

Gender Politics in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*

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Abstract:

This paper deals with gender policies in *That Long Silence*, the search for gender-specific concept of women. In several respects, these women are educated and progressive, but they are not ready to break free from the conventional and cultural expectations of women. The role of gender in this novel is imagined and re-enacted in a multitude of relationships. *Long Silence* is a book that also serves as a literary critic. It explores the social pillars of marriage and the home. Gender strategy can be easily shown in the book. This kind of relationship is what is shown in the book, and the paper has pointed out certain politics or policies in the novel.

Keywords: Politics, Conventional, Relationship, Gender

That Long Silence

Feminist thought involved both mainstream and conservative theorists. Feminism's three waves include a multitude of feminist views. At the outset, though, the feminism movement concentrated only on the ambition of fair treatment or the right to vote. B. Antony and her efforts, the suffrage movement started in the United States. It has served as the base of the new feminism movement. The revolution did not entail a political front in the early years, and only by the second wave did the emphasis change to an economic and social front. A very crucial point to remember during this period is that, in the early years, xenophobia in the first wave actually advocated for fair treatment.

The prevailing belief that women are normal has some characteristics that are inferior to men. This changed in the second generation, when feminist commentators began to contend that women were not literally born, but meticulously made. During that time, this new thinking inspired a number of feminist critics. The basic concept that a skewed world view was used as a mirror to view the world of women became obvious. Men's authors have definitely inspired even the patriarchal texts.

In India Holy Scriptures, society and beliefs perpetuate the concept of men being the better. But one female writer has always represented women in India. She is, by all means, concerned about the problems facing women in India. Deshpande uses her prose as a way of explaining the tension between modernity and tradition. Cultural principles for women in India are to cook and take care of the home. The value of modernity is very different. They are expected to work in an office, and they are often needed to do something at home. Her writing is a social universe with multiple dynamic interactions. Most men and women live together and

migrate throughout their lives with their various age groups, professions and gender roles. The characters are considering life and emptiness in it. Women's characters are always in the process of self-discovery or redefine their position with the expectations of society.

This paper deals with gender policies in *That Long Silence*, the search for gender-specific concept of women. In several respects, these women are educated and progressive, but they are not ready to break free from the conventional and cultural expectations of women. The role of gender in this novel is imagined and re-enacted in a multitude of relationships. Feminist understanding during the second generation of women that they are not born and that they are born is valid in this research. Critics reviewing the novel Shashi Deshpande also considered it rich in dealing with gender inequality. Nilufer E. Bharucha points out that "Deshpande 's texts provide the most comprehensive and knowledgeable account of gender inequality in contemporary India" (363). Other observers point out her tendency to write about middle class women, not to advocate their cause in any way, but merely to depict them in the story.

Indian heritage has undoubtedly maintained its mythology at tremendous heights. Ram and Sita are often depicted as the perfect wife and husband. The protagonist in *That Long Silence* is in line with the conventional depiction of Sita who is humble, docile and subservient, but still content to serve at home. She's a lady who appears to be pursuing her husband's bids without any questions. Mohan, her husband has been trapped in a financial misappropriation. This event requires them to switch from their house to a very shabby house. Jaya describes how she actually pursued her husband like Sita into exile. The tiny flat makes her worry about her condition, and she ruminates how her name changed when she married Mohan. The name was not disapproved solely because Mohan must have been insulted. She clearly acknowledged as a simple lady, and all her life simply lived performing all her feminine duties. This is the congruent identity of most

women in India. Indian women are supposed to behave in some way. For example, Jaya has to wait a long night for her husband to return. The food needs to be hot and fresh. Just in case the meal did not suit his taste, he would throw the dishes and the children would wake up. Waiting for her husband is a useless thing to do. The wait is often followed by a long silence that is not due to her husband, but to centuries of Indian patriarchal standards. Women are seen as martyrs, and they are supposed to be sacrificial in that way. They are lauded for being sacrificial, and as French feminists, such as Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous, remember that a patriarchal system established by a man is the authority under whom women can trust is an unwritten law.

The standards pressurize an individual, and they follow them, and if they do not follow the patriarchal premise, they are supposed to stay silent. Jaya's sister-in-law, Vimala is mistreated, and she doesn't get any support from her in-laws. She died because of silent pain, and Jaya could see red marks, but Vimala did not want to share the suffering with others. In either case, Jaya's mother-in-law and Vimala were not so isolated. They all died in isolation, conforming to the patriarchy.

Jaya's childhood training makes her behave like all the women who belong to a household. Yet her sensitivity is revolting against all efforts to confine herself to the conceptual model of a traditional woman. To affirm a woman's social values, she suppresses all her personal desires, leaving her isolated and insecure. "I had to confess to myself the fact that I always find family life unendurable. Worse than anything else was the frustration of the unchanging pattern, the unending monotony"(TLS 4). The monotony of family life is burdening her, and she is mentally repressed. This silence allows her husband to take up the role of guardian and provider. It's because of her silence. Women lead a miserable life mainly because of their inability to talk about their issues. They have been crippled by long silence, and Jaya is one of the victims who

embrace family life without questioning it. Gender strategy can be easily shown in the book. The male gender is granted all rights, and women are subject to all that they say or do. Women are the topic of silence.

The middle class and the male psyche are perfectly depicted in the book, and women are treated as men's challenges as they step out of their jobs. They decide to exclude women from the agreed line of social conformism. The novel also deals with the fact that socially empowered women also feel limited. Jaya is a modern guy, but she is simply ingrained in culture, and her mother, on the other hand, is fully entrenched in traditions. They don't get each other, and this is causing a lot of issues. The key explanation may sound like an attitude issue. But the true challenge is society's inherent belief.

Gender strategy of injustice, not in the way of rights and work, but in the form of culture, is the key to interpreting the text. Silence as a reaction is the common language of many marginalized people. By all way, conforming to the male-centered world view of isolation would not support the feminist cause. Jaya's absence leaves commentators and readers asking whether it was intended as a sense of responsibility or merely to imitate the great values of past Hindu women. This is a recurrent issue about Jaya's silence. This alarming silence on the topic is making such a mess in her life.

Inequality in cognitive rank between Mohan and Jaya can also be seen as another problem. Jaya's silence can also be wise in not tilting gender scales out of control. Critics observe that the novel is an attempt to crack Jaya's silence at a certain stage. It's almost certainly about the other characters and their silence, too. It's also, in fact, about the silence of Mohan who talks, but there's no listening to ramble. Maybe Mohan's character is intentionally undermined, and Jaya explains him as follows: "His old air of authority and trust. Then the old self

disappeared, leaving behind a lonely, bewildered man. "She also compares him to Graham Green's Scobie, a lonely man who is reconciled to his future. The trouble with gender politics is that they're both sides. The feminist notion of generalizing men has become a concern. This novel uses Mohan to explain the insensitivity of men, but this cannot be the case everywhere. Gender dynamics are to be analyzed in all possible angles.

Mohan is emotionally reliant on Jaya, too. He's desperate to see what's going on in the field. She wants his wife to share her anxieties and fears. During the bad times, he sees it as a refuge. The confusion he produced is now bound up with his child. She's like an anchor in a hurricane. Men's emotional support alone is needed for their blunders, and Mohan wants his wife to understand him, but he never tried to understand her silence. He needs her to behave like Sita, the conventional roles of women that she expects her wife to perform. Both anger and fear lead to a physical collapse. This makes Jaya worry even more of her condition. As Beauvoir points out regarding marriage, it literally leases "unless days repeated forever, life that falls softly into death without challenging its purpose"(500). This is true of Jaya and her martial life. After the failure, she agrees to break her silence and paves the way for a future that is different from her experience.

The book retains a consistency in the plot. The relationship between man and woman is analyzed fairly whenever possible, and it does not pin all the blame on men. But at the end of the day, when Mohan confesses his wrong doing and his abrupt disappearance gives a great shock. The true tragedy was not Mohan's wrong actions, but her isolation in the relationship for such a long time. Jaya's self-realization is the achievement of the story. It took a long road to break Jaya's long silence. In the end, she offers to be assertive, and like much of Deshpande 's character, she undertakes a great ordeal to break her silence for the better.

Long Silence is a book that also serves as a literary critic. It explores the social pillars of marriage and the home. Gender strategy can be easily shown in the book. The various marriage institutions are carefully analyzed with regard to the brother, the sister, the daughter, the son, and particularly with regard to the husband and the wife. Sex appears to make a great deal of difference in both relationships. Jaya, at the end of the day, let's leave all the ghosts that have been bothering her all her life through her fiction.

The inner chaos of Jaya is salty. Yet she chooses to take the feminist stance of accepting her true, full self instead of a fractured self that was adjusted to her husband's likes and desires. Like the second generation of feminism, she appears to be free from an oppressive culture that controlled how she could behave. The beauty of this novel is that it never makes Jaya a rebel or a militant feminist by any means. It's an endogenous development to take its rightful position in the name of her own rather than that of her spouse. Gender equality policies and the argument to equality are well developed in the book.

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