

BREAKING THE SILENCE IN *THAT LONG SILENCE**Mamta, Assistant Professor, D.A.V. College Jalandhar***Abstract:**

Silence in Shashi Deshpande novels plays significant role. It also shows the psychological suffering of females which is imposed by society and family. In 'That Long Silence' the main protagonist, Jaya, also feels the same trauma of imposed silence. But at the end of novel Jaya tries to come out of it through her witty mind. New Jaya succeeds in breaking the chains of silence and traditional barriers in order to achieve maturity and self-discovery.

Keywords: *Silence, Trauma, Psychological Suffering, Traditional Barrier.*

Shashi Deshpande is one of the famous contemporary Indian novelists in English. She as a writer and novelist shares a platform with women writers like Jane Austen, George Eliot, Kamala Markandaya and Virginia Woolf in more than one sense, because she believes that only a woman writer can understand and express the complete life, career and maturity of woman within a family fold, especially in the modern Indian society. Shashi Deshpande's novel deals with the women belonging to Indian middle class. She deals with the inner world of the Indian women in her novels. She portrays her heroines in a realistic manner. As in 'The Dark Holds No Terrors' the novel reveals the life of Sarita, who always neglected and ignored in favor of her brother. In 'Root and Shadows' she explores the inner self of Indu, who symbolizes the new women, who is educated and married to Jayant but her feminine instinct for articulation is suppressed.

For the novel 'That Long Silence' she was given the Sahitya Akademi Award. When the novel 'That Long Silence' was published, it was described by times literary supplement as a story of compassion, tolerance and understanding of human relationships. Deshpande strongly concludes that the basic reason of female suffering is the SILENCE, which is either culturally imposed or circumstantially produced or psycho-spiritually imbibed. This silence does not allow women to come to the surface. In the beginning of the story, we are given the social background of Mohan as the son of a poor man where his mother also was maltreated and subdued by his father. After Mohan's marriage with Jaya, a middle class intellectual woman, he leads a successful and peaceful life till he is accused of bribery along with colleague Mr. Aggarwal. Now Jaya feels the Punch and Pinch of insecurity and meaninglessness in this vast world and Mohan also becomes frustrated and lonely to the extent of Jaya as her indifference and unsupportiveness. But Jaya on her part considers this act of Mohan as immoral as it has exposed the family to all the dangers. However, Mohan tried to justify his act of bribery by saying

“I did it for you, for you and the children”

There are a number of dreams that haunt Jaya which are symbolic manifestations of her inner state of mind and her fears. The dream of toilet is described by novelist in highly psychological and symbolical language and perspective.

“I was looking for toilet. I was desperate..... and yes that it was.... the immense relief and the overpowering shame as I realized I was in a public place surrounded by people staring at me.”

Jaya is typical Indian middle class woman who is confined between her realizations and restrictions. Jaya ponders throughout the novel for her role clarity, her life or is she living for someone else. She searches her identity as an individual and where her emotions are getting subdued. She remains in delirium for many days, but finally she discovers the moral lapses on her part as a wife as a mother, as an individual. This leads to her search into soul where she acknowledges her sins, and as a consequence imposes penance, she says.

“I will have to speak, to listen, to ease that long silence between us.”

Her failure to be an ideal wife and mother is revealed by her as she says.

“I have failed him (Mohan). He expected something from me.”

Her incapability to deal with her son Rahul's complexities make her say.

“A mother? I had been unfit be trusted with the entire responsibility of another human being.”

In this way Jaya attempts to break that long silence, which leads to self discovery, happiness and harmony. At the end, we find Jaya, who Breaks that silence and leads a confident life. So, that we find at the centre of book is neither to Sita who suffered exile for the sake of her husband, nor a Draupadi sharing her husband's travails, but an educated middle class woman who is caught between two currents of tradition patriarchy and modernity. This independence of views and love for freedom is neither something suddenly acquired nor imposed from outside rather it is a natural extension of an inquisitive and witty mind of Jaya. As her grandmother used to complain about Jaya: “For everything a question, for everything a retort, how husband can be comfortable with?”

So, 'That Long Silence' is a powerful feministic expression of growth, development, career and conflicts of a woman in male dominated society. In this society a woman is taught that husband is happiness, career and treasure. But through her intelligence and resourcefulness, Jaya succeeds in breaking these traditional barriers in order to achieve maturity and self discovery. She declares herself as an independent and liberated individual “who will not settle for the half”.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande in portraying Jaya silence, suggests women to break their silence to identify their true self.

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