

The Existence of Feminine Magnetism and Humanistic Hallucination of Conjugal Burst and Armistice in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*

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ABSTRACT: *Shashi Deshpande's novels divulge a world of complex human associations that weave together in an inextricable familial bond. She has secured a prestigious position in post -colonial New English literature. Being a keen observer she observed all burning issues prevailed in the family and society. The novelist projects modern Indian woman's search for self and role in the society and family because her relationship with others is central to living. Deshpande puts female characters on the anvil of the situational crisis, trials, and makes them suffer through a series of uncanny events. By rejecting the romantic notion of an artist as a hero, which excludes women, she emancipates the artist and the feminine spirit and depicts the woman's situation and her struggle in all spheres of life. Violence in all fashions against women is a habit of social and domestic life from time immemorial. In a society dictated by Patriarchy, women have become the victims of humiliation, torture, and exploitation. Women continue to be the appendix of male and treated a possession, not a person. They continue to be the margin and relegated to the inferior position in the domestic and social structure. Women stand stripped of all their rights and privileges. The problem of women starts at womb and ends at the tomb. Women writings are primarily committed to challenging the practice of gender inequality, a factor contributing to global distress. Women writing is committed to rewriting the history of the women who have been denied history, ultimately to create society gender-free. Here this paper discuss about the feminine magnetism and humanistic hallucination of conjugal burst and armistice in her famous novel *That Long Silence*. It draws the attention of readers and makes them more curious to know about that silence.*

Key Words: *Uncanny, Emancipates, Feminine Magnetism, Humanistic, Hallucination, and Conjugal.*

Indian fiction in English has a formidable line of women novelist from Kamala Markandaya to Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Shashi Deshpande, Attia Hosain and Anita Desai. The women novelists explore the psychic and moral dilemmas and repercussions of the situation in their women characters trying to achieve a new harmony of relationship with themselves and their surroundings. Shashi Deshpande is one of the foremost voices to deal with this problem. Her novel *That Long Silence*, which won her the Sahitya Academy Award for 1990, tells the story of an Indian housewife who maintained her silence throughout her life in the face of hardships that threatened to break it. The novel is a recalling of Jaya, the heroine, who is a writer. For her writing is like childbirth, both painful and risky.

The novel can be read in the light of the concept of the feminine magnetism, put forward by the American feminist critic Betty Friedan. The women's answer set Friedan to thinking that many of her classmate's 'personal' problems were very similar. The book begins with the question of American wives' nameless aching dissatisfaction and she calls it 'a problem that has no name'. When Friedan put this into words, many American women wrote to her by expressing their wonder that their problem is common among women. In the age after Freud, sex is the suspect. But Friedan denies it. When we read the novel *That Long Silence* from the point of view of Friedan, we can find Jaya is also confronting with such a problem. Friedan is talking about the American middle-class women, and Deshpande's protagonist, Jaya is an Indian educated middle-class woman.

Friedan does not discuss poverty or financial insecurity, Jaya does not have such economic problems. Like American suburban women, Jaya has a well-employed husband and two children. As Betty Friedan's concept, we cannot name Jaya's problem. According to Friedan, the feminine mystique stresses the highest value and the only commitment of women is the fulfillment of their own femininity. It says that the femininity is so mysterious and intuitive. It also warns that the root of women's troubles in the past is that women envied men, and tried to be like men, instead of accepting their own nature, which can find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination and nurturing maternal love. In the novel, Jaya is forced to accept this idea from her childhood onwards. She is always warned to be a passive woman and demanded

to prepare herself for a husband and children. Her husband, her family, and the society she lives in compel her to be a passive, silent object and to sacrifice her interests and likes.

Friedan shows that the term career woman has become a dirty word and women shown in the act of renouncing career and discovering that what she wanted to be a housewife. Jaya, being a creative writer forced to renounce her job as a columnist due to her husband's interests. Friedan pointed out the fact that women are human beings, neither stuffed dolls nor animals. Human beings set apart from animals by their mind's power to have an idea, vision and shape their future. From her own voice, Deshpande asserts herself as a humanist, not a feminist, not a masculinist. She raises her voice for treating women as a human being.

Behind the story of the novel lies the groundswell of frustration in the married life of the protagonist. She suffers from isolation and alienation. Despite her marriage to Mohan and subsequently becoming a mother of two children, she was lonely. Her life partner could not understand her emotions as a result of which she was torn from within. Deshpande describes her married life by using an appropriate image as "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 man and woman." (TLS p 8)

The novel begins with the sensitive presentation of the loneliness of a woman and the haunting question of the ultimate purpose of her life in the context of her familial relationships. Jaya wants to understand her own bare self, devoid of all embellishments, as that alone can prove to be a reservoir of strength in her tedious, lonely journey towards self-actualization. Oscillating between desire and disgust, she constantly tries to bridge the gap between the mythic wife and mother and her own experiences of being a wife and a mother and is often racked by pangs of guilt and inadequacy. To come across as an ideal wife and mother, she suppresses her own emotional needs. The fear of failure to conform to the stereotyped model of ideal women makes her restless and she is afraid to acknowledge her desires decisively in petty day-to-day affairs. She is afraid that a frank admission of her desires may disturb the delicate balance of her relationships. She realizes the futility of a life, which lived only for the sake of others by suppressing her own passions, likes and dislikes strength and caliber. Jaya is a typical heroine of Shashi Deshpande. Her women characters are tired of life with the pressures of their life. These women are the stereotyped images of weak, timid and sacrificing women, who are comfortable with blind faith in patriarchy. They are forced to lose their faith in themselves.

Jaya, the heroine of the novel, gives us a new image of the Indian woman who now tries to stand on her own legs and seeks to break the old age silence by refusing to dance to the tune of her husband. With Jaya's assertion of life that 'long silence' is threatened to be broken. In a way, the protagonist Jaya is any modern women who resent her husband's callousness and becomes the victim of circumstances. By implication, the character of Jaya represents modern women's ambivalent attitude to married life. Shashi Deshpande hints at the modern woman's refusal to comply with the wishes of the husband Jaya expresses her conflicts. It is about the silencing of one half of humanity. Jaya succeeds in realizing and discovering herself. The need to establish herself as an individual comes to her after seventeen years of marriage.

The whole novel, *That Long Silence* is built around silence and making one silent. Mohan, Jaya's husband accuses that his mother never raised her voices against his father. However, his father behaved in the same manner as Mohan. The novel is not only about Jaya's efforts to obliterate the silence that is suffocating her, but also about the despair and resignation of other "victims of patriarchy and also their silence" (Palker p 168). Silence becomes an insistent metaphor in Deshpande. To her protagonist, it becomes a part of their lives, a distinguishing mark. Most women in India leave behind them only silence. Deshpande does not extol this Indian habit of silence on the part of women but shows how it can become a weapon in the hands of man, the punishment inflicted upon women. Marriage is a weapon for them to make women silent.

To any perceptive reader, the relation between Jaya and Mohan is an epitome of failure and an emblem of disgust, disappointment, and depression. Mohan has crushed both the writer and woman in Jaya as he neither loved her nor encouraged her. Jaya has every reason to be bitter with him, for he has been responsible for her misery. The similar experiences are reflected in Urmi of *The Binding Vine*, Madhu of *Small Remedies*, Sumi of *A Matter of Time* presents how a female child is indoctrinated to be passive, submissive and silent right from childhood. It is the same parental partiality conditions them to mask their feelings and to be silent.

Indu and Jaya succumbed to dance to the tune of others, either the husband or the editor. On the threshold of establishing herself as a successful writer, Jaya is forced to masquerade behind a safe 'Seeta Column', because her husband fears a close resemblance between her stories and their life. In a way, it creates an obstacle for Jaya to break her silence through writing. From the traditional gender-based roles Deshpande's protagonist struggles to emerge as individuals. Reconciliation with their own selves enables

them to discard their silence too which is a strong symbol used by Deshpande for submission, anger, pain, and frustration issuing out of helplessness. As Asha Susan pointed out, these novels are not mere documentation of female resistance to patriarchal ideologies but are the attempts made by women to forge an identity their own, to voice themselves.

The end of the novel, she has decided that she shall no longer be the subservient, silent wife she has decided to break her long silence. The force of Deshpande's indictment of women's lives lies in the way she is able to their condition as endemic, chiefly by drawing similarities among Jaya and variety of other female figures, in generations of women in her family, among different classes of women of the same class and generation who have all been trained in Silence. Although Jaya's creativity provides her an outlet for her frustration, she is not able to go beyond the social conditioning and somehow believes that a woman's choice, independent of that of her husband, should not have a significant role in her life. Her indefinable relationship with Kamat imparts an inner fulfillment.

According to Charu Chandra Mishra, Jaya's need for Kamat also reinforces the truth of Maslow's theory of sequential motivational hierarchy. The motives and needs of human beings are considered as arranged in a hierarchy in order of potency to the unsatisfied organism, which has several levels. At the first level, physiological needs are the most basic aspect of human motivation and action. At the second level, the motives pertaining to the organism's desire for a stable, secure environment become important. At the next level is the hierarchy, love and belongings are the motives for having friends, companions, family, and identification with a group or individual. These needs involve affiliation and friendship, and as they are satisfied, self-esteem motives become important, involving the desire for respect, confidence, and admiration. The desire for affectionate relationship is important in this motivation of this stage. Jaya's identification with Kamat tones in this category.

Expression of anger in silence is best evident in Jaya revolts in silence in an incident when Mohan accuses her for no fault of her. She wants to burn out in anger. But she fails to break her silence. She was fed up with the routine work like changing the sheets, scrubbing bathrooms and cleaning the fridge, and so on. Shashi Deshpande uses an apt image of a worm crawling into a hole to describe the state of Jaya, a budding writer doomed to dwindle into a stereotyped Indian housewife. "Oh god, I had thought, I can't take any more. Even a worm has a hole it can crawl into. I had mine- as Mohan's wife, as Rahul's and Rati's mother." (148)

Shashi Deshpande's humanistic vision paves the way for women, who consider themselves inferior to men. They considered that women are safe only in the protection of men. So men as a father, brother, husband, and son can even dominate them without caring for their emotions which is really inhuman. Psychologically women are trained to consider men as a status symbol. When under pressure and anger Mohan leaves home silently and stealthily with no word to his wife. She does not hear him for a certain time. She is badly jolted by his departure from home. His absence makes her uneasy and she begins to ruminate. She thinks that he has gone for good. Her reputation as a wife is at stake. The thought of carrying children's responsibilities upon her shoulders stirs her; she does not want her to disintegrate. So she is constantly haunted by the thought of incompleteness without Mohan. She considers Mohan as a source of social protection. Such feelings she shares with Mukta as "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 only two persons. A man, Woman" (p 8)

Jaya realizes that both are separated. This feeling gives birth to the sense of detachment in Jaya. Both live together but there is little emotional attachment. Before marriage, Mohan drifts towards her seeing her proficiency in English. He thinks to marry her but he never cares about her emotions, feelings, and desires. She is just like a status symbol to her husband. Men as husbands do not take wives worth to stand equally in society and family. Consequently, they humiliate and insult them unknowingly and knowingly too. It will be apt to recount Kiran Desai's protagonist in her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* who abuses his wife for her uncivilized behavior and rebukes her time to time for her inability to speak in English. Whereas she has been a source of financial aids to him without that he could not have fulfilled his dream. She is a key which opened the doors of his success. But he never accepts her as a wife and treats her inhumanly. It makes a deep chasm between them. In the case of Jaya and Mohan, there is the same chasm between them as there are no love and mutual understanding. She brought up in the unemotional surroundings does not understand the meaning of true love. She is confused about this vital relation which is also the binding vine between different human relations. Just after getting married she misunderstands love she says: "Love...? yes, what else could I call it but love, when? Thought of how I had longed for his physical presence, when I

remembered how readily, almost greedily, I had responded to his touch? ... when his desires, his approval, his love had seemed, to be the most important thing in my life.”(p15)

Jaya is thinking revolves around Mohan only so she feels the need for Mohan and his need of her. She never gets warmth in her relationship with him. Her personal happiness and gratification do not carry any weight to Mohan and to himself too. She fully knows her future and relationship with him. Despite it, she cannot dare to leave her culture totally. No matter her marital relationship is unable to give her satisfaction, peace of mind and love, she cannot go away from her identity as Mohan's wife. Shashi Deshpande very effectively expounds the aim of only individual happiness in marriage. Jaya belongs to the average household. From the beginning she developed a fear of speech for fear of ridicule from males Appa, her father who always prevent her from doing any task of her taste. Her father and brother criticized whenever got opportunities to rebuke. Due to that, she jumps into silence which becomes easier for her. Later she avoids confessing to Mohan that she actually likes to watch heads in the movies more than movies, reasons behind this were liberty and freedom shown in threads. Her inability to find words loads Jaya to embark upon a long silent journey. Finally, she holds silence, the utter silence. She is taught to take Mohan as her God. Her traditional upbringing makes her sacrifice herself on the altar of marriage. “Love, like everything that is great and precious, demands its own morality, and frequently entails a sacrifice of the less to the greater; but the sacrifice must be voluntary for, where it is not, it will destroy the very basis of the love for the sake for which it is made.” (p215)

After marriage whole life of girl changes, this is discernible in case of Jaya. She gives up her ambition of becoming a writer because she was led into believing that her husband is her career, her profession and her means of livelihood. Shashi Deshpande has highlighted many burning issues of modern discourse of feminism. Through the characters of Jaya, Asha, Mukta, Kusum etc. the novelist depicts the complexities of the Indian woman of the modern age. In the life of Indian women, marriage plays a pivotal role. It changes their entire life. As far as husbands are concerned in the lives of their wives, they live as they were living. They rejoice in their life carrying no sign of being married. Jaya sees her individual fate becoming the common fate of women whom she sees around her, bound and suffocated in marriage. Jaya meditates as to why woman plunges into the marital fire and keep burning silently. The reason that occurs to her is, “We're all frightened of the dark, frightened of being alone” (p102). It is both a personal weakness as well as the social fate of women in Indian society.

Shashi Deshpande expounds that without male support even the strongest is considered a weak one whereas wife being or not being in husband's life does not bring apparent change. Fear of being isolated without man hovers on the woman. Divorce and widowhood pull on silently in marriage as Jaya thinks on what Ravi, her brother, whose wife Asha has left after a quarrel would have liked her to tell Asha as “Go home like a good girl, Asha... Go back home and obey your husband. And never mind, whatever it is he has done, he's your husband...”(p115). In the married life of Jaya treachery lies and deception take place instead of love, affection and mutual understanding. So Jaya is dissatisfied with her married life. She is busy with the contemplation about childhood, girlhood, and womanhood. Since childhood, she is taught to follow the instruction of men with little complaint. But stealthily she manages to do the task of her own liking. Upon a lot of girls Bernard Shaw has rightly pointed out, “Home is the girl's prison and the women's workshop is very true in case of Jaya” (358). After marriage Jaya is endowed with a new name ‘Suhasini’ by her husband Mohan. Meaning of ‘Suhasini’ is “a soft smiling placid motherly woman”(16). She does not like this name but cannot oppose them. She does not use this name entire novel. She feels confident when she remembers the meaning of Jaya, name given by her Appa. She does not like to see herself as a poor idiotic woman. She feels that it is inhuman to impose new identity including desires and whims upon anyone. When she goes through the pages of her diaries she realizes that ‘there were only the bare skeletal outlines of her life.

Shashi Deshpande has achieved a definite space in Indian women writings with her promising novels which sincerely document the unspeakable horrors of women and how they are struggling to liberate themselves from the fetters of patriarchy. Deshpande has keen concern for the tragic and deplorable life of women. In her novels portrays the humiliations faced by the protagonist who puts her life to liberate herself from her autocratic husband to have an autonomous life. A woman marries a man with a dream of having her own space in the ‘new life’ where she can have her own ambitions and aspirations honored. But the new life deserts her of all the dreams, thanks to the insensitive attitude and nature of the husband. In India, the predicament of a woman is even more deplorable. She is spiraled in the cage of being woman-wife-mother. Clara Nubile rightly observes a woman in India, “A woman cannot exist outside the boundaries of married life and motherhood, otherwise she is perceived as useless and unworthy according to traditional Indian views... Indian woman does not appear to have their independent role in society....” (Clara p12)

Jaya's definition of married life is more metaphysical and mature whereas Mohan has taken married life for granted. He is more physical than emotional, rational than metaphysical. Jaya is more emotionally and metaphysically alive. She prefers that she and her husband would build up physical intimacy gradually but her husband does not share this belief. The relationship between husband and wife can be soulful only when it is governed by mutual understanding, mutual respect, mutual cooperation, and mutual sharing; otherwise, the formation of a family is not possible. Such a soulful relationship is the oil of a meaningful life.

The marital disharmony makes Jaya turn her anger towards her mother and grandmother for not schooling her to be articulate her dreams and needs in life, "... ferociously satirize their mothers and grandmothers who had not taught them to articulate their desires and needs" (*TLS* p 40). Jaya's life is not for herself even to a little. She has to align herself sacrificing everything of her to meet the tastes and expectations of her husband, "Cut your hair up to here, his hand lightly brushing my shoulder" (p 96). She has completely engaged her life only to keep Mohan pleased, hence no natural relationship.

Jaya makes up herself exercising superhuman patience to her husband's cruelty, and misconduct. She questions the traditional home-confined role of a woman to be an alien to the rest of the world. She feels all her talents made dumb. A writer in her gets articulated in a story published in a magazine. But the patriarchy in her husband Mohan gets articulated to resist her writing career and suppress her imagination not to have wings. Her artistic self, pregnant with the creative impulses can open an avenue to ventilate her emotional ruptures to make her unburdened. Kamini Dinesh rightly observes, "The act of unburdening herself (Jaya) through self-expression becomes for her a creative process to come to terms with herself..." (88). One can understand the emotional upheaval when Jaya says, "Now am I writing a story of a callous, insensitive husband and a sensitive suffering wife" (*TLS* p 35). It is a grave tragedy beyond description for Jaya when she has the pain of her creative acumen mercilessly silenced by her husband, "I had known then that it hadn't mattered to Mohan that I had written a good story, a story about a couple, a man who could not reach out to his wife except through her body" (144).

Jaya and her husband are guided by the forced relationship and stand detached "All this certainly doesn't show a natural and harmonious relationship between the two when we see that one is unable to express his or her real feelings to the other" (Sandhu 14). Their relationship is not organic and it is emotionally dry. Mohan upholds the traditional compulsions on women terming it as the code of conduct for married women "My mother never raised her voice against my father, however badly he behaved to her" (*TLS* p 83). The title *That Long Silence* speaks the role of silence in a woman's life in relation to her family. In the patriarchal context silence is the most common means of survival for a woman. Cunningham rightly observes the mind of Shashi Deshpande, "You learn a lot of tricks to get by in a relationship. Silence is one of them... you never find a wife criticizing her husband, even playfully, in case it might damage the relationship" (6).

Jaya continues to live with her husband as a traditional wife subservient to him. Even seventeen years of her marriage has not helped her achieve a space in her family "Differences with her husband, frustrations in their seventeen year-old-marriage, disappointment in her two teenage children, the claustrophobia of her childhood all begin to surface (*Nair* 4). She feels the married life of long years only a rehearsal to live as wife and husband. They do not make a life but a living, sporting illusion of happiness. Jaya describes her marriage as "A pair of bullocks yoked together" (*TLS* 8). In her marriage of seventeen years, she feels unharmed in her home and deserted and psychologically ruptured as her husband, being emotionally sterile cannot understand her feelings.

Jaya's life with Mohan is more loaded with regrets, aggravation, frustration, depression, feeling of insecurity and disappointments, not a ray of hope for personal freedom and happiness. The family climate is so hostile that she is highly dispirited in spite of being an educated and modern thinker. Loneliness horns and torments her. The deplorable destiny of a woman also is depicted in the story of Mohan's father who is a tyrant. Mohan's mother had her testing time in the hands of her husband but survived by exercising endurance and silence, hence termed as an ideal wife. Jaya's life is closely punctuated with a wait, a symbol of slavery. Man does not know what waiting is: "But for a woman the waiting game starts early in childhood. Wait until you get married. Wait until your husband comes. Wait until you go to your in-laws home. Wait until you have kids ... for them to start school, waiting for them to come home, and waiting for milk, the servant the lunch carrier man. (*TLS* 30)

A woman feels betrayed in the married life where love has no place. Jaya, the protagonist of the novel *That Love Silence* is educated, intellectual and modern. She is married to a man whose nature is in conflict with hers, hence the marital disharmony. Consequently, suppressions, oppressions, frustrations, anxieties, and agony fill Jaya. There is no life in the marital relationship between Jaya and her husband. Initially, she

challenges the attitude, belief system and supremacy of her husband to establish a woman's due rights and dignity. But inspired by her being educated and influenced by western thought all her struggles fail to secure her a reasonable space in the family and end up only with the compromise to save her marriage.

The relationship that Mohan prefers with Jaya is built on expectations that she is well versed in English communication and can make "an educated cultured wife" (*Long Silence* p 92) and salvage his social ladder. Family harmony is naturally remitted as the relationship is built on expectations, not spontaneous. The relationship between man and woman should be built on the principle of virgin love and expectation-free to make the family blissful. Shashi Deshpande in her writing has tried to see and define what an Indian marriage is. Getting the daughters married is a sense of achievement for the parents. There are no emotions involved in bringing the two different entities together. By this, the highly talented girls become a silenced puppet. A statue should be ready to bear anything. When thinking about these predicaments of women, Betty Friedan remembers the German phrase 'kinder, kirche, kurche', a Nazi slogan for confining women to the biological role. Both Deshpande and Friedan wonder, why the patriarchal society limits women to one role, one position, and one occupation. They conclude that the feminine mystique is so powerful that women grow up no longer knowing that they have the desires and capacities that mystique forbids.

Shashi Deshpande, through the character of Jaya, Kusum, Aasha, Mukta presents the picture of the oppressed Indian women. The novel ends with an optimistic note. Through Jaya, the novelist depicts the inhuman behavior and treatment of man-made society towards women whereas both are the two sides of the same coin so can't be separated. Without freedom and liberty, there is no meaning of life and becomes worthless to live. It cannot be denied that compromise and adjustments are necessary for life to have a prestigious social life but one can do to some extent. Being happy with Kamat, Jaya finally goes back to her previous life after speculation. She wants to resume her domesticity by making a compromise. But new Jaya, thereafter, emerged. She feels the need to be protected from sinking in the crumbling world around her; she goes with her sheltering tree with hope.

Life will be saltless, if there is a vacuum of life fully communication and potential understanding between the life partners. However, Jaya commits herself only to honoring her roles as wife and mother with the sole objective of not annoying Mohan and severing the marriage. Whenever the context provokes conflict with her husband, she throws herself in silence which, for her, is the easiest way out, "I saw a struggle so bitter that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender" (36). Her silence carries a purpose and for her, silence is the lubricant for the smooth running of the machinery of the family. Jaya strikes a balance between preferring to be a modern woman with absolute freedom and accepting the oppression of life in the name of marriage. However, she resists the blind submission of the traditional role and prefers a woman to break the long silence.

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