

# **A feminist study on Shashi Deshpande's novel "*That Long Silence*".**

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## **DECLARATION**

I **Glory Moshahary**, bearing the enrollment number: **PGENG408A22016** and registration number: **018859** of **2019-2020** a regular PG student of the department of English at St. Ann's Bodoland University, Kokrajhar hereby declare that the Dissertation work entitle **A feminist study on Shashi Deshpande's novel " That Long Silence"** submitted towards the partial fulfillment of requirements for the award of the degree of Masters of Arts in English, is my original work and I now further state that no application for any degree has been made using this material.

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**Abstract:**

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the issues and hardship that middle-class women face in patriarchal society. Shashi Deshpande is a feminist author from India. She has revealed the ways in which dominant males in the home and society mistreated and abused women. The majority of her articles frequently address the obstacles and hardships that women encounter as a result of the laws and regulations that govern India's patriarchal culture. In India, both the upper and lower classes of women are required to uphold family and social norms. The primary function in society is played by men. Deshpande's work *That Long Silence* tackles the subject of women's struggle and tolerance in the face of societal and familial situations. Deshpande presents Jaya as the main character of her novel *That Long Silence* who comes from a middle-class family and has a number of issues. Jaya is a writer who is inquisitive and full of questions. However, her grandmother disapproved of her progressive viewpoint. She used to urge her to be skilled at home tasks and to act well after marriage, and to keep quiet if she didn't agree. Jaya's husband Mohan also doesn't entirely support her goals and comes from a patriarchal background. Women are still trapped in antiquated superstitions. Women are not entitled in their own homes. Deshpande has attempted to convey the women's efforts to break the silence and express their inner conflicts through Jaya's character. This dissertation also attempts to illustrate the journey of Deshpande's heroine Jaya, from hopelessness to optimism as well as the struggle that women face in gaining respect and a sense of self identity. Overall, this dissertation seeks to present a complete feminist study of "*That Long Silence*" focusing on the topics such as social status of women in the patriarchal society, struggle for self-identity, Jaya's transition from silence to speech, empowerment through self-awareness and her path to self-discovery.

**Keyword:** Women's struggle, Silence, Self-identity, Patriarchal, Feminist.

## Chapter: 1

### 1.1: Introduction

At its core, feminism is a revolutionary movement and philosophy of life that seeks to establish equal political, economic, personal, and social rights for women. Feminism has evolved over time by addressing various issues pertaining to women and gender minorities and advocating systemic change dealing with deeply-rooted disparities. This system challenges patriarchal standards in perpetuating discrimination and inequality against females. By the aid of feminism throughout history, women have been emancipated to greater extents than it would have happened without the movements being there. Policies and laws that promote gender equality like access to education, health care services, and equal job opportunities have been changed through feminist movements. Furthermore, feminism calls for cultural remodeling those values and recognizes the participation and voices of women in society. Additionally feminism also supports reproductive rights such as contraception availability or safe abortion as an inherent aspect of female autonomy. Another basic objective is economic equality which encompasses aspects like fair payment policies (such as bridging the wage gap), recognition of unpaid work among others as well as equal employment opportunities at large. Also it should be noted that another key element regarding feminism lies in challenging sex stereotypes that restrict human's potentialities thus perpetuating discrimination. The twentieth century feminist movements have enabled people to vote, own land, work, and be educated. In recent times, feminism has become a powerful lens for understanding and addressing issues of gender inequality in various spheres of life. Feminism comprises diverse theories and movements focused on challenging and dismantling patriarchal structures that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and oppression. 1. *Liberal Feminism* emphasizes gender equality through such means as political and legal

reformation. It seeks to address equal pay, voting rights and reproductive rights within existing societal frameworks. 2. *Radical Feminism* perceives patriarchy as the fundamental cause of women's oppression with a demand for radical reconstruction of society that would wipe out all forms of gender inequality. It usually revolves around such questions as sexual violence, reproductive control or the devaluation of women's labor. 3. *Marxist Feminism* is a blend between feminist thought about patriarchy and Marxist ideas concerning economic exploitation exploring how patriarchal oppression intersects with class relations and capitalism reproduces the subordination of women. 4. *Intersectional Feminism* acknowledges that the manner women are oppressed is influenced by their particular social positions on race, class, sexuality, and ability. It serves to include all genders in the feminism that dealt with such diverse and complicated systems of oppression as one of the main goals is recognizing that various forms of oppression are intertwined. 5. Postcolonial feminism dissects the manner in which colonialism, imperialism, and globalization interweave with gender subordination. It puts forward the woman's experiences in the Global South and effect of colonial past on gender relations, moreover, it critiques western feminist standpoint etc. Though feminist writers have been around for centuries, they did not gain real visibility until the feminist movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Writers like Mary Wollstonecraft who was known for her work "A Vindication of Rights of Woman" 1792 helped to lay foundation for this kind of thought, became more prominent during first wave feminism which began towards later part of nineteenth century; they include Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Virginia Woolf among. These writers sincerely championed for women's rights and gender equality via a variety of literary forms such as novels, essays, and manifestos furthermore they confronted social norms systems. Since then, feminist authors have emerged, using literature as a powerful tool to address issues of gender



oppression and discrimination. Highlighting the predicament and growing issues faced by women has been one of the main goals of modern writing worldwide. This study will analyze Shashi Deshpande's female characters in relation to feminism looking at various aspects of representation, positions as well as stages. Shashi Deshpande is a renowned Indian writer whose works are characterized by vivid images drawn from the lives and experiences of women. Her novel "That Long Silence" depicts the conflict between traditional values and the emerging aspirations for gender equality and personal autonomy. Deshpande's protagonist, Jaya represents the struggle of many middle-class Indian women trapped between these opposing influences. Feminist authors and critics including Shashi Deshpande, Eline Showalter, Manjula Padmanabhan, Anita Desai paint a realistic portrait of male dominated Indian society. Similarly, Manjula Padmanabhan's novel "*Lights Out*" sheds light on the patriarchal power structure that governs society as well as the connection between men and women. Padmanabhan exhibits a world which has identity crises. In "*Lights Out*", Leela's every utterance is made silent. She implores unto man about her troubles and finds no help. Her voice was also unheard and she was also oppressed and marginalized by her husband just because she is a woman. Shashi Deshpande in her another novel, "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" also shows the conflict between the traumas of her troubled marriage and her need for autonomy. This novel tells the story of Saru, a successful doctor dealing with the stress of a dysfunctional marriage and the shadows of her past. It delves into the themes of domestic violence, professional ambitions, and the quest for autonomy. Saru's journey is also a poignant reflection on the societal expectations placed on women and their quest for self-definition. Shashi Deshpande made a vital contribution to Indian feminism by articulating the voices of women and experiences. She depicts feminism as an inclusive and growing discourse that accommodates the diverse realities of Indian women.

Deshpande's characters often exhibit a quiet strength that subverts the notions of submissive femininity and emphasizes the variety of ways that empowerment may take many forms. Shashi Deshpande's *"That Long Silence"* is also an expression of the silence of the modern Indian housewife. Deshpande's fame stems from her portrayal of actual life experiences. The work truly reflects the inner conflict of Jaya and her search for self-identity. This paper entitled *"A Feminist Study on Shashi Deshpande's novel That Long Silence"* deals with the sufferings of female character in the novel. Women ought to receive equal rights and opportunities through the feminist movement. The feminist movement's primary goals are gender equality or gender justice. In India, women writers have stepped up to express their feminist views on life and the patriarchal family. Indian novelist Shashi Deshpande is well-known for her work in English. *That Long Silence*; *The Dark Holds No Terrors*; and *Roots and Shadows* are some of her well-known works. She is a prominent Indian author known for her exploration of women's experiences and societal dynamics. In 1990, her fifth book, *That Long Silence*, received the Sahitya Akademi award. Deshpande's work is dominated by key issues such as women's liberation and quest of identity in society. According to Deshpande, every woman has the right to enjoy her life to the utmost. She is of the opinion that every woman has the right to make their own choices, and to become self-sufficient. Additionally, she is of the opinion that they are entitled to discover their true identity and self. In her novel, Jaya, the protagonist, find herself trapped in a suffocating marriage with her husband, Mohan. Jaya experiences emotional and mental turmoil as she tries to cope with the demands of her roles as wife, mother, and daughter-in-law. The narrative unfolds as she confronts societal expectations, her own desires, and the reality of her troubled marriage. Amidst this turmoil, Jaya seeks solace in her writing, which becomes both an escape and a means of self-expression. Through her journey, Jaya embarks on a path of self-discovery

and empowerment, ultimately finding the strength to assert her identity and reclaim her life. *That Long Silence* portrays the pitiful state of middle-class Indian woman who endures quiet suffering in the rigid social environment and eventually becomes a silent victim of male abuse. It also explores the oppressive nature of patriarchal society and its impact on women's lives, particularly in the context of marriage and society. The patriarchal culture ruled by males and their dominating ways have barely acknowledged the sacrifices made by women. Shashi Deshpande encourages all women to break their silence in the aftermath of the feminist movement. During Jaya's search for herself, *That Long Silence* offers insight into feminine mentality. Though Jaya is literate, a writer, and optimistic about the future, none of these can secure her a respectable standing in the eyes of her husband and Aaji. Mohan equated Jaya with Draupadi, Seeta, and Savitri. His mother and sister are extremely submissive to his father. Therefore, he aspires for his wife to share their submissiveness. The male members of the family made all of the choices, most of which had to do with money and family issues. Woman, in a patriarchal culture must constantly rely on men, whether they be her husband, father, or son. An autonomous woman has no right to exist. Woman has very little freedom or autonomy. A woman has no right to select her husband for life or to be married. A woman cannot be self-sufficient. The main objective of the dissertation is to conduct a feminist analysis of "*That Long Silence*", concentrating on specific aspects of gender, power, and agency within the novel. It aims to explore how gender roles influence power dynamics and agency among the characters, examining issues such as patriarchal structures, women's autonomy, and societal expectations.

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## 1.2. Literary review:

In the research work of Diviya Mishra entitled as “*The theme of Silence in Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence*” she represents the protagonist to those kinds of women who are trapped between modernism and traditional behavior, like a normal woman she is also trained by her mother and society as a perfect wife who never questions her husband. One of her aunts even taught her so much that one can think that it is a patriarchal society. Whatever a husband does water a flourishing tree if you need shelter underneath it, even if husband keeps a mistress, she has to compromise. These type of teaching shows how much a women have to suffered for decades and centuries. I think that this suffering is practice somewhere in the corner of the India and women have to suffer in pain and agony all these made me to raise voice against the ill treatment and the misconception about the women that women have to look after only for their family.

R Rajakumari in her paper entitled “*Feminism in Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence*” talks about the suffering of female characters in the novel. In this work she brings up the difficulty and barriers of the female character to adjust with the modernity or the modern society. It is shown that in India how Indian females have to suffer inside her own land due to the oppression of the males, husband, brother, society and the women itself. In this paper Rajakumari didn’t cover all the dominations and problems of the women in the society she has just shown how women in India could not enjoy their individual rights of their own that is made by the Indian government even though they were aware of it. It is the women themselves who rule over other women and becomes the barrier of their own gender. Through this paper

Rajakumari wanted the modern women to raise their voice against the ill treatment that they got from generation to generation and wants the women to fight for their voice and rights against the patriarchy society.

After reading the work of V. Jeya Santhi titled as "*Feminist Perspective in Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence*" I Came to know about the struggle of women that is shown up by Santhi more clearly through the novel written by Shashi Deshpandey "*That Long Silence*". In this work Santhi through the women character shows up the struggle of women in keeping her identity as a mother, wife and most importantly as a human being in the eye of the patriarchy world where male dominates the opposite gender. Deshpandey though she is also a woman she doesnot consider or accept her novel as a feminist writing because she thinks that women are themselves becoming the barrier and enemy of their own gender in getting their individual rights it means that they themselves are oppressing their own voice in the society. She portrayed the dissimilarities between the modern women and the tradition bound women and the male dominant society of India. Santhi in this article portrayed and highlighted the fact that the circumstance inside the patriarchy world is not that the circumstance of that women in the negotiation of the rights of the women but the fact is that it is the own gender that polarize their identity and rights of the women.

Ms. Sowmya in her article "*Feminist Outlook in That Long Silence of Shashi Deshpandey*" attempted to examine the feminist side in the novel of Sashi Deshpandey "*That Long Silence*" It is portrayed the male supremacy and superiority that signifies the male dominant society or the patriarchal culture in the relationship between Jay and her husband Mohan. Their marriage has resulted into discard, frustration, disharmony and lack of individuality as there was lack of love between husband and wife and only with sex. Jaya was seen as an object of sex just because she

was a woman and a woman doesn't hold any respect other than object of sex in the patriarchal society. She was compelled to keep silence and surrender her body and soul to her husband and adopt socio-psychic nature she was forced to forget herself, her own needs, etc. The traditional institution of the Indian family does not give the female the equal rights compared to male in any dignity whereas the female members have to sacrifice her life in the name of marriage and have to remain silent even though they were treated ill. It is not only the males who dominates the female but it's the women themselves and faces the consequences of their own tradition. They have to keep silent, suffer, suppress their emotion and forced to forgot their own desire. The love in the family isn't significant where gender discrimination is practice in the family environment. Jaya the protagonist of the novel could break her silence after the support of Kamat because she was a modern woman but remain silent because it was not only the fight with her husband but it was fight between the patriarchal society and most importantly it was the fight with her own gender who helps the males in ruling over them in the name of the traditions of the society. She did not raise any voice against it in the last she remains silent and suffer thinking it is the duty of women.

After reading all the articles and journals that I have mention above I feels that there is a lack of portraying the women character as a feminist because some of them are not shown as a woman of strength who wants to fight with the male and with the society like Jaya. I feel like Jaya was given limited voice in the above mention articles and works so in order to make the character of Jaya more powerful, independent and modern girl, for that reason I want to continue my research with this certain topic of feminism.

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### **1.3 Methodology:**

The research methodology that I have used in my research proposal work is qualitative in nature and described. In my research proposal I have used both primary and secondary source of data, but I primarily relied on secondary data like journals, articles, essays, research paper, etc. and not much on the primary data because primary data are hard to get at my place as well as in my state where I belong and for that reason the primary data are limited to me for doing my research work. The theories that I have used to support my research paper is the theory of *Feminism*.

#### **1.4 Research Questions:**

The present study attempts a theoretical discussion and interpretation from a feminist view of point in Sashi Deshpande' the novel "*That Long Silence*".

1. Why women are being marginalized in the society?
2. What are the factors that makes the voice of women silence?
3. Why they are not aware of their individual rights?

### **1.5 Aims and objectives:**

The aims and objectives of my paper is

- 1.To bring up the voice of the women within the same gender.
- 2.To find out the problems of women in the patriarchy society.
3. To make aware of women of their individual rights.

## **Chapter: 2**

### **2.1: Social status of women in the patriarchal society:**

In a patriarchal society, women frequently face numerous challenges and restrictions as a result of strongly rooted social, cultural, and structural norms that promote male dominance and power. These expectations influence many facets of life, including as politics, religion, education, work, and family relationships and they have a significant impact on women's experiences and social standing. The idea that males are inherently superior to women and that women belong in submissive positions is the foundation of patriarchal societies. Women's lived experiences and social standing are shaped by this power dynamic, which takes many forms. It is evident from the social relationships between men and women at many societal levels that women do not have the same status as males in areas such as caste, religion, family, and culture. Women have historically been denied cultural, family, religious, and political rights in society. In many areas, including the level of life for both men and women, society differentiates between men and women. Some of the social and cultural distinctions between men and women are also shaped by society. In patriarchal societies, males often possess major control and decision-making power within family systems. Women are expected to follow conventional gender roles as caretakers, carrying out household responsibilities and raising children. These expectations limit women's autonomy and agency in the home, as their worth is frequently linked to their ability to conform to these roles. In patriarchal societies, women also encounter challenges such as insufficient resources, cultural norms that privilege male education and gender-based discrimination. As a result, women may have lower levels of literacy and education than males,

perpetuating their subservient status and limiting their chances for economic independence. Women also often face discrimination in the workforce, including lower wages, limited career advancement opportunities, and barriers to entering male-dominated fields. Gender stereotypes and biases contribute to the devaluation of women's labor, reinforcing their economic dependence on males and perpetuating gender-based inequalities in the workplace. Women are often underrepresented in positions of political power and leadership in patriarchal societies. Women's political engagement is restricted and their capacity to fight for their rights and interests is hampered by structural impediments such as gender prejudice in political institutions, cultural norms, and discriminatory legislation. Consequently, policies and choices could not sufficiently attend to women's interests and concerns, which would further solidify their marginalization. Patriarchal societies often tolerate or condone various forms of violence and discrimination against women, including domestic abuse, and harmful traditional practices like child marriage and female genital mutilation. These types of violence are used to keep control over women and reaffirm their submissive status, repeating cycles of abuse and trauma. Religious and cultural belief can play a significant role in perpetuating patriarchal systems by legitimizing gender inequality and reinforcing traditional gender roles. Interpretations of religious text and teachings may be used to justify discriminatory practices and limit women's right and freedom. Cultural norms and traditions that uphold male authority and control further restrict women's autonomy and perpetuate their subordination. The social status of women is a central theme in Shashi Deshpande's novel, *That Long Silence*. Deshpande examines the intricacies and obstacles that Indian women encounter in the society, particularly regarding their roles within the family and society, the constraints of traditional expectations, and the struggle for personal identity and autonomy. The novel delves into issues such as marriage, motherhood,

patriarchy, and the quest for self-realization amidst societal pressures. Deshpande's portrayal sheds light on the complex experiences and problems of women negotiating the intersection of tradition and modernity in India. The novel provides a poignant commentary on the social status of women in contemporary Indian society, particularly within the context of middle-class urban life. Protagonist, Jaya grapples with the challenges of marriage, motherhood, and personal identity in the face of societal expectations and patriarchal structures. Jaya finds herself trapped in a stifling marriage to her husband, Mohan. Through Jaya's introspective narrative, it provides insight into the complexities of her relationship with Mohan, as well as the subtle power dynamics at play within their household. Despite her intelligence and aspirations, Jaya's social status is largely defined by her roles as a wife and mother, relegating her to the margins of her own life. One of the key issues discussed in *"That Long Silence"* is the conflict between tradition and modernity, specifically in terms of women's autonomy and agency. Jaya's struggle to reconcile her own goals with societal expectations mirrors a larger cultural discussion about women's roles and identities in India. As she grapples with feelings of disillusionment and dissatisfaction, Jaya confronts the limitations imposed by patriarchal norms and the internalized pressures to conform to traditional gender roles. Deshpande portrays many perspectives of women in Indian society through the interactions of Jaya with the other female characters such as her mother-in-law, Savitri, and her friend, Malati. While Savitri exemplifies the traditional principles of self-sacrifice and responsibility required of women, Malati symbolizes a more contemporary and autonomous perspective, defying gender stereotypes and pushing for women's emancipation. Furthermore, Deshpande also looks at how societal expectations affect women's mental and emotional health, especially when it comes to marriage and motherhood. Jaya's feelings of alienation and despair stem from her inability to voice her inner turmoil and assert her

own desires in a male-dominated world. As she grapples with the demands of domesticity and the pressure to conform to societal norms, Jaya experiences a profound sense of isolation and disconnection from her own sense of self. Jaya's "long silence" symbolizes not only her personal struggles but also the collective silence of women whose perspectives and experiences are often marginalized and devalued and ignored in mainstream discourse. In addition to exploring the challenges faced by women within the domestic sphere, "*That Long Silence*" also sheds light on the boarder societal structures that perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination. Deshpande portrays a society where women are expected to prioritize the needs and desires of their families above their own, often at the expense of their own aspirations and autonomy. In Shashi Deshpande's works, victims are mostly women. She explores the social position of women in patriarchal societies and their experience with sexism. These women have experienced injustices committed by males in silence and without revolt because they were unaware of the possibility of changing their environment via protest. Their inner agony, astounded emotional endurance, and relation bondage are suggestively placed against her protagonist's agonizing attempt to identify and achieve selfhood. Shashi Deshpande has portrayed women who show signs of brainwashing in their mentality and conduct. In her book *That Long Silence*, Jaya struggles to establish her identity because of cultural constraints, feminine training that dictates how one should behave, and other complex issues. Her stillness is a sign of anxiety and alienation that are ingrained in every woman's spirit in various ways. However, men sometimes misinterpret her stillness as an indication of her own satisfaction. Jaya was conscious of an inner hole, hollowness in her existence, which was concealed behind the deceptively attractive screen of her social graces and commitments. She realizes that even among the upper middle classes, the inherent value of clever and talented women is inevitably influenced by her social or married position,

because society regard her as an item or a property rather than as a person. Jaya's obligations to her family and society stop being a joy and turn into a form of slavery as she feels compelled to fulfill them on a feminine basis. She is forced to display herself in her married life, but this has prevented her from completely understanding who she is. Her dissatisfaction is heightened by her incapacity to have a regular relationship with her husband. Her novel "*That Long Silence*" depicts women's misery in a patriarchal society, regardless of whether they are from the elite or lowest strata. A life of subjection was formerly experienced by other characters too such as Kusum, Jaya's aunt Vanitamami, Mukta, Jeeja, Manda, Ai, and Ajji. Society has led them to fit neatly into roles such as wife, mother, and daughter. And if they are not capable to fulfill these duties of mother or wife flawlessly, then their existence is worthless. Jaya aims to end women's silence in general and that of women authors in particular. Deshpande has attempted to highlight the predicament of women in traditional culture via the characters of Jeeja, Mukta, Kusum, Manda, Vanitamami, Mohan's mother, her sister Vimala, and Ajji. Mohan's sister passes away silently from a "*ovarian tumor with metastases in the lungs*". She does not inform anybody about her issue, not even her mother-in-law, since she knows it will be pointless, and she falls into a coma and dies a week later. Mohan's mother likewise died while attempting to abort an undesired kid. Vimala, the only one who is aware of her actions, considers it disgraceful. Her father was a habitual alcoholic who would often abuse his wife. Jeeja's husband was a habitual beater who is intoxicated. Jeeja did not complain when he brought a new mistress to his home because she could not give him a son. Jaya senses no resentment in Jeeja's quiet since she believes that her husband made the correct decision by marrying another woman after failing to have a son. Women who are infertile are forced to accept their fate and acknowledge that they are unlucky. Whichever class a woman comes from, she will always encounter similar attitudes from



society. It is obvious that women in traditional societies face threats of being ejected from their homes if they are unable to give birth to a male child. Jaya's cousin, Kusum, gets abandoned by her husband. And later, she committed suicide. Jaya feels offended when her mother, Ai, adds, *"It was a good thing in a way. She was of no use to anyone after she went crazy, nobody needed her"*. As if a woman is devoid of her own existence. In *That Long Silence*, Deshpande features women from many walks of life. She has brilliantly represented these personalities as they exist in real society. All of these characters show the marginalization of women. They experience discrimination and brutality inside their own families. Deshpande recommends that instead of women blaming themselves, they should work to speak out against gender inequality, like Jaya did by chronicling her life in a book.

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## **2.2: Struggle for self-identity:**

The patriarchal family, as a fundamental unit of societal organization, has historically served as a locus for the reproduction and perpetuation of gender norms and power dynamics. Rooted in traditional beliefs and reinforced through social institutions, patriarchal system often prioritizes male authority and privilege while constraining women's autonomy and agency. To understand the contemporary struggles of women for self-identity, it is essential to trace the historical trajectories of patriarchy and its impact on familial and societal structures. Patriarchal views have been embedded in religious teachings, legal laws, and cultural practices throughout history, relegating women to submissive positions inside and outside of the home. From ancient civilizations to colonial regimes, women's identities have been shaped by rigid binaries of femininity and masculinity, often marginalizing their voices and contributions. Women's struggles for self-identity intersect with myriad axes of oppression, including but not limited to class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability. Intersectional frameworks show how these overlapping identities compound and worsen the difficulties women encounter when expressing their autonomy and establishing their sense of self under patriarchal organizations. For women of color, queer women, disabled women, and those from marginalized socio-economic backgrounds, the struggle for self-identity is further complicated by intersecting systems of discrimination and marginalization. In patriarchal societies, women frequently face the contradiction of balancing traditional expectations with modernity and self-fulfillment. This

double-blind manifests in various forms, from conflicting expectations regarding marriage and motherhood to societal pressure to conform to narrow standards of beauty and comportment. Balancing familial duties with personal ambitions, women grapple with the tension between tradition and progress, seeking avenues for self-expression while negotiating familial and societal norms. Despite pervasive constraints, women have mobilized myriad forms of resistance and agency to assert their identities and challenge patriarchal structures. From grassroots activism to artistic expression, women have carved out spaces for self-affirmation and collective empowerment, challenging dominant narratives and redefining gender roles. Through acts of defiance, solidarity, and resilience, women reclaim agency over their bodies, minds, and narratives, forging paths of liberation and self-determination. Education emerges as a powerful weapon for women's empowerment and self-actualization, providing opportunities for critical thinking and social mobility. By acquiring knowledge and skills, women expand their horizons, challenge societal norms, and envision alternative futures beyond the confines of patriarchy. However, there are still disparities in access to high-quality education based on factors such as location, class, and gender, which feeds the cycle of marginalization and inequality. In an increasingly digitized world, women navigate new frontiers of identity and self-expression through digital technologies and social media platforms. From online activism to digital storytelling, women harness the power of connectivity to amplify their voices, share their experiences, and mobilize for social change. However, the digital realm also poses risks, including harassment, and the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes, underscoring the complex interplay between technology and gender dynamics. Feminist writers have been concerned with the difficulties of women's battle for self-identity in patriarchal society. Writers like Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Bell Hooks, Adrienne Rich, and many more have explored various

facets of this journey through literature, essays, and poetry, shedding light on the challenges women face in defining themselves on their own terms. Virginia Woolf's seminal work, "*A Room of One's Own*," is a cornerstone of feminist literature, examining women's need for physical and intellectual space to establish their identities. In her essay, Woolf argues that women have historically been denied access to resources and opportunities essential for self-discovery and self-expression. Through her iconic metaphor of "*Shakespeare's sister*," Woolf highlights the stifling effects of gender roles and societal expectations on women's creative potential, underscoring the necessity for women to carve out their own space for identity formation. Simone de Beauvoir's "*The Second Sex*" delves deep into the existentialist perspective on women's identity. De Beauvoir famously proclaimed, "*One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman*," challenging essentialist notions of femininity and highlighting the constructed nature of gender roles. She scrutinizes the ways in which women are "othered" within a male-dominated world, exploring how societal norms and expectations shape women's self-perception and limit their autonomy. Through De Beauvoir's analysis, women are urged to reclaim agency over their identities by transcending imposed roles and embracing their existential freedom. Adrienne Rich, in her poetry and essays, examines the intersectionality of gender, race, and class in shaping women's identities. Rich's concept of "*compulsory heterosexuality*" illuminates how societal norms dictate women's roles within heterosexual relationships, constraining their ability to fully explore and assert their identities. Her poetry, such as "*Diving into the wreck*," symbolizes the journey of self-discovery and the process of reclaiming one's identity from the depths of societal expectations and constraints. Bell Hooks delves into the politics of representation and the role of self-representation in constructing women's identities. In work like "*Aren't I am Woman: Black Women and Feminism*," hooks interrogate the ways in which mainstream media perpetuates

harmful stereotypes about women, particularly women of color. She emphasizes the significance of women controlling their own narratives and image as a means of challenging hegemonic structures and affirming their identities. Through her writings, hooks call for a feminist praxis that centers the voices and experiences of those most marginalized within society. One common goal in feminist writing is the search for women's identities. Its foundation is the patriarchal system, in which women are denied all freedom while men are granted them. Women who yearn to create their uniqueness, identity, and independence are explored by Shashi Deshpande as she delves into their deepest emotions, pain, and experiences. Shashi Deshpande's *"That Long Silence"* delves into the complicated issue of self-identity in the context of Indian society, particularly among women. Women's struggle for self-identity is profoundly explored through the protagonist, Jaya, as she grapples with societal expectations, familial pressures, and her own internal conflicts. She struggles with multiple roles and societal expectations, resulting in a profound quest for self-discovery and assertion. Through nuanced character development, Deshpande delves into the inner turmoil and external pressures faced by Jaya, shedding light on the broader socio-cultural context of gender roles, marriage, and personal agency. Jaya's journey towards self-discovery and empowerment serves as a lens through which Deshpande examines the complexities of womanhood in Indian society. Her journey towards self-identity is shaped by her roles as a wife, mother, daughter-in-law, and eventually as an individual seeking autonomy and fulfillment. At the outset, she conforms to societal norms and expectations, embodying the traditional Indian woman who sacrifices her ambitions for the sake of her family. However, as the story goes on, Jaya begins to question her own desires and aspirations, confronting the constraints imposed by patriarchal structures and familial obligations. One of the central themes in this novel is the impact of marriage on women's identity. Jaya's marriage to

Mohan, initially portrayed as a union of love and companionship, gradually becomes a source of disillusionment as she grapples with feelings of alienation and emotional neglect. Deshpande presents Jaya as a middle-class woman with contemporary education, and a powerless figure. Jaya lives quite a comfortable middle-class married life with her husband, Mohan. However, beneath the facade of domestic bliss lies a woman grappling with a profound sense of emptiness and discontentment. The breakdown of communication between Jaya and Mohan reflects the broader societal disconnect between spouses, where emotional intimacy is often overshadowed by societal expectations and gender roles. Moreover, Jaya's role as a mother adds another layer of complexity to her struggle for self-identity. While she is devoted to her children, she realizes that motherhood alone cannot define her existence. The pressure to be the perfect mother, as dictated by societal norms, stifles her individuality and suppresses her own aspirations. Deshpande highlights the pervasive expectation for women to prioritize familial duties over personal fulfillment, thereby perpetuating a cycle of self-denial and emotional repression. Jaya's relationship with her mother-in-law, Amma, further underscores the tensions between tradition and modernity, duty, and autonomy. Amma embodies the traditional values of Indian womanhood, expecting Jaya to adhere to rigid norms and subjugate her own needs for the sake of family harmony. However, Jaya's desire for independence and self-expression challenges Amma's authority, leading to conflict and resentment. Through this dynamic, Deshpande critiques the generational divide and the stifling impact of traditional gender roles on women's agency and self-esteem. Jaya's silence reflects her inner turmoil and inability to articulate her desires amidst societal expectations and familial obligations. The idea of silence symbolizes the suppression of women's voices and the erasure of their identities within patriarchal structures. However, at the end, Jaya finds courage to break her silence and assert her autonomy, albeit at

great personal cost. Deshpande portrays silence not as a sign of weakness, but as a potent tool for resistance and self-discovery. Jaya's journey towards reclaiming her sense of self unfolds against the backdrop of societal norms and patriarchal expectations that seek to confine and suppress her individuality. She delves into her inner turmoil, battle, and longing for uniqueness, selfhood, liberty, and release. The author's main concerns include gender inequality, prejudice, dominance, cultural constraints, and the desire for male children. Deshpande depicts the difficulties faced by women in juggling their dual roles as mother and wife. She challenges gender inequity and male dominance in traditional family systems in Indian society. In her book, she argues that true empowerment stems from our inner strength and ability to transcend limitations and barriers. Prior to her marriage, Jaya was taught the significance of a husband in a woman's life. Jaya's aunt Vanitamami, informs her that her husband is a sheltering tree. Ramukaka tells her that she is ultimately responsible for her husband's and their family's happiness. Dada had also told Jaya to "*be good to Mohan*" when she leaves her house after getting married. Jaya's name changed once she got married. Her husband changed her name from 'Jaya' (meaning triumph or victory) to 'Suhasini' (which alluded to a submissive but effective housewife). Jaya uses writing as a means of self-discovery and comes to terms with their identity at the end. Despite her attempts to assert her individuality as a writer, her family and husband have restrained her. Despite her talent for writing, she has become an ordinary housewife in her marriage. "*I can't cope, I can't manage, I can't go on...is this all I?*" she cries, overcome with guilt. It depicts the monotonous married existence in a middle-class family. She lacked the guts to rebel she was dissatisfied with her current position. Additionally, when her name was changed from Jaya to Suhasini, she lost her individuality. Like every other woman, Jaya submits to the norms and limitations of her community. She couldn't figure out where she lives, either for her family or for herself. She

senses a need to discover who she is when is taken for granted. Ultimately Jaya's struggle for self-identity culminates in an act of defiance and self-assertion, as she chooses to reclaim her autonomy and pursue her own path. Her decision to leave her marital home symbolizes a rejection of societal expectations and a reclaiming of agency over her own life. However, Deshpande does not offer a simplistic resolution to Jaya's journey; instead, she acknowledges the enduring challenges and complexities of women's lives in India. Deshpande's *"That Long Silence"* offers a poignant exploration of the struggle for self-identity in the face of societal expectations and familial obligations. Through the character of Jaya, Deshpande illuminates the multifaceted nature of women's experiences in India, highlighting the tension between tradition and modernity, duty and autonomy. By giving voice to Jaya's silenced desires and aspirations, Deshpande invites readers to reflect on the pervasive impact of patriarchy on women's lives and the enduring quest for self-empowerment and fulfillment. Shashi Deshpande promotes positive self-realization among women through her novel *"That Long Silence"*. Feminist writers have played a pivotal role in articulating women's struggles for self-identity, offering diverse perspectives and insights into the complexities of this journey. Through literature, essays and poetry, these writers have challenged societal norms, critiqued oppressive systems, and advocated for the liberation and empowerment of women to define themselves on their own terms. In doing so, they have paved the way for a more inclusive and equitable society where women's voices and experiences are valued and celebrated.

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## **Chapter: 3**

### **3.1: Jaya's transition from silence to speech:**

Jaya's transition from silence to speech is a profound journey that encompasses various elements of her life and the broader sociocultural context in which she exists. Jaya's silence is deeply rooted in her personal past and societal expectations. In many traditional societies in India, women are often expected to conform to roles that prioritize domesticity and subservience. Jaya's silence can be seen as a response to these oppressive structures. Her reticence is not merely a lack of words but a reflection of the constraints placed upon her by her family, her marriage, and the broader societal norms. Initially, Jaya's silence serves as a coping mechanism. It is a way to avoid conflict and to maintain peace in her relationships, especially within her marriage. She's been conditioned to believe that silence is a virtue and that speaking out could lead to undesirable consequences. This internalized belief is a significant barrier to her self-expression and personal growth. Jaya's internal struggles play a key role in her transformation. As she struggles with her dissatisfaction and the restrictions of her existence, she begins to realize the toll that her silence had taken on her mental and emotional well-being. The first step toward transformation is being self-aware. Jaya realizes that her silence is a form of self-betrayal and starts to seek ways to express her true-self. The only time Jaya was able to speak up was toward

the end of the novel. Though they appear to live a comfortable middle-class life, the same daily routine for seventeen years of their married life bores Jaya. Despite being a writer, she was unable to depict the issues and paradoxes in society in her writing. She is forced to give up everything to family and society expectations. Despite being educated, she has chosen to keep mute in the face of injustice. Mohan's deceitful behavior can be somewhat attributed to Jaya's silence. Jaya had a chance to caution or stop Mohan from following his personal objective, but she chooses to follow him blindly much like Gandhari, without raising any objections. Mohan has been raised with a patriarchal perspective, but Jaya was raised by liberal parents. However, Jaya's father did not believe that a daughter was a responsibility to be transferred to a man. He constantly encourages Jaya to follow her aspirations. She was also given the name Jaya by her father, which signifies triumph. Even Jaya's mother had a different outlook on life than other women. She even opposed Mohan's marriage to Jaya at first since she knew Mohan's family well, claiming "*They're orthodox, old-fashioned people*". Later, after marriage, Jaya becomes silent as a result of Mohan's orthodox temperament and respond to various situations based on his opinion, despite being liberal-minded and optimistic. Deshpande makes an effort to highlight the important roles that family preaching and practices, as well as the social milieu play in this. Jaya didn't realize till they moved into a modest apartment in Dadar. Jaya takes a vacation from her hectic family life and finds plenty of time to indulge herself. However, Jaya finds no similarities between herself before and after marriage. Jaya sits down to reflect on how she has become a completely meek and mute individual. She sees how her grandmother, mother, cousin Kusum, widowed Mukta, her aunt Vanitamami, and other women had maintained the same silence for many years. When she tries to regain control of her life, she wonders how the people she has given so much of herself to have ultimately abandoned her. She seems like a failure even

after exerting every effort to fulfill her roles as a wife and mother. From then, she describes how she changed her perspective and eventually discovers her own voice by writing about her own life, self-dissecting, and examining many interactions she was a part of. Interactions with other character like Kamat, Mukta and Kusum who embody strength and assertiveness can inspire Jaya. Kamat being a man is different from other man. He encourages Jaya in her writings. This characters act as a role model, proving that it is possible to live authentically and speak one's truth. They provide Jaya with the courage to begin her journey towards self-expression. Jaya goes through a difficult path of self-discovery to overcome her predicament. Specific incident or crises can act as turning points in Jaya's life. These moments often force Jaya to confront her fears and take decisive action. For instances, a personal lose or betrayal might push Jaya to break her silence as a means of coping and moving forward. Jaya begins on a voyage of self-reflection, investigating the causes of her silence and hoe it has impacted her life. This introspection allows her to understand her desire, fears, and aspirations better. As a result, she begins to see how important it is to speak up and stand up for her own self. Jaya gain empowerment after finding her voice. She learns to create boundaries, communicate her needs, and pursue her goal. This empowerment leads to a stronger sense of self-worth and independence. As Jaya becomes more expressive, her relationships also transform. In *"That Long Silence"*, silence symbolizes the suppression of women's voices and desires within a patriarchal framework. Jaya's silence is both imposed and internalized, reflecting the societal expectation for women to be passive complaint. This enforced silence is evident in her relationship with her husband, Mohan, and in her interactions with her extended family. Jaya's internalized silence is a result of years of social conditioning, where she learns to prioritize others' need over her own and to accept her secondary status. It also reflects the deep-rooted impact of patriarchy on women's psyche. Jaya's

struggle to break the silence is central to her journey towards self-discovery. The novel traces Jaya's gradual realization of the need to reclaim her voice and assert her identity. Her contemplation and final choice to confront her past and express her true self signify a rejection of the passive silence that has governed her life. This act of breaking the silence is both a personal and political statement against patriarchal oppression. Jaya's journey has the potential to inspire women in her community, who are going through similar challenges. Her journey becomes a beacon of hope, demonstrating that change is possible and that silence can be overcome.

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### **3.2: Jaya's path to self-discovery:**

Women's journeys to self-discovery are intensely personal and frequently difficult, with considerable influences from family and society. Throughout history and across cultures, women's roles have been largely defined by patriarchal norms and expectations. However, the search for identity and self-realization has long been a key element in women's life, motivated by an innate yearning for autonomy, purpose, and fulfillment. Historically, women's duties have mostly focused on household obligations. In many societies women were expected to be good daughters, obedient wives, and nurturing mothers. These roles were frequently enforced by societal norms that dictated a women's value based on her ability to conform to these expectations. The notion of self-discovery was eclipsed by the need to meet familial commitments, leaving little opportunity for personal development and inquiry. Here I will explore the multifaceted journey of Jaya's self-discovery within the contexts of family and society. Jaya's journey exemplifies the difficulties many women experience in balancing their personal desires with societal expectations. One of the most significant aspects of Jaya's journey is her reconnection with writing. Many women writers, through their unique perspectives and narratives, have not only explored their own identities but have also illuminated the complexities

of gender, culture, and individuality for their readers. This exploration has been both an act of rebellion and a quest for truth, leading to significant contributions in literature and society at large. Women writers have traditionally utilized writing as a potent means of expressing the difficulties and conflicts they face in the home and in the society. Through novels, stories, and other forms of writing, they have articulated the nuanced and often oppressive experiences unique to their gender. Women writers have used their narratives to rebel against societal expectations. For instance, Sylvia Plath's *"The Bell Jar"* is a poignant exploration of mental illness and the suffocating pressures of 1950s America on young women. Through her protagonist, Esther Greenwood, Plath delves into the struggle for autonomy and the desperation that comes with feeling trapped by societal norms. Indian feminist writer Shashi Deshpande also wrote about the issues and hardship that women face in the family and society. Her writing is a powerful indictment of the patriarchal institutions and societal expectations that defines women's life in India. Deshpande's work often centered around female characters, delves into the complexities of identity, autonomy, and the fight for self-realization within the confines of traditional Indian society. In her novel *"That Long Silence"*, Deshpande portrays the internal conflict of Jaya, who grapples with her identity and the expectations placed upon her as a wife and mother. Jaya is educated and a writer. Jaya uses writing as a therapeutic therapy to express her deepest feelings and ideas throughout the entire novel. It becomes a medium through which she reclaims her voice and asserts her identity. The act of writing is a rebellion against the imposed silence, a means of documenting her experiences and asserting her existence. Jaya's initial hesitation to write is due to her concern over coming out as her real self and possible fallout for her family. However, as she continues to write, she understands the therapeutic value of self-expression. Jaya finds that writing helps her deal with her past traumas and

disappointments, and in doing so, it becomes a transformative act that moves her closer to self-realization. Jaya's path is also marked by her experiences with other women, which illustrate the pervasiveness of patriarchal tyranny and the possibility of female solidarity. Characters like Kusum, who succumbs to the pressures of societal expectations, and Nayana, who takes advantage of these expectations, respond to the same repressive institutions in very different ways. These interactions force Jaya to reevaluate her own decisions in life as well as the internalized patriarchal ideals that have shaped them. She begins to see how the importance of solidarity among women in challenging and subverting these oppressive structures. Jaya's changing viewpoint on female solidarity demonstrates her increasing understanding of the necessity for support amongst women in the fight for gender equality. The culmination of Jaya's journey is marked by her own decision to break her silence and assert her agency. This breaking of silence is more than simply a verbal gesture; it represents a significant internal transformation. Jaya decides to confront Mohan and express her dissatisfaction with their marriage. This encounter represents Jaya's desire to fight for her autonomy and her rejection of passive acquiescence, making it a crucial turning point in the novel. Jaya's assertion of her voice is a declaration of her reclaimed identity. It shows that she values herself more than just being a wife and mother. By speaking up, Jaya confronts the power dynamics in her marriage and affirms her right to self-determination. This act of rebellion reflects her path from silence to self-realization. Jaya's journey to self-discovery in "*That Long Silence*" is multilayered, including introspection, confrontation of past traumas, and regaining her voice. Through her reflections and writing, Jaya comes to understand the extent to which societal expectations have shaped her identity. Her encounters with other women, as well as her final choice to emphasize her voice, demonstrate the value of solidarity and agency in the search of self-realization. Shashi Deshpande's portrayal



of Jaya's journey is a powerful commentary on the struggles of women to find their true selves amidst societal pressures. Jaya's transformation from a silent, submissive wife to an assertive, self-aware individual is a poignant reminder of the strength and resilience required to challenge and transcend patriarchal norms. Her journey is a testament to the enduring quest for identity and autonomy that defines the human experience. In contemporary society, women often find themselves navigating the delicate balance between family and career. The pursuit of professional ambitions can sometimes conflict with traditional expectations of motherhood and domestic responsibilities. This combined strain can cause tremendous stress and impede a women's quest of self-discovery. However, it also allows women to reimagine their identities and responsibilities within the family and society. A valuable tool in the quest for self-discovery is education. It equips women with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to explore their interests and pursue their goals. Access to education has been transformative for many women, allowing them to break free from conventional restraints and forge their own identities. Women with higher education, for example, are more likely to seek employment, engage in political processes, and make informed decisions about their lives. Personal narratives, such as autobiographies and memoirs, provide personal insights into women's quests for self-discovery. These works often highlight the struggles and triumphs of women as they navigate the complexities of family and society. For instance, Maya's Angelou's *"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings"* and Malala Yousafzai's *"I Am Malala"* provide powerful testimonies of resilience and self-empowerment. Through their stories, these women inspire others to pursue their own paths to self-realization. Deshpande's protagonist, Jaya's journey to self-discovery also involves confronting her past and choices she made. She revisits her childhood, her relationship with her parents, and the expectation placed on her as a woman. Her father's influence, particularly his

progressive views on education, contrasts with her mother's traditional beliefs. This duality shapes Jaya's internal conflict, torn between her aspirations and societal expectations. Jaya's memories of her marriage indicate a gradual loss of her independence. The initial romance and dreams are overshadowed by the mundane realities of domestic life. Mohan's realistic attitude to life and devotion to cultural conventions limits Jaya's creativity. Her attempts at writing, a passion she cherished, are dismissed by Mohan, reinforcing her sense of inadequacy. A turning point of Jaya's self-realization occurs with the encounter with Kamat, a friend and neighbor. Kamat, unlike Mohan, admires Jaya's intelligence and encourages her to continue her writing. His sudden demise leaves a vacuum in Jaya's life while also serving as a reminder of her unrealized potential. Kamat's belief in her abilities ignites a spark of self-awareness in Jaya, prompting her to question her passive acceptance of her circumstances. By the end of the novel, Jaya emerges as a self-aware and assertive individual. She recognizes her weaknesses and failures while still valuing her talents and potential. The journey to self-discovery is not about rejecting her past or her relationships, about integrating her experiences into a cohesive self-identity. Jaya's relationship with Mohan undergoes a transformation as well. While the novel does not present a clear answer to their marital conflict, it does indicate a shift in dynamics. Jaya's new found assertiveness challenges the established norms of their relationship. She no longer looks for approval for Mohan, but rather expresses her own value. The novel concludes with Jaya contemplating the future with a sense of hope and determination. She recognizes that self-discovery is an ongoing process, one that requires continuous introspection and courage. The silence that once defined her life is replaced with a voice that seeks expression and authenticity.

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## **Chapter: 4**

### **Conclusion:**

Shashi Deshpande stands as a prominent figure in Indian English literature, her work embodying the nuances and complexities of Indian womanhood. Over the years she has authored numerous novels, short stories, and essays, establishing herself as a voice of modern Indian feminist thought. Deshpande's writings mostly focus on women's inner life, their struggles for identity, and their pursuit of self-realization within a patriarchal society. Her narrative style is frequently distinguished by its simplicity and psychological depth, concentrating on the everyday lives of middle-class women. Through her protagonist, Deshpande delves into themes of gender inequality, marital discord, and the constraints imposed by traditional norms. The feminist viewpoint of Deshpande is neither radical nor militant. Rather, it is grounded in a realistic depiction of women's lives, emphasizing their fortitude and bravery in the face of hardship. Her feminism is based on the real-life experiences of women, taking into account their internal conflicts, the demands placed on them by society, and the subdued means of resistance they use. Awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award, "*That Long Silence*" is perhaps Deshpande's most acclaimed work. The protagonist, Jaya is a housewife and aspiring writer who is forced to her

suppressed desires and unspoken grievances when her husband is implicated in a financial scandal. Shashi Deshpande's *"That Long Silence"* is a compelling exploration of women's struggles for identity and self-expression within a patriarchal society. Through the character of Jaya, Deshpande highlights the pervasive nature of silence and the transformative power of breaking it. The novel's feminist themes of resistance, empowerment, and solidarity provide a complex criticism of gender discrimination and a hope for a more equitable future. Her novel *"That Long Silence"*, illustrates the pitiful and terrible state of Indian women. It also illustrates how women endure great suffering and live their lives in silence, exposing the abuse of power by males. The novel presents a picture of middle-class women's lives. Throughout the novel, Jaya defines the status of women in various contexts by drawing on the mythical figures Sita and Gandhari. In the novel, Deshpande depicts the hardships face by educated middle-class woman in a patriarchal society. The novel critically analyzes the role allocated to women in marriage and society, emphasizing the need of discovering one's own voice. Jaya embodies the silent suffering and eventual awakening of countless women who navigate a patriarchal framework that dictates and their roles and suppresses their voices. Throughout the novel, Jaya's path from silence to self-expression exemplifies the feminist battle for identity and empowerment. Jaya first conforms to the typical roles of wife and mother, internalizing societal expectations that prioritize her husband's career and family's honor over her own desires and ambitions. This enforced silence and submission reflect broader patriarchal ideology that limits women's potential and confines them to subservient roles. Deshpande's portrayal of other female characters in the novel further enriches the feminist discourse. Characters such as Mukta and Kusum reflect many aspects of female oppression and perseverance. Mukta, who is widowed and childless, endures societal rejection and economic hardship, underlining the perilous situation of women who lack the

protection of a male figure. Kusum's terrible destiny highlights the harmful effects of societal expectations and a lack of help for women in difficulty. Through these characters, Deshpande underscores the diverse experience of women within the patriarchal framework and the urgent need for systemic change. This novel also critiques the institution of marriage and the typical gender roles associated in it. Jaya's marriage to Mohan is a microcosm of the broader expectations placed on women. Regardless of her education and goals, Jaya is expected to prioritize her husband's wants and conceal her own. Mohan's intent on projecting a pleasant family image and his disdain for Jaya's concern indicate gendered power relations in marriage. Deshpande's critique includes social involvement in upholding these standards, in which both men and women should support conventional roles, frequently at the expense of women's autonomy and well-being. Additionally, *"That Long Silence"* explores issues of self-discovery and identity. Jaya's writing, which was originally suppressed due to Mohan's criticism and her own self-doubt, eventually becomes a method of regaining her voice and agency. Through writing, Jaya confronts her fears, insecurities and the societal expectations that have silenced her. This creative process represents a feminist expression of self-identity and strength. Deshpande contends that self-expression and the reclamation of one's voice are crucial steps towards liberation and self-fulfillment. The feminist study of *"That Long Silence"* illustrates patriarchy's widespread influence on women's life, as well as the complex battle for autonomy and self-expression. Deshpande's portrayal of Jaya's transition from silence to speech underscores the need of recognizing and opposing societal norms that oppressed women. The novel advocates for a redefinition of traditional gender roles and the creation of a more equitable society where women can pursue their aspirations without fear of repression and judgment. Shashi Deshpande's contribution to Indian feminism is significant in its articulation of women's voices and

experiences. She presents feminism as an inclusive and evolving discourse, one that accommodates the diverse realities of Indian women. Deshpande's characters often embody a quiet strength, challenging the stereotypes of passive femininity and emphasizing various forms of empowerment. One of the hallmarks of Deshpande's writing is her focus on everyday feminism. She highlights the little, everyday actions of resistance that women do, demonstrating their strength and tenacity. This emphasis on the mundane and the personal provides a realistic portrayal of feminist struggles, making her work accessible and relatable.

In this dissertation, I explored the feminist dimensions of Shashi Deshpande's novel "*That Long Silence*", focusing on the nuanced portrayal of gender roles, struggle for female autonomy, and the systemic silencing of women's voices in a patriarchal society. The goal of this research was to reveal the nuances of Jaya's silence and her eventual quest for self-identity within the confines of marital and societal expectations. Through the detailed examination of the narrative structure and character arcs, the study revealed how Deshpande skillfully uses Jaya's silence as both a symbol of oppression and a space for introspection. This dissertation's chapters focused on many facets of Jaya's life, including her relationships, inner conflicts, and moments of rebellion. We observed that Jaya's silence is not merely a passive state but a strategic retreat that enables her to scrutinize her life and gradually reclaim her voice. Deshpande's depiction of Jaya's transformation from a confronting wife to a self-aware individual emphasizes the complexities of female autonomy in Indian context. By applying feminist theories such as postcolonial feminism and intersectionality, this study positioned "*That Long Silence*" within a broader framework of feminist literature. The novel's depiction of Jaya's internal conflicts reflects postcolonial feminist concerns about identity and agency in a patriarchal society. Furthermore, the narrative's focus on the intersections of gender, class, and societal expectations

aligns with intersectional feminist analyses, revealing the multiple layers of oppression faced by women like Jaya. In exploring Shashi Deshpande's *"That Long Silence"* through a feminist lens, this study sought to unravel the nuanced ways in which Deshpande portrays the silent suffering and eventual awakening of her protagonist, Jaya. The main goals were to analyze the novel's portrayal of women's difficulties under patriarchal rules and to draw attention to the feminist issues of identity, voice, and silence. *"That Long Silence"* stands as a powerful feminist text that reveals the deep-rooted patriarchal norms and the silenced voices of women. Deshpande's examination of Jaya's inner world and eventual self-affirmation exemplifies feminist consciousness' transformational power. The novel advocates for a communal awakening to the injustices that women endure, emphasizing the significance of providing venues where women may express themselves and achieve their ambition. *"That Long Silence"* remains a significant addition to feminist writing, calling for a society in which women's powerful voices replace silence.



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