

Breaking The Suppressed, Visible Long Silence in Marriage – A Study of Shashi Deshpande’s “That Long Silence”

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Abstract

Shashi Deshpande’s novel ‘That Long Silence’ gives a realistic state of middle-class married Indian women who choose to remain silent to save their marriage and family life. The novel throws light on the condition of married middle-class women, the crises in married life, and how women suppress themselves and remain silent for years and years. Most often married women have no choice and mask themselves with happiness to move around in society to safeguard the reputation of their husbands and family. The burden to sustain the marriage and make compromises is expected from a wife in a marriage. In Marriage a woman as a wife is expected to fulfil her duties as a wife, take care of children as a mother, do the household chores as a woman in the house and finally live for everyone ignoring and neglecting herself, her desires, her expectations, and her feelings. This paper discusses the long silence of Jaya and Mohan in their marriage, the crises in their married life, and the suppression of wives in marriage. Mohan as a husband has authority over his wife. This power leads to the suppression of Jaya and she chooses to remain silent and live her life in the direction of her husband. Finally isolated amid frustrations and despair she embarks on the journey of self-realization. She realizes that long silence is not going to solve her life problems. She gathers strength and courage and decides to break the silence, speak up and balance her life. She wants to restore her marriage and thus breaks her silence.

Keywords: Suppressed Silence, Marriage Crises, Identity Crises

I. INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpande’s novel, ‘That Long Silence’ mirrors how married life crises between husband-and-wife lead to alienation and suppression resulting in a visible long silence between the two. Shashi Deshpande has been realistic in portraying the real-life marriage problems faced by Indian middle-class women and men. Shashi Deshpande's novel, ‘That Long Silence’ has helped readers around the world to awaken and understand the situation of Indian women living in the seventies. The title of the novel itself is quite self-explanatory describing the nature of silence. The silence referred to in the novel is not a simple silence of a few hours but it is described as ‘That Long Silence’ meaning this silence is deeply rooted, existing for a long time – 17 years in the married life of Jaya and

Mohan. This means a wife is leading a married life with suppressed feeling and have silenced herself. Jaya, the wife who plays the main character in the novel is a woman who is living with her husband unable to speak and suppressing her feelings, emotions, and dreams. Her husband Mohan is a typical husband who expects his wife to be humble, understanding, and listen to her husband all the time. His expectation is clear and he makes it clear to Jaya by giving the example of his mother. He says that his mother was a humble woman who never showed anger toward her husband even though his father ill-treated her. He sees nothing wrong with his father and simultaneously considers his mother's suppression as humbleness. Whereas Jaya sees his mother as a wounded woman. Mohan is unable to see the helplessness of a woman as a wife and expects his wife Jaya to live like a humble woman.

This expectation leads Jaya to remain silent in their marriage and the silence keeps growing day by day in seventeen years of their marriage. Finally, at the end of the novel, Jaya realizes and awakens, and takes a decision to break that long silence.

We can see many women face such types of marriage crises. But to keep their marriage afloat many choose to remain silent in marriage and consider it as their destiny and suppress their desires and dreams. Shashi Deshpande has been vocal to bring to light such unspoken issues creeping into our society and thus causing the destruction of marriages.

II. DISCUSSION

That Long Silence:

Shashi Deshpande exhibits the situation of a woman who is caught between the arms of marriage and society. She portrays how a woman suffers silently in her married life. She has no choice because marriage is held respectfully in society and a necessity for a woman. A woman's identity lies only in her marriage and family. Shashi Deshpande has very well explained the problems, issues, plight, and suffering of a married woman.

Identity Crises as a Women:

Shashi Deshpande has used first-person narration to speak out the real feelings and emotions of the main character 'Jaya' in her novel. This first-person narration creates a realistic feeling for the readers who connect to the character naturally.

Jaya the heroine of the novel struggles to find her identity in her life. 'Jaya' meaning victory is the name given by her father to Jaya, her father has brought her up in a loving kind, and gentle way. For him, his daughter symbolizes victory as soon as Jaya gets married her husband changes her name to 'Suhashini' meaning a motherly, understanding, and humble woman. Jaya is burdened with a new name which comes along with new responsibilities. She is expected to behave as a humble and understanding woman in her new role as a wife.

Jaya's home, family, and family members are changed after her marriage. Even her name her original identity name is changed. Her marriage begins with her identity crises. The new name brought along with many new expectations to be fulfilled by Jaya. So, Jaya is suppressed under the burden of a new and changed identity in her married life. Jaya is confused and has lost her old identity. She knows to remain in a relationship she has to make a compromise. Jaya chooses to remain silent in this situation.

Expectation Crises as a Wife and Woman:

Jaya is an educated woman who hails from a middle-class cultured family. She is a woman with modern thoughts. While Mohan belongs to a traditional family that believes in customs and traditions. Mohan has grown up seeing his mother waiting for his father daily and serving his father fresh and hot cooked rice which is untouched to be served right from the vessel. For Mohan waiting at the fire until her husband arrives and serving him hot food is a symbol of strength and humility for a woman. But to Jaya, it symbolizes a wounded and suppressed woman.

Mohan thinks that it is unwomanly for a woman to be angry. He expects that a woman should never get angry and keep on doing her household chores as her duty. He had a clear thought about how he wanted his family members to live.

Both Jaya and Mohan have different views and thus differ in their viewpoints. The difference in their attitude creates differences in their marriage. Their marriage is based on compromise and Jaya makes compromises silently without uttering a word. Jaya chooses to remain silent and this silence keeps on growing in their married life.

The bond between husband and wife is based on the communication they have with one another. Here in the story of Mohan and Jaya, Jaya remains silent, she suppresses her words, emotions, and feelings knowing that it would harm her marriage.

The silence between the two was visible and quite evident. Both knew the silence and kept living in this silence as Jaya felt she has no choice or option. So, she speaks with confusion, these words,

“A pair of bullocks yoked together...it is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. To go in different directions would be painful: and what animal would voluntarily choose pain?”

Expression Crises as a Woman Writer:

Jaya likes to write. Jaya had written a short story and fetched first prize for it. She began her career with a good start. Mohan her husband did not appreciate her writing. He

thought the story she wrote was their own life story. Mohan never encouraged her for writing.

But after Mohan's downfall in his job, he asked Jaya to write to supplement the family income. But he suggests she write something light and humorous which would not relate to their personal life. He suppressed her freedom to write as an author giving her a guideline on what to write and what not to write.

The novel brings to light the plight of a woman writer suppressed by her husband. As a writer, she is forced not to express her views and thoughts as a woman. Jaya accepts this suppression too with Silence. Silence is her tool to exist in difficult and crises.

Jaya has no freedom to write as a woman. The novel expresses the helplessness of a woman writer, suppressed by her husband as a wife, mother, and writer.

III RESULT

Breaking That Long Silence of Seventeen Years:

Though Jaya had been an ideal wife, listening to her husband she was a broken woman from the inside. She was full of despair, an isolated woman.

In her isolation at the Dadar flat, she remembers her past, and present and gets frustrated. Her suppression, disappointments, and helplessness begin to create self-realization in herself. By the end of the novel, Jaya decides to break her silence and passivity and speak. Jaya introspects her life and in the process of self-discovery, she realizes that she needs fresh perceptions in her life. She understands that living in silence is not a solution and that life cannot be trampled under silence. Jaya realizes that she should not be silent and face life with great courage and strength.

IV Conclusion:

Shashi Deshpande in this novel brings to light the real state of Indian middle-class married. She shows how marriage suppresses a woman as a wife, mother, and career maker. Women as a wife are expected to be understanding and humble anytime and every time in life. The plight of women caught between marriage and society is portrayed by Shashi Deshpande.

The novel throws light on the condition of married middle-class women, the crises in married life, and how women suppress themselves and remain silent for years and years. Most often married women have no choice and mask themselves with happiness to move around in society to safeguard the reputation of their husbands and family. The burden to sustain the marriage and make compromises is expected from a wife in a marriage. In Marriage a woman as a wife is expected to fulfill her duties as a wife, take care of children as a mother, do the household chores as a woman in the house and finally live for everyone ignoring and neglecting herself, her desires, her expectations, and her feelings.

Finally, Jaya gets the courage to revolt and break her silence to bring life and change to her married life. She goes through a self-realization process and decides to break the chain of suppressed silence. A change in Jaya's personality is seen at the end of the novel. The novel awakens us to the plight of married women who suppress their words and silence themselves. The dark side of silence in marriage is portrayed beautifully. Marriage is a beautiful relationship and communication is the essence of this relationship. Realizing this fact, Jaya takes a major decision to break the silence in her marriage and speak up. She wants to restore her marriage and thus breaks her silence.

REFERENCES

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