

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

GENDER INEQUALITY AND MALE DOMINATION IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THAT LONG SILENCE

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Abstract

Shashi Deshpande is an eminent Indian woman writer in English literature. She focuses on women's problems, oppression, discrimination and women's emancipation. The importance of women have been identified in literature in various fields. Indian women have always been socially and psychologically oppressed, sexually utilized and biologically subdued in the male dominated patriarchal society. In her novel *That Long Silence*, Deshpande explores the innermost feelings, sufferings, and experiences of women who long to establish their individuality, identity and freedom. The story narrates the relationships of the narrator-protagonist Jaya and her hard-boiled husband Mohan with their nineteen years of silence. The main objective of this research is to discuss and analyze gender inequality and male domination in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*. Descriptive and analytical methods are used in this research. Data is collected from various texts, magazines and articles written by scholars. Deshpande indicates women's capability and gives awareness to them to overcome the struggles in the society. She raises her voice against gender inequality and male domination. All human beings are created by God with equal rights. So women should be treated equally to men. Gender inequality and male domination should be erased not only in India but all over the world.

Keywords: Gender inequality, male domination, patriarchal society, freedom, identity

1. Introduction (with Objective)

"Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the liner absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture." (Elaine Showalter, 1979)

"I don't like to call myself a feminist writer.

I say I'm a feminist, but I don't write to propagate an ism" – (Shashi Deshpande).

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* focuses the author's personal views, ideas and opinions in marital harmony and peace. The quest of women's identity is a typical aim in feminist literature. The novel is an expression of the helpless, modern educated middle class Indian woman Jaya. It explores her inner conflict, struggles and her thirst for individuality, identity, freedom and emancipation. The story tells the relationships of the protagonist Jaya and her cold-hearted husband Mohan. The writer concentrates on struggles of women from cultural restrictions, male-child preference, domination, discrimination and gender inequality. She portrays the sufferings of women in reconciling their

twofold role as wife and mother in her novel. Shashi opposes and criticizes the male-domination and gender inequality not only in Indian society but all over the world. This paper attempts to analyze how Indian women lives are brought through a series of largely tragic events. Shashi Deshpande's novels express the frustration and disappointments of women who experience social and cultural problems in the male-dominated patriarchal society. *That Long Silence* is a story that occurs in every middle class and educated Indian woman's life. I would like to pinpoint how gender inequality and male domination play a key role in Indian society. The main objective of this research is to describe, discuss and analyze women's problems, gender inequality and male domination in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*. The novelist explores realistically and casually the inner-feelings of the feminine psyche and probes deeply into the mysteries of the women's self. Women always longing for solutions to establish their stable identities in the society (Kennedy, V. J. M., 2009; Prasad, A. N., 2003 & Prasad, A. N., 2004).

2. Methodology

I have planned to use descriptive and analytical methods. In addition to, this paper is going to make detailed references to the original writings of the prominent writer Shashi Deshpande. Data is collected from original texts, books, magazines, journals and articles written by scholars and critics. The qualitative methodology of this research paper is carried out through original texts, journals, articles and informal interviews. Related documents and collected materials are used in this paper. I would like to develop my arguments on the basis of the host of criticism collected from various sources. Selected lines from Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* are taken and these lines are analyzed using descriptive and analytical research methods with feminist and gender-based theories.

3. Results and Discussions

Shashi Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence* portrays the human relationships, struggles, sufferings and their problems in life. The problems of women, male chauvinism and female oppression in India is clearly pictured by the author in *That Long Silence*. Women always hanger-on fathers, husbands and their sons. "I was born. My father died when I was fifteen. I got married to Mohan. I have two children and I did not let a third live. Maybe this is enough to start off with. I can take off from here." (*That Long Silence*. p-2) This paper attempts to focus how the novelist Shashi Deshpande analyzes and criticizes the gender inequality, male domination, injustice, and prejudice and contributes to the betterment of the lives of women in Indian society.

This research will be helpful to the students and scholars to develop their ability in English literature. The research will be supportive to me to enhance the performance of students in English Literature and improve their knowledge in literature field. This research will facilitate to expand students' skills in arguments and enormously enlighten their understanding of the novels and ultimately elevate their analytical way of thinking. This research will help me to develop my ability in Literature field and it will create interest and awareness among the students regarding the gender inequality, male domination, injustice, freedom and women's emancipation.

In the opening lines of this novel, Shashi Deshpande says: To achieve anything, to become anything, you've got to be hard and ruthless. Yes, even if you want to be a saint, if you want to love the whole world, you've got to stop loving individual human beings first. There's just no other way of being a saint. Or a painter. A writer. (*That Long Silence*, p-1)

The significant of the opening lines of the novel gives the principles of the Darwinian Universe as constituting the primary condition of beings' especially human beings' social survival and their success.

In the novel *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande expresses her feelings that how women are oppressed, suppressed and dominated not only in the patriarchal Indian society but all over the world. Education, choices, wishes, great potentials, capabilities, freedom and liberation are restricted to

women due to the male dominated world. As a writer, Deshpande depicts her personal experiences in her writings to improve the society with its rigid, orthodox, conventional, patriarchal social system.

The patriarchal society obstructs women's great potentials and abilities all over the world. Gender inequality and male chauvinism are major concerns which relates this novel to feminism. Forceful marriages, lack of freedom, identity crisis, domination and torture are perpetuated towards the Indian women are the major issues which are criticized by the novelist. This paper presents how women have been oppressed and defined as the 'other' in patriarchal social system from ancient time to modern. The author expresses her personal experiences, views, ideas and opinions and vistas on conjugal happiness, peace and harmony. In Jaya's silence, any Indian woman can find her own silence. Shashi Deshpande is a feminist writer and she criticizes male characters. Her important male character lives in his different, own personal world. The silence can be found in both her female and male characters with various nuances. Mohan squashes and suppresses both his wife, the woman and the writer Jaya in his disgust, irritation and frustration. There is a conflict and confused attitude towards the 'self' and also in Mohan's relation to Jaya. His annoyance and enraged remarks are examples of his frustration. The marriage is entered into by Mohan and Jaya with a sense of self-preservation and self-realization. The novel depicts oppressed woman and oppressive man.

4. Conclusion

Shashi Deshpande indicates the necessity to harmonize the man-woman relationship as equal partners. There is no success in the subjugation, oppression and domination of the male. Freedom of expression and love should be given to women. Shashi Deshpande criticizes and opposes gender inequality and male domination in the orthodox conventional family structures in Indian society. Deshpande exhibits the Indian woman's social paralysis personified by Jaya's silence. It also pictures the woman's silence resulting from her clinging to the Indian patriarchal tradition handed over to her through the ideals of Sita, Savitri, Nalayani, Kannaki, Gandhari, etc. The silence of women should be broken in order to uplift their status, establish their identity, individuality, freedom and emancipation. The silence of women through the ages, symbolizes women's acceptance of her familial, social and cultural status. It is the silence of a person alienated from herself. In *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande indicates women's capability and gives awareness to them to overcome the struggles in the male dominated society.

Shashi Deshpande gives an important and useful message that "without hope life would be impossible, and life has always to be made possible". Jaya is a wife and a writer, but she has not gained true self-expression. Deshpande depicts the suffocating and narrowness of Jaya's life. Most of the women are confined in their own selves which created silence in them. They hesitate to break away from their supportive own family. Jaya suppresses her likes, desires and loses her identity in trivial affairs in her life. She is afraid that a frank admission of her desires may deserve the delicate balance of her relationships. Shashi Deshpande mirrors the contemporary middle-class society with its traditional culture and raises her strong voice against the gender inequality and male-domination towards women not only in Indian society but all over the world. Gender inequality, oppression, suppression, discrimination and male-domination should be erased in the world.

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