

# **Metaphysical Approach to Shashi Deshpande's**

## ***That Long Silence***

**V. Kumaran**

Ph.D Scholar

Alagappa Government Arts College

Karaikudi.

Tamilnadu

[kumaranjaya.v@gmail.com](mailto:kumaranjaya.v@gmail.com)

and

**V. Nagarajan**

Associate Professor & Head

P.G Department and Research

Centre and English

Alagappa Government Arts College

Karaikudi, Tamilnadu

Shashi Deshpande brings woman's nobility, passions, struggling and the will to the society which should be understood by all through her writing. In the novel *That Long Silence* the prolonging phases of unfulfilled sexual happiness, unwarranted life partner, unstable profession, lack of communication, psychological imbalance, economical insufficiency, lack of permanent refuge, the abandonment of parental support, gender domination, misappropriating the cultural values and unagreeable social pattern drive the balance minded middle class woman Jaya and other minor women characters to have an unquenchable thirst for familial love and longing for belonging.

It is suggested by the writer that woman is a silent sufferer. Though she appears as a fair sex and a symbol of love and affection, her physical ailment and psychological disturbance are not understood properly by the male dominant society.

Jaya, the protagonist of the novel, *That Long Silence*, is desirably named by her father as Jaya. Jaya stands for 'victory'. Her father is a pragmatist. His revolutionary step in giving education to his children cannot be refused while he was earning a strong oppose from his mother because his brother was sending his children for Kannad school. He has sown the sense of superiority in his daughter that she should maintain individuality and dignity in every aspect of her life. He does not encourage her to feel the fervor of lower middle class customs. Being brought up in such a manner, she is driven to question herself why her father has made her feel different from others. She blames her father for her habit of keeping herself aloof.

Jaya does not appear as a prescriptive feminine character because of her traditional middle class background. Jaya is not satisfied with her married life because her husband is allegedly found in malpractice in his business so it happens to them to leave their well settled house in Church gate to the very old apartment at Dadar, in Bombay. Owing to the progression of the enquiry regarding his malpractice, Mohan absconds from his house and industry to protect himself which makes Jaya become tensed and terrified, she loses her peace of mind and always thinking of their life having a downward slew of changes in their status. The relationship between the husband and wife becomes diplomatic due to the deplorable state of their life.

The writer has used flash back technique in *Jaya*. Jaya reminisces her past when she was with her parents and recalls her bitter experiences with her egoistic husband, Mohan, retrospectively and pensively. After her marriage, her mind is tossed in between submission and assertion due to her husband's allegations and accusation on her which propel her mind to panic. The cause and effect of oppression of Indian middle women in their domestic life and prevention for feminine identity as well as female self-hood are exhibited through the realistically chiseled feminine character of Jaya.

She does everything for her husband and his family with great disappointment when her expectations are disregarded after her marriage. The internal perspectives of her life partner are determined by the elders through his external objects such as his physical appearance, nature of his occupation and his caste. This is revealed in the lines:

It is here that my vision fails. I cannot distance myself from us and what happened to us, however much I would like to do so. A pair of bullocks yoked together...a clever phrase, but can it substitute for the reality? A man and a woman married for seventeen years. A couple with two children. A family somewhat like the one caught and preserved for posterity by the advertising visuals I so loved. But the reality was only this. We were two persons. A man. A woman. (8)

It was a much delayed finding of Jaya that there was a strong selfish motive of underestimation and domination lurking in his mind ever. The words used by him possessed the fervor of underestimation and domination. The following passage portrays Mohan's rare exchanged feeling with Jaya: I had seen the thought in him whenever he met or spoke of an old school or college friend or acquaintance, or of an earlier colleague who 'is only a junior engineer still, just imagine that, Jaya!; or, 'poor man, only a lecture still'. (33)

Vasant, Mohan's brother, tells Jaya that his mother was called out for her help in cooking by the people if there was any function in his native place. She would bring food to home from there when she returned. They felt that the day would be great for them and could be sure of a good meal that day. His father never touched the food. Mohan would eat large without any fuss. His father had the habit of insulting and hurting his mother often. But he never realized her pain and her longing for familial love. Such narrative part of economic crisis and struggling for protecting self-respect of the middle class family earns the novel readers tears.

The sense of self-respect metamorphoses into ego and he becomes egoistic in his life. Hence it is found that he seems to be a hidden character right from the beginning of this novel and he appears ever as an unwarranted life partner to Jaya. Therefore Jaya is ever geared up with the sense of longing for belonging and thirst for familial love with searching for truth and affection in her life. . Jaya laments herself pathetically as "Kneel down yourself... Yes, I will have to join him. The pair of us kneeling down and kissing the garbage-strewn, shit-packet pavements of Bombay... hysteria gurgled in my throat." (31).

The longing for love does not leave even the children in Mohan's family. The children earn psychological upset owing to the peculiar, selfish and egoistic character of Mohan through which the writer sketches the child psychology and their tender nature surrogated to the complicated one. The love offered by Mohan to his children looks like a lopsided one that Rati, Jaya's daughter, enjoys the environment gaily and plays the games with her father. When Mohan calls Raghu to join the family fiction he refuses his calling because he feels discomfort to mingle with them due to

Mohan's unusual pet. He simply replies 'It's boring'. When Rahul was a kid Mohan did not heed his attention to him properly. He did everything reluctantly for his family and never encouraged him for anything.

Jaya reveals her inner voice that Mohan did not believe any one and mind anybody's disaster he never sacrificed anything and encouraged any one for his good cause. He was budging his cleverness into everything to achieve his want. He wanted solution for how to evade from intensifying official problem intentionally made by him for his desire. Jaya is perplexed utterly when Mohan mincingly bursts her it as 'No, nothing will happen, nothing can happen. So many men are in this situation. Can anyone live on just salary?'(31).

The need of a smart guidance to a woman in an unhealthy environment and her fear in her moral consciousness are discussed here. Jaya remembers nostalgically her father's affection, magnanimity and his sufferings to pay her college fees and Kamat's, her well-wisher's, timely encouragement for her after her marriage.

Kamat's encouragement gives her moral boost up and perseverance to sabotage and succeed the obstacles in her life. Therefore, she is able to become a successful writer with her incessant endeavour, she becomes a great writer to prove her self- confidence and individuality in her life though Mohan absconded from the family without hesitation.

According to Mohan, his role in sexual contribution with Jaya remains as an urge to fulfill his physical urgency. He does not offer her his tender proposal before his sexual content and a peaceful quench of sexual thirst after such content with Jaya. Only his urgency and wish for fulfillment stand prominent. Jaya offers him her full physical co-operation but a permanent vacuum remains ever in her mind which refers to her physical surrender and mental lapse. The readers are able to feel through this novel that numbers of women are like Jaya and their private problems are veiled up in the Indian middle class family. Therefore, we could assure that she is not satisfied with sexual pleasure while she is psychologically ruptured.

In this section, the investigator scrutinizes the concepts of centripetal and centrifugal forces and their functions in the characters of Mohan and Jaya. Mohan pays his poor attention to his family. His whole aim is deviated from familial responsibility and is bound mostly with the material phenomena. Mohan communicates his return to his house after leaving his family unarmed. His reunion seems to be an unwarranted one as whether he will realize his mistakes in his life and he will offer Jaya a peaceful life. Therefore the character of Mohan is moving with a centrifugal force from the beginning to end of this novel. Though Mohan is a man of evasiveness and treachery and Jaya has earned an identity through her writing, she is longing for the support of her husband and his affection and she is geared with the thirst for familial love which is found in her sorrowful recollection of her past and sharing her agony with the readers. So her mind is always brooded with botheration about her children bearing her psychic irritation and numbness due to her unscrupulous husband. Therefore the readers are able to feel the character of Jaya is moving with 'centripetal' force which remains with the search for truth and love in familial inwardness instead of accusing her parents, her relatives who loved Jaya very much before her marriage, and cultural and social set up. Though her mind visits her parents, brother's and her uncle's families often, she is concerned about her husband.

Indian culture does not encourage the Indian women to be passive and coward and to be subservient ever. It supports them to trust their individuality and power through designing their

own duty. Jaya seems to be a typical victorious woman among the dominant people and the people those who follow the inappropriate ancient principle. She seems to be a light giver to others by keeping herself as a candle to glow light in the darkness with melting itself. Indian middle class women are unable to trespass the culture and to dissociate themselves from Indian culture because their contribution is more effective to protect it. She does it through giving her heart and head for the wellbeing of her people in and around her family circle. Vimala Ramarao's *Myth and Folklore In Shashi Deshpande* witnesses:

Deshpande does not use myth and legend as embellishment or for local colour of ethnic appliqué-work. Myths, legends and folklores are deeply engrained in the Indian psyche—especially those which are found in the epics and the *puranas*. They are so much a part of our psychic make up that it is terms of theses myths and legends that we try to order our inner world and cognize our experiences. These stories and myths are part and parcel of our 'collective unconscious'. (Pathak, R.S 208-209)

In viewing the character of Jaya, on one hand, she remains a cultural woman never deviating herself from Indian cultural code so that she is able to regain her lost husband but on another hand it induces the readers to perceive how much she is satisfied in her life and what the value of her innate cultural power has rewarded her after her mind is torn into pieces.

Her silence seems to be a conscious one ever when she is perturbed by her husband's verbal hurt and physical separation. It is found in the nowhere of the novel that she has done verbal battle with any one and made self-physical hurt to threaten any one to fulfill her desire. Although her silence appears like her weakness in many places of her life, it has given life not only to her but also to her children and her husband Mohan. Her silence remains to be a unifying factor to reshape her family after Mohan's return. Therefore it is known that her silence witnesses her thirst for familial love such longing for children's future and the presence of her husband in her family. Moreover her silence is confirmed as the Indian middle class woman's consciousness to protect Indian culture. The Indian middle class woman's silence is not the outcome of her fear but it remains conscious rational psychic perceptiveness of nurturing Indian culture through protecting her family.

While analyzing Jaya's character, it is known by the readers that her silence seems to be her own strength such as truth and wise, and weakness, such as suffering and lose which draws her husband to come back to the family. It makes the readers remind John Don's 'campus image' in his metaphysical poem *Valediction Forbidding Mourning*.

*they be two, they are two so  
As stiff twin compasses are two;  
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show  
To move, but doth, if th' other do.  
And though it in the centre sit,  
Yet, when the other far doth roam,  
It leans, and hearkens after it,  
And grows erect, as that comes home.  
Such wilt thou be to me, who must,*

*Like th' other foot, obliquely run;  
Thy firmness makes my circle just  
And makes me end where I begun.*

### Works Cited

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A> Valediction: Forbidding Mourning