

Reconciliation as a Cathartic Release in Shahshi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*

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Abstract

*A literary Catharsis is the climaxing effect created by the causes in the course of the novel. It can have different release in accordance with the objective of the creator. Reconciliation relieves the tension and anxiety built by various occurrences. The novelist's social seasoning paves such a kind of sleek path in the Indian social context. Women condition in the patriarchal society, Women are considered as inanimate objects. As they are imbibed with the male oriented society, they could not fulfill their desires even in writing. Male dominated society oppressed her desires. Shashi Deshpande's protagonist Jaya in *That Long Silence*, could not fulfill her desires in her writing and also she is disappointed in her married life. When Mohan, Jaya's husband, had caught in a financial scam, he blamed Jaya with negligence of duty and in sincerity to him. Jaya wanted to contradict but she could not because she was advised by her Aiji, her grandma, to keep silence. So she did not retort and moved to accept mutual responsibility in marriage. She has shaped herself to the wishes of Mohan. Jaya realizes that she had to conflict her own battle and derive her own solution. Accordingly she understands the necessity to break the silence, formulate her predicament and establish her identity. She feels that there is always space for discussion and reconciliation. She decides that she will not renounce the identity or the individuality. She will make the strategy of reconciliation but it will not be a servile one. *That Long Silence* can be read as apparent of memory and catharsis. Shashi Deshpande highlights the social evils of power structures designed by the patriarchal society. The Protagonist of “*That Long Silence*” overcomes the Catharsis of the insitu pressures not by revolution or rebellion but by the strategy of reconciliation. The social experience of the novelist drives her so gentle towards this kind of Cathartic release.*

Keywords: Reconciliation, Catharsis, Discrimination, Patriarchal Society, Self Revelation

A literary Catharsis is the climaxing effect created by the causes in the course of the novel. It can have different release in accordance with the objective of the creator. Reconciliation relieves the tension and anxiety built by various occurrences. The novelist's social seasoning paves such a kind of sleek path in the Indian social context. Women condition in the patriarchal society, Women are considered as inanimate objects. As they are imbibed with the male oriented society, they could not fulfill their desires even in writing. Male dominated society oppressed her desires.

Shashi Deshpande is an eminent writer in English Literature, was born in Dharwad, Karnataka. She has excavated the problem of every woman in this patriarchal society. She has depicted the inner distress

of a woman, struggling herself between her own knowledge and that force on her by the male-dominated society. Her protagonists are in the conflict between duties of oneself and surrender to the traditional role of a wife. They cannot accept to be considered as the objects of fulfillment. Even-though they strongly trust in docility and understanding for the sake of protection of domestic harmony rather than revolt.

Nirmala Prakash in her article says,

Women have always been defined in terms of marriage, procreation and kinship. (p.25)

Virginia Woolf defines women's place in the patriarchal setup and laments the unenviable position of women,

Imaginatively she is of the highest Importance: practically she is completely insignificant, she pervades poetry from cover to cover, she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of King ... in real life she could hardly read could scarcely spell and was in the property of her husband. (p.66)

That Long Silence is a novel of sensitive woman's search for self in a male-dominated society. The protagonist Jaya is a housewife and a failed writer. She feels writing is as child-birth both painful and risky and says:

Nor am I writing and a story of a callous, insensitive husband and a sensitive, suffering wife. I'm writing of us of Mohan and me. And I know this - you can never be the heroine of your own story. Self-revelation is a cruel process. The real picture, the real 'you' never emerges. Looking for it is us bewildering as trying to know how you really look. Ten different mirrors show you ten different faces.

In the article socialization and gender construction in Shashi Deshpande's novels N. SharadhaIyer says,

"Even women with liberal modern education, with an irrepressible yearning to break loose from time honoured crippling and in equitable social law, do often lose their mooring and find themselves in perilously embarrassing situation. Even economically independent women have not been able to clear off the besetting pitfalls created by the customs and beliefs sedulously preserved in the tradition bound Indian Society'. (P.43)

Jaya is a satisfied house-wife marrying a responsible person Mohan, blessed with two children and a house material comforts, she feels to have almost nothing to ask for in life. In order to achieve the state of fulfillment as a woman Jaya has subdued every aspect of her personality that rejected to fit into her image as wife and mother. Jaya has been a short-story writer of moderate success. Her husband Mohan objects to her themes which he doubts to have strong autobiographical overtones. On a specific occasion he says:

They will all know now, all those people who read this and know us, they will know that these two persons are us, they will think I am this kind of man, they will think I am this man. How can I look anyone in the face again? Any how could you write these thing. (P.143-44)

Gender discrimination is not a new development but it has began since the spring of civilization. It is a dark spot which makes the survival of woman two difficult. The woman folk patiently follow patriarchal codes without despising man-folk. The settlement of marriage is well-made in Indian society and has drastic effect upon married women. Marriage changes a woman more docile, submissive and mature beyond her age, Shantha Naik rightly points out.

Gender becomes a social expression of the basic psychological difference between men and women, which is decided appropriately into masculine or feminine roles and which is learned through primary and secondary socialization. (145)

It is an important factor that in the Indian practical setup of family, man dominates on his wife. As said in research conducted by S. Anandha Lakshmi Director, Lady Irwin College, Delhi:

The supremacy of the male so well established that the average Indian is surprised to even be queried about it. Whatever the ecology of the social group, even in communities where the women may be the bread winners, the male is considered superior. Within the family the sense of inferiority of the female is pervasive. (3)

In *That Long Silence* Jaya is indoctrinated that, “A husband is like a sheltering tree”. She is rechristened Subasini by her husband which is not accepted by her. The patriarchal society reshapes the life of a female into a different form after marriage. Jaya does not want to yield herself for the motion of patriarchal self. Deshpande portrays her as an emerging women conscious of her status. Jaya is a woman of courage and determination with revolutionary ideas. Despite all these progressive ideas, she models herself to be viewed an Indian married woman adjusting to the regulations around her. The novelist describes the character of Jaya as a budding writer fading into a typical housewife. Jaya says,

But I’m a wife and mother first, my home and children come first to me ... 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. And so I had crawled back into my hole. I had felt safe there. And so I had stopped writing. It hadn’t been just a coincidence, though it had helped, that just then Mohan had propelled me into that other kind of writing. (148)

The inner suffering of Jaya is resolved through her willingness to accept a pattern of life in accordance with her husband. Her self-introspection reveals that it is the “*Long Silence*” that has destroyed her happiness. She breaks the Silence by writing for the magazine *The Seeta*. But her husband believes it to be unwomanly to show anger through writing. Creative authorship seems to be gender biased and a work of art is expected to be structured and shaped by that. And so she confines herself to the margins set by her husband. She says,

... No woman can be angry. Have you ever heard of an angry young woman? ‘I’ve seen them angry women, I mean. All ages, he had grinned again. ‘Heard them as well. ... A woman can never be angry; she can only be neurotic, hysterical, frustrated. There’s no room for anger in my life, no room for despair, either. There is only order and routine – today, I have to change the sheets; tomorrow, scrub the bathroom; the day after, clean the fridge ... (147)

Eventhough Jaya’s father taught her confidence and her education has strengthened her will power. She struggles to manage her husband. When she wins a prize for her story, her husband accuses her that she has portrayed his personal life. She does not like to risk her relation with her husband and her publishes, “Jaya, suppressed at every stage of her life, compromises to conform to the role of “*Ideal Indian Woman*”. (74)

A woman is powerless in the patriarchal order and she negates her own personality to maintain her marital relationship and transforms herself into the stereotype of an Indian woman. As Maria Miles observes her,

The career woman has not only to face the opposition of her surroundings and to struggle against many objective obstacles, but she is often divided in herself because she also often subscribes to the Indian idea of womanhood. Her problems arise, firstly, from the contradictions between this image and the demand of a new situation and then from the discrepancy between new aspirations and lack of opportunity. (9)

Jaya struggles silently with the trauma and manages mental equilibrium. Creative self of Jaya finds the realization through writing. The encouragement offered by her husband at the initial stages of her marital life transformed into a mental complexity and create a tension in their life. But she practices the strategy of silence as a coping skill. But her husband considers this as a protest. A kind of transformation is visible when she says,

Two bullocks yoked together – that was how I saw the two of us the day we came here, Mohan and I, now I reject that image. It’s wrong. If I think of us in that way, I condemn myself to a life

of disbelief in ourselves. I've always thought –there is only one life, no chance of a reprieve, no second chances. But in this life itself there are so many crossroads. So many choices. (191-192)

Jaya herself meets a traumatic situation she moves to a false complacency. Since then she follows to adopt the footsteps of mythological role model of Sita. At one time she attempted to imitate the mythological Gandhari,

If who bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband could be called an ideal wife. It was an ideal wife too. I bandaged my eyes tightly I didn't want to know anything. It was enough for me that we moved to Bombay that we could send Rahul and Rati to good schools, that I could have the things we needed – decent clothes, a fridge, a gas connection, travelling I class. (P.61-62)

Jaya's mess in marriage shoot from her husband's endurance towards any change from her role of a submissive wife. He anticipates her to go into veiling with him when he gets threatening the charges of corruption. When she denies to obey he becomes angry and goes out of the house. Jaya feels pathetic as she followed Vanatamani's advice a husband is life a 'Sheltering tree', otherwise the family becomes collapsed and vulnerable. Though she does so, she feels herself and the children the more unprotected and insecure.

Shashi Deshpande highlights the social evils of power structures designed by the patriarchal society. The Protagonist of "That Long Silence" overcomes the Catharsis of the insitu pressures not by revolution or rebellion but by the strategy of reconciliation. The social experience of the novelist drives her so gentle towards this kind of Cathartic release.

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