CHAPTER-II

SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IN *THAT LONG SILENCE*

Those days are by gone when feminism used to mean an advocacy of women rights and to talk of docile submissive and helpless woman at the name of feminism. Modern unconventional woman is ready to take the world at storm and she strikes our mind, as one who is striding alone and wants to live according to her own desires.

Comparing *That Long Silence* with her novel *Dark Holds No Terrors* we find that there is a visible change in her conception of Feminism. If Saru of *Dark Holds No Terrors* is neglected in childhood and underestimated in her married life then Jaya of That Long Silence is pampered. She makes efforts to reconcile but can’t advocate Shashi Desphande’s Jaya in *That Long Silence* who giggles at Mohan, her husband and seems to be sadist. In a nutshell Shashi Desphande through her writings, has altered meanings of feminism. For her it means to walk in accordance of one’s own will even being alone or putting at stake the man made limitations of traditional society. We find her female characters breaking and protesting those social taboos which are employed by the society at every step.
In the very beginning of a novel its main central lady character Jaya is being portrayed helpless. Jaya is brought to her old flat in Dadar with her husband Mohan, as he has committed a forgery in a business and in order to avoid investigation he had to escape from his old well settled posh flat. Now here in a small flat she is not at all comfortable and being out of touch of her daily routine she sites in deep contemplation and she analyses her present and indulges in nostalgic reveries of her childhood. Her existence was diluting even before also but she never get the time to think and this was for the first time that she tries to find out herself, “Jaya find her normal routine so disrupted that for the first time she can look at her life and attempt to decide who she really is” (King, 1988:97).

Dwelling into her past, missing and recollecting she plunges into the reminiscences of her childhood and remembers how she grew up what kind of atmosphere was there in her house. Sailing through the stream of consciousness she recollects preaching which were taught to her and those which she finds meaningless now. She recalls the words of her aunty who used to say that husbands are like sheltering trees. These words keep resounding in her psyche.

Shashi Deshpande has very beautifully presented her protagonist’s in capabilities to express herself. Jaya’s both innocence and anxiety is expressed in here kiddish way to accuse her father of her all difficulties.
Kiddish because she is accusing but in her solitude, “It was all Appa’s fault. Why had he made me feel I was someone special”? (Deshpande 1988:32)

These words are the beautiful instance of the novelist’s usage of language carrying serious thought. Actually what have been said in these lines has not meant that and what has she meant she has not said, i.e. it is an indirect complain against Mohan of not treating her as someone special as her appa used to. If we consider seriously it is quite evident that she is missing that treatment of her father as someone special but since she can’t say it to anybody so she is whispering in her solitude.

Appa’s fault to make her feel someone special was not the only thing Jaya is longing for. According to her, the way her mother never raised voice against her father or she never prohibited Jaya to shout at are few of the blunders of her parents that she is incapable to adjust with in her married bond. Again she thought of her mother and accused her what Mohan says, “she had prepared me for none of the duties of a woman’s life” (7). The way she is hurt with Mohan’s words shows her innocence that she is hurt at the spoken words without contemplating them as reality or imaginary.

At the point, that most of Jaya’s problems are directly or indirectly originated out of her childhood, Shashi Deshpande coincides with Anita
Desai. Just like Desai is characters in the same way Jaya every time grapples reason of her maladjustment in her childhood. Psychological impacts of childhood are so powerful in Jaya that she is unable to cope with practicalities of her married world. Like she can remember that whenever she was prohibited by her father to listen Vividh Bharati broadcast on the radio and was advised to go for something classical she usually used to revolt against her father and asked why she should not but her father never tried to satiate her query and so she became silent suppressing her desire. Here again Shashi Deshpande coincides with Nayantara Sehgal, who very openly emphasized the need of communication. And moreover Shashi herself said, “The themes of lack of communication may be over-familiar in western fiction, but in extrovert India it is not much analyzed” (15-16).

Jaya was not satisfied with her married life but if we talk even of a protection, which an average man is expected to impart to his wife, even then Jaya finds herself a looser. Jaya is a writer by profession and novelist has presented her as a complete modern Indian women, i.e., she is sensible, mature and rational, so she tries much to keep balance between her ambition and her husband’s desires. She comments on her marital life that their life has been so delicately balanced that they had even snipped off bits of themselves to keep the scales on an even balance. This is not
the fact that Jaya, like any other woman is not conscious of her contrary situations of life or she reacts all of the sudden at the last but is her so-called maturity and sensibility with which she has always tried to harmonize the situation and even when she revolts she revolted in silence.

Since writers are associated with imagination and so Jaya is dismissed most of the time by Mohan as an imaginative person. She is scared to say anything so that she would not be rejected even when she feels, along with her daughter Rati, that he loves his niece Revati more than his real daughter Rati, as if being a writer she can never feel genuinely and every time her thinking would be baseless and fantastic.

It is not for the first time that she wonders or disagrees with the conditions and can’t say anything but this fight for identity has been disturbing her since childhood. Actually in her childhood, she was named Jaya, which mean victory, it was normal for her like any child but the way her name was altered after marriage was really stunning for her. It means loss of identity that her identity is to be defined by others. Her likings or disliking are not at all important for anybody. She has always been encouraged by her father that since her name is Jaya so she has to conquer the world. It was the name given to her by her father and it is her father only who has instilled those qualities of victory into her. But the question is this that why the need of the alteration of her name is felt and
that too by others and against her wish. Not only this but she is expected to bring all those qualities into her which her changed new name Suhasini, carries, i.e. inspite of being new in this home. Jaya had to be Suhasini as well who was always soft, smiling, placid, motherly women who livingly nurtured her family.

But right from the beginning Indian woman is so well-trained by the society that she can feel but can’t express and so she does not react. The same is there with Suhasini. She couldn’t find any logic in changing her identity by her name and starts changing and molding herself in accordance of Mohan’s expectation, i.e. now she is soft and placid not naughty as she was when unmarried and she always smiles whether she is happy or not. Here we find great difference in delineating women characters, in between Shashi Deshpande and rest of the women writers. This difference makes her characters different from conventional women of the society also. Jaya of Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence* neither runs from the situation or rebels violently nor convince or reconcile or sacrifice but revolts in silence that silence of the patience which breaks eventually. This way of revolt makes Shashi’s Deshpande’s Jaya different from other writers and such characters were never created by any of them. At one instance in the novel once Mohan tells Jaya that there is a woman who is being treated cruelly and he calls it her strength then she
draws an idea that Mohan finds woman’s strength and dignity in her
tolerance while she takes it as a sheer sorrow. He saw “strength in the
woman sitting silently in front of the fire, but I saw despair. I saw despair
so great that it would not voice itself. I saw a struggle so bitter that
silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender” (36).

First time she realizes that Mohan is like any another men and not all different from others in thought, since the struggle in which he finds woman’s strength she finds a deep despair. But the treatment she gives to her research about Mohan’s attitude makes her different from any conventional woman of silence, loud weapon of our society used to be revolt and voice of silence and surrender. She remains silent as traditional women but there is tinge of rebel and revolution in her silence which is absent from a traditional woman’s silence because they surrender themselves lacking a capacity of thinking and so it is the only option left for them but Jaya realizes and analyses Mohan’s character and makes silence as her weapon to struggle. It would be far better to say rather that she has known well that there is no communication possible between them so she moves back to silence because, “It was so much simpler to say nothing. So much less complicated” (99).

The way novelist Shashi Desphande has made silence a key word which means one but refers another to show similar qualities, to the
comprehension of the text it has proved now that she has strived to break her own silence of their own married and professional life i.e. the novel holds an auto-biographical element. Once she herself confesses:

A lifetime of introspection went into this novel, the most autobiographical of all my writing not in the personal details but in the thinking and ideas. It was with the articulation of all that had been in me through the years that I came to feminism, to a consciousness of myself as a feminist (Deshpande, 1996:107).

It is being said that in her own personal, professional and married life Shashi Deshpande has been very frustrated, never said anything but the way she has broken her silence and said everything through the means of her first novel, *That Long Silence* makes her writing credible, authentic and realistic which is taken as her best contribution to Indian English writing. Once she said that she wrote what she had to because it is within her. That was one point of view, a world from within the woman, and that she thought was her contribution to Indian writing.

One thing is to be very much clear here she portrays the real middle class educated independent woman of late eighties and doesn’t bother than how they should behave. Secondly, she is not probing the cause of woman’s trouble nor makes men responsible for all but instead
brings out their inner thoughts. She makes it clear that hers is not the strident and militant kind of feminism which sees the male as the cause of all troubles.

The very beginning of the novel emerges with one of those themes which most of her writings revolve around, i.e. search for identity. Concept of marriage and sex, parent-child relationship and inner conflict are her some other famous themes. Sitting alone at Dadar flat Jaya first time realizes that her identity is dissolved and she is nothing without Mohan and have to follow him every time. She says to her neighbor, Mukta also, “without Mohan…. I don’t know what I am (185).” Jaya had been always unhappy with her married life but being busy with her writings she never got time to think and so it did not take the form of any problem. And now when there is nothing to do, except thinking then she misses her old existence and feels that, “The nothingness of what had seemed a busy and full life was frightening (25).” When her sailing into her past intensified then she feels that while playing the roles of mother and wife her inner haughty and arrogant child of childhood is finished, who was, “feeling heady with the excitement of finding unexpected resources within herself (187)” and that indicates her loss of self-approval. She can easily recollect those moments when she used to deny and dominate her father, i.e. her father used to appreciate classical music.
of Faiyaz wanted Jaya also to listen that instead of Vividh Bharati Channel on radio but the child Jaya was fond of “…. Listening music of Rafi and Lata (3).” Such kind of revolutionary child had to face problems when her emotions couldn’t get an outlet to burst out. That’s why subsequently after her wedding when she was lying on bed with Mohan she feels attacked by pains of her emotions, “Anger, fear, hatred, envy, tenderness love-all of these came to me as I lay in bed, a fascinated listener (56),” which naturally increase her sensitivity.

Her sensitivity and habit of remaining silent accelerate upto the level that coming to the husband-wife relationship Mohan has become a dominating husband and Jaya, a suffering wife. Since her birth she has been a queen of her own wish, so never felt a need to rebel. So whenever she is asked by him that whether he has hurt her? She cannot admit that yes he has hurt her. She wants to be understood without uttering a single word, so remains silent, which was not at all feasible with Mohan. So she has to tolerate everything, “The emotion that governed my behavior to him, there was still the habit of being a wife, of sustaining and supporting him (98).”

In her childhood the kind of environment under which she was brought up is responsible for her incapability to adjust in her married life. Had she been brought-up like an ordinary girl child she would not have
been demanding and expecting or she would have been expressed her instead of rebelling in silence? Even her grandfather used to proclaim of her bad habits. He says humorously, “…. Pampered, bad-tempered only daughter (92).” It is strange, though new that after knowing all about her childhood, priorities, temperament and inclination it seems as if Jaya would be quite daring in adverse situation but she is not, which itself a quite new feminist element in Shashi Deshpande’s novel. Generally basic instincts are not supposed to be changed But Jaya is proved weaker even than a traditional woman, whom physical torture would have been suicidal for when she can’t tolerate mental chaos and becomes dumb. The way she used to crave for self-knowledge and self-revelation, before marriage, it appeared as if either she would satisfied or make the world satisfactory but would not perturb herself, but she does. She nullifies her that pursuit of self-knowledge, “Self-revelation is a cruel process. The real picture, the real you never emerges. Looking for it is as bewildering trying to know how you really look. Ten different mirrors show you ten different faces (1).”

Her notion of self-assertion kept alive spontaneously but she couldn’t put efforts when she was left deserted by Mohan at his disappearance suddenly and loses the control over her nerves. Otherwise there is no specific reason except emotional insecurity, that she becomes
a victim of depression, who used to be self-contended in her solitude, “Even a worm has a hole it can crawl into, I had mine-Mohan’s wife, Rahul and Rati’s mother. Not myself….oneself in a man which may be discovered (48).” As already mentioned earlier that all her dominance, resolution, rigidity were absolutely spontaneous and so was never willing to create a scandal at the name of her identity yet a slight tinge of individuality she always wanted to maintain and that is why she couldn’t accept the economic dependence over Mohan after her marriage. It was disgusting for her as if she is degraded to, “the stereotype of a woman, nervous incompetent, needing male help and support (77).”

Here emerges the second major theme of Shashi Deshpande, i.e. theme of inner-conflict after the theme of crisis for identity. She draws pain in realizing the real picture after marriage as compared to her fantastic childhood. The way her name is changed at her in-laws house, her economic dependence over Mohan etc disturb her and compel her to raise a question of her self-recognition. She faces a tough inner-conflict in losing her old life-style and accepting new ideologies with new ethos of new family. Till the time she could keep herself alive herself she would be called Suhasini, “that poor idiotic woman Suhasini (17)” because when Jaya becomes Suhasini she starts believing in security which is not prevalent anywhere according to the mature Jaya. Taking a strident flag
to her vain efforts, to keep alive her real existence she decides to play the double role, i.e. one is for her husband and children and the other is for herself. She didn’t strive to commensurate because she didn’t find Mohan capable enough to understand her and she herself can’t forget her identity, so resolute to play doubly, “one that of loyal wife serving her husband and son and keeping her mind off the office-life, like Gandhari bandaging her eyes (61).”

She becomes so stick to her treatment to her problems, which was in a form a resolution of neither to talk nor to react that once when Kamat, her new friend for whom she feels a flair of love, asked her why she had not expressed the anger of women in her writings, her response is, “because no woman can be angry. Have you ever heard of an angry young woman? (14:7)”

In other way, with her every statement it is very much clear that somewhere somehow she is frustrated. She against her desire is expected to be soft and smiling always which she was not. She is angry because she can’t get and look angry, since Mohan calls it very ‘unwomanly.’ She is changed automatically and altogether her anger is flown though she was a child who used to get angry very soon. But after her marriage she tolerated her anger. She “realized that to him anger made a woman unwomanly (83).”
Such kind of child, when grows up, and is married to such an in affectionate and calculative man like Manohar then she feels herself torn from within. Staying together for a long period husband and wife become so habitual of each other that not only their taste, priorities, likes, dislikes, inclinations etc. become same but even their thoughts also get similar. But Jaya, even after 17 yrs of her marriage and 2 children born and one aborted, perceives her marriage to Mohan merely as two animals waling in two different, opposite directions. She believes that they are:

A pair of bullocks yoked together, so better to go to same direction, as to go to different directions will be painful. 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 (8-9).

This is a cruel reality for any married couple. When Mohan was suggested by one of his partners. Agarwal to stay out of the city till the matter calms down and he decides to move then Jaya was not at all willing to accompany his guilt and moreover she is a kind of modern educated woman who doesn’t rely in conventional mythological *pativrata*
woman but instead being practical towards a married couple, considerably of her own with Mohan, “No, what have I to do with these mythical women? I can’t fool myself. The truth is simpler. We two bullocks….and what animal would voluntarily choose pain? (11-12)”

Knowing well that if she expresses her reluctance to go it may create a pain. So becoming an animal, who is unwilling to take pain of conflict, agrees to go with another animal unwillingly. The way Jaya has been making one compromise after another and even after a casual single reading of a novel, it is evident that the novelist is not concerned with her protagonist Jaya only but by portraying her characters she brings out the pains of all women in Indian society who are kept silent under the stresses of cultural ethos.

In Indian Society girl child is an oppressed being….family tree has no names of female members on it. This custom is prevalent as the society does not treat women as family members, only men count as they are the carriers of the family name (Gaur, 2003:92).

There is a point in a novel when before marriage Jaya is sitting with her grandmother. Like other children, in their childhood, she raises question and asks why she does not figure in a family tree of house which was painted by her uncle, Ramukaka. She is surprised and sad to know
that it is not her house but her husband’s house would be her own. Now
the second question baffles her that all the old ladies of her house, i.e.
paternal aunts, grandmother, mother are residing in their husband’s house
but are not figured in that family tree. Not even her ajji, grandmother who
was the most dominating and powerful pillar of the house, “who single-
handedly kept the family together (143).” With this incident she was
resolute to herself to not be suppressed and to fly with her colourful
wings and she tried for to come out of it by educating herself. But here
lies a pathos that once again she is confronted by a situation in which she
is to shut down nor to react and moreover she doesn’t feel like as she is
said to herself to revolt in silence. Mohan got the job of his choice but she
did not ask where from and how he arranged but instead started looking
only at its positive aspects and tried to be Gandhari, not in thought but
indeed, “If Gandhari, who bandaged her eyes to become blind like her
husband, could be called an ideal wife, I was an ideal wife too. I
bandaged my eyes tightly. I didn’t want to know anything (61).”

Poor Jaya has become so used to silence that whatever had been
there she never spoke, never spoke even at those issues which directly
affected her, not even of sex, a daily physical torture for Suhasini. That
sex she never spoke which she was quite idealistic about before marriage,
i.e. she was of the opinion that first there should be love and then sexual relationship but here with Mohan everything was reverse.

Love….? Yes, what else could I call it but love when I thought of how I had longed for his physical presence, when I remembered how readily, almost greedily, I had responded to his touch? What else could I name it when I thought of the agony it had been to be without him, when his desires, his approval, his love, had seemed to be the most important thing in my life? It seems to me now that we had, both of us, rehearsed the roles of husband and wife so well that when the time came we could play them flawlessly, word-perfect (95).

Not only her sexual life was devoid of love but in addition lovemaking was such a kind as if they are rehearsing the roles of husband and wife in order to stay together as a married couple, yet they have been together for last seventeen years. Jaya wanted to be loved and because she could not get the same so she is shattered. On the contrary Mohan neither loves nor wants to be loved probably, otherwise he would not have taken her mere as an object instead of an alive, person that is the reason that Jaya could never draw satisfaction out of her married life. This silent, wordless and mechanical lovemaking to her body makes her say, “I could stay apart from him without a twinge, I could sleep with
him, too, without desire (97).” We can evaluate the intensity of Jaya’s agony with her statement only that Mohan has not made even that much place for him in her life that she can feel a difference between his absence and presence. She is not loved even this much that she is bound to say that she doesn’t bother whether she is departed or be with Mohan.

To bring out woman’s real pain and sorrow in an act of sexual relationships novelist has given such instances and made her protagonist utter those words which can be understood the feeling by women only. It is a real picture of man’s selfish attitude and when it became apparent to her it becomes an awful moment. And that’s all is there, i.e. a sense of solitude and insecurity, just because of Mohan’s indifference in and after sex with her:

But, lying there, my body still warm and throbbing from the contact with his, it had come to me in one awful moment that I was alone. The contact, the coming together, had been not only momentary, but wholly illusory as well. We had never come together, only our bodies had done that I had begun to cry then, despairingly, silently, scared that I would wake Mohan up, trying desperately to calm myself (98).

Even for a formality she does not have anybody to calm her. She does not make a show of her mental agony also, so neither she makes her
husband know, moreover he doesn’t deserve also, nor she can overcome her pain but just she can try to remain calm and pacify herself. Had she stayed with her children the problem of loneliness would have been resolved is alone with her husband. This sense of loneliness is pathetic, as she idealizes the relationship.

A husband and wife care for each other, live with each other until they are dead; parents care for their children and children in turn look after their parents where they are needed; marriages never end, they cannot—they are a state of being (127).

Craving for words of love in Jaya was so vehement that she takes his words of suggestion and changes her life completely in accordance of his wish. She leaves her job, stops writing and participating in campaign and so that she could satisfy Mohan and could run her family smoothly. Wish to adopt a child, to participate in campaign or to get into her job are all the ways with which she has kept alive her conviction of self-identity. And since she was alone and did not find anybody to share her problems with or to confide in so she used to maintain her diary to express herself and to purgate her frustration of loneliness, but Mohan did not cease to interfere even in her personal affairs and so accuses her that children and he are neglected because of her continuous writings, so she stops writing.
In response of all her alterations which she made to make him happy, she gets only and only awesome loneliness and long unending waiting. Ever since she gets married she just has waited and nothing, since she was made unable to do anything at her own in her leisure, so she kept waiting for all.

Waiting for Mohan to come home, waiting for the children to be born, for them to start school, waiting for them to come home, waiting for the milk, the servant, the lunch-carrier man......... and above and beyond this, there had been for me other waiting.... waiting fearfully for disaster for a catastrophe, I always had the feeling that if I’ve escaped it today, it is still there round the corner waiting for me; the locked door, the empty house, the messenger of doom bringing news of death (30).

This is reward which Mohan has given her at the cost of changing her and her life altogether. Jaya is stunned with the role Indian wives are imparted with to perform right from the beginning of their married life. And even their personal interests are to be flourished only at their husband’s wishes. Mohan expects her to give up her writing not because he and his children were neglected with that but because the content and theme of her first published and famous novel scared him. The way Jaya
has presented her heroin of a story, who was out of reach of her husband but her body was under his control, gives him a guilt which scared him to be considered as the real story of Jaya and Mohan in front of the whole world. In a nutshell, even in her writing he doesn’t take her as a writer,

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. For Mohan it had mattered that people might think the couple was us, that the man was him. To Mohan, I had been no writer, only an exhibitionist (144).

Undoubtedly the story must have taken an imprint of her life a bit but had it been discussed over it would have been resolute and she could have continued with her writings. But Mohan neither said anything nor shown his anger but he has shown that he is hurt. Consequently all her flights of imagination in her, which could have turned into famous writings, blown off because she was afraid of ruining her marriage, “…. I had been scared-seared of hurting Mohan, scared of jeopardizing the only career I had (138).”

She stopped writing through reluctantly which shows her pathetic condition of not saying anything ever since she gets married. Every time her mind is heavy with a lot many thoughts but doesn’t put forward. This
time again she could not make him known of her passion towards writing and being scared of endangering her married life she stops writing though now and then her frustration comes out and when she says to Mohan, “I gave up my writing because of you (83),” which only she can understand why she how she gave up for Mohan? Nobody else.

The pent up feeling, bottled emotions make her a reticent and in fact, submissive. But undoubtedly if the theme of lack of communication makes her similar to Nayantara Sehgal’s Storm in Chandigarh, then giving so many meanings of ‘silence’ Shashi Deshpande had made her novels unique. It has been always considered as a weak symbol of a weak lady but through That Long Silenceshe has given a new awakening to feminism, as words can be silent, but silence can’t, since it has its own loud voice and she herself also puts, “You learn a lot of tricks to get by in a relationship. Silence is one of them…. you you never find a woman criticizing her husband, even playfully, in case it might damage the relationship (Cunninghum, 1988:6).”

In its wider sense it is to be said that it is not only the silence of Jaya but a general notion of every woman who is suppressed under the Indian social norms. It is for all women characters as supported by Veena.

The novel is not only about Jaya’s efforts to obliterate the silence that is suffocating her. It is also about the despair and
resignation of women like Mohan’s mother. Jaya’s servant. Jaya’s mentally disturbed cousin Kusum. It also deals with Mohan’s silence which is the silence of a man who speaks but can find no one to listen to him (Sheshadri, 1988:95).

Jaya’s long journey of self-assertion of individuality, of resolution, of silence basically all are the elements of modern feminist awakening. Though earlier in the very beginning she strived to sustain the virtue of a traditional woman. She was enough submissive, docile and serving but the time came when she became rebellious and self-centered, modern and unconventional woman. But the question which the novelist has answered with a rare skill is that whether is it so simple and profitable to sail in a boat Jaya is sailing now? Kind of struggle she does for self-knowledge and recognition has its own cost which she has paid. Kind of desertion, solitude and turmoil she faces is really painful. As Prof. Iyengar says,

Raji, Shashi and Juliette all three write about the tears in things, the little upsets in life, the price one has to pay for one’s acute self-awareness and the loneliness that becomes more pronounced as one gets older and older (Iyengar, 1985:760).
Whatsoever might Jaya’s way of facing of her problems but undoubtedly she has bore a lot and still she is blamed by Mohan that she has changed in his adversity. He has not considered his flow of malpractice, irritation, hiding facts from family instead of that he blames her. Does Mohan appreciate or not but the fact was that Jaya tried herself bearing many burden while playing the role of Ideal Hindu wife and besides kept aside herself as a person as a writer, as a pampered daughter and as everything. But in response she accomplished unwanted tasks but at regular intervals accusation of Mohan pushed her into an aggressive sadistic repulsion, which appeared unjust but it was a natural anger, revenge and frustration of Jaya. She got bound to half suppressed laugh at Mohan’s word because agony of being misunderstood made her bitter and sadistic. But that all was just a momentary reaction, yet reasons accumulated in her 17 years of unhappy married life, still her words give a glimpse of her being a good humane. As she says, “I had to control myself, I had to cork in this laughter. But it was too late. I could not hold it any longer. Laughter burst out of me, spilled over and Mohan started at me in horror as I rocked helplessly” (122).

To err is human but to realize at its own having guilt in a mind is human of course and Jaya is a good human being otherwise she would not have repented over her insane behavior and in addition she is careful
for Mohan’s staring also, what goes if Mohan has not tried to bring out
the reasons of her reactions. If we compare the real personality of Jaya
with her capacity to adjust and cope up with the adverse circumstance we
will find a fine blend of traditional and modern element in her. Her thirst
for self knowledge and assertion makes her a modern educated woman at
one hand and all the other side her patience, submission, silence, sense of
serving the family and tolerance assign her as an ideal traditional woman,
so she can face the situations and make her understand of her adversities.
But on the contrary, Mohan is a traditional husband who even thinks
traditionally and so lacking a broad outlook can accuse Jaya but he can
never understand their life’s complexities. So, on the whole the root cause
of their failures is because of their different attitudes. And of-course the
criteria of choosing the life partners must have different, so life became
mere a compromise devoid of love. As Mohan always wanted a cultured,
educated wife, who should look ideal whether she can give love or not.
May love there or not but sex should be there which he can always make
possible and he has made with Jaya. Therefore he made up his mind to
marry her for the first time when he saw her speaking English fluently
and she appeared him like that girl which he had seen earlier and was
impressed. Once he tells Jaya also:
You know, Jaya, the first day I met you at your Ramukaka’s house, you were talking to your brother Dinkar and somehow you sounded so much like that girl. I think it was at that moment that I decided I would marry you (90).

Mohan sounds like a modern man with a wide-spread view of life but in reality he is only a conventional husband with his same instincts. For example, in an act of sex he performed beastly, he did not bother for a single possibility of love to Jaya and entertained his body exploiting the soul of Jaya and behaving like a caring husband kept asking whether he hurt her. But before marriage he was the same man who use to enjoy Jay’s modern frankness regarding love and sex that, “First there’s love then there’s sex that was how I had always imagined it to be. But after living with Mohan I had realized that it could so easily the other way round (95).” Afterwards there was only a suffocating act of sex devoid of a tinge of love.

Critics have said Jaya’s giggles and Mohan’s accusations, are a sadistic posture. But can we avoid all those tribulations and bad experience which have given her bitter lessons. The notion that women are suppressed in our culture is deeply rooted in her mind. She has learnt that an educated woman is more liable to these all, since she knows to make her rationales she has now accepted that problem is not with the life
and had it been it would have been for all men also, but life’s cruelty is for women only and women have surrendered themselves to its cruelty. “I felt a thickening in my throat, as if I was to burst into tears. It’s not just that life is cruel, but that in the process of our birth we submit to life’s cruelty (102).” This pessimistic psychological determination she has developed for a life. Since the main outlet is shut so where so ever Jaya’s frustration finds a way it comes out, i.e. even for religion her treatment becomes egoistic, as she takes it as symbol of prejudices, when she says, “So may chariots of Jagannath promising us Moksha. But there was no Moksha anymore (113).”

Now here from the novelist Shashi Deshpande has made her protagonist to incept a new journey, towards reconciliation led by Kamat, Jaya and Mohan’s upstairs neighbor at Dadar flat. Now the readers would definitely say that Jaya is not an unjust person but she couldn’t meet a companion of her mental frequency so far. Kamat is a widower and having a son staying out of his country, as soon as she gets his life story and calls his life a ‘structural to loneliness,’ she finds her own inner voice in him. Her chemistry coincides with his altogether and she accepts that, “…. I had needed him (146).” Which shows that Jaya has got her companion? Though it was for a very short period yet she had a beautiful relationship with him. He was a person who was like her, so she used to
share to put all her problems with him, to confide in him and to shoulder his pains upon him.

The criteria to evaluate a healthy relationship is that man initiates to improve and so it is with Jaya. It was Kamat only who challenges her mental energy in right direction. He suggested her to come out of her lonely illusory world and to start writing again so that she might have satisfaction for being taken seriously by others “Take yourself seriously, woman. Don’t skulk behind a false name. And work-work if you want others to take you seriously (148).”

Gradually she started coming out of her self-made chaotic world. She realized that the real problem existed with her attitude not with Mohan only. Since, somewhere somehow she was still a traditional housewife who always had her family and its sentiments at priorities, so she kept killing herself afraid of losing them. And it was this fear of failure Kamat asked her to come out of fear of flying “If you don’t commit yourself, you’ll never fail (150).” With this there was not a creation of a new modern woman with traditional virtues but it was a pure realization of an already created modern woman with her conventional milieu and this realization was made by Kamat of course. With this new awareness of self Jaya started writing with a new determination and confidence but without a pre-occupied conviction she herself remarks that
with Kamat she is not a woman only, but she is a woman with an identity of Jaya, “With this man I had not been a woman. I had been just myself – Jaya (153).”

Actually this is all what woman basically needs – a right man at right time to communicate. She always knew and realized of the void between her and Mohan but could never express and fortunately Kamat desired to make her speak of her personal turmoil’s. So she puts forward a meaningless relations – practice of living together, “We lived together but there had been only emptiness between us (185).” Whether it is her conjugal relationship or her writing career each and everything she accepted and resulted to reconcile. Not only with Mohan but with herself also she confessed that she was scared, “Yes I have been scared, scored of breaking through that thin veneer of a happy family…. (191)”

That is the way Shashi Deshpande has made her feminist flair contributing and unique. She has not made her protagonist move forward with a pathetic catastrophe like that of Maya in Anita Desai’s Cry the Peacock or made continuously struggling and further sacrifices like Mayabut she has made her Jaya realize and rejuvenate like Sita of Where Shall We Go this Summer? and Saru of Shashi Deshpande’s Dark Holds No Terrors. Eventually she has made Jaya to utter those sentences which should be an ultimate motive of every feminist writing.
I’m not afraid anymore. The panic has gone. I’m Mohan’s wife. I had thought and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan’s wife. Now I know that kind of a fragmentation is not possible. The child, hands in pockets has been with me through the years. She is with me still (191).

The novelist has made it true that, *That Long Silence* is a story of a woman with wavering ego through her Deshpande looks under cultural stresses and critical human predicament with an emotional affinity. Earlier Jaya deserted everybody due to her ego-centric temperament, then after marriage adopted and honoured traditional values and preferences and eventually with her all senses and rationale realizes her weakness and not only realizes but adopts an optimistic view of life and feels that in life, “We have to go on trying (Iyengar 1985:758).”

At the end of the novel the novelist has put her fabulous philosophy of life through the mouth of Jaya that woman is a beautiful musical instrument but needs a right player. One thing she has proved that woman has to rely upon herself atleast with a fine determination as “life has always to be made possible (193).” One has to believe in one’s self; Jaya will begin life a new, for life provides many choices.

As a conclusion in a nutshell we can say that Shashi Deshpande undoubtedly one of the best Indian English women novelists who
contributed to feminist writing but quite inadvertently. She has never written to be publicized as a feminist writer but delineated a real picture of a woman of 70 and eighties instead. In order to harmonize a balance she has not presented her ideal picture but in a realistic way her approach is pragmatic. If desertion of bad makes her a traditional wife then acceptance of good puts her in the category of a modern educated woman and so consequently her protagonists are a fine blend of conventional and un-conventional traits.

Since the objective of creating a literary piece is entertaining as well as giving a message to society in such a way that in spite of lot many undulations of female ego the novel ends in an absolutely optimistic note as it depicts an end of search for identity of the chief protagonist Jaya who realizes her own self, breaks her long silence and expresses her creative upsurge through writings which provide her an identity and ultimately self-satisfaction.

To the arena of feminism the contribution of women writers in English in India is of vital importance. Advocacy for women’s liberation is not new but the way few Indian English women writers ventured to reconcile and to retain those efforts is undoubtedly an object of applause. These women writers carried the legacy of writings of great personalities like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Gandhi, William Bentick and
drawing their bitter experiences out of their life, started contributing to the English writing, which because of its content make itself fall in the category of feministic writing. In a nutshell the kind of contribution they have made to the English writing which seems more like a battle for women’s right was not new but was taken over again instead.

The relief from dependency was still out of the reach of most women. So the battle for emancipation was taken over by a few educated women who, in their efforts to communicate to the world their own bitter experience as women’s well as their ideas of social reform, turned writers (Rammurthi, 1987:67).

It is sheer coincidence that much of the contribution in fiction has been given by those writers who have witnessed cruel treatment to women around them. Resultantly they tried to tell the world the kind of predicaments women faced and the kind of losses Indian society made to them. Tinge of their own life is one of the contents which has made their writing read in India as well as abroad,

They tried to tell the world the obstacles women faced and the disadvantages they suffered is an orthodox Hindu world. These women writers struggled to give form and shape to their autobiographical accounts which attracted publishers both in India and abroad (Alphono-Karkala, 1970:78).
As far as the conception of feminism pertaining the women writers of 70’s and 80’s are concerned, it revolves around the transformation of women from conventional to unconventional standard of life and it is nothing to be surprised about. But Shashi Deshpande, a very recent author in Indian English writing of 70’s is different from the rest of the writers not for the support she shows to her women characters but the way she analyses the way of women characters who are shifting from conventional to unconventional and then shifting from unconventional to conventional women again. Inspite of her dynamic contribution she made to the Indian English writing, considerably to the feministic kind of writing she has never proclaimed that she is a feminist. It is a kind of flairs which instill into her blood not in her mind, since she has penned what she had to and it has earned authenticity because it was an ink of a women herself.

I realize that I write what I write because I write because I have to. Because it is within me. It’s one point of view, a world form within the woman and that I think is my contribution to Indian writing (Deshpande, 1989).

Against the claim that she is a feminist, one should see that firstly, she is a woman, so whatever she writes carry a glimpse of her nature, her real world. But secondly, the portrayal she has given to her chosen female
character is how the situation of women is all the world over, “If others see something feminist in my writing I must say that it is not consciously done. It is because the world for women is like that and I am mirroring the world (Deshpande, 1990).”

She has worked with the two juxtaposition forces, i.e. fantasy and reality. On one hand she is quite enough fantastic to be called fictionist and on the contrary she doesn’t make her writing monotonous stuffing them with teaching and anticipations. She portrays her characters historically, i.e. what life is, rather than what life should be, “She believes in presenting life as it is and not as it should be (Sheshadri 1988:94).”

Every artist has/her own way to sequence the events of art which is his first priority. So dealing with human life is Shashi Deshpande’s first choice. What to write? How to write? With what purpose one is to write? With which technique? as well, all are governed by only one thing, i.e. her powerful characters especially her women characters, “There are some, may be several, choices in the technique…. but not in the characters (Deshpande 1998:193).” She has made not only the characters of vital importance but the way she has brought them into her novel is also unique. They are not directly encompassing the imprints of the novelist nor as the situation demands, but since they are important so they are made the same in her hands, “I don’t think any character in my novels
comes out of necessary, to serve some need of mine (Holmstrom, 1993:22-24).” She holds the instincts of human kindness. So her characters are not women characters first but they are the “Human Beings first in the world around and no supermen (Corvollo 1990).”

Readers willing to study Shashi’s characters real nature and type they have to go into layers. She deviates at every step in portraying her characters, which makes them differently interesting, i.e. without having notion of preaching, with the instincts of humanistic attitude delineates a real picture of women that too unintentionally and at the last inspite of having a pen in her hand she has made her women as weak as they are in their real life. “My characters take their own ways. I’ve heard people saying we should have strong women characters. But my writing has to do with women as they are (Vishwanatha 1987:12).”

Even at the selection of real women characters of 70’s and 80’s again she takes a specification in creating her writing i.e. the specification of middle class educated and economically dependent ladies. She goes neither for Shobha De’s high-society fashionable females of Bombay nor psychic characters of Anita Desai. Her ‘woman’ are presented perturbed either sexually or professionally via the family relationships, either conjugal or social,
Human relationship is what a writer is involved with. Person
to person and person to society relationship these are the two
primary concerns of a creative writer and to me, the former is
of immense importance. My preoccupation is with
interpersonal relationships and human emotions
(Gangadharan 1998:ii).

According to Deshpande even if a person is leading his life in
accordance to his criteria though he is well-educated, successful but if he
is alone he can’t stay happy, since man is a social animal. This condition,
according to Shashi Deshpande, is more applicable to women. God has
made women with her own emotional attachments and this she pays for
when it becomes her weakness, so according to Shashi Deshpande a
socially successful woman surely can’t stay alone. For getting her identity
she leaves everything but reaching at its zenith she again misses her lost
relations and tries to reconcile them.

It’s needed, it’s necessary for women to live within
relationships. But if the rules are rigidly laid that as a wife or
mother you do this and no further, then one becomes unhappy.
This is what I have tried to convey in my writing. What I
don’t agree with is the idealization of motherhood the false
and sentimental notes that accompany it (Literature Alive:13).
A very general query which readers can go for is what is the reason that Shashi Deshpande has chosen a middle class educated and financially independent woman character? and for this the best possible answer is that she herself has come from such kind of background. Secondly, in her childhood whatsoever the society was full of two contrary forces, i.e., principles and reality and so, she took and preoccupied her mind with these opposite forces while writing. But as far as her own views are concerned most of woman in our country belong to only that group of characters so it was better to talk of every woman of society, instead of fashionable ladies of Shobha De or psychic women of Anita Desai. So she has chosen that class of female characters whose pains and sufferings can be felt by each and every woman of society, since her ladies are representative of the woman of her contemporary 70’s and 80’s.

These used to be the climax of bygones days story that a conventional woman character unconventionally marries to her beloved and they start living happily forever but Shashi Deshpande’s novels are a journey of a middle class educated financially independent woman from unconventional marriage to conventional submission to the society and relations. Because of the traditional suppression her characters go against society but later on deal with the predicaments of adjustment and
conflicts in their mind and eventually submit to the tradition. Shanta Krishnaswamy says,

Despite the changes in the norms, the variations in taste, in standard of judgement, the impact of western culture and alien moves economic and educational progress. She (woman) is essentially Indian to sensibility and likely to remain so (Krishnaswami:31).

Through all these varied ways Shashi Deshpande carries a unique position in Indian English writings. She is less bothered about her woman character’s adjustment or mal-adjustment but more about their submission to the traditional roles. She writes at one instance, “writers appear not to have paid much attention to the recent phenomenon of the educated earning wife and her adjustment or maladjustment in the family (Shirwadhkar, 1979:31).” Shashi Deshpande emerges as a champion of women’s cause who expresses their pent up emotions, problems, turmoil and tries to suggest a solution in the family matrixes.
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