

## TRANSITION FROM TRADITION TO MODERNITY IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S NOVEL 'THAT LONG SILENCE'

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### ABSTRACT

*Shashi Deshpande's 'That Long Silence' (1988) is an expression of the silence of modern Indian housewife. Her protagonist, Jaya, is a modern, educated young woman who is crushed under the weight of a male dominated and tradition bound society.*

*The present paper endeavors to analyze the transition from tradition to modernity in Shashi Deshpande's novel 'That Long Silence' through female character Jaya, the writer portrays the image of modern women who faces void and feels vacuum in her life. It shows that how Jaya tries to go against the social conventions and traditions.*

*Like Rama Mehta, Shashi Deshpande wants to crave a female space by challenging the age old order the myriad bondage of tradition imposed on women by male dominated society. The writer seems to believe that society compel women to assume the status of the other.*

*But Jaya emerged as a round character that developed in the due course of time. It is the same Jaya who longed for disaster in the beginning but awakened herself so much that during crisis. She decided to be hopeful and start new life.*

### INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpande's „That Long Silence“ is an expression of the silence of modern India housewife. Although many women writers tried their hand at expressing this long silence but Deshpande's success lies in her representation of real life experience. In „That Long Silence“ (1988), her protagonist, Jaya, is a modern, educated young woman who is crushed under the weight of a male-dominated and tradition bound society.

The female protagonist, Jaya, conforms to the rules and constraints of the society. She is unable to find out whether she lives for herself or for her family only. She is taken for granted by everyone in the family. She is typical wife with love and affection for children, respect and sense of duty for husband and her in-law. Being husband and wife, she shares intimate relations with Mohan (her husband), yet, she is unable to relate herself with him in terms of feelings. Her silence is symbolic of most of the women of the world who are unable to express themselves as individual.

Jaya's introspection and memories are a part of every woman's life. Like every other woman, she is not encouraged to take up profession. Though she tries her hands at writing, but

she is not appreciated by her husband. Not only her husband, have her children also disappointed her. She is not satisfied with her life and lacks courage to revolt. She feels a kind of stagnation when she recalls that her life which seemed so busy was nothing, but a worthless pursuit.

In the novel, a first person account of both Jaya's past and present life is given to give a direct and truthful statement with introspective analysis her concrete existences. The writer reveals the consciousness Jaya through an exposition of her mind in the process of thinking, feeling and reacting to the stimuli of moment and situation.

The protagonist, Jaya, lives with her husband Mohan and her two children Rahul and Rati. The author describes the travails of being a middle class woman educated yet confined to restriction posted by the orthodox society. The novel seems to centre on the inner perception of a woman who is subtly drawn from inside, 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.

Jaya confessed, "Worse than anything else had been the boredom of the unchanging pattern, the unending monitor. She also compared herself to Gandhari who blind folded herself to share the blindness of her husband. She realized that she had totally altered and lost herself during the process of pleasing Mohan. She changed her name, personality and profession according to Mohan's will. Mohan expected her to change because he did not need Jaya, but a woman who could serve him, support him and act as dictated by him. Jaya admitted that she spent her days in just waiting as she said, "waiting for Mohan to come home, waiting for the children to be born, for them to start school, and waiting for them to come home"(2)

Now left by Mohan, Jaya was broken and helpless. But she emerged as a round character that developed in the due course of time. It is the same Jaya who longed for disaster in the beginning but awakened herself so much that during crisis she decided to be hopeful and start new life. Shashi kande reveals that how female protagonist long for if identity and self-dependence because she suffers from silence and lack of communication with her husband. The novel teaches women to fight the silence and express themselves and also gives a message to the man folk to try and understand woman in a better way.

Deshpande's protagonist Jaya reorganizes herself in new kinship patterns, with every change, and within these changing patterns, she revolts against the tradition. In this way, we finds that Shashi Deshpande's novel explores the patriarchal social set-up of India and her protagonist located within this social reality, reach out to define the self in an attempt to free herself from tradition. The writer's voice explores predicaments through the female psyche. Her novel reveals the inability of the woman to speak and the positive movement is always the movement towards the breaking of "That Long Silence."

It is a truth universally acknowledged that woman have been denied existence as complete human beings though they are mentally and physically equipped to perform at par with men. As Sushila sing puts it, "Human experience for centuries has been synonymous with

the masculine experience with the result that the collective image of human has been one sided and incomplete”(3). Focusing on the marital relation Shashi Desphande seeks to expose the tradition by which a woman is trained to play her subservice role in the family. She also reveals the man made patriarchal tradition and uneasiness of modern Indian woman in being a part of them. Present paper endeavors to analyze the transition from tradition to modernity through female character Jaya in „That Long Silence“. In the role of Jaya, the writer portrays the image of modern woman who faces void and feels vacuum in her life. Like Rana Mehta, Shashi Deshpande wants to crave a female space by challenging the age-old order the myriad bondage of tradition imposed on women by male-dominated society. The writer seems to believe that society compel woman to assume the status of the „other“.

No doubt, the Indian women in this era are born at a time when there is much awareness about her rights, liberty to express her ideas, freedom to enjoy freedom and the chance to stand for a cause. Still The Silence Continues!

## **REFERENCES**

- 1 Shashi Desphande, “That Long Silence” (New Delhi, Penguin)
- 2 *ibid*, P.30
- 3 Sushila Singh, “Feminism and Recet Fiction in English” (ed New Delhi: Prestige, 1991 P.7)