

Self Introspection of Silence Leads to the Sanity of Women Characters in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande - A Study

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In Post-colonial Literature, The Silence is the most recurring theme. According to many writers silence is the loudest scream of a woman who suffers. Most of the women characters of Shashi Deshpande try to communicate through their silence. But the result of this long kept silence is all in vain. Therefore they start to question their silence and henceforth they attain their sanity. Most of the protagonist of Shashi Deshpande's fiction practice silence as their utmost weapon in their marital relationship. Because of their practice those women protagonist undergo a mental stress. This practice of silence is because of the society, tradition and culture they were brought up. The education and advancement in the society has a deep change in the thought process of the women characters in Shashi Deshpande's novels. Hence they introspect themselves only to find that they have to break the silence which they created to protect their marital relationship. But the same silence has become a threat instead of safe guarding their marital relationship. Therefore they decide to break the silence to reach the level of sanity. They break the silence only to identify their true self and be sane.

In the novel *That Long Silence* the protagonist Jaya is a well-educated middle class women brought up traditionally according to the will and wish of the societal norms. She was taught to be obedient to her husband and women should be submissive to her family in her marital life. Jaya is married to Mohan who strictly adheres to the norms of the society. He even changes the name of Jaya as Suhasini which means "soft, smiling, placid, motherly women". Mohan is money oriented traditionalist and always for the societal betterment. Jaya expresses her feelings to become a writer. At first Mohan allows her to do so but later think she writes stories that goes against the tradition and culture and puts a wet blanket. Therefore Jaya manages to suppress her creative availability. She is forced to give more importance to be an ideal wife rather than being a good writer. From childhood Jaya was under the will of her family latter after marriage under the will of her husband. She yields to all his moves without opposing his decision by maintaining a long silence.

Jaya deals with the agony of women in the traditional Society of India. Her silence for seventeen years becomes deafening. Though she has been fully satisfied as multifaceted women, as a wife, a daughter in law, a good mother, she feels her life is in void. Mohan keeps on insisting Jaya by quoting his mother and his sister who used to be silent even if they are treated badly. He says that a woman should never be angry. At one stage when her routine life gets disturbed, Jaya realizes herself and tries to find out her identity. In her introspection she

finds out that neither Mohan nor her family is responsible for her failure as a writer. Jaya looks into her diary where she doesn't find herself but only as more of Mohan's wife, Rahul and Rati's mother. She has completely forgotten and denied herself. Jaya decides to stop blaming others. She takes responsibility and decides to remove the darkness in her soul and mind. Thus break the silence with Mohan so as to reach her sanity. She hopes to spend the rest of her life with Mohan with better understanding. She decides to speak up with Mohan so that she rejects the option silence from her life. Jaya emerges as a new confident woman with sane mind and soul. Jaya concludes with an array of hope, "It's possible that we may change even own long periods of time. But can always hope. Without that life would be impossible. And if there is anything "I know now it is this: Life has always made to be possible." (193)

The second protagonist is Saritha (Saru) in the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is a successful doctor. This novel is said to be the sequel to the novel *That Long Silence*. In that novel Jaya tries to become a writer whereas in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* Sarita is a famous doctor whose life is said to be a double life because of her husband Manohar (Manu). Sarita is a renowned and independent doctor at day but a silent suffer in the hands of her husband at night. During her childhood she faces the gender discrimination and was neglected by her parents.

Saru's life falls apart when her husband has a sense of inferiority complex because of her great social status and does not like to play the second fiddle role. Because of a superior position Manu becomes the sadist and vents his frustration in the form of sexual sadism over Saru but remains silent. At one stage Saru decides to leave to her mother's place to console her father for the loss of her mother. That is when she realizes her true self. She goes to her father's place after fifteen years. As Sarita has conversation with her father, she starts to introspect herself. She understands that her long kept silence was of no use. Nearly for fifteen years she has used the option silence as the only way to survive. She realizes unless and until she speaks up with Manohar she shall never be out of the misery where she is in the illusion of being normal. She decides to speak with Manohar so that she could be normal and be sane. She decides to accompany Manohar rather than being silent and go insane. She has a better understanding of herself and decides to confront the reality. Thus Sarita concludes, "Baba if Manu comes tell him to wait I will be back as soon as I can." (221)

The next protagonist is Urmila (Urmi) from the novel *The Binding Vine*. This is the fourth novel of Shashi Deshpande. In this novel the protagonist is bit different from the other two Jaya and Sarita. Urmi to overcome from her personal tragedy of losing her one year old daughter Anu, diverts her attention on the victims Kalpana and Mira whom she meets. The life story of Mira her long dead mother-in-law is a silent sufferer of her unhappy marriage. It is revealed to the readers that Mira is the victim of marital rape. But till her death she keeps silent. She never opened her problems. Mira in her solitude has written poems which came to light when Urmi accidentally found those notebooks in the dusty storage trunk. The writings of Mira brings a change to Urmi. Urmi understands that there is a cord that ties the mother and daughter emotionally like the umbilical cord to which the mother and child are connected physically. As

it is cut down at one point which can never be again together is the point where she realizes that her daughter is really gone. "What's broken cannot be mended." Therefore it is necessary for one to find their own strength. Hence she decides to publish the poems of her long dead mother-in-law Mira.

The second victim whom Urmi meets is Kalpana, Shakutai's elder daughter. Urmi learns that Kalpana is a rape victim and was brutally raped by her sister Sulu's husband. She was hospitalized and unconscious. When everyone asks to report the case to the police Shakutai refuses and remains silent thinking that this would affect her daughter's marital life in future. She says, it is the plight of the woman to be silent and cope with the tragedies that they undergo in their life. When Dr. Bhaskar in the hospital questions Shakutai, Urmi listens and realizes the words of her mother-in-law and persuades Shakutai by breaking the false significance that Shakutai have been focusing so far. At the end of the novel Shakutai's decision of reporting the case changes Urmi and gains strength which gives her a new sense of Liberation. She has been tormenting herself with the guilt of her dead daughter. Finally the voices of those two women break Urmi's false significance that she has been clinging onto. Those victims are the eye opener for Urmi in her life. Thus she decides to move on forward.

Silence in these novels is portrayed as the different kinds of feelings like protest, objection, pain, suffering, fear. Despite of the social status women characters of Shashi Deshpande endure silence for a long time. They endure it because of the tradition based society. As they cross the stage of silence, they introspect and find solution but they never leave the tradition. They reject the traditional idea of being silent. The women characters do not reject their marriage life but the notion of being silent sufferers in the marital life. The protagonist makes their voices heard. They stop being silent and be below their male counterparts but decides to walk beside them and along with them to form a new and happy world for which they have to break the silence and be sane in mind and soul. These women characters Jaya, Sarita and Urmila of Shashi Deshpande's novel are the best protagonist who self introspect their silence and become a normal sane person and never go out of traditional even though they are women of modern era.

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