

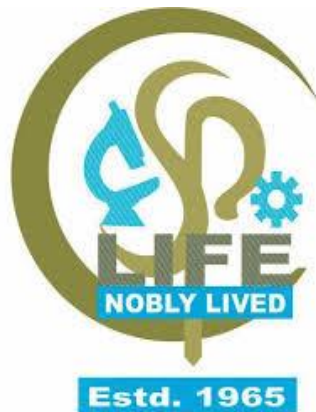
**A Study on Fulfillment of white moon faces : A feminist voyage through  
Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*.**

Project submitted to the Mahatma Gandhi University Kottayam in partial  
recognition of the requirements for the award of the Degree of  
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### **Declaration**

I do hereby declare that the project A study on “**Fulfillment of white moon faces : A feminist voyage through Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence.***” is the record of genuine research work done by me under the guidance of Ms. RosyMilna, Assistant Professor, Department of English, St. Paul's College, Kalamassery.

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### Certificate

This is to certify that the project work **A study on Fulfillment of white moon faces : A feminist voyage through Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*** is a record of the original work carried out by Beema Beevi ER under the supervision and guidance of Ms. RosyMilna, Assistant Professor, Department of English, St. Paul's College, Kalamassery.

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## **Introduction**

Indian English literature also referred to as Indian Writing in English is the body of work by writers in India who write in the English language and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India . Its early history began with the works of Michael Madhusudan Dutt followed by R K Narayan , Mulk Raj and Raja who contributed to Indian fiction in the 1930s. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian diaspora who are of Indian descent. It is frequently referred to as Indo-Anglian literature. As a category, this production comes in the broader realm of post colonial literature, the production from previously colonised countries such as India.

Indian English Literature is an honest enterprise to demonstrate the ever rare gems of Indian Writing in English. From being a singular and exceptional, rather gradual native flare – up of geniuses, Indian Writing has turned out to be a new form of Indian culture and voice in which India converses regularly. Indian Writers – poets, novelists, essayists, and dramatists have been making momentous and considerable contributions to world literature since pre – Independence era, the past few years have witnessed a gigantic prospering and thriving of Indian English Writing in the global market.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the eminent novelists of contemporary Indian literature in English. Western readers align her with Anita Desai. Indeed, both writers' work center's around women's lives in modern Indian society. However, only Deshpande lives and writes in India, and she explicitly addresses Indian readers, not the international marketplace. Deshpande's

novel *That Long Silence*. (1988) of which she says that it is her most autobiographical one, makes silencing, By the family and by society, its main topic. It is, as she has said, a loud shriek of despair. The main figure, however, manages to break the silence and to speak out, achieving agency. The novel had come out in English, in Britain, but was translated into Hindi, Marathi and Kannada. Which shows, not only the impact of the linguistic diversity of the subcontinent, but also the status Deshpande has by then achieved.

A woman is known as a mother, a sister, a daughter and a wife. In the Indian society women are still dominated by males. Here, society's rules are orthodox and enclosed with a conservative mindset and these rules are especially meant to be followed by women. This gender discrimination has been running in our blood for centuries. Women are bound to follow the steps of males in the lives. They are not allowed to raise their voice and take big decisions. It is a male who is the head of the family and takes all the decisions. He will tell her sister, her wife or her daughter to go or not to go outside. He will take the decision to select which stream if she wants to go for higher studies. Still women have to fight for their independence as they are not allowed to go to new a new or strange city for job or study. By the end of twentieth century and the start of twenty first century a new wave has risen and that is the independence of a woman and her fight for identity. There are many young writers who penned down their revolutionary thoughts for the women's rights with conviction.

Domestic space has become private space of the house, household or the home as opposed to the public space of the street or the urban space of the city as whole. The duality of domestic versus public space was civilized by feminist scholar for the patriarchal dominance of the public male domain over the secluded female domain of the house.



Domestic space is a way to refer to relationship among household activities. It can be regarded as a complex relational framework in which a specific subset of social action and natural process interacting with various agents of modification in what appears to be a statistical way. When there is some regularity in the location and the distance of the material consequence of social activities performed at a household level, it can be say that that there is a certain degree of dependence between different elements of the social activity. Whereas a household is something that should 'see' domestic space cannot be 'seen' but it is an analytical relational concept to be measured and calculated. Domestic space signifies the home that is derived from the word domestic or domas, house or household. The domestic space is seen in the material, spiritual, gender, sociocultural and psychological aspects of home. Home has dominant meaning because it is the locus of everyday family life and a repository of memories. So every person maintains an intimate relationship with the ones home. Home can operate in overlapping scales indicating how and where people feel a sense of belongings. At the same time that homelessness and migration contributions to how see can understand the impact of deracination and alternate ways of feeling attachment.

The aspect of feminism that is analyzed in this project is its social spatial consideration. The home as a sphere of a women's life is the focus of analysis in *That Long Silence*. The segregation of women into a private space is seen as a process that take place not only on the economic and political levels but also found to have a discursive and linguistic base. The security and the confidence that a woman gains in her wifhood makes her glorify her domesticity and the role she plays in the lives of her husband and children.

In the sixteenth century, women were suppressed by the male dominations as they were considered as sexual object. In the essay *In search of our mother's garden*, Alice walker draws the real problems faced by the women. They have no space in their own home and have no chance to show their talents. If they showed their talents, they were called Witches. So they used kitchen and their limited space to bring out their talents. Women had no space of their own earlier. They use pseudonymous and wrote many literary works.

In the twentieth century, they began to receive space of their own but confessional poets like Sylvia Plath and Kamaladas had to go through difficulties because writing forbidden topics were considered as a sin. Even her talents had to be hidden within the walls of the house. As women were domesticated, it can be seen that the feminine reflections in the domesticity as they try to make up the home into their world of fantasy. That is, women are more closer to the home and the bond between the family members helps to create a healthy home.

Gender discrimination is also seen in the space of home. Father is the Supreme power in home. He work hard for the family and mother has to look upon the children. In Indian culture, family has a very important role and the relation between the mother and father makes the home a happy place to live in. In the novel *That Long Silence* it is about a married couple Jaya and Mohan, who get separated in course of time and about Jaya who observes silence all through her married life only to break it at the end. By this idea, the novel can be read through the perspective of feminism and how it is portrayed in the novel can be seen in the coming sections.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Into the Feminine**

Feminism is a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that aim to define, establish, and achieve the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. Feminism incorporates the position that societies prioritize the male point of view, and that women are treated unfairly within those societies. Efforts to change that include fighting gender stereotypes and seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men.

Feminist movements have campaigned and continue to campaign for women's rights, including the right to vote, to hold public office, to work, to earn fair wages, equal pay and eliminate the gender pay gap, to own property, to receive education, to enter contracts, to have equal rights within marriage, and to have maternity leave. Feminists have also worked to ensure access to legal abortions and social integration and to protect women and girls from rape, sexual harassment and domestic violence. Changes in dress and acceptable physical activity have often been part of feminist movements.

Some scholars consider feminist campaigns to be a main force behind major historical societal changes for women's rights, particularly in the West, where they are near universally credited with achieving women's suffrage, gender-neutral language, reproductive rights for women including access to contraceptives and abortion, and the right to enter into contracts and own property. Although feminist advocacy is, and has been, mainly focused on women's rights and some feminists, including Gloria Jean Watkins, argue for the inclusion of men's liberation within its aims, because they believe that men are also harmed by traditional gender roles. Feminist theory, which emerged from feminist movements, aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women's social roles and lived experience; it has developed theories in a variety of disciplines in order to respond to issues concerning gender.

Numerous feminist movements and ideologies have developed over the years and represent different viewpoints and aims. Some forms of feminism have been criticized for taking into account only white, middle class, and college-educated perspectives. This criticism led to the creation of ethnically specific or multicultural forms of feminism, including black feminism and intersectional feminism.

Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical fields. It encompasses work in a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, economics, women's studies, literary criticism, art history, psychoanalysis and philosophy. Feminist theory aims to understand gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations, and sexuality. While providing a critique of these social and political relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on the promotion of women's rights and interests. Themes explored in feminist theory include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification (especially sexual objectification) oppression and patriarchy. In the field of literary criticism, Elaine Showalter

describes the development of feminist theory as having three phases. The first she calls feminist critique, in which the feminist reader examines the ideologies behind literary phenomena. The second Showalter calls gynocriticism, in which the woman is producer of textual meaning. The last phase she calls gender theory, in which the ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system are explored.

The works of Julia Kristeva a feminist psychoanalyst and philosopher, and Bracha L. Ettinger; artist and psychoanalyst, has influenced feminist theory in general and feminist literary criticism in particular. More recent feminist theory, such as that of Lisa Lucile Owens, has concentrated on characterizing feminism as a universal emancipatory movement.

Feminism is a distinct type of critical sociology. There are considerable differences between types of feminism, however; for example, the differences often attributed to the first wave of feminism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the second wave of feminism from the 1950s to the 1970s, and the third wave of feminism from the 1980s onward. At the turn of the century, the first wave of feminism focused on official, political inequalities and fought for women's suffrage. In the 1960s, the second wave feminism, also known as the women's liberation movement, turned its attention to a broader range of inequalities, including those in the workplace, the family, and reproductive rights.

Currently, a third wave of feminism is criticizing the fact that the first two waves of feminism were dominated by white women from advanced capitalist societies. This movement emphasizes diversity and change, and focuses on concepts such as globalization, post-colonialism, post structuralism, and postmodernism. Contemporary feminist thought tends to dismiss generalizations about sex and gender (e.g. women are naturally more nurturing) and to emphasize the importance of intersections within identity (e.g., race and gender). The feminist

perspective also recognizes that women who suffer from oppression due to race, in addition to the oppression they suffer for being women, may find themselves in a double bind. The relationship between feminism and race was largely overlooked until the second wave of feminists produced literature on the topic of black feminism. This topic has received much more attention from third wave scholars and activists.

Feminist theory encompasses a range of diverse ideas, all of which originate with the following beliefs: that is, society is patriarchal, structured by and favoring men, then traditional ways of thinking support the subordination of women and the neglect or trivialization of issues particularly affecting women; and next one is, this patriarchal order should be overthrown and replaced with a system that stresses equality for both sexes. Feminist theory impacts all institutions medical, legal, academic, and social, and can be used to illumine all issues affecting humans. The diversity of thought within feminist theory lies in the fact that women across the world differ from each other in many ways—including race, ethnicity, nationality, class, sexual orientation, or educational background, for example and that these differences result in varying views of feminism and gender equality as expressed in liberal feminist, Marxist–socialist, radical libertarian and radical cultural, postmodern, and global feminist theories. Yet for all the diversity within feminist theory, there remains the belief that despite women's many differences, women everywhere share some basic ‘sameness.’

Feminist theorists are interested in the societal attitudes and values that promote women empowerment and they derive their evidence from macro-level observations of legal and social systems. However, a problem with feminist theories is that they do not account for the fact that some offenders are oblivious to the harm they have caused their victim and may not actually consciously use rape to intimidate females. Feminist theory has been at the forefront of new

directions in political, social, and cultural theory. These developments are inherently indebted to the internal critique within feminism made by women of color who have been pivotal in raising questions of 'difference' around such social axes as class, racism, ethnicity, sexuality, and the problematic of global inequities. The critique consists of debates that emerged through political contestation both within and outside the women's movements, drawing attention to the centrality of slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and in understanding contemporary gender relations and global predicaments.

Feminist theory traditionally has not been much occupied with technology, and that topic almost exclusively has been a concern for feminist technology studies. Moreover, feminist technology studies have not been very influential with feminist theory, unlike feminist studies of science that have had more resonance with feminist theory building.

Thus Feminism is a collection of movements aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights and equal opportunities for women. Its concepts overlap with those of women's rights. Feminism is mainly focused on women's issues, but because feminism seeks gender equality, some feminists argue that men's liberation is therefore a necessary part of feminism, and that men are also harmed by sexism and gender roles. Feminist theory exists in a variety of disciplines, emerging from these feminist movements and including general theories about the origins of inequality, and, in some cases, about the social construction of sex and gender.

Feminist movements mainly campaigned for women's rights and freedom. The main aims are right to vote, right to work, equal pay, to earn fair wages etc. There is infinite number of writers who played significant role to eradicate women's problems and they wonderfully portrayed the pain of woman in the society in their glorious pages. One among them is Indian

writer Shashi Deshpande. She always used to narrate the struggles, feelings and emotions of women in domestic space. In her novel , *That Long Silence* she gives a clear picture of a character named Jaya, a girl born into a middle- class family. This project is aim to focus on how feminism is the central part of Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence*.

## Chapter 2

### A Journey through the Long Silence

*That Long Silence* continues with the issues of women subjugation arising from marriage in an extended way. Due to its stylistic and thematic concerns, *That Long Silence* won the most prestigious Sahitya Academy award for Shashi Deshpande in 1989. Shashi Deshpande has vigorously tried to paint the humiliating and stifling environment where women feel themselves fettered. She has protested against the several types of exploitations of women. In this novel, silence has been used as a metaphor. Silence is a patriarchal symbol. A girl is socialized to be silent as being eloquent and loud are not the traits that society deems fit for them. Consequently they keep on being silent and bear everything with this weapon but gradually this very silence eats away the very vitals of their existence.

Jaya is a writer and she makes it quite clear in the beginning of the novel that she is writing a story but it is not the story of someone else's but rather it is her own story where she herself is the heroine and her husband the hero. But writing her story where she is her own heroine is not an easy



task. Generally a writer hides many of the factors which perhaps are not for the world to be known. So presenting an objective amount of one's personality is always a convoluted process.

Though she never wants a personal disaster but it is what befalls them. Mohan works as an engineer in the purchase section of the company and one day is caught taking bribe. Mohan has been prompted to accept commission under the influence of Mr. Aggarwal for the better life of his wife and children. He thus is implicated in the business fraud and he has to go on hiding as some investigation regarding the shenanigans that Mohan is charged with are going on. For hibernating, he takes refuge in Jaya's humble Dadar flat which is located on the outskirts of Bombay and leaves his posh Church gate bungalow. The time for both Jaya and Mohan hang heavy as they do not have anything to keep them occupied. Jaya during this time falls into reflection; lost into reviewing her own past which unfolds the plot of the novel before the readers. She reflects on the last seventeen years which she has spent with her husband in marriage as well as her very family life before marriage. Even her very personal life issues which are quite confidential are taken into review which provides the present novel a touch of quite confessional mode. The novel has been narrated in flashback technique. There is an ample use of dreams in the novel through which Shashi Deshpande has successfully put forward Jaya's mental situation.

Mohan wants from Jaya complete obedience and unquestioning care. He cannot like the idea of Jaya avoiding him and his children. Mohan is a traditional man who has seen his father being quite dominating and abusing his mother time and again. He is an ordinary man who like all men attends his father's death ceremonies and also bears the expenditure. It is quite normal then that he would like the other Indian men demand complete solidarity from his wife. Consequently Jaya too provides him love and affection. Like a traditional lady she too picks up the threads of house holding and tries to connect them and strives hard to be an ideal wife as per the norms of the society but the same has been quite

tiring for her. Each time she tries to subjugate her desire and individuality a cry she listens but she has to adopt a silent look as nothing has happened.

The novel commences with the couple shifting to Dadar flat in Bombay. It is the same place where they had lived after getting married. The reason for their shifting here for some days is that Mohan has been implicated in some malpractice in business and an inquiry is being carried out. It was her first chance of outburst with Mohan soon after their marriage. But nonetheless she has to make the reconciliatory move after days of Mohan's silence. Mohan was quite angry with her for he has never seen women bursting out with anger and passion. It is societal norm that women have to be silent. She has so much loved him that the thought of living without him is so scary for her. Sometimes she has a hunch that there is an impending danger to Mohan's life. She gets scared as Mohan is the one who provides her complete security although she has been living under the pseudo sense of security which she does not realize earlier.

She has written short stories which won for her some awards. She feels that she has related her experience only after transmuting it into something entirely different. In such a stifling environment where she has been trapped to live not outside the confines of her family life, there comes a ray of hope. The advent of Kamat whom she meets is an advertiser and lives alone above the apartment of the Kulkarnies at Dadar, Bombay. Unlike the other men he has no reservations against doing unmanly things like cooking. He is sympathetic and conducts himself with ease and grace in the company of women. Of all the qualities that endeared him to Jaya, she particularly notes his treatment of her as an equal. While every man she meets puts on a different face and a false smile, making his condescension all too palpable. But with Kamat she is her own self.

It is in his presence that she becomes uninhabited and sheds the crippling silence she imposed on herself as a part of erasing every sign of her identity. She gets from Kamat the best of her father's

concern for her – reassurance and comfort – and the best of attention that she would like to have from Mohan. Consequently she confides in him things she would never dare mention to Mohan. It is to Kamat that she turns for solace when one of her stories which she wrote pseudonymously is rejected by many editors. He informs her how to bring freshness in her stories. He tells her of all the required techniques to mould the stories in the right way. He reviews her works as a genuine critic.

But she instantaneously rejects the instinctual urge; it is not in the interest of safeguarding her marital bliss. At home that night, however, she deliberately arouses desire in Mohan and makes fierce love to him in an apparent displacement. She reasons that in her case and in the case of many other married women, marital life is dictated by treachery, deceit and betrayal. Yet the pretense has to be maintained. Perhaps it is the same realization which makes her behave callously on the death of Kamat. Her writing and Kamat are not all that she has given up for the safety of her marital citadel. She has systematically insulated and alienated herself from everything and everybody that posed the remotest threat to the peace of her home.

The novel is a study of silence not in the case of Jaya-Mohan relationship only but rather it extends to many other women who are victims in the patriarchal society. Jaya's maid servant Jeeja is the epitome of the oppressed Indian women. Her husband gives her brutal beatings. She has to shoulder the responsibility of the family by earning the livelihood. Her husband takes a major share of earning and spends it all in satisfying himself with liquor as he is a boozy and remains always drunk. She even brings up the children of other woman whom her husband married. But still she does not protest, never raises her voice in anger but does everything silently as women are destined to do it only.

Jaya's aborting her third child without Mohan's knowledge speaks of her lack of freedom and confidence. Mohan's temperament in love making appall her. Like a typical stereotyped Indian man who wants his wife for physical gratification only without caring a fig about her true inner feelings, he

behaves callously. Their intimacy generally ends in sex. The act of sex which does not stir their feelings but it is just a physical touch. She is so much known to his behaviour that she can almost predict what he would say after every act of sex. She knows pretty well that in order to get by a relationship, one has to learn a lot of tricks and silence is one of them. One can never find a woman opposing her husband as it always results in damage of the marriage. Jaya succumbs and surrenders to Mohan without revolting. Silently she wills to his wills.

Jaya strives hard for expressing her silence. There are numerous examples in the novel that Jaya would eventually break her long held silence but in the end of the novel this desire and resolution of her is left for the future. There is a hint that Jaya would break the ice regarding her silence in the time to come. There is no doubt in the fact that she would definitely break her silence despite the fact that she is unable to express her pent up feelings at the present time. Her resolve to break her silence is a welcome step. It is a first foot forward towards her freedom. She would eventually create a future for her full of happiness and normalcy where the sexes would play no other game but a game of love and prosperity.

Jaya has to follow Mohan to Dadar flat as he is implicated in an act of corruption. To avoid the charges he has to go underground for some days and he consequently chooses Dadar flat. He does not ask for Jaya's consent whether she would like to accompany him as he thinks that it is unnecessary to ask. Jaya's consent is taken for granted. Consequently Jaya too has to accompany Mohan reluctantly. Temperaments of Jaya as well as Mohan's are far different from each other; that is why their marital relationship suffers. There is a silence which surges between both of them. Mohan wanted to marry a girl who was well educated and could speak English fluently. Jaya too in her introspection reflects on their marital relationship and notices nothing but sham, pretence and a facade of marriage that is being maintained because of the social obligations. There is silence between them. Jaya cannot respond to Mohan's questions.

In Dadar flat their relationship suffers all the more. Jaya is being haunted by her past. She is haunted by all the past happenings. She examines her life with Mohan minutely trying to find the reasons for her disintegration. Mohan at that place wants Jaya's attention but Jaya being obsessed with past sometimes does not seem to comprehend Mohan. Thus Mohan flings the arrows of all sorts of accusations on Jaya. He accuses her that she married him because she was compelled by her brother Dinkar. He further accuses her that she never cared for him rather she was more interested in her own needs. He also makes her the scapegoat of the malpractices of which he has been accused.

Due to his charging her of immoral acts, she is frustrated and an altercation ensues. He flings all sort of blames on her and for the first time the dam of silence she has built so carefully in all those seventeen years which has not broken till now, caves in and she pays him in the same coin. She replies furiously that it is for him that she left everything. She even charges him of making her writing career bring to a halt. For the first time she is overwhelmed by a sense of complete anger. When anger overpowers her she finds it difficult to express herself.

The crux of the problem occurs when Jaya bursts out into laughter and Mohan leaves the flat. The laughter that she bursts into is her expression of stupidity of marriage. Mohan's desertion leaves Jaya half mad. She becomes hysterical. Her marital citadel collapses for which she suppressed every feeling and ambition of herself. Her suffering is all the more enhanced by the news that her son Rahul is missing. Hopelessness and despair seize her. She turns to be a neurotic.

After Mohan's desertion she starts walking on the streets of Bombay. She sees a drug addict girl being sexually teased by two men. But the reality is the girl does not mind rather her attitude is patronizing to the men who have been caressing her breasts. Her idea of woman as victim vanishes, as she knows that woman themselves are responsible for many of her troubles. The reality comes before her. All her ideals of revolution melt away. She comes to know that she has identity only with Mohan.

She comes to know that she cannot live without him and her children. She is driven with guilt feeling that she is responsible for everything that befell her and her family. She is haunted by numerous past happenings. She understands that Mohan never stopped her from writing it was actually her own fault. When Mohan had asked her not to do autobiographical kind of writing she could have talked to him instead of maintain silence and relinquishing writing.

Jaya suffers from lack of sleep and an acute sense of detachment. Her dreams turn into nightmares which keep haunting her. Her situation becomes like a mental patient suffering from mental illness and hallucination. Jaya's nightmares put forward her sense of loneliness and estranged feelings. Her nightmares clearly present her pent up emotions. They tell the readers her very existential dilemma. Life for her is hard to endure. In one of her dream, she visualizes Mohan and her own self. They are walking. Mohan suddenly is nowhere and she is alone and passes through a house. The house is vacant but in one of the rooms, there are many girls. She falls dead and the girls mumble in their low voices something. Suddenly Mohan appears on the scene and implores her to run so that they may get a taxi in order to run away. The dream clearly voices her unconscious needs. She wants Mohan back. The house is to be taken care of by her. No one can help her to maintain the house clearly. She has to do it herself.

Luck favours her and it brings for her relief much good news. First is the news from Rahul as he returns. The second good news is from Mohan. Mohan sends a telegram announcing that he will be back as the enquiry ended and he is safe. She is quite happy. She overpowers her hysteria and is back to her usual normal self.

She comes to know that she has been at fault all her life. Though in the beginning of her life at her parental home she has been in quite vehement opposition to what Vanitamami and her grandmother used to say. Her grandmother and Vanitamami are those women of the older generation who generally come into clash with the girls of the new generation like Jaya. Vanitamami's suggestion

that a husband is like a sheltering tree was met with objection by Jaya. She used to wonder regarding her own identity and think that a woman's sole aim in life is thought in society to find a suitable husband and bear children. Jaya too through her reflection gathers strength to break that long silence which she has adopted as wife. I had thought and cut off the bits of that had refused to be Mohan's wife. Thus in the end of this novel there is still a hope that Jaya-Mohan relationship will not end in despair rather Jaya through her efforts will again exert to sort out their problems and they would in future lead a happy life. What Shashi Deshpande exhorts through this novel is that women must fight for their rights. The subjugation of women can be rooted out only if women start breaking their long silence as in the case of Jaya.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **From the cage to the outer world; Reflections of feminism**

Feminism is defined as culture, economic and political movements that are focused towards establishing legal protection and complete equality for the women sector. It is emerged as a worldwide movement to secure women's rights on the one hand and love, respect, sympathy and understanding from males on the other. It once focused on women's struggle for recognition and survival and made them realize that the time has come when they should stop suffering silently in helplessness. This miserable condition of woman all over the world inspired the women writers to raise their voices against the patriarchal society and the result was the emergence of feminism, a great movement in the western world in 1960.

It is a movement for the emancipation of women and their fight for equal rights. With the rise of feminism across the world, a new generation of Indian feminists has emerged. Women

have developed themselves according to the situations and have become advanced and independent in various fields. Contemporary Indian feminists are fighting for and against the individual autonomy, rights, freedom, domestic violence, gender, stereotypes, sexuality, discrimination, sexism, non-objectification, and freedom from patriarchy, the right to an abortion, reproductive rights, the prostitution and education.

The feminist literary critics, in India in the seventies, came to believe that women had to create a literature of their own, in which the feminine sensibility could consider and confront the feminine issue and experience. Feminism in literature is essentially concerned with the representation of women in society. It is always meant independent of mind, spirit and body and it has been subtly handled in the massive or colossal work of English novels in India.

In Indian writing, feminism has been used as a modest attempt for evaluating the real social scenario as far as woman concerned. Right from the past, woman has faced several problems and has been exploited by the man and the society, which is made by man at large. She has also been portrayed as subservient and weak and has been considered as an accessory to man. Her biological features are connected with her destiny. As she is deprived of her own identity in the male dominated society, she is always defined only in relation to man. She is altogether laden with a traditional role and confined within the four walls of the house.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the famous contemporary Indian novelists in English. She deals with the inner world of the Indian women in her novels. She portrays her heroines in a realistic manner. Basically she writes about the situation of women and their failures in the fast changing socio-economic milieu of India. She writes about the conflict between tradition and modernity in relation to women in the middle class society. Woman is the center of her fictional world. Her desires, efforts and failures in the traditional Indian society are the main concepts in



her novel. She is typically Indian, modern and feminine in her sensibility. She makes it clear that hers is not the strident and militant kind of feminism which sees the man as the cause of all troubles. According to her an Indian woman is different from her counterpart in the western countries. They suffer and adjust themselves. Her depiction of women's world is authentic, realistic and credible. She is an ordinary woman who writes sitting at home.

Shashi Deshpande has many avatars. In literary circles, she is the author of the 1990 Sahitya Academy award winning novel *That Long Silence*. In *That Long Silence* as elsewhere Deshpande raises her strong voice of protest against the male dominated Indian society and against manmade rules and convention.

Shashi Deshpande derives the title of her novel *That Long Silence* from the classic understatement by Elizabeth Robins made in a speech to a world body. And the few women writers who tried to present facts from the woman's point of view often succumbed to the feminist ideology of creating strong women characters. This again tended to distort the truth in as much a manner as the writing by men did. Judged against this backdrop *That Long Silence* comes relatively close to real life experience. The novel achieves greater credibility from the fact that Jaya the protagonist is a very well read person, possessing a literary sensitivity which corresponds with her fictional role. Articulate women characters are obviously difficult to create, natured as they are in the culture of silence. *That Long Silence* portrays the conflict in the mind of the narrator between the writer and the housewife. *That Long Silence* is the story of Jaya, the protagonist, who remains a sufferer in her childhood and adulthood. As a young girl, she is chilled by her grandmother for her inquisitive and witty nature. For seventeen long years, Jaya managed to suppress her feeling, thinking that it is more important to be a good wife than a good writer. She perhaps would have remained in the shadow of her husband Mohan, for the rest of

her life if it had not been for the jolt she received as her husband was arrested for misappropriation.

The norms of womanhood in specific terms have been forested by recourse to religion, mythology, mass media, films and literature, oral and written texts. All major religions in India have been interpreted and controlled by upper-caste men who have also defined morality, social codes and ethics. A person's marriage, divorce and inheritance in India are determined by her religion. Religion codifies society in ways that privilege men.

A short historical survey of the construction and representation of Indian women from colonial times to the present may be useful in understanding the conflicting roles imposed to the contemporary Indian women. Deshpande's work makes central the division between the stereo typifying and the reality of the urban middle-class, professional women in India today. Shashi wanted to express her feelings about the society and its various aspects and this was the perfect platform to make the reader aware of any burning issues. Her novels are deeply rooted in India and this is the specialty of her writing. The characters, settings, and the conflicts, are inherently Indian. Her short stories have been widely anthologized throughout the country. *That Long Silence* is not an imaginary story. It is a story that happens in every middle class and educated Indian woman's life.

As we know that Shashi Deshpande's concern is the woman and her external quest. She has re-incarnated the new Indian woman and has reinforced the female dilemma in her novels. Her concern for women is reflected who are deeply rooted in the line of socio-moral-sexual fiction. Therefore her regard for the social problem, especially in the favour of middle-class women is apparent. Deshpande shows considerable promise in delineating characters from the

middle class. She portrays the middle class women tactfully. And there is no comparison of such type of description of a woman.

Jaya is the protagonist in the novel *That Long Silence*. She has involved in the current traditional role of a woman, wife and mother. She has suppressed her existential self. Though she has a happy home with her well earning husband and two children Rati and Raghul and material comforts, she feels fed up with the monotony and fixed pattern of her life. In her attempt to rediscover her 'true self', she finds herself as an unfulfilled wife, a disappointed mother and a failed writer.

Actually the theme of this novel is simple. Jaya, the protagonist, recalls her married life with nostalgia. She is married to Mohan, an engineer with two children. Her life gets changed when Mohan is found guilty of a business malpractice, and she with her husband has to reside at her old flat in Dadar, Mumbai. Here, she recalls her relationship with innumerable relations. She tries to come to terms with herself by trying to write about herself and family and is determined to break a 'Long Silence'. The novel ends with the return of her son, Rahul and promise of Mohan's coming back. This novel traces how Jaya gradually emerges as a confident individual. A stereotyped house wife initially nervous but later she turns into a confident woman. Being a writer she is expected to reveal her views and ideas but she keeps a mum and struggles with her present. She is not different from the other heroines of hers. Jaya journeys from ignorance to knowledge, from nervousness to confidence and from weakness to strength. Going through the whole process, she is able to accept the challenges of life.

Desphande makes Jaya, a writer of woman's magazine fiction. In Jaya's stories they lived happily even after although she knows the falsity of the view of life. Also the mixture of

surrealism and fantasy in some of the experiences the writer undergoes is an important aspect of the making and unmaking of fictions in *That Long Silence*. Jaya is representative of the urban, middle-class women exposed to liberal western ideas. But she is unable to free herself entirely from the clutches of male chauvinist ideas. These ideas are a part and parcel of her cultures those around her.

This novel declares that a woman is a being. She has her own existence. She is not only for amusement. She has her own life in which she has full right like man has. She is capable of finding her own way to salvation. She needs no support or help from others. With the use of mythical characters, the writer attracts the attention of the readers to the plight and struggle of those characters but at the same time she reveals the awareness of the Indian wife of her existence, identity, position and her acceptance of Arjuna's way of facing life. Now she is ready to face every side of life whether it gives joy or gloom. So does Jaya. She has found the key to be successful in life is that a person must live his life on his own terms and should always tries to make it happy.

Like other female protagonists, Jaya also finds herself in the midst of a domestic tension when she tries to know about her husband's corrupt practices at office. In order to avoid exposure to public, Mohan shifts from his posh church gate flat to a small apartment in Dadar, where they had once lived soon after their marriage. Consequently, her husband loses his status, and she loses her identity and her selfhood. They have nothing better to do but to pretend the illusion of happiness, as most couples generally do. But there is no place for hypocrisy and pretensions in a really happy married life. In fact, Deshpande is out to explode the myth of perfectly happy wife and mother.

The male superiority signifies the patriarchal culture in the family relationship between Jaya and her husband Mohan. The result of marriage yield into frustration, discard and disharmony as there was absence of love with only sex. Jaya was compelled to keep silence and surrender and adopt socio-psychic nature. The traditional, institution of Indian family is dwindling as the familial relationship does not have gender equality. Male member of the family is entitled to all sorts of comforts and excuses whereas female member has to sacrifice her life keeping silence, suppressing emotions and desires. The mechanical and artificial love is significant where gender discrimination exists in family environment. Jaya could break her silence after the support of Kamat but decides to keep silence and surrender. Violence is not the solution to the problems, to bring a change one has to wait and to be optimistic.

“To achieve anything, to become anything you’ve got to be hard and ruthless” (Deshpande, 2). With these words the novel *That Long Silence* starts and these words throw light on Jaya’s changed view of life. As Jaya records, that day Mohan came back from work carrying a magazine which he thrust on her saying that there was her story. Jaya knew that it did not matter to Mohan that she had written a good story about a man who could not reach out to his wife except through his body. It only mattered to him that people might think that the man and woman in the story were Mohan and Jaya. Though Jaya knows that there is no truth in what her husband thinks, she does not try to reason with him. She thinks, “Looking at his stricken face, I had been convinced. I had done him wrong. And I had stopped writing after that” (72). Jaya later starts writing light, humorous pieces on the travails of a middle-class housewife in a column titled ‘Sita’. This receives a good response from the editors and readers and, more importantly, gets a nod of approval from her husband Mohan. Through the episode of corruption, we also get a glimpse of the Indian concept of ethics. Mohan, as viewed by the Indian standards, is a dutiful

son and by extension, a dutiful husband and father. In the small, drab flat at Dadar, Jaya's carefully built facade cracks and she breaks her self-imposed silence. She proceeds to unmask layer the superficial aspects of her married life to reveal the hard core of reality.

Jaya herself faces a traumatic situation. She too has been jolted out of a false complacency. Ever since her marriage she had been content to follow the footsteps of the mythological role model of Sita. At one time, she even tried to emulate the mythical Gandhari. Looking up to her husband as a sheltering tree, she had been lulled into a false sense of security. Whatever chaotic conditions prevailed outside, a home is a safe and secure place with the husband as the head of the family. This sense of security was shattered with the sudden prospect of Mohan facing an enquiry. Jaya keeps the insane Kusum at home and takes care of her in spite of strong objections from her mother and brothers.

After recovering a bit, she is taken home by her brother, Dilip. Kusum, however, commits suicide a day before her husband is supposed to take her home. Jaya's capacity of self-analysis is the distinguishing quality in her character. She has the courage to acknowledge her flaws. That is why she said that she did not intend to make Mohan a scapegoat. Thanks to her ruthless self-analysis, she knew that her fear of losing the comfort of a happy family was at the root of taking the role of Sita.

Jaya, makes a powerful statement on the totally unfair system prevailing in our society. The most notable example is the family tree episode. Once Jaya's Ramu Kaka excitedly shows her the family tree he had prepared. He is very happy and proud of the fact that he had been able to go back nearly two hundred years to trace the line of their ancestors. Jaya, however, is shocked to find her name missing. Nor does the family tree include her mother, her aunts and most importantly her Aji "who single-handedly kept the family together"(181), women who had

married into this family. This amply illustrates the utter lack of importance for women in the India social set up. In order to plug that hole in heart she has to erase the silence in between them. Deshpande's unique narrative skill blends the interior monologue with the ebb and flow of outward incidents including dialogue among several characters. The novel's strength lies in its capacity to capture the reader's attention through a spell of narration. At the end of the novel, Jaya very honestly questions herself: "But why am I making myself the heroine of this story? Why do I presume that the understanding is mine alone?"(189)..... It is questions like which prove that *That Long Silence* is not just another novel filled with hysterical ranting by a prejudiced writer but almost the diary of a sane housewife.

Feminism has always meant freedom of mind and body. It is the concept that men and women should be equal politically economically and socially. Its primary concern is to end patriarchal domination. Thus, unlike many other novels which are written from the feminist point of view, *That Long Silence* is a muted and essentially sympathetic treatment of the problem of marital relationship; maintaining a credible balance between the sexes.

### **Conclusion**

A close study of Shashi Deshpande's novels reveals her deep insight into the plight of Indian women, who feel smothered and fettered, in a tradition-bound, male dominated society. She delineates her women characters in the light of their hopes, fears, aspirations and frustrations. These women are aware of their strengths and limitations, but find themselves thwarted by the opposition and pressure from a society conditioned overwhelmingly by the patriarchal mind-set. She highlights their inferior position and the subsequent degradation in a male dominated society.

Shashi Deshpande's protagonist's quest for identity gets largely accentuated due to their frustrating experiences born of the prohibitive nature of the Indian patriarchal society. In her novels, the host of male characters — husbands, lovers, fathers and other relations display different aspects of patriarchy and oppression. The older men, particularly the fathers, are broad-minded. And friends are feminists in their approach and sympathize with the protagonists' lot. Deshpande's male characters only serve to enable the protagonists to define their identities more fully.

Deshpande's women protagonists are victims of the prevalent gross gender discrimination, first as daughters and later as wives. They are conscious of the great social inequality and injustice towards them, and struggle against the oppressive and unequal nature of the social norms and rules that limit their capability and existence as a wife. Fettered to their roles in the family, they question the subordinate status ordained to them by society. Deshpande has made realistic representation of the Indian middle class women and her sincere concern for women and their oppressive lot is reflected strongly in all her novels.

The women protagonists in Shashi Deshpande's novels go through a thought process after which they see themselves differently. There is a change in their mental attitude, which is spelt out in a change in action. We feel that the revolution comes not out of escaping the situation, but facing the situation with a different idea of what I am. This is the biggest revolution. If one realizes about her identity, positions and importance of existence, there is no better revolution than that. This is what women characters state. By liberation, Shashi Deshpande means being humanitarian, being aware of responsibilities and duties refusing to give in to oppression and cruelty. Her protagonists, in moments of crisis look to the past; they are shown going to their parental home. Reasons of disorder in the family life are given in her novels in various ways.



The novel can be seen as different expressions of the problems in real life situations. To that extent the novels can also be seen as realistic.

The concept of sisterhood is more prominently seen in her novels. Sometimes it can be seen as a solution to end male domination in the society. In India, the male centered society is a curse and a lifelong threat to women. There are lots of differences in between men and women on the basis of their profession, family positions etc. Cooking and bringing up children and childbirth were part of the woman's world and it was the women in joint families who supported one another in times of trouble and illness. There was some cruelty too between women but more than that was the support which showed a bond of sisterhood. However sisterhood has never solved the problems of women, but has only been a comforting balm. Companionship between men and women is the only solution to the problem of women; sisterhood is only a comfort zone.

Shashi Deshpande's emphasis on woman hood is coupled with the idea that the institution of marriage needs to be seen in a different light in the modern context. Her novels suggest ways of adjustment by the heroines to the issue of marital problems and their different expressions. Shashi Deshpande occupies a place of pre-eminence among the contemporary women novelists concerned with women's issues. Deshpande's creative talent and ideology have established her as a great feminist writer genuinely concerned with women's issues and anxieties.

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