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TRANSFORMATION AMONG THE NEW GENERATION OF WOMEN AGAINST THE PATRIARCHAL NORMS WITH REFERENCE TO SHASHI DESI PANDE'S "THAT LONG SILENCE"

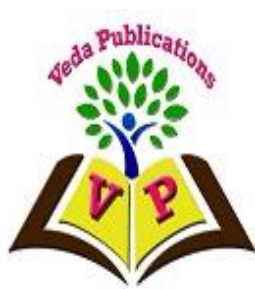
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ABSTRACT



Indian English fiction has pictured the journey of female characters from submissiveness to rebellion, challenging the patriarchal norms where women are treated as one equal to men and honoured partners. The transactional nature of Indian society in Indian Literature is re-examined in the works of Manju Kapur, Maha swetha Devi, Kaveri Nmbisan, Shoba, Shashi Deshpande, Chitra Divakaruni, Nayantara Sehgal and Anitha Nair.

In a traditional society set against the backdrop of patriarchal society, Deshpande's Sahitya Academic Award winning novel, "That Long Silence" (1989) shows how women can break the silence of pain and suffering in the form of oppression and exploitation. The forced silence of the Indian women is more meaningful in Deshpande's novels as it deals with much larger issues i.e., the long silence of women.

Keywords: *Patriarchal norms and Challenges, Transitional nature of Indian Society, Transformation.*

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In relation to lives and situations of women reveal, altogether a different world, a world of tyranny, suppression, and repression where silence sometimes reign in the form of a feeling of emotions loss, pain in the form of anger, rebellion, and confirmation. In other words, it expresses itself as the authentic form of redefining the relation of Power. The silence eloquent with unheard and unattended doubts, fears and worries and suppressed grievances are explored in the units of Shashi Deshpande. That long silence presents the inner world of a woman, it is from inside not only the Indian society, but a universal situation rooted that long silence without much drama Deshpande tries to bring out the psychological aspects of the various forms of silence in the Indian society of the educated urban middle class women. In the Indian fictional scene Shashi Deshpande emerged on the Indian fictional scene as a novelist in English and created Deep insight into the female psyche and focused on the marital relationship. The modern Deshpande Indian women, the young heroines' rebel against the traditional way of life. Deshpande takes us inside the consciousness of her characters of reveal the man-made patriarchal tradition and uneasiness of them the realistic picture of middle class educated women, who are finally independent are struggling to face the problems of adjustment between idealism and pragmatism.

The Sahitya academy award winning novel "that long silence registers women" protects against the middle-class society. It depicts the women's world in an authentic, realistic, and credible manner. Women's struggle to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and as a human being forms the major concern of Deshpande's novels. By portraying the

new woman, she doesn't want her writing to be called feminist writing because her writings are not a man versus woman issue. She portrayed the Indian woman and her dilemma in the traditional bound, male-dominated Indian society. She sympathizes for human relationships and highlights the fact that it is the women folk who polarize their dig at the emancipation of women. As Eva figes (1986) says, dominance is the key note in an analysis of the man-woman relationship where the male attributes are associated with mental thought whereas woman is regarded as essentially passive, her role to be the respectable of male sexual drive for the subsequent reproduction of the species. As marriage is a social necessity in which women seek security and men respectability in a married life of the protagonist, her marriage is isolated, and her life is built around the needs of her husband. As Jaya decides to wipe out her silence and have a beloved Life through her creativity and get rid of her dissatisfaction self-actualization of Jaya was possible when she decided to wipe out the silence and have a balanced contented life in the right direction. She started to reveal the genuine value of her free and inborn individuality when she decided to be herself.

In an interview with Geetha Gangadharan she revealed that the complexities of woman relationships are so vast, Deshpande discussed the respectable man and woman psyche and their relationship in marriage. Deshpande reveals the consciousness of Jaya through an account of her mind in the process of thinking feelings and reacting to the stimuli of the situation the daily chores of normal life of a women with material comforts is significantly represented in these lines as in "the glassware that had to



sparkle, the furniture and curious that had to be kept spot less and dust free, and those clothes god", all those never ending piles of clothes that had to be washed and ironed, so they could be worn and washed and ironed once again (57).

Being a modern woman, Jaya turns down the role models like "Sita following her husband in to exile, Savitri , dogging death to reclaim her husband, Draupadi stoically sharing her husband's travails"(11) Jaya expresses herself comprehensively by using her silence as a kind of defence mechanism as there is a Frank, even brutal, realization of this evil necessity in her marital life two bullocks lived together...it is more comfortable for then to more in the serve direction. To go in different directions would be painful and what animal would voluntarily choose pain? (12)

As the novel deals with feminism its core Jaya stops to imitate the role models followed by anger and protest. Deshpande lays down a balance between tradition and modernity as a working philosophy for the contemporary woman. As tradition symbolizes the Indian way of life with the values of harmony and coexistence and modernity in the affirmation of the self-regulating identity of an individual. Women in middle class family life are presented through literature with great vividness especially by Indian women writers of the 20th and 21st centuries. Among the feminist writers Shashi Deshpande gets a prominent place in the later part of the 20th century. The 3rd novel of Shashi Deshpande "That long silence" of the first of her novels published abroad that represents the real-life experience of a modern Indian housewife is silence under the patriarchal symbol. The protagonist Jaya who lives with her husband Mohan in the Old Dadar flat, goes deep into contem-

plation of her past life after a long period of her married life. "Jaya finds her normal routine so disrupted that for the first time she can look at her life and attempt to decide who she really is" (3). The loneliness at Dadar gives her space for self-discovery and paves way for the new woman's quest for self-discovery.

In this feminist narrative, the novelist speaks of Women's oppression in society through metaphors like "The dark silence". The title of the novel comes from Elizabeth Robin's speech "If I were a man and cared for one half of the world". (Robin at by Ghantasala 120) the silence refers to the introversion of women, as the novelist refers is that for women the waiting game starts early in childhood, wait until your husband comes, wait until you get to your in-laws home, wait until you have kids (long silence 30) Jaya observes "The ghost most fearful to confront is the ghost of one's old self (Long silence 13)" with her formidable courage and determination and faithfulness she tries to transform herself and learns to explore herself. In her task of self-exploration because she is mindful of the fact that she must play a secondary role in the family and not even acquainted with prime concerns in her life. Jaya's Grandmother Ajji is the earliest woman who represents the stage of widowhood undergoes public humiliation as her hair is removed and so she lives in complete seclusion. Jaya recollects how a widow is compelled to renounce all the luxuries and pleasure. But why doesn't it happen with men? Why the moment one wife dies, another is ready? Her neighbour Mukta, a widow dancer lives in never ending grief fighting the toughest battle of loneliness, though Mukta was educated, could not free herself from the orthodox and worthless norms. "Jeeja" Jaya's maid and "Nayana" a mere



sweeper is helpless and cannot imagine their life without their husbands, because in India a woman left by her husband will never get shelter and safety. Once Jeeja scolds her daughter-in-law Tara who curses her own husband. Like any other women of her time Avva, her grandmother Vimala Mohan's sister, Jeeja and Nayana were "blessed women who divide with their husbands yet living" (38).

Undoubtedly Shashi Deshpande discusses the transformation in the lives of women through the characters like Asha Jaya's sister-in-law who is courageous and Leena Jaya's college friend who is radical. Ash is not a woman who shrugs into a house coat and Leena who successfully pulls herself out of "ugly", "self-hating despair". Being inheritor of the age-old culture of silence Jaya outgrows the culture of Patriarchy. She erases her silence, submissive, subservient countless generations of women martyrs before her. Unlike her mother-in-law, sister-in-law she became a victor in her rebellion against it. Unlike Nora, the protagonist of Ibsen's A Doll house, her journey reaches the human status that is rightfully hers. Jaya's dilemma of silence and communication is resolved when she is reminded of Krishna's final words to Arjuna, she wants her marriage to work through communication and she seek to renew and realize that silence comes to an end with a radiant hope and life has always made things possible, though she had seen silence as the image of subjugation, alienation and absurdity for seventeen long years, "the silence was the only weapon - Silence and Surrender(36) " Jaya declares to erase the silence to break the existing social structure

Deshpande has chosen the individual to transform as a unit of change in order to see the big difference one should see the change within oneself. Despite the truth that people don't change. Deshpande offers a new vision as an optimistic note through the protagonist Jaya an educated married writer, who is representative of modern women who represents the other women portrayed like Jaya's mother, grandmother, cousin, Kusum, her widowed neighbour Mukta comes out of her victimized crisis and breaks silence "No questions, no regrets only silence" (143)

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