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# Examining Family Expectations and Gender Roles in Silence and Subjugation in Shashi Deshpande *That Long Silence*

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## Abstract

*This paper aims to attempt readers how to follow their dreams and never give up. In light of gender inequality, the article title *That Long Silence* aims to portray the predicament of women character, the protagonist Jaya inside a certain societal structure, expectations, and traditions. Furthermore, the *That Long Silence* which was written by Shashi Deshpande describes the life of a married, educated, writer named Jaya in her novel. She ought to be able to use her writing as a means of providing answers to the issues that women in society confront. Despite her education, Jaya is compelled by society and family to write according to societal frame it means she does not speak out against the injustices that she must submit to in order to fit in. The present research article focus on gender role in Indian society.*

**Keywords:** Feminism, Silence, Resistance, Family Dynamics, Oppression.

## Introduction

Shashi Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence* delves into the intricate layers of a woman's life in contemporary Indian society., Navigating the complexities of identity, agency and social expectations. The novel is the institution of marriage in the modern context. *That Long Silence* originally was first published in the year 1988. The publisher Penguin Books India 1st edition. Deshpande won the Sahitya Akademi Award for the novel *That Long Silence* in 1990 and the Padma Shri award in 2009.

## Glimpse of the Novel

In this novel *That Long Silence* readers are introduced to Jaya, a woman navigating the intricate web of social expectations, familial obligations, and personal desires in contemporary India. The novel offers a glimpse into Jaya's life as she grapples with the challenge of being a wife, mother, and individual amidst the backdrop of a patriarchal society.

Not only does Jaya's character have issues with the male gender, but the majority of women also struggle in the workplace for a variety of reasons and are unable to overcome their difficulties. When Jaya

has a chance to escape her predicament, she considers what to say and what not to say and chooses to keep quiet. This book is based on feminist philosophy. The purpose of this novel is to analyze, via Jaya's introspective journey, how contemporary women overcome mental constraints and end protracted periods of quiet.

As the narrative unfolds, readers witness Jaya's journey of self-discovery and empowerment, punctuated by moments of introspection and resistance against oppressive norms. Deshpande skillfully portrays the complexities of Jaya's relationships particularly with her husband and children, highlighting the tensions that arise from conflicting desires and expectation.

### **Feministic Perspective in Novel**

Feminism as a literary and social movement, seeks to address and dismantle the systematic inequalities faced by women in society. In Shashi Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence* feminism is a central theme that permeates the narrative, characters and overarching message of the story. Through intricate character development, nuanced storytelling and critical exploration of societal norms offers a rich and multifaceted portrayal of feminism in the Indian context.

To understand the feminism depicted in *That Long Silence* it is crucial to consider the historical and societal context in which the novel is set. The story unfolds against the backdrop of late 20th century India, a time marked by rapid social and economic changes. While urban centers experienced modernization and economic growth, traditional patriarchal values and gender norms continued to exert significant influence particularly in familial and social structures.

The Challenge and Constraints faced by women in the context, highlighting the ways in which patriarchal structures limit their autonomy, agency and opportunities for self-fulfillment "the man climbing gingerly, almost on tiptoe, the woman walking with the steadiness of familiarity" (Deshpande 7). The protagonist Jaya grapples with expectation placed upon her as a wife, mother and daughter-in-law struggling to reconcile her own desires and ambitions with societal norms that dictate her roles and responsibilities.

Central to the feminist discourse in *That Long Silence* is the crucial examination of gender roles and expectations. Deshpande interrogates traditional notions of femininity and masculinity, exposing the ways in which these roles are constructed and enforced within the family and society. Jaya's character embodies the tension between societal expectations and individual desires "It's small and sharp and clear, like your face" (Deshpande 14), as she navigates the complexities of her roles as a wife, mother and woman.

One of the central conflicts in the novel revolves around the tension between domesticity and independence "Even now I have no answer to that" (Deshpande 57). Jaya finds herself caught between her responsibilities as a wife and mother and her longing for a personal fulfillment and autonomy. Deshpande highlights the societal pressure on women to prioritize their roles within the domestic sphere, often at the expense of their own aspirations and independence.

Despite the constraints imposed by patriarchal norms, *That Long Silence* celebrates moments of female agency and empowerment. Jaya's journey towards self-discovery and assertiveness serves as a testament to the resilience and strength of women in the face of adversity "You were right where you were all among" (Deshpande 124). Through her experiences Deshpande underscores the importance of women finding their voices and asserting their autonomy even in environment that seek to silence them. Amidst the challenges and struggles depicted in this novel. Deshpande also emphasizes the importance of solidarity and sisterhood among women "Listened to the two girls talking and laughing in the kitchen" (Deshpande 177). Female relationships serve as a source of support, strength and resilience for the characters, highlighting the transformation power of collective action and mutual support in the fight against gender-based oppression.

## Conclusion

In *That Long Silence* Shashi Deshpande offers a powerful and nuanced portrayal of feminism in the Indian context. Through rich characterizations, intricate storytelling and critical exploration of societal norms “We don’t change overnight” (Deshpande 1989), Deshpande invites readers to engage with complex questions of gender, power and identity. By foregrounding the experiences of women and interrogating patriarchal structures, the novel contributes to broader conversations about feminism, gender equality and social justice in contemporary India and beyond.

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