

RESEARCH ARTICLE



MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S NOVEL, 'THAT LONG SILENCE'

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ABSTRACT

Shashi Deshpande is one of the Indian English Scenario, most celebrated and leading fictional writers of the 21st century. She holds a unique position among Anglo-Indian writers and has achieved national and even international fame and recognition. She is psychoanalytical novelist who has probed into the psyche of her characters, males as well as females. She has explored their ideas, feelings, emotions and reactions in familial and social milieu. In this world of science and technology, where the whole world has become a global village, the human relationship has undergone a sea change. Human relationship has become a matter of loss and profit. It is not based upon love, emotions and affections, but on selfish motives.

Shashi Deshpande in her Sahitya Academy Award winning novel *That Long Silence* explores human relationship, especially the Man-Woman relationship. Jaya, the heroine of the novel, is married to Mohan becomes the mother of two children tries to adjust herself in changed circumstances but fails to come closer to her husband mentally. Her husband cannot understand her feelings as a result of which she is torn within. In the end Jaya gets a telephonic message from Mohan that he is coming on Friday morning and she learns the truth that "*life has always to be made possible*".

The present paper explores the man-woman relationship in marriage and its pressure, conflicts and tensions and presents solution to redeem such entangled and enmeshed relationship leading to despair and frustration.

Keywords:-Psyche, Psychoanalytical, Social Milieu, Human Relationship
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Shashi Deshpande highlights the type of man-woman relationship where they are yoked together but only informal relationship. There is a hollowness in the husband-wife relationship. Living under the

same roof, they are totally stranger and do not understand the real frustration and disappointment of each other. Life becomes harsh for them. In her novel *That Long Silence*, the novelist uses a

beautifully suggestive image for Jaya's married life and comments :-

"A pair of bullocks yoked together.....a clever phrase, but it substitutes 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).

The image of the beasts mechanically performing the duty undermines the husband-wife relationships that are united in marriage life marred by mutual hatred and distrust. The image conveys the message that there is dearth of love in their relationship and the supreme creatures of earth i.e. human beings have become an animal and there is no bond of love and affection.

Husband-wife relationship is one of the most pivotal relationship on which the sacred institution of marriage depends. An average Indian girl is brought up with typical mentality that the husband's home is a 'sheltering tree' from where there is no escape, and her marriage relationship is a bond of seven births. Jaya is also brought up with this mentality and her Vinita Mami tells that her that she never should say 'no' to her husband and that her husband's home is the 'sheltering tree for her '. Jaya accepts the traditional role given to her and performs the role assigned to a wife in our country staying at home, looking after the babies and keeping cutoff from the rest of the world. Soon she becomes fed up with the routine works like changing the sheets, scrubbing bathrooms and cleaning the fridge and so on. Jaya is distressing to know that the writer in her cannot bloom because of her husband. She says-

"I had known that it hadn't mattered to Mohan that I had written a good story about a couple, a man who could not reach out his wife except through her body. For Mohan it had mattered that people think the couple was us, that the man him. To Mohan, been no writer, only an exhibitionist " (144).

Deshpande has depicted the reality of the modern educated Indian woman who is caught between the traditional expectations and the new demands. The reality of this woman is that even with regard to the basic needs of life like love, marriage and sex, she is in a state of subordination. Katherine in Shakespeare's play. "The Taming of Shrew" expresses the stereotype importance given to male when she says; "the husband is the lord, the life, the keeper, the head, the sovereign."(Singh P.2). But Jaya, an educated girl, is not ready to accept the notion of the supremacy of the husband and reacts in silence.

Mohan seems the victim of superiority complex. He does not understand that there is no question of superiority or inferiority. Marriage depends on equality where husband and wife have to play their respective roles. Jaya and Mohan never realize that they are more complementary to each other rather than opponents in the battle of life and Shashi Deshpande shows this very fact in *That Long Silence*. She describes the inequality that exists in society.

Not only Jaya but Mohan also suffers in the course of the novel. Mohan- the main character of *That Long Silence*, feels alienated from his family when he finds himself caught in the case of malpractice in his office. He feels extreme unhappiness, suffocation and displeasure out of which he leaves home. Undoubtedly, his decision is not the right one, but somehow he cannot get the support of his family.

Just like a woman, a man also requires to fulfill his responsibilities as a father, husband, son and brother, etc. Man also seems to face mere pressure like a woman. He hangs between his duties towards his mother and wife. Shashi Deshpande shows that fact in Jaya's father's life and relationship. Mohan also undergoes similar experiences.

In the moments of crises Mohan expects Jaya to share his anxiety and wants that his wife should comfort him in this time of stress. But Jaya reacts differently to the situation. She finds that Mohan has lost interest in her. The disturbance in his office threatens the peace of their house as well. She has given up writing for the newspaper column 'Seeta' which symbolically means giving up her traditional role model of a wife. Mohan persuades her to continue writing for the column, but now she inwardly refuses to be a Mohan's wife and Rahul and Rati's mother. Ultimately Jaya realizes that "the pursuit of happiness is meaningless" and loneliness is the essential condition of human existence. That Long Silence shows the silence of both Mohan and Jaya. Everyone has to fight his own battle. We cannot blame Mohan- her husband for all the things that have happened to her. Only a balanced relationship between the man and the woman can give both a stable outlook on life.

If ego and misunderstanding between husband and wife are removed, life will go on smoothly like Adam and Eve, who loved innocently and happily without any argument. Eve says;

"O thou for whom and from whom was formed flesh of the flesh and without whom I am to no end, my guide and head".(Single P-19)

The dire need of our time is to restore love, understanding and happiness in the man-woman relationship.

A better understanding and communication between two sexes can make the mutual conjugal relationship a successful one. If Jaya and Mohan had both their silences, That Long Silence wouldn't have happened and their relationship could have been much more satisfying and blissful. This positive message Shashi Deshpande seems to convey through her novel.

WORK-CITED

Deshpande, Shashi , That Long Silence New Delhi; Penguin India, 1989, Print: All subsequent references are from the same text.

Singh, Sarup : Family Relationship in Shakespeare and the restoration comedy of manners.New Delhi; Oxford University Press, 1983, Print.