

THE SENSE OF FULFILLMENT IN THE SHASHI DESHPANDE'S WORK "THAT LONG SILENCE".

Abstract: This research article meticulously delves us into the perspective of feminist theory which explores the multifaceted challenges and sense of fulfilment encountered by middle class women within the framework of patriarchal society, in Shashi Deshpande's "That long Silence". The paper comprehensively explores and interprets what feminism truly signifies during 1988 that long silence work in the Indian context. The novel is set to explore the saturation of women in society through the character and protagonist of the novel "Jaya" who navigates the quiet suffering and loss of identity that come from conforming to restrictive gender roles in the society. This is the story of the journey of a girl Jaya from her childhood to her adulthood who faced a load of problems, suppression and conventions beliefs of her grandmother's advice. The narrator has skilfully crafted the story, how her problems still continued from her being a girl and after being mother of two children and wife of Mohan. She was mechanized and tied up with the social convections being quiet all her life till the end. Finally, she broke her "That long silence" to stand against her husband Mohan for his malpractices in the business, her next phase of her life she achieves fulfilment not merely by speaking out, but by embracing a crucial process of internal self-conscience by looking at her whole life with a new ray of hope. Her fulfilment, therefore properly worked through a multilayered journey that integrates her fragmented identity, redefines her role within her marriage and mostly importantly asserts writing. The current paper is an effort to draw attention to the shift of Indian women's feminine characteristics from sense of surrender to sense of fulfilment by exploring how Jaya discovers her personal life oppressed and wants to rebel against the conditions and gives us a remarkably accomplished representation of a women trying to wipe out a long silence from her life, triumphant at the end.

Keywords: sense of fulfilment, that long silence, silent wife, transformed women.

Shashi Deshpande is an Indian eminent and distinguished novelist and short story writer known for exploring the inner lives and struggles of modern Indian women in society. Over a career spanning more than two decades she has become a powerful voice for the inner lives of middle-class Indian women which employs a feminist perspective delves into themes of identity, family, marriage and personal freedom, self-discovery within a patriarchal society. Shashi Deshpande has received several prestigious awards for her contributions to the literature. She won honoured with the Sahitya academy award in 1990 for her novel "That Long Silence". In addition to her fictional work for children's book and a collection of essays entitled writing from the Margin and other Essays. She also used her public platform to voice her political convictions most notably in 2015 when she returned her Sahitya Academy award to protest the institutions silence on the growing intolerance in India. In recognition of her overall literary achievements, the government of India awarded her the Padma Shri, the Nation's fourth highest civilian award in 2009. Some critics have suggested that her male characters are less developed than her female protagonists. In a 1987 interview with Vanamala Vishwanathan, Shashi Deshpande responded to this criticism by noting that "The female Tolstoy is yet to come".

The story entitled as "that long silence", historically and socially the silence of the women has been enforced and exploited by the patriarchal structures. Often told to be "seen and not heard", women are marginalized in both the public and private life supressing their voices and contributions. This silence served to maintain the social convections and practiced in the society. Further the practice of silence manifests in various ways from overt abuse, harassment, depression, mood swings, anxiety, and stress related illnesses more subtle invalidation of women's mental and physical stage. Women's silence is not a passive stage but a coping mechanism for survival within her marriage. The lines quoted by the protagonist

“A woman can never be angry ; she can only be neurotic, hysterical, frustrated,”. (147)

In many societies of Indian family women are conditioned to self-silence to maintain peace, avoid conflicts and conform to prescribed gender roles. In this novel we can see the protagonist Jaya serves as a powerful symbol for the enforced and internalized silence of women in patriarchal societies. She was abandoned her ambition to write meaningful stories instead by producing light and approving content, this conformity leads to a deep silent dissatisfaction. Their marriage was just a puppet show both got married and Jaya was bound by all the convictions of typical Indian wife like to be silent, workaholic and looking after her husband and family which totally changed her life lost her own ambitious, identity, breakdown communication with her husband Mohan where she feels unheard using the metaphor “two bullocks yoked together” analogy to describe their fundamental inability to connect the relationship which becomes source of humiliation, emotional void and isolation. Her feeling of being trapped in a life without personal autonomy. Similarly plights of other women like her maid Jeeja and cousin Kusum which act as painful reflections of a systemic problem. Jaya’s journey is one of internal realization as she eventually confronts this long silence recognizing that she must reclaim her voice and identity to break free from the invisible chains of her subdued existence.

The methodology used here is descriptive and analytical method. It focuses on feminist theories as Virginia Woolf articulates in her essay *A Room’s of One’s Own* that women have been historically excluded from literary tradition and intellectual life due to a lack of material resources, not because lack of talent. A woman writer needs her space, free from domestic duties and distractions to create an art. Adding a valid point she further explains that women needed a stable income to achieve the freedom necessary for intellectual and artistic pursuits. She says “A Woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction”. Here Jaya married and initially sacrifices her creativity to play a role of Indian wife and was completely dependent on her husband for financial support. Finally, Jaya resist a sudden confrontational outburst but a quiet profound inner shift. The novel ends with her ready to break her silence and articulate not to win an argument, but to genuinely communicate and restore in harmony.

The central female character of the novel “That Long Silence” named Jaya which means victory where her progressive father considered always as she was a writer with her own identity as Jaya after changing the name in husbands house Suhasini means soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman. She suppresses her true self to become the obeying wife for her husband. Mohan symbolizing the subjugation of her identity and marriage has become a central symbol of her subjugation. By adopting a new name and new family she accepts a new patriarchal identity defined by her roles as obedient daughter, submissive wife and dotting mother. Her earlier intellectual ambitions as a writer are sidelined to maintain domestic peace and please her husband Mohan. This act represents the silencing of her creative and intellectual self for the sake of conformation to societal expectations. Mohan Mold her to agreeable version of herself that aligns with his traditional expectations of a typical Indian wife. This act is symbolically mentioned as women’s loss of selfhood in marriage, where her inherent identity is erased and replaced with one that serves as patriarchal desires.

Jaya’s initial silence profoundly shaped by the advice received from her grandmother, Ajji and other female relatives of her family was malicious, but born out of her own lifetime of compromise. Living in Indian society where a woman’s value is tied to her domesticity because she should be prepared for next stage of her life called marriage by training her in cooking, cleaning and household chores. She was instructed on the importance of staying quiet and accommodating in her marriage life. Shashi Deshpande shows that it is not just Jaya’s struggle but a cycle that affects all the women in her family and society. Her mother also silently endures a difficulty faced in the marriage, her cousin

Kusum and neighbour Mukta are victims of the same unspoken convention traditions. This inherited wisdom passed down through generations of women living within a patriarchal system it is the source of Jaya's initial silence and conformity. An educated middle class Indian woman, as she confronts the decades of unspoken feelings and societal pressures that have defined her life.

The protagonist Jaya's ultimate awakening is the turning point in her introspective during a crisis in her husband's career. For a decade Jaya had meticulously adhered to the society and her marriage dictated exchanging her intellectual more assertive. This bargain rooted in generational advice from female assertiveness, led to a pervasive emotional suppression where Jaya stifled her voice, her desire and her real identity to maintain the peace. However, with Mohan's professional and moral collapse following allegations of malpractice that masked the emotional barrenness of their relationship. This rupture acts her to profound self-reflection a journey that sees her return to her long-abandoned passion for writing. Jaya begins to find her voice again as Mohan grows increasingly unhappy interpreting her re-emergence as a threat to his masculinity especially at a moment when his own life is in turmoil. Her newfound career as a writer is a symbol of her reclaimed selfhood and it is not with support but with his disapproval highlighting how their marriage was predicated on her subservience rather than her empowerment. This resistance from Mohan forces Jaya to confront the true cost of her emotional suppression and the painful realization that her long silence was not merely imposed upon her, but was an act of complicity in her own marginalization .

Jaya's slow burn rebellion while she was not always loud or outwardly defiant. The profound act of resistance against the invisible expectations that sought to cage her mind and spirit. She had spent a lifetime internalizing the quiet rules of womanhood, a silent curriculum of sacrifice that dictated her existence from a young age. It was a world where women were expected to be accommodating their identities subsumed by their roles as daughters, wives and mother while their personal desires were deemed a luxury to be forfeited. However, the silent suffering could not last long. A flicker of rebellion was ignited in her youth, as an act of defiance that become a touchstone for further resistance. Recalling her courageous decisions to defend her cousin Kusum against societal pressure, Jaya remembered how she had placed her family loyalty above the community's judgement. Her ultimate act of resistance was not a public declaration but a deeply positive wish of her that decision to write again. By reclaiming her identity as a writer and it defines her womanhood. This was a private rebellion against her orthodox society. Pen became a best tool for her to express her feelings. Her voice speaks through her own complex story from the long years of suppression. The writing profession made her to be independent women and filled the strength and confident in her life. This act of self-realization became her ultimate turning point of her quiet struggles into a powerful and independent women.

The writer beautifully webbed Jaya's journey as a sense of fulfilment through the central theme, defining by a protracted and painful struggle against patriarchal constraints and self-imposed limitations. Being an educated women with a passion for writing, Jaya initially found a form of personal expression and potential self-realization in her creative pursuits even publishing stories in magazines. However, this sense of fulfilment by professional identity, independent was gradually stifled by her marriage to Mohan and the societal expectations of an "Ideal wife". The novels core conflict lies in between Jaya's creative aspirations and the domesticity she is forced to embrace. Her husband's disapproval of her writing particularly when it touched on their own marital dynamics led her to abandon her literacy career effectively silencing her voice and her potential for professional fulfilment. For seventeen long years she suppressed her true self and her dreams to maintain the calm and happy married life. Her work became thankless repetitive labour of a housewife, a role she performed with devotion but which left her with a growing sense of hollowness and dissatisfaction. The incident that

eventually shatters her silence her husband's corruption scandal forces her into introspection causing her to re-examine her life and question the choices she made. It is only in this moment of upheaval that Jaya begins to recognise her own complicity in her unfulfillment. A key turning point is her recollection of a friend's advice to take herself seriously and work if she wanted to be taken seriously. Jaya finds a renewed path to sense of fulfilment not by escaping her family, but by reclaiming her identity through writing. She chooses to break her silence forever using her writing as a tool for self-discovery and assertion. Finally, transformation her mute suffering into revolting thinking to gain her own identity and achieve a sense of purpose that was denied to her for so long. This final act of self-assertion through her own symbolizes her journey from a life of passive submission to one of empowered self-realization.

In conclusion, Jaya's transformation journey that long silence ultimately offers a powerful and resonant message for modern women, real sense of fulfilment is found not to run away from the hurdles, but in confronting them head-on. After years of suppressed aspirations and internal conflicts, the crisis in her life acts as a catalyst, forcing her to abandon her self-imposed silence and reclaim her voice. The path of fulfilment is realised not through grand gestures or escaping her domestic life, but by making a conscious decision to value her own work and identity. She transforms her passive suffering into active introspection and self-assertion in her writing. This narrative strongly suggests that we as modern women should never escape from challenges that attempt to diminish our professional or personal identities. Jaya's story serves as a timeless reminder that authentic self-realization requires us to navigate and overcome societal and personal obstacles with resilience ensuring our voices are heard and our passions pursued, thereby achieving a genuine and lasting sense of fulfilment on our own terms.

Reference

Deshpande, Shashi. *That Long Silence*. New Delhi : Penguin 1989.

Woof, Virginia. *A Room of one's own*. Penguin Books, 2004.

Holmström, Lakshmi. *Shashi Deshpande: A Critical Study*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2003.

Mishra, Divya. *The Theme of Silence in Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence*. *International Journal Online of Humanities*, 2016.

Rashid, Romina. *Jaya: A Product of Society in That Long Silence*. *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, 2017.