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WOMEN'S ANGUISH IN MARRIED LIFE THROUGH NAIR'S ANJANA FROM *THE BETTER MAN* AND DESPANDE'S JAYA FROM *THAT LONG SILENCE*

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ABSTRACT

This paper reveals that women have been quite concealed, quite exploited. It explores, even though educated, large section of Indian women are suffering even today. An attempt is made to compare the feminism present in the works of Anita Nair and Shashi Deshpande by protagonist Anjana from *The Better Man* and Jaya from *That Long Silence*. Both the novelists have presented the troubles of Indian middle-class women who face inconsistency of tradition and modernity. They express how women are exploited within the marital frame. Present research paper is centered on the examination of sensibility and psychology of female protagonist of Anita Nair and Shashi Deshpande's work. This examines the particular conditions of Indian women characterized with self-realization in their different appearances. Through the character of Anjana we came to know that women are not the puppet in the hands of man but she has her own will to make her existence and from Jaya we came to know that women used to suffer for the sake of children and so called married life.

They suffer from mental trauma because of frustration, hopes and disappointments. They feel trapped between her own aspirations and an individual and forces of patriarchy which confine them. Paper explains that Feminism fights against male prejudice and demands equal rights and treatment of women as human being. Further this paper explores the comparative analysis between two protagonists of both feminist writers.

**Keywords:** - Married Life, Sufferings, and Existence.

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INTRODUCTION

Both writers have expressed the concern with which the women are conditioned right from the beginning of their birth. They are told that the ultimate aim of their life is to find a suitable match and get married. They are made to feel that their attributes are obedience, humbleness and servility. Thus they are forced to assimilate their inferior roles gradually. Novels by both writers are a study of husband wife relationship.

The condition of women from lower class, as presented by Deshpande, is really pitiable. Their suffering starts much before their marriage. They continue working and earning all their life. They are married off at the age considered suitable by their parents, to any boy who has one head, two eyes, two ears, two hands and two legs like any man. Marriage does not bring any positive change in their lives, but it brings with it endless pain, suffering and burden.

Anita Nair is a genuine Indian Fiction writer concerned with the predicaments of women in Indian scenario. Her women characters come out with full strength and vitality to encounter the oppressive environment. She envisions a beautiful future of women by her optimistic attitude and by bestowing her female characters with undoubting courage. Anita Nair's women are so courageous, so bold, so daring that they, in order to free themselves from the male domination, can go to any extent. Overturning the gender roles is not impossible in Anita Nair.

#### OBJECTIVES

- To reveal the sacrifices of women for the sake of married life through Jaya the protagonist of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*.
- To explore the sufferings and then decision making of women through Anjana the protagonist of Anita Nair's *The Better Man*.

#### CHARACTER OF JAYA

*That Long Silence* is a study in Jaya's Character and the fortitude she displays. Despite the fact that she is humiliated and her individuality is hindered at a number of places, she is able to come out as a winner in the end of the novel by mustering up courage. The process of success and self recognition is not that easy as she has to undergo much mental trauma. But She emerges as a powerful individual in the end of the as she is possessed with better understanding of human relations and her own role as a mother, daughter, wife and a woman. She is able to break that long held silence.

Jaya, in the beginning, is a stereotyped, educated, middle-class woman, whose aim is to suppress her own wishes and to act according to her husband. She dares not protest against his wishes: 'I had learnt it at last – no questions, no retorts. Only silence' (143).

Jaya was very close to her father. Her father always encouraged her. He named her Jaya which stands for victory and always made her aware that she was not just any person. She was different from others. He would dream that Jaya either bags an international award or goes to Oxford. However, his early death shatters her dreams and makes her strong to confront the reality of life. Her early training at home has made her obedient and submissive towards her husband. As she was taught that a husband is everything for her, and it is impossible to survive in this male-dominated world. She must have a male support, especially her husband's if she wants a happy marital life

Her husband is one of the traditional Indian husbands who believe that woman's strength is sitting in front of the fire but to Jaya it is a despair. Jaya is a woman who accepts things silently, suppressing her own desire. In our traditional scenario, a woman's identity is never hers own. It gets changed with the passage of time and her relationships with others, as a daughter, sister, wife, mother etc. As her father named her 'Jaya' which means victory, but her husband named her 'Suhasini', stands for soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman. She wants to retain her own old name and to some extent she succeeds in but over all gets fail. Moving on to the physical relationship between husband and wife, it is again the case of a dominating husband and a suppressed wife. The same thing is in her relationship. Mohan hurts her but she remains silent; 'Did I hurt you?' and my answer, 'No'. Each time, after it was over, the same question; and my reply too, invariably the same – 'No'. It was Mohan who encouraged her but when her story was awarded, he got furious because it was the revelation of their own life. This story wounded him, 'How can you reveal us, how can you reveal our lives to the world in this way?' (144)

And Jaya knows it that it has nothing to do with Mohan that it is a good story after all. It is not the revelation of their life that disturbs him but her success and fame which this story brought to her. Social consistency has always been more mandatory for a woman than a man. A woman, generally, does not speak

bitter to her husband but her husband speaks. Mohan has crushed both – the woman and the writer in Jaya because it seems, he neither loves nor encourages her. Jaya has every reason to be bitter with him, for he has been responsible for her misery. Jaya recalls their relationship as wife and husband. There was no feeling of love. Both of them were bearing the burden of this husband-wife relationship.

In her character there are two opposite factors. One is that she is unhappy with her husband and the other, she is anxious for him and keeps waiting for his arrival. In India the relationship between wife and husband is not only cordial but intimate and enduring. They have to bear their relationship until it becomes unbearable. Jaya is a modern woman, rooted in tradition, whereas Mohan is traditionalist rooted in customs. The difference of their background, in their attitudes is the main cause of their failure. There was no love in their relationship. Jaya chose Mohan because Dada and Ramu Kaka insisted her on choosing him and Mohan selected her because her fluency in English.

But the later part of the novel brings forward the determined character of Jaya. She comes over her mental crisis and thinks that nobody is responsible for her disaster. She leaves her blaming attitude. A change has occurred to her. Now in her terrible loneliness she realizes and understands what Kamat said to her that 'pursuit of happiness is meaningless' and loneliness is the essential condition of human existence. Others cannot be blamed all the time. To some extent, She, herself is responsible for her miserable condition. She blames Mohan for her failure but she realizes that it is not Mohan who stopped her interest of writing: 'I hadn't stopped writing because of Mohan; I could not possibly make Mohan the scapegoat for my failures, for I had written even after that confrontation with him –(145). Now she realizes her own power 'I'm Jaya, Jaya for victory'(137).

Escape cannot be found anytime and anywhere. It is not always possible. One has to search one's way through hardships. Anger or protest is not convincing weapon for fighting our battle and realizing peace in life. The novelist suggests not to let the situation go as it is. We should have control over them. 'Take your pain between your teeth, bite on it, don't let it escape . . .' (125).

This novel declares that a woman is a being. She has her own existence. She is not only for enjoyment. She has her own life in which she has full right like man has. She is capable of finding her own way to salvation. She needs no support or help from others. With the use of mythical characters, the writer attracts the attention of the readers to the plight and struggle of those characters but at the same time she reveals the awareness of the Indian wife of her existence, identity, position and her acceptance of way of facing life. Now she is ready to face every side of life whether it gives joy or gloom. So does Jaya. She has found the key to be successful in life is that a person must live his life on his own terms and should always tries to make it happy as the novel ends with the line that: 'life has always to be made possible' (193).

#### **CHARACTER OF ANJANA**

Anjana, in the novel *The Better Man* was brought up in a liberal atmosphere by her parents. She is happy in her world of independence which gives her a profound sense of self fulfilment. When her age turned twenty seven her independence is lost in the name of marriage. In her married life she endures several injustices perpetrated by her husband. In the days of her earlier married days she tries a lot to impress her husband, Ravindran but she couldn't. She wants to give the best to him but he was interested in her. Anjana consciously or unintentionally imitates the perfect woman because of her conventional upbringing. From her early childhood, girls are trained to stay pleased in their married lives under any circumstances, and thus fit in these ethics in her psyche. Whenever Anjana is ready for a casual conversation Ravindran feels irritated and leave the place at once. In spite of his actions she is ready to perform her duty and all that she wants to know about the likes and dislikes of her husband. Her husband's home signifies a place of meaningless where she feels a stranger in the bed beside her. She is eager to lead a healthy life with him but it is mere a dream for her to achieve. She longs for freedom and love in marriage, but it breeds pain, misery and fury. She develops hatred to all the things around her, even to herself. She feels that she has been victimized in the name of customs and practices. In the world of Anjana, marriage is used traditionally.

Apparently communication in the Indian society marriage brings together man and woman under one roof, but she skins over the sexual relationship. She conveniently gives up the fact that every relationship, of course, sexual relationship also incomplete without the involvement of emotional relationship. There was no fine exchange between them. Her marital relation with her husband is marked by loneliness and improper communication. Anjana moved to her parents' home in order to look after her mother. Her entrance to her mother's house is kind of escape from her loveless marital life. For the first time after four months her husband spoke an extended discussion about his plans to give up the house and start a new factory on his own. In course of her married life only on that night she feels really happy and she flavours the conjugal bond with him.

Anjana tries to understand him because all her thoughts stand for the Indian wife who is compelled to carry her tradition and culture. Ravindran's business failed and decided to start a new one. He being a selfish man wants to achieve his goals and ambitions in life. He becomes self-obsessed man. He concerns about himself and rarely does he think about her. His frequent visits were reduced. The novel also cross-examines the environment of the relationship between Anjana and her husband and the nature of their married life. Their relationship is affected adversely by their incapability to understand each other. Due to lack of communication the growing 'silence' between them, their marital life grows unsteady and dismal. For his lack of confidence he violently attacked Anjana. On watching the terrifying behaviour her father raised a voice against him, When I gave you my daughter's hand in marriage, it was with the hope that you would love her. Cherish and protect her for the rest of her life. If all you intend to do is hurt her, and made her unhappy, then there is no need for such a relationship. My daughter can manage very well without a husband like you. If you ever hurt my daughter again, I'll throw you out of this house. Do you understand?' her father told Ravindran. (Nair, BM: 232) Again the worries begin to start in the life of her parents. Ravindran began to assault her in another way. In order to save their daughter from the cruelty of her husband, her father finds a suitable teacher job. She enjoyed her job and made many friends. She prefers to read magazines, books and carried the transistor radio along with her like a baby. She tries to come out from the married life which she considers it as a disaster.

Having realized her position, Anjana would not accept the earlier image of a pair of bullocks yoked together, signaling a loveless couple. She comes to realize that life can always be made possible. The earlier impulsive Anjana becomes a mature woman, and with her realization, shadow that befalls between wife and husband tends to disappear. Anjana like all women is a victim and conquered woman but not a passive silent sufferer all restricted women. Yet she does not question the man; her oppressor because she is more concerned in getting on her life and in finding her meaningful existence. She was not unaware about the thoughts of her husband. The novelist tries to establish that it is not only the patriarchal set up which is responsible for the women's condition in the Indian society. The responsibility also lies within the victim to refuse, to raise a voice and to achieve the goal.

The novel also traces the growth of the character from a state of weakness, feeling of failure to that of relaxation. She accomplishes this through self-assessment and self criticism. The older generation is silent to the colonial power of patriarchy and become colonized whereas the younger generation is drastic and revolutionary. Anjana seeks healthy relationships that will allow her to be herself and to exercise the degree of control over her life which, as an educated woman, she knows and she deserves. Years went by and on one morning she realizes that she has live her life with no symbols of marriage and decided to live as a spinster. She holds strong opinions about patriarchy and decides to become a teacher and discards the perception of wifehood, maternity and marriage as the final goal of woman's survival. The novel travels from the total silence to strong enunciation at the end. She gave away her colourful saris and took to wearing starched cottons in shades as insipid and dull as her life. She locked up all her jewellery in a safe deposit box at the bank and swept all her fripperies away into the waste basket. (Nair BM: 234) Education provided them the privilege to be aware of themselves, especially of their rights.

Educated women demands equality, freedom and justice to bring about a radical change in their lives. Finally, Anjana breaks the traditional Indian consciousness and creates the world of her own. Anjana's emergence from her unsuccessful marriage, with the determination to live as a free individual, is an assertion of her personal freedom. She meets Mukundan and falls in love with him. She finds in Mukundan everything which she had been searching for in Ravindran. Mukundan does not ignore her presence or over ride her thoughts, but instead helps her to regain her freedom of herself as an individual, a human being with her own identity. In Mukundan's company she realizes that she has to free herself from her unhappy married life. When Anjana, proposed her wish to Mukundan, he said, 'Anjana', Mukundan said. 'You must listen to me. I know you think I am a good man. a gentle man. Someone you can depend on completely. I don't know if I am that man you make me out to be. My mother begged me to rescue her and take her away. But I didn't. I was afraid of my father, and so I made excuses. If I had done as she asked me, perhaps she might be still alive. That is the kind of man I am. A weak and undependable creature. Do you want to be part of such a man's life?' 'All of us have our weakness, but we seldom have the courage to accept them. Or even declare it as you have done now. To me, that makes you braver than anyone else. I Love You. My love tells me that this is right; you are right for me.' (Nair, BM: 244- 245) Anjana is a blend of both traditional and modern elements and she wants uniqueness and autonomy.

Finally Anjana's positive attitude towards life, work, financial independence, and self-identity helps her to go ahead in her life with hope and optimism and she proves that women can achieve autonomy. Anjana finds her voice and establish her identity. She has also created her gender identity and found a significant way of life with Mukundan. It shows that the novel does not end in depression but ends on a note of hope. Thus Anita Nair in her novels has given the external and the internal identity of her all female characters in a psychological way. In fact her fictional specialty occurs to be the exploration of the psyche of her women characters of all age groups.

Towards the end of the novel, Mukundan visits Anjana to plead with her to forgive his trespasses and accept him again. Anjana warns him of the consequences, "The Villagers won't approve of it. Or me. You will be kicked out of the committee. They will ostracize you. You won't be invited to anyone's wedding or housewarming or be included in any of the village's activities." (TBM 355). For Anjana, Mukundan's well-being was her primary concern. She represents the traditional Sita image, an object of pity and compassion.

## CONCLUSION

Due to higher education, women start questioning and are able to prove themselves. A woman in the contemporary era has developed the urge to create a environment for the full expression for her emotional and moral self and what is important to her is that the craving to be accepted as an individual, a person in her own right and enjoying the same status as man has always enjoyed. So she indulges in search of self or real image.

Today, the woman plays diverse roles both indoors and outdoors. She participates in all the hitherto male-dominated spheres. But a conflict persists in her mind and makes her restless. Family, marriage and social norms bind her completely. In the name of tradition and conventional beliefs, Indian women are subjected to a lot of tortures. We can see this in the both novels, how do the protagonists suffer on the name of marriage. At last they both decided to understand their own existence and make decision without any confusion.

Through this research article, The paper reveals how Shashi Deshpande and Anita Nair depict the misery of Indian girl-child who suffers from genderdiscrimination and feels herself inferior. They express how women are exploited within the marital frame. Present research paper is centered on the exploration of sensibility and psychology of female protagonist of the Anita Nair and Shashi Deshpande's work.

The paper deals with the theme of marriage in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*. Marriage is an institution which is meant to provide security, love and emotional harmony to both male and female. But the institution of marriage has failed dramatically in its aim. Instead of providing love, it has only resulted in sex and lust without even an iota of love and emotional understanding. The novel by Deshpande *That Long Silence*

clearly brings forth the various ways by which Jaya's life has been subjugated, making her only an object rather a lifeless object. Marriage plays its disastrous role and Jaya is left aghast. She has to mould herself after marriage according to her husband's likes and dislikes. Her creative urge remains pent up as her husband is not at all happy with whatever she writes, thus ultimately she has to shun writing. Not only Jaya but other women including Nayana and Jeeja are also victims in marriage.

Paper reveals that mind or the deepest thought of Indian woman is generally influenced by violent powers that control unfairly her control unfairly her acceptance and admittance of defeat which results in varieties of reactions and includes protest, revenge and violence.

Present paper tries to explore the issues like rape in marriage in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. Article also reveals how Shashi Deshpande depicts that rape, in marriage life, is used as tool by husband to dominate women.<sup>13</sup>

the strength and weakness of Indian women through the woman protagonist of her novels. Present paper examines how Shashi Deshpande explores the psyche of educated middleclass Indian women who find themselves smothered and fettered in patriarchal society. They suffer from mental trauma because of frustration, hopes and disappointments. They feel trapped between her own aspirations and an individual and forces of patriarchy which confine them. <sup>16</sup>

Paper explores the study of feminism and its various definitions. It explains that Feminism fights against male chauvinism and demands equal rights and treatment of women as human being. It demands emotional and psychological adjustment respecting each other. Feminism is not insult of partner but is a movement of social reconstruction. It is not anti-man but it challenges to patriarchal thoughts.<sup>20</sup>

In this paper writer explores how Shashi Deshpande portrays the image of modern women who face void and feel vacuum in their life. The paper examines how patriarchal set up, where man is given complete freedom and futility of life compels the women characters for selfintrospection and to find out their own identity in the society. It elaborates how the protagonist Jaya suffers due to lack of communication with her husband. It explores how her husband, her children, her brothers and her mother disappoint her. This makes her to revolt and need for the identity and in the end her quest reaches to compromise.<sup>22</sup>

Present paper distinguishes Indian Feminism from the Western feminism. Western feminism follows the notion of „self“ which is in relation to „individualism“ but in Indian Society individual is considered just as a part of the society. Paper reveals how this theory is presented by Shashi Deshpande in her novel *That Long Silence*. Paper explores that Shashi Deshpande, through her male characters, presents Indian masculinities. Deshpande does not dehumanize the male characters and depicts that plight of Indian middle class woman like Jaya is the result of her own making. The greed for materialistic life is the main reason of the suffering of male as well as women in the society.<sup>24</sup>

This research paper throws light upon how silence is used as a weapon against their male counterpart to inflict punishment. Paper also studies how Shashi Deshpande through her women character insists to bring about the change in the norms and values for women and give equal space for women in society. It also expresses co-existence and co-operation makes the marital life successful. Man's success or failure is closely linked with degression and regeneration.<sup>33</sup>

Present paper is focused on the women characters in the three of Shashi Deshpande's novels namely *The Dark Holds No Terror*, *Roots and Shadows* and *That Long Silence*. The paper elaborates how Shashi Deshpande's novels reflect on the problem and the concerns of the middle class Indian women. The paper finds that root of Deshpande's feminism is in the sufferings of Indian women which are caused due to the conflict between tradition and modernity, family and profession, culture and nature.<sup>35</sup>

The present paper discusses how self-discovery awakens the spiritual intelligence in the women protagonists of Shashi Deshpande's novels. Writer proves that women in Shashi Deshpande's novel not only stop with identity crisis and self-discovery but analyze their sufferings, concerns, and problems, understand the culture and make positive decisions through introspection. Paper reveals that Deshpande's heroines suffer from alienation, identity crisis and they feel the need of complete freedom to their own life. But in the end

showing maturity, they find happiness in peaceful co-existence, understanding and acceptance and expect the same from male community.<sup>40</sup> The writer probes into the root causes of plight of Indian women through this paper and explores that illiteracy among the women, their weak and submissive natures are responsible for their sufferings. Paper reveals though Indian women are aware about the rights, status and identity; they lack the will and courage to fight against the exploitive forces. Paper reveals that Deshpande's women characters are victim of exploitation, separation and negligence. Paper also examines how Shashi Deshpande, through her fiction, suggests prestigious adjustment to Indian women and tries to protect the marriage system in Indian society.<sup>41</sup>

Shashi Deshpande's fifth novel, *That Long Silence* (1988), marks her emergence as a major novelist. The narrator Jaya, an upper middle class housewife in Bombay, with two teenage children, is forced to take stock of her life when her husband is suspected of fraud, and they move into a small flat in a poorer locality. Deshpande shows up the hollowness of much of modern Indian life - the convenient, arranged marriage, with the upwardly mobile husband and the children studying in "good" schools. The repetitiveness and boredom of a woman's life come through forcefully. She shows how the silence imposed on women is partly of their own making, though society and tradition have a hand. There is no reference to anything outside Jaya's narrow ambit. India's tradition and philosophy (so dear to novelists like Raja Rao) have no place here. The only reference to the past is in Jaya's realization that in Sanskrit drama, women did not speak Sanskrit - they were confined to Prakrit, a less polished language, imposing a variety of silence on them. The heroine Jaya, like the other women in the novel, whether the half-crazed Kusum or the poor maid servant, is incapable of breaking away from the supportive yet stifling extended family. The narrow focus results in an intensity which is almost painful. All the characters including Mohan, Jaya's husband, are fully realized, though none of them are likeable. Shashi Deshpande's next two novels are not as good as her Sahitya Akademi Award winner, *That Long Silence*. In *The Binding Vine* (1993) the story of Urmi, the narrator, grieving over the death of her baby daughter, runs parallel with the stories of her long-dead mother-in-law, and of Kalpana, a teenage victim of rape, fighting for life in hospital. Neither the setting nor the characters are typical of small town India. All the women drive themselves around in cars (rather unusual even now), Urmi addresses her mother by name, and her widowed mother has "pink-tinted nails," inconceivable in a society where a widow is not supposed to wear bright clothes, let alone makeup or nail polish. *A Matter of Time* (1996), attempts to depict the complex web of human relationships in an extended family over three generations. Sumi, the mother of three young daughters, goes back to her parental home, the "Old House," when her husband Gopal walks away from the marriage. The "Old House" has its own dark secrets which are unravelled in the course of the narrative. However, this novel tends to be diffuse, and some of the characters are not quite credible.

Deshpande generally has the heroine as the narrator, and employs a kind of stream-of-consciousness technique. Almost all her novels deal with a crisis in the heroine's life. The narrative goes back and forth in time, so the narrator can describe events with the benefit of hindsight. Her work is woman-oriented, but it would not be correct to term her a feminist, because there is nothing doctrinaire about her fiction; she simply portrays, in depth, the meaning of being a woman in modern India.

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