

# Patriarchal Hegemony and Marital Anguish in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*

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## Abstract

*Patriarchy is one such institution and this study aims to investigate the many nuances of this institution and how this phenomenon plays out in the context of marital ties, as seen through a close reading of Shashi Deshpande's novel, That Long Silence. It's the journey of Jaya, a young girl caught between tradition, family, and her ambition but desperately trying to figure out who she is and where she fits into an oppressive male-dominated country. Focusing on the themes of silence, conformity, and defiance, this work reveals Deshpande's rejection of accepted gender roles and her promotion of women's empowerment. The results show how silence sustains inequality while self-expression and self-agency lead to personal liberation. This paper weaves together the potential for liberation that comes from subverting established customs and cultural factories.*

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Gender Equality, Identity, Indian Fiction, Female Empowerment

## Introduction

Indian literature has always mirrored the country's social progression, its differing cultures, traditions and the complexities of present life. Shashi Deshpande is one of India's most well-known authors who captures the inner conflicts of women in patriarchal establishments. Her novel, *That Long Silence*, decries all the social machinations that make women second-class citizens and force them into silence. These constructs serve oppressive function in society and it is through her protagonist Jaya that Deshpande critiques how women are perceived and what she suggests instead.

## Material & Methods

The analytical framework of *That Long Silence* is based on an in-depth thematic analysis of the texts, emphasising the gender dynamics and patriarchal firmament of the writing. This enables us to build on feminist literary interpretations of Jaya's experiences while grounding them within larger cultural critiques. The methodology follows the guidelines in the *MLA Handbook* (Eighth Edition) for the sake of academic precision and consistency.

## Findings & Results

Jaya's exploration shows how the entrenched expectations of patriarchy cling to marriage, to family life. Her sense of silence, enforced by the culture, symbolizes the repression of women's autonomy and self-identity. By liberating herself from these binds, Jaya embodies the possibilities of rediscovering voice and power.

## Key Findings Include

Patriarchy: Marriage and family are portrayed as institutions that stifle women's freedom.

Oppression through Silence: Silence becomes a survival strategy and a sign of repression.

Jaya's eventual rebellion highlights how expressing oneself is the path through breaking the barriers put up by society.

## Interpretation & Discussion

Deshpande takes issue with cultural dictates that exalt male power and expect female submission. Jaya's transformation from a faithful spousal sitting on a sock-industrial plant to a woman claiming her identity upends these traditionally held constructs. This story illustrates how damaging it is to keep silence and to go along to get along, and shows the dire need for resistance in order to regain rights. Jaya's struggles stand in for the more universal experiences of Indian women, and thus, the novel acts as a powerful commentary on gender inequality.

## Conclusion

That Long Silence is an intricate exploration of the lives of women within patriarchal societies. By following Jaya's journey, Shashi Deshpande critiques societal norms and invites readers to envision a world in which women live authentically and fearlessly. Breaking silence is portrayed as a critical part of the journey to empowerment and equality. Jaya learns (over the course of the narrative) that this silence and invisibility is a privilege that is mostly harmful — it perpetuates the cycles of inequality and discontent. In one of the most important scenes of the novel, just before the climax, Jaya decides that enough is enough; she will break the cycle of silence and choose to communicate openly with her partner. This momentous choice highlights the importance of women asserting their wants and needs in their relationships. The culture of silence, Jaya asserts, has no place in the life of any married woman. By breaking free from this suffocating silence, women can reclaim their voices, assert their autonomy, more fulfilling partnerships based on mutual understanding and respect.

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