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THEME OF SELF-REALIZATION IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *THAT LONG SILENCE*

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This paper examines the passive state of Jaya who is the narrator and protagonist in the novel *That Long Silence* by Shashi Deshpande. Jaya starts a new life when she realizes her stillness. *Feminine Mystic* theory is used to show the dissatisfied family life of Jaya. Shashi Deshpande, a recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award and Padma Shri and has authored Short stories, essays and bestselling novels like *The Dark Holds No Terror*, *Roots and Shadows* and *The Binding Vine*.

In this novel, Jaya features the women of India. Unexpected termination from her monotonous lifestyle has marked a new beginning in her life. Being Silent is not just leading a peaceful life, it may also hide a chaos within Jaya's silence and it throws an open opportunity to ponder over passiveness. She is an educated woman and is advised by her father who often says "Bite on your pain, don't let it cry out" (129). Jaya's priority changes after her marriage. Jaya has insight upon the life of married women including Ai (Jaya's mother), Ajji (grandmother), kaki (aunt) and mother-in-law. When Jaya enters into married life immense advices thrust upon her like "A pair of bullocks yoked together" (7), "a husband is like a sheltering tree" (32) and an utterance of Mohan who is Jaya's husband "My mother never raised her voice against my father, however badly he behaved to her, he had said to me once." (83) has become a guideline to obscure her identity, despite her education and freedom granted by her husband to write. Like her mother and aunt she considers her only job is "being the peacemaker in the family, the bridge between father and son" (50). She never tries to find a remedy for her emptiness rather she focussed on blaming Mohan for her passive life. The Chaos of silence in her life turns a new page in her story.

Jaya says "Memory is selective." (130). When Jaya thinks about the life of her friends, relatives and neighbours then she realizes her flaw and potential. Her longing for freedom reflects when she recalls the life of Kusum who becomes insane. "In her madness, she had been able to get away from the burden of pleasing others; only in her madness had she been able to be gloriously, unashamedly herself" (126). She actualizes how she has suppressed herself when she recalls the first party in her house where women from different status had visited. She has fooled herself by trying to please people. By her speech and laughing, she realizes her fragile attitude "The Weapons of the weak and the oppressed, Jaya" (169).

Kamat, a neighbour in her apartment whose death inflicts pain upon her. When she retrieves the words of Kamat, a fresh spirit bloom within her. He keeps saying "If you don't commit yourself, you'll never fail" (150) a paradoxical statement to break the darkness of Jaya. "Making others dependent on you. It increases your sense of power. And that's what you really want, all you bloody looking-after-others, Caring-for-others women" (84). These umpteen utterances of Kamat while she recalls provide a way to awake from her unenlightened life although bitter memories of him dwell in her mind.

She thinks that she has understood Mohan thoroughly "I know you better than you know yourself, I had once told Mohan" (75) but she finds, it is not she. She accused Mohan as "To Mohan, I had been no writer, only an exhibitionist" (144) "But he had only shown me his hurt" (144). Later she comprehends that her blame on Mohan is an escape. Despite the fault on Mohan side, he is barely responsible for the devoid state of his wife. Jaya does not know what she needs. The silence in regular life gives her time to think what she

accomplished so far in her life. "But I cannot blame Mohan, for even if he had asked me- what do you want?-I would have found it hard to give him a reply"(25). When the story progresses, Jaya's character is vividly portrayed. She realizes who she is. "...and with the returning silence the truth came to me. I hadn't stopped writing because of Mohan; I could possibly make Mohan the scapegoat for my failures, for I had written even after that confrontation with him-the stories that had been rejected, stories that had come back to me..." (145). This shows maturity in the development of Jaya's character.

The *Feminine Mystique* written by Betty Friedan in 1963 is one of the literary works that sparked the beginning of second-wave feminism in the United States. Friedan begins her introduction by discussing "the problem that has no name." She uses this to generally refer to the unhappiness of women in the 1950s and 1960s. She illustrates the problem with stories of severe unhappy housewives from the United States who struggled with fulfilment despite living in comfort and having seemingly "perfect" families. This American idea of a housewife directly contradicted the actual trends that were occurring. She discusses her own decision to conform to societal expectations as a housewife when she abandoned a promising career in psychology so that she could raise children. She observes that other young women still struggle with that exact decision. In Jaya's life, she is blessed with material wealth, good husband and children but the state of dissatisfaction has been roaming in her life. She has the ability to write but her quest for writing comes to an end when her works get rejected. She ceases to develop her skill and dedicated her life to look after the family. Taking care of her family is unavoidable but her spirit of writing has faded when she faces failure. A new courage is born when she meets and recalls different people and a conflict with Mohan opens up her narrow mind to realize her errors.

Jaya undergoes depression when she comprehends her attitude towards her career. She gathers hope and strength to pursue her life. Her views on marriage has never changed "Marriage never end, they cannot- they are a state of being" (127). She yet loves her husband besides his inability to capture the pessimistic emotion of his wife. "Do as you desire" (192) shows positive code in Jaya's life. She believes her husband will come and also she will pursue her passion, writing" life has always to be made possible"(193).

The silence of few days, recollection of memories and a diary in Jaya's life breaks her long silence. Her shifts from leading a monotonous life to courageous woman is vividly portrayed when the story runs between her memory and her present life.

Works Cited

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