should attempt to give voice to their inner conflicts. Silence is an image of oppression, a characteristic of the inferior condition while discourse signifies self-expression and liberation. The current paper highlights the representation of women in Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence.

KEYWORDS:

Women, Silence, Society, Subjugation, Victimise, Traditional Society, Patriarchal Society, Wife, Mother,

INTRODUCTION

That Long Silence is the novel in which Shashi Deshpande has tried to depict the marginalized condition and the miserable plight of women in a traditional society. Through the character of Jaya, who is likewise the protagonist of the novel, the novelist has tried to delineate the women's endeavors to eradicate the silence and to give voice to their inner conflicts and injuries, with which the women are destined to live since ages.

Sahitya Akademi and Padam Shree Award winner, Shashi Deshpande is an astounding Indian woman writer writing in English. Brought into the world in Dharwad, Karnataka, she is the little girl of a renowned dramatist and Sanskrit researcher.

Her works include the novels: The Dark Holds No Terrors (1980), If I Die Today (1982), Roots and Shadows (1983), That Long Silence (1988), The Binding Vine (1993), Come Up and Be Dead (1993), A Matter of Time (1996), Small Remedies (2000), Moving On (2004), In the Country of Deceit (2008); short-story collections: The Legacy and Other Stories (1971), It Was Dark (1986), It Was Nightingale (1986), The Miracle and The Intrusion and Other Stories (1993), The Stone Women (2000); Children's books: The Hidden Treasure (1980), The Only Witness (1982), A Summer Adventure (1983), The Narayanpur Incident (1992).

Most of her works mirror the inner conflict of her women protagonists. She writes about the middle-class, instructed women, who are mostly in conflict with the traditional qualities pervasive in Indian society.

The aim of the current paper is to investigate the women characters in Shashi Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence* including the critique of quest for identity by the protagonist Jaya. The novel indicates that the plight of women is miserable in a patriarchal society, regardless of whether they belong to the upper sections of society or they are from the lower layers of society.

The characters like Jaya, Mukta, Jeeja, Manda and so forth used to lead a life of subjugation. They are conditioned by the society to be in the strict boundaries of mother, girl, wife and so on. Their lives have no significance if they can't play out these jobs of wife or mother impeccably.

The expression "silence" has been utilized symbolically in this novel. The inaction or passivity while living in a patriarchal society is named equivalent to silence in this novel. As Geetanjali Singh Chanda in her critical work *Indian Women in the Place of Fiction* opines:

In Shashi Deshpande's novels, womanly silence is regularly considered to be a silencing of women by patriarchy. In *That Long Silence*, particularly, Jaya's silence and her writing are linked. In the biography she needs to submit to a newspaper she pares herself down to the barebones of "I was conceived. My dad died when I was fifteen. I got married to Mohan. I have two children and I did not let a third alive." In literary terms this would be the plot of her life. It doesn't at all reveal what her identity is. (2009, p. 45)

The female writers ought not write what the patriarchal society needs them to write, rather they ought to write about the inner injury of female

layers of the society, who are denied all out independence and equality and they have no identity of their own. Indira Nityanandam notices:

Jaya in *That Long Silence* endeavors to end not just her own silence however that of women, especially women writers, down the ages. A desire for identity and self-expression prods the creative writer yet Jaya finds it being covered by her significant other's reactions. (2010, p. 45)

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THAT LONG SILENCE

The novel *That Long Silence* is the story of Jaya, the protagonist, who is leading the roles of wife and mother impeccably. After the seventeen years of her marriage, she needs to confront a fiasco. Her better half is trapped in the malpractice of funds at his office and their marital life comes to a stop. They need to shift to the Dadar flat gifted to her by her uncle. Spending a few days at that level, Jaya introspects her married life with Mohan, while the children are away with some relative.

For a period of seventeen years, Jaya has been leading a life of routine performing the roles of wife and mother, caring and handling her family works. She has never shown her feelings towards others: A woman can never be irate; she must be neurotic, hysterical, baffled. There is no space for outrage in my life, no space for despair, either. There's just request and routine – today I need to wash the bed covers; tomorrow, scour the

restrooms; the following day, clean the fridge . . . (Deshpande, 1989, pp. 147-148)

An ideal wife has live according to the wishes of her significant other. The society wants her to be an equivalent accomplice in the spouse's deeds. She is considered ideal if she doesn't question her better half, rather she does what he needs. I remember now that he had accepted I would go with him, had underestimated my acquiescence in his arrangements. So had I. Sita following her better half into exile, Savitri dogging Death to reclaim her significant other, Draupadi stoically sharing her significant other's travails . . . (Deshpande, 1989, p. 11)

Jaya herself believes what the society needs her to believe. She personally acts passively and doesn't have any desire to act oppositely. She personally doesn't have the foggiest idea what kind of woman has she become, as Simone de Beauvoir, an eminent feminist appropriately says, "Marriage oppresses and subjugates women and it drives her to „aimless days indefinitely rehashed, life that slips away delicately towards death without questioning its purpose“ (2017, p. 500)".

Jaya has no reason in her life. Whenever she has tried to write something and tried to become a story writer, her story shows up in a magazine and it gets the first prize. However, Mohan, her better half goes against her writing, and she must be satisfied by writing short gossip in a magazine segment. She cannot become a serious writer, because of her reliance upon her better half and the passivity to surrender herself to the family

wishes. She becomes what Mohan needs her to be. As Beauvoir expresses, "a wife is what her husband makes her" (2017, p. 484). Her aim of becoming an ideal wife prevents her from rebelling:

If Gandhari, who gauzed her eyes to become blind like her better half, could be called an ideal wife, I was an ideal wife as well. I wrapped my eyes tightly. I didn't have any desire to know anything (Deshpande, 1989, p. 61). She is internalized by her in-laws that the spouse is a sheltering tree and without this tree one feels absolutely unprotected, "Remember, Jaya, a husband is a sheltering tree."

At her Dadar flat, Jaya feels that she has become almost a stereotypical woman, having every one of the feminine qualities, who is not equipped for doing any work without male assistance:

I'm terrified of cockroaches, lizards, apprehensive with regards to electrical devices, miserable at technical matters, sluggish with regards to accounting . . . almost the generalization of a woman: apprehensive, incompetent, needing male assistance and support (Deshpande, 1989, p. 76).

Now at Dadar level, Jaya introspects her life and feels that she has become what she would rather not become. Her dad names her – Jaya, Jaya for victory. Rather, she has shaped herself according to the wishes of her family, in-laws and society. She has modified herself as the society and the family needs. Now she thinks that such kind of modification is not possible:

What have I achieved by this writing? The idea happens to me again as I take a gander at the flawless pile of papers. Indeed, I've achieved this I'm not afraid any more. The panic has gone. I'm Mohan's wife, I had thought, and remove the bits of me that had would not be Mohan's wife. Now I know that kind of fragmentation is not possible (Deshpande, 1989, p. 191).

In this manner, Jaya, toward the finish of the novel, realizes that killing of one's own identity is not possible. Finally, she feels convinced that she should end her silence and should cause him to believe that he ought to acknowledge her as she is.

Through the characters of Jeeja, Tara, Manda, Kusum, Mukta, Vanitamami, Mohan's mom, his sister Vimala, Aiji, Shashi Deshpande has tried to reveal the plight of the women in traditional society. Vimala, Mohan's sister dies of "ovarian growth with metastases in the lungs", bleeding herself to death in silence. She doesn't educate anybody concerning her concern, not even to her relative as she knows that it would be futile and "sank into a trance like state and died seven days after the fact, her silence intact" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 39).

Mohan's mom likewise died while trying to cut short her undesirable child. Her demonstration is considered as "despicable" by Vimala, Mohan's sister who just knows about it. Her mom used to make her living by cooking for wedding feasts. Her dad was a boozier who used to beat his wife oftentimes.

Mohan enlightens Jaya concerning an incident when his dad kicked the plate of rice away when he observed that chutney had not been served to him. He strolled off, though in the middle of the night his mom arranged new chutney for him by borrowing the ingredients from a neighbor. Mohan considered her mom a "intense" woman as she never raised her voice against her dad.

Vanitamami, maternal auntie of Jaya, is a fruitless woman, who performs diets and pujas with the goal that she might get a child. Yet, she developed an ovarian disease. Hoping that she would get a kid, she did not let herself worked. Jaya thinks ironically: "Vanitamami's uterus, having failed in its life-bearing design, was finally carrying death" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 106).

DISCUSSION

Jeeja is the assistance maid of Jaya. Her better half was a boozier who much of the time used to beat her. Then, at that point, he carried another woman to his home as a mistress, however Jeeja did not protest as she was unable to give him a child. After some time, he and his mistress died, leaving a little girl and a child for Jeeja to bring up that Jeeja acknowledge willingly. Her child is additionally like his dad, to whom Tara, her girl in-law curses, however Jeeja quiets her down by saying: "Stop that, don't neglect, he keeps the Kumkum on your brow. What is a woman without that?" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 53).

Jeeja is professional naturally, substantiates herself a decent worker and knows her motivation of living: "She knew what her motivation in life was – it was to continue living. Enduring was important for it thus she persevered through all that she needed to" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 51).

Jaya notices "no indignation behind her silence" because she thinks her better half had done a right thing by marrying another woman as she failed in giving him any children. Traditional society causes the women to realize that they are unfortunate if they are fruitless and they need to acknowledge their destiny for what it's worth. They are not provided medical therapy and reviled for not having children. This attitude of society towards the women is a similar whether they belong to the upper class or lower layers of the society.

Manda, the excellent girl of Jeeja and girl of Tara, "went to class in the morning, gathered cash for the milk in the afternoon, delivered the milk, remained in the line for the rations, for lamp fuel, and aided Jeeja on her holidays, briskly scrubbing the vessels in a spoof of her grandma's actions" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 53).

In spite of doing this multitude of works, being a girl she is undesirable child, shares misery along with her mom and grandma. Her plight makes Jaya think about infanticides done centuries prior: "Where was it I had perused a record of how child girls were done to death a century or so back? They were, I had perused with dismay, buried alive, killed in the room they were brought into the world in; and immediately from that point

forward, a fire was lit on the spot – to purify the spot, they said.. However, Jaya thinks it "more merciful, that swift ending of the distress for the last time, than this prolonging of it for a really long time" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 53).

Nayana is likewise an assistance mate of Jaya. At the youthful age, she must be pregnant again and again in the desire for getting a male child. She had two girls and her two children were died at the time of their birth. She reviles her karma for not getting a male child. This time she is confident that it will be a child. It is evident from her condition that in a traditional society, the women who fail to give birth to a male child are taken steps to be tossed out of their homes. She says to Jaya, "He [her husband] . . . he says he'll toss me out if I have another little girl", yet she strikingly challenges him, "Just you dare. . . Allow me to see your mental fortitude." (Deshpande, 1989, p. 28).

It is not that main the women of lower classes or helpless sections of society have auxiliary or marginal position in society, however the women belonging to the upper middle class like Kusum or Mukta likewise need to confront a similar subordinate status in society. Kusum, a frantic cousin of Jaya, is abandoned by her better half. Jaya keeps her along with her for quite a while despite the objections by her mom, siblings and spouse.

After some time, her sibling removes her to their home. In any case, she commits suicide by jumping into a dry well one day before her better half needs to come to take her. Jaya is stunned when her mom (Ai) says, ". . .

it was something worth being thankful for in a manner. She was of no utilization to anybody after she went off the deep end, nobody required her" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 22).

As though a woman has no life of her own? Is she just a thing usable for other people and when her usability diminishes or expires, she is a waste thing which can be disposed of?

Woman who dies before the death of her better half, is considered "honored", however who is widowed, needs to have a miserable existence.

Jaya's grandma confined herself to a room, diminished her uncovered requirements and dozed on the ground, while Mohan's mother in her photo "resembles some other woman of her time . . . the colossal kumkum on her temple blotting out everything in that face yet the "favored woman who died with her significant other yet living" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 38).

Jaya surprises at her neighbor, Mukta's diets, as they have lost their motivation – the avoidance of widowhood.

CONCLUSION

To put it plainly, it can be said that Shashi Deshpande has introduced women from every section of the society, in her novel *That Long Silence*. She has vividly depicted these characters as they are found in real society. Through their characters, Deshpande has depicted the marginal condition of these women. They face oppression, violence, threatening and so forth in their own families.

According to the novelist, the women have a subordinated position, regardless of whether they belong to high status families or they are from helpless sections of the society. They have been marginalized, whether or not they are taught. The novelist recommends that the women should not victimize themselves; they should attempt to raise their voice against sex discrimination, as Jaya does as such by writing about her life in a book.

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