

Study of Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence Summary and Analysis

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"If I were a man and cared to know the world in which I live, I almost think I would be troubled by it—the weight of that long silence of half the world."

This statement by Elizabeth Robin forms the epigraph to Shashi Deshpande's novel. *The Long Silence*, so to speak, announces the intention of this talented contemporary Indian writer to break the long silence that has surrounded women, their experiences and their world. For a long time, woman has existed as a gap, as an absence in literature, whether Western or Indian. This is true not only of fiction created by men, but also by women, who have mostly limited themselves to writing love stories that superficially deal with women's experiences and create the same kind of stereotypes of women that they find so reprehensible. In the writings of men. Female writers have also often fallen victim to this normative feminist ideology of creating strong female characters. This doctrine becomes as oppressive as the doctrine created by male hegemony and suppresses the truth about most of their sisters and their lives.

Against this backdrop, Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* promises to be a refreshing departure from most fiction written by women. Of course, it cannot be said that he is doing anything extraordinary. We easily identify with the middle class ethos and the people we meet in the novel. The writer's contribution lies in the increased sensitivity and fresh perspectives she brings to familiar types and situations. The plot of the novel starts with a crisis in a middle-class family. Mohan, the narrator's husband, has indulged in certain nefarious practices in this pursuit of prestige and security, as a result of which he now faces an investigation and may lose his job. Mohan Agarwal, his partner in crime, is advised to stay away from the office and this flat in Churchgate until the storm passes. Luckily for Mohan, the kids are away on a trip with their family friends and everything ends well, he doesn't even have to know about this embarrassment. Mohan therefore decides that he and his wife Jaya will go and stay in an apartment in Dadar. This apartment belonged to Jaya's maternal uncle. Jaya and Mohan stayed there before moving to a larger flat in Churchgate. Jaya agrees with her husband's decision and accompanies him, albeit in silent resentment, to their current exile in the Dadar apartment. It is there, in an unbearable period of waiting and growing hysteria, that the process of self-examination and self-criticism begins for Jaya. She is flooded with memories of the past – her earlier life, her marriage to Mohan, the frustrations and disappointments of her seventeen-year married life, her personal failure, all of which begin to haunt and torment her. On his journey to the past, Jaya gains guidance for his future. By the end of the novel, the crisis—a mere tempest in a teacup—has been averted, and everything outwardly appears to be as it was, except for what happened to Jay. Jaya can no longer be a passive, silent partner to Mohan. The novel ends with her decision to speak, to break her long silence.

A long silence then follows Jaya through a multitude of self-doubt, fears, guilt, pent-up anger, and silence towards articulation and affirmation. Suman Ahuja, reviewing the novel in the *Times of India*, notes that Jaya "finds herself in an emotional maelstrom, trying to come to terms with her protean roles and trying, albeit in vain, to rediscover her true selling point, which is only ephemeral—an unfulfilled wife, a disappointed mother and failed writer," Jaya actually rejects the patriarchal notion of a unified self or identity.

Even on a casual reading of the novel, one realizes that Shashi Deshpande is not only writing about her female protagonist Jaya, who is trying to erase a long silence and struggling with issues of self-discovery and self-worth, but through Jaya, also about other women, those unfortunate victims who never they did not break the silence. First of all, the author points out how our culture has often been silent on the topic of women. For example, at one point in the novel, Jaya discovers that she does not figure in the family tree that her uncle Ramukaka had painstakingly prepared and was so proud of. When Jaya asks her uncle why her name is not included in the family tree, she understands that she now belongs to her husband's family and not her father's. But that's only half the truth. Not her mother, not her kakis, that is, her uncle's wives, not even her grandmother Ajji, the indomitable woman: "Who alone held the family together, find a place in the family tree. Java is dismayed to find that her name and existence, along with the other women in the family, are completely erased from the family's history. The novel is, so to speak, Jay's protest against the way women are treated in our culture and her attempt to present a different version of history from a woman's point of view.

The Long Silence is also a scathing critique of our social institutions like marriage and family, the way they stifle individual growth and free expression. These institutions place individuals into slots such as wife, husband, brother, sister, daughter, son, etc., and prevent free communication between human beings. This is what happens in Jaya's relationship with Kamat. Kamat was Jaya's neighbor upstairs in Dadar. He was a widower and his only son settled abroad. He was a lonely man and showed much understanding and sympathy for Jaya. In fact, Jaya was more free and uninhibited with him than she was with her husband. But in our society this kind of friendship between a married woman and another man is always viewed with suspicion and disapproval. Perhaps that's why when Jaya found Kamat dead on the floor of his apartment during one of her visits to his place, she panicked and left the place silently. This event highlights how marriage often puts people in impossible and uncomfortable situations. Jaya can't even stay and pay tribute to her best friend in his death for fear of ruining her marriage. She may be great at her role as a wife, but she fails as a person.

Shashi Deshpande uses first-person narration, forcing her central character Jaya to tell her own story. Jaya warns the reader at the outset that she is not the heroine of her story, nor does she speak of her isolated self. One could say that it deals with the relationship between man and woman, marriage and family life. But the novel avoids the easy solution of placing the blame solely on man. Both men and women are products of their culture and victims of the institution of marriage. It is just as difficult for women to outgrow the image and roles assigned to them by their society as it is for men. For example, when Jaya suggests to Mohan during her first pregnancy that he should cook, Mohan is very amused by the suggestion as he thinks that cooking is not a man's job. We later find out that Jaya also shares her husband's opinion when she confesses to Kamat that the sight of him cooking made her uneasy because she thought it was unmanly. Like Mohan, she puts her children in slots and feels disappointed when they refuse to stay there and do their part to create the myth of a happy and harmonious family. It is only at the end, after her ordeal, that Jaya realizes her mistake and frees herself and her children from the slots she has put them into.

In her anxiety to fulfill her role as a wife and mother, Jaya did not do proper justice to her own talent. Years ago, Jaya made a good start as a writer by creating a story that won first prize and was published in a magazine. But Mohan's reaction to the story was very disheartening. He assumed the story was about their personal lives. He was worried and pained to think that people he knew would think he was the kind of person the man in the story was. There is no doubt that this incident left a deep impression on Jaya's psyche and affected her career as a writer. She can therefore easily make her husband a scapegoat for her failure, but in her self-critical mood in the Dadar flat, she refuses this easy way out. She recalls that even after the confrontation with Mohan, she continued to write and write under a false name (as female writers often did under the patriarchy), but her stories were rejected. They lacked something, something was condemned. According to Kamat, it was Jaya's anger, her strong passions. Jaya tried to remind him what she had actually learned from her husband in her first memorable argument with him, that a woman cannot be angry, that anger makes a woman unwomanly. She also gave the familiar excuse that women give when things are not going well, that they don't have time for serious work because of their domestic responsibilities. Kamat rebuked this tendency in her. "I warn you – beware of your 'women are the victims' theory. It drags you down into a soft squishy swamp of self-pity. Take it seriously, woman. Don't hide behind a fake name. And work-work if you want others to take you seriously." Kamat was a tough critic and left no escape route for Jaya. He pointed out that the real reason for her failure was her fear. She was afraid of writing, of failure.

Jaya was in no mood to take such harsh criticism. She crawled back into her hole. She resumed her career as a wife, as a mother. Meanwhile, Mohan suggested to her that she should write light humorous articles for the newspaper, which were called "Wednesdays". Jaya then started her weekly column "Seeta" which won the approval of the readers, the editor and above all her husband. "And for me". Jaya notes, "She was the means by which I firmly shut the door on all those other women who invaded my being and screamed for attention: women I knew I couldn't write about because it was just possible. to look like Mohan's mother or aunt or my mother or aunt." The writer thus clarifies that not only was the patriarchy silent on the subject of women, but within the patriarchy women also withdrew from telling the truth about their gender.

When Jaya finally recovers from her emotional upheaval, she has resolved several issues with herself. For the two nights she has to herself, she puts down on paper everything she suppressed in her seventeen-year silence. What she wrote is evidently the novel we are reading. The novel mostly deals with women like Kusum, Mohan's mother, and many other such victims—victims of patriarchy and also of their own silence. The Long Silence summarizes the history and development of women during the four generations that Jaya knew, and promises a better future for women.

In *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande portrayed the irony of a writer who is also a young housewife. As a writer, she should present her opinions and thoughts to society, yet she silently explores her past, struggles with the present, and tries to relate to her future. She is an intellectual who finds herself out of place in a male-only society.

The novel begins with Jaya and her husband Mohan shifting from a well-stocked and comfortable house to their old house in Dadar, Mumbai, where they stayed right after their marriage when their financial situation was not good. They move to their old flat to escape the scene as Mohan has been caught in some business malpractice and an investigation is underway. Here in the small old apartment, Jaya deviates from her daily schedule and becomes an introvert. She sits deep in contemplation, thinking about her childhood and trying to analyze herself. As Adele King says in her book review, "Jaya finds her normal routine so disrupted that she can look at her life for the first time and try to decide who she really is."

Unsatisfied with her married life, Jaya reminisces about her past days, her upbringing, the environment in which she was brought up and the sermons that were imposed on her growing up, such as learning that "a husband is like a shelter tree".

Although Jaya has been educated and influenced by the modern thinking of the west and other developed countries and is a writer herself, she still wants to compare herself with the image of Sita, Draupadi and other ideal mythological figures. She always tried her best to maintain a balance between husband and wife: "Our relationship was delicately balanced, so much so that we cut bits of ourselves to keep the balance at the same level."

On the occasion of Raveti's birthday, Jaya and her daughter Rati feel that Mohan loves his niece Raveti more than his own daughter. But she doesn't say anything to Mohan because he just dismisses it as her "writer's fantasy" and nothing more. She always wishes to follow her husband's wishes.

In general, a woman's identity is defined by others, in terms of her relationship to men, i.e. as a daughter, as a wife, as a mother, etc. The question "What does a woman do" is never asked, but "who does she belong to" is always considered important. It has no identity of its own. Her name is constantly changing according to the wishes of others. In *That Long Silence*, the author introduced this phenomenon through the character Jayi, who is known by two names: JAYA and SUHASINI. Jaya, meaning victory, is the name given by her father when she was born, and Suhasini, the name given after marriage, meaning "gentle, smiling, calm, motherly woman". Both names symbolize traits of her personality. The former symbolizes rebellion and the latter subjugation. The dreams of her childhood, to change the assigned situation of a woman leading to the achievement of her goals, are shattered by the environment, the surroundings and above all by society, which imposes all kinds of restrictions on women. She is absolutely helpless and unable to do anything to improve her situation. Eventually, she tried to adapt to the mainstream. She longs to be called the ideal wife. They rebel in silence. She comments on the situation where her husband talks about women being treated very cruelly by their husbands and calls it "strength", "He saw strength in the woman sitting quietly in front of the fire, but I saw despair. I saw despair so great that it was not spoken. I saw a fight so fierce that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender."

When it comes to the physical relationship between husband and wife, it is again a case of the dominant husband and the suffering wife. Even if the husband hurts the woman, she remains silent. Jaya was also cast in the same mold. She cannot say "Yes" when her husband asks her if he has hurt her. He has to tolerate everything. "The emotion which governed my conduct towards him was still the habit of being a wife, supporting and supporting him."

All this certainly does not show a natural and harmonious relationship between the two when we see that one is unable to express his or her true feelings to the other. Their physical relationship always ends with Mohan asking if he hurt her. It clearly indicates a forced relationship and not a natural one. Jaya does not immediately react to the situation, but the reader is informed through the flashback technique the author uses. Lying alone in a small house, her mind travels through the past and present, covering her entire life. The author occasionally uses the stream-of-consciousness technique to project the characters' minds, thus making the story authentic and realistic.

In the Indian context: "Once a girl is married to a man, be it a love marriage or an arranged marriage, the husband takes complete control over her. Whether the husband follows the right or wrong path, she must follow blindly in his footsteps. When Mohan is caught misbehaving and is supposed to be unavailable for a period of time, he assumes that Jaya will accompany him. Although she does not want to follow the example of Sita and Savitri, paradoxically she is forced by situations and circumstances to follow the principle that "both are bound together, so it is better to go in the same direction than to go in different directions. be painful."

Jaya's husband Mohan always interprets things in relation to the impact it may have on society. He subtly likes to conform to social norms, even when they are strong. The success of Jay's novel depicting the relationship between a man and a woman is judged in relation to what society would think in the future. So he wants to make Jaya think like him too and make her stay away from topics that would endanger their marriage. Representing a typical Indian woman in the contemporary context, Jaya wants to mold herself as her husband wishes. But all these male-chauvinist ideas are not her own, but were forced upon her by society in general and

her father in particular. Her father forced her to think that she was different from the others, which is why she couldn't fit in with her roommates and stayed away from the other girls.

In her childhood, she was raised lovingly and affectionately without any responsibility. But after marriage, she automatically changes, her anger fades away: "As a child, she got angry very early. But after marriage she tolerated her anger. She realized that for Mohan, anger makes a woman 'unfeminine'. "When Kamat asks her why she didn't express the anger of a woman in her writings, her answer is, "Because no woman can be angry. Have you ever heard of an angry young woman."

When she leaves her home after her marriage, her father advises her to always be nice to Mohan, and she always tries her best to follow his advice. It also sheds light on her being closer to her father than her mother. Even when her mother reprimands her or asks if she goes out and comes home late, she complains about her mother to her father.

Social conformity has always been more binding for a woman than for a man. In general, a woman's identity tends to be defined by shaping her tastes to suit the tastes of others, even if her higher intellect is not satisfied. At the very beginning of the novel, we see her trying to reason with her father about not listening to the songs on the radio, but in the end she keeps silent and represses her desire. Here Deshpande introduced the topic of lack of communication. As she says,

"The themes of lack of communication may be over-familiar in Western fiction, but they are under-examined in extroverted India."

In the studied novel, Shashi Deshpande presents the meanings of silence. As she says, "You learn a lot of tricks to get into a relationship. Silence is one of them. You will never find a woman who criticizes her husband, even playfully, in case it might damage the relationship.

The novel is not an autobiography, except for certain parts dealing with the frustrations of a failed writer. Shashi Deshpande presented the Indian woman as she is in 1980s India and not as she should be. Veena Sheshadri says in her review:

"Why did the author choose a 'heroine' who only succeeds in causing waves of irritation in the reader? Maybe it's because a competent writer like her is never satisfied unless she's tackling new challenges. He also believes in presenting life as it is, not as it should be, and there must be thousands of self-centered women like Jaya who are forever tormented by their fate."

To make the story authentic and appealing, Deshpande used the device of first-person narration to ensure its credibility by making the protagonist read her inner mind, thus representing the psyche of a modern educated middle-class woman.

Nayantara Sahgal's Modern Thought on Marriage

Jaya is basically a modern woman rooted in tradition while her husband Mohan is a traditionalist rooted in custom. The difference between their views is so great that they fail to understand each other again and again. For Mohan, a woman sitting by the fire waiting for her husband to come home and eat a warm meal is the true "power" of a woman, but Jaya interprets this as nothing but desperation. The difference in their attitudes is the main reason they don't understand each other.

It was due to different attitudes, their married life is uncertain and gloomy. It becomes a compromise rather than a love based on social fear rather than a mutual need for the other. The cause may be rooted in their choice of partner. For example, Mohan from the very beginning wanted a woman who was well educated and cultured and never loving. He decided to marry Jaya when he saw her speak fluently and it sounded so much like the girl he saw speak fluent English.

In her novel *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande presents on one level the condition of women in Indian society - her role model and how different types of women fulfill their roles through their silence. The title emphasizes the silence that the protagonist Jaya wishes to break and search for her own self, her role as a wife, and her true individual self. On another level, he explores the role of Sita and Gandhari and Maitrevey. on yet another level. she is a modern, English-speaking, convent-educated woman groping in the darkness of life—dissatisfaction with her role model in marriage and her agony over her own acceptance, albeit unwittingly, of double standards for men and women in society—bilingual pattern of Sanskrit drama, Sanskrit for men and Prakrit for woman.

Shashi Deshpande exposes both Jaya and Mohan as they face crisis in their lives. They have run into stormy weather and their safe sheltered life washes away like the color of water in a rain storm. The disaster they face affects them differently and they react differently. What exactly happened to the ambitious Mohan is not clearly stated, but it is vaguely stated that Mohan will probably be fired for malpractice. Mohan feels that Jaya, who cared a lot about him, no longer cares about him due to the crisis in his life. His life revolves around his office job and his family. Now that he has no office job, he is restless. He becomes restless and ghost-like as he waits to hear from his colleague. He is a traditionalist and has clear ideas about his role in life. When it breaks, he is confused and doesn't know what to do. Waiting makes him tense and nervous. He expects his wife Jaya not only to share his anxiety, his unhappiness, his doubts, but also to speak positively and help him face the

crisis. He says that everything he did was for his wife and children, not just to realize his ambition of a good life in high society. He wants to use his wife as a buffer, an opiate to soften the impact of the forces he has set in motion against him. In fact, he is looking for emotional desires to hold Jaya hard, in which he looks for an anchor in this storm.

Jaya on the other hand reacts differently. Her whole life revolved around her husband's wishes. Now that he doesn't want anything, she's at a loss. The two are as in *Aranyavas* as Rama and Sita. But she is not Sita and cannot be Sita. Here they are in her Dadar house, which is a homecoming for her. Significantly, this homecoming makes her take stock of her life, evaluate her life and examine her inner self and her relationship with Mohan. Until now, she had been like a compass leg, her whole life arranged on the circumference of Mohan's life and activities. But now she doesn't want to hang around Mohan in silence. As she gave up the "Seeta" newspaper column, she wants to give up her traditional role model of a wife.

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