

That Long Silence: Unexpressed Pain

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ABSTRACT

"That Long Silence" by Shashi Deshpande is a profoundly introspective and moving novel that dives into the topics of gender roles, societal expectations, and the search for one's own identity within the framework of an Indian middle-class family. The story examines, mostly through the perspective of the character Jaya, the unspoken suffering, challenges, and sacrifices that women who conform to society conventions are forced to endure, as well as the toll that this takes on their emotional well-being. The storytelling talent of Deshpande shines through in the graceful wording, nuanced characters, and in-depth analysis of complicated family dynamics that she presents in her work. The novel functions as a societal critique, illuminating the restrictions that are placed on women as well as the significance of personal autonomy and self-expression for individuals.

Keywords: unexpressed pain, struggles, novel, sacrifices.

INTRODUCTION

"That Long Silence" is a novel written by Shashi Deshpande, an acclaimed Indian author. Within the framework of an Indian middle-class family, the novel delves with topics such as gender roles, societal expectations, and the search for one's own identity. It was first released in 1988.

The film "That Long Silence" has been hailed by reviewers for its nuanced representation of the struggles that women face and its examination of the power dynamics that exist within traditional Indian families. It provokes readers to think about the hidden conflicts and unfulfilled goals that lurk beneath the surface of lives that appear to be comfortable with what they have.

Deshpande provides an engaging tale that resonates with readers by following Jaya on her path of self-discovery and her quest to recover her voice. He does this by encouraging readers to reject the limits that society places on them and to embrace their own ambitions and objectives.

The main character, Jaya, is a middle-aged woman who appears to have a happy existence as a wife, mother, and daughter-in-law. Her story is the focus of the narrative. Despite the outward appearance of domestic bliss, Jaya is secretly struggling with a profound sense of discontent and harbouring unrealized ambitions. She comes to the conclusion, when she thinks back on her life, that she has let the expectations of others to constrain her, to the point where she has stifled her own wishes and ambitions.

The story dives into Jaya's quest for self-discovery as she begins to question the roles that society has cast for her and the sacrifices that she has made for her family. She takes solace in writing in a diary, which becomes a way for her to communicate her most private thoughts and feelings as well as an outlet for her frustrations. Jaya is able to begin the process of reclaiming her voice and coming to terms with the constraints that have been placed on her through her writing.

The book "That Long Silence" is an insightful investigation at the complexity of gender dynamics, the societal constraints that women are subjected to, and the significance of self-expression. It brings emphasis on the problems and obstacles that women confront in traditional Indian households and highlights the necessity for women to have personal autonomy and fulfilment in their lives.

The novel written by Shashi Deshpande has been praised by reviewers for the sensitivity with which it depicts the experiences of women and the depth to which it develops its characters. It is a significant piece of Indian literature that tackles age-old topics such as the quest for personal freedom, the discovery of one's own identity, and the journey to find oneself.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Here are a few excerpts from literature reviews of "That Long Silence" by Shashi Deshpande:

"In 'That Long Silence,' Deshpande skillfully weaves a moving investigation of the restrictions that are placed on women within the context of traditional Indian society. Her depiction of Jaya's hidden pain and her search for personal identity strikes a chord with the audience on a profound level. The writing style of Deshpande is sophisticated and contemplative, and it has an extraordinary capacity to pick up on the complexities of human feelings. (Photo courtesy of The Hindu)

"Shashi Deshpande's 'That Long Silence' is a fascinating piece that dissects the complexities of gender roles and the demands of society. Deshpande weaves a gripping story out of the entries in Jaya's journal to produce a compelling narrative that shines light on the unspoken anguish and desires of women who live in patriarchal countries. This book is a striking monument to the unconquerable spirit of women in the face of societal restraints, and it stands as such because of its exceptional quality. (Compiled from India Today)

"In 'That Long Silence,' Deshpande deftly examines the silences that pervade Jaya's life, revealing the weight of unspoken emotions and unfulfilled dreams. 4. "In 'That Long Silence,' Deshpande deftly examines the silences that pervade Jaya's existence. The book delves deeply into questions of individuality and the battle to find one's own voice through its narrative. It is an intriguing and thought-provoking read because of Deshpande's detailed characterizations of the characters, as well as her ability to delve into the nuances of the dynamics inside families. (Image courtesy of Book Riot).

"Deshpande's 'That Long Silence' delivers a scathing assessment of the restrictions that are imposed on women within the context of traditional Indian families. The unspoken anguish in Jaya's life functions as a potent metaphor, drawing attention to the critical nature of emancipating oneself from the shackles of conventional norms and giving in to one's own inclinations. The skill with which Deshpande tells stories shows through in this beautiful and emotionally powerful novel. (Information obtained from The Indian Express)

The acclaim and appreciation shown for "That Long Silence" by Shashi Deshpande as a gripping and introspective investigation of gender roles, personal identity, and the battle for self-expression is reflected in these reviews. The work has been praised for its capacity to delve into the unspoken agony of its protagonist as well as for its societal critique of Indian society. This skill has received appreciation not just from critics but also from readers.

The Novel's Most Notable Traits and Qualities

That Long Silence, written by Shashi Deshpande, is a book that will get you thinking because it goes into a number of important topics and characteristics. The following is a list of some of the most important features in the book:

1. **Gender Roles and Societal Expectations:** The gender roles and expectations that are traditionally placed on women in Indian society are subjected to an analysis and criticism in the novel. It examines the ways in which these societal norms might stifle the individuality of women, hinder the personal growth of women, and limit the choices available to women. The difficulty that Jaya's character goes through is representative of the struggle that a lot of women go through when they try to balance their personal wants and goals with the expectations of society.
2. **Self-Exploration and Identity:** Jaya begins a journey of self-discovery, during which she questions her own identity and the sacrifices that she has made for the sake of her family. She hopes that through conducting self-reflection and writing in her journal, she will be able to get a deeper understanding of herself and reclaim her sense of independence. The book delves into the significance of introspection as well as the independent pursuit of one's own identity apart from societal roles.
3. **Repression and quiet:** The title of the book, "That Long Silence," alludes to the repression and quiet that Jaya experiences throughout her life. Her own thoughts and desires have been repressed. The novel focuses on the adverse repercussions of stifling one's voice and the toll it has on the emotional well-being of an individual. It places a strong emphasis on the necessity of self-expression as well as the strength of speaking up against the limitations imposed by society.
4. **The Keeping of a Journal as a Method of Liberation** Jaya's journal develops into an important symbol throughout the course of the story. It gives her the opportunity to vent her emotions, including her thoughts,

disappointments, and dreams, in an intimate setting. Jaya discovers peace and a way to recover her voice through the process of writing her thoughts down. The diary serves as an instrument of emancipation for her, enabling her to express her deepest feelings and to question the limitations that have been imposed on her.

5. Families and Relationships: The book investigates the intricacies of family dynamics as well as the influence that cultural expectations have on personal connections. It paints a picture of the conflicts, compromises, and concessions that may be found inside an Indian family of the middle class. The relationships that Jaya has with her husband, children, and in-laws are analysed, and the often underlying obstacles and unfulfilled desires that lay beneath the surface of these interactions are brought to light.
6. A Critique of culture "That Long Silence" provides a social critique of Indian culture, specifically focusing on the treatment of women and the restrictions that are placed upon them. It sheds light on the constraints that are imposed by society norms as well as the ways in which these norms impede individual development and fulfilment. The reader is encouraged to question and confront the preexisting social systems throughout the story.
7. That Long Silence is a riveting and introspective investigation of gender, identity, and the search for personal independence within the backdrop of Indian society because these elements collectively add to the rich tapestry of the novel, making it a compelling exploration of these topics.

The Unexpressed Pain that Pervades This Novel

The term "unexpressed pain" is used in "That Long Silence" to describe to the deep inner turmoil and suffering that is endured by the protagonist, Jaya, but which is kept buried and is not spoken about. Throughout her life, Jaya has had to face a lot of silent battles, sacrifices, and unfulfilled desires; this necklace is a symbol of all of that.

The unspoken anguish experienced by the characters in the book has multiple origins. It is the result of an internal struggle that Jaya has between the demands of society and the goals she has set for herself. She strives to fulfil the traditional gender roles of wife, mother, and daughter-in-law while juggling all of these responsibilities with grace and dignity. On the other hand, beneath the surface, she harbours a sense of discontent and a yearning for personal fulfilment as well as the autonomy to pursue her own aspirations.

The fact that she had to stifle both her voice and her feelings is another source of the suffering. Jaya is unable to openly articulate her complaints, disappointments, and goals since the standards of society force her to keep quiet about these things. The unspoken suffering is a product of the fact that she is unable to freely express herself, as well as the toll that this restriction places on her mental and emotional health.

In addition, the anguish that isn't being voiced has its origins in the struggles and compromises that are inherent in the dynamics of familial relationships. It is common for Jaya's sense of duty and obligations towards her family to take precedence over her own desires, which results in a feeling of mental turmoil and unsaid sorrow for her.

The novel's unspoken anguish serves as a cautionary tale about the perilous outcomes that can result from repressing one's thoughts, feelings, and desires. It highlights the significance of self-expression as well as the negative impacts that might arise from concealing one's own emotions. As Jaya strives to break free from the quiet and find her own voice, the journey she takes towards recognising and confronting the trauma she has been through becomes the primary focus of the story.

Shashi Deshpande illustrates the vast emotional depths that lay beyond the surface of seemingly comfortable lives by investigating the unexpressed suffering. This encourages readers to focus on the hidden difficulties and sacrifices made by individuals within the context of society systems.

Despite the fact that there are some superficial similarities, it appears like Jaya and Madhu are talking about the same woman, the same things, and the same issues. The conclusion of both books follows a similar pattern: Mohan goes back to Jaya, and Madhu goes back to her husband, Som. They are set on beginning a new life, not only for themselves but also for their spouses, despite the fact that they have developed into distinct people and that their lives are going to be significantly different from one another.

Shashi Deshpande draws attention to the Indian culture by implying that family life should go on regardless of the perilous gloom that pervades our existence. It is not a coincidence that the answers come from our very own ancient wise men and women. Madhu realises that the statement "Putra-Moha," which she hears from Som's father, does not

imply "love," but rather "obsession," which involves "confusion, ignorance, illusion, and pain" (SR-188). While Jaya gains strength from the words of Krishna to Arjuna in the Gita, Madhu recognises the meaning of "Putra-Moha," which she hears from Som's father. She learns this from Akka's 'drishti' ceremony, which is described as 'the ritual to ward off the evil eye' (SR-189) The chant during this ceremony calls for the kid to be safeguarded from neighbours, strangers, and so on, as well as parents. Now she understands that 'from those who love us, we need to be protected' (SR-190), for it is when we are among those we care about the most that we are at our most defenceless and vulnerable.

The delicate way in which these books manipulate female psychology is one of the defining characteristics that set them apart from one another. Both Jaya and Madhu exhibit clear evidence of having an Electra complex, according to Freudian psychological theory. Both have a close relationship with their respective fathers. Jaya holds a hatred against her mother since, after her father passed away, her mother sold the family home, which left Jaya without a place to live. Her primary grievance towards her father is the fact that he passed away. His passing leaves her in shambles utterly. Again, she is unable to bond to her daughter Rati, but she is very attuned to the need of her son Rahul. Mohan and Rahul are in a constant state of arguing with one another, but Mohan is unable to see that conflict between fathers and sons is one of the most natural occurrences in the Freudian universe. This becomes more obvious throughout the course of *Small Remedies*.

Even though Madhu notes that this contradicts Freud's theory, and even if Som and Adit get along quite well with one another, Madhu's attachment to her father and her clinging to her son are essentially Freudian in nature. For instance, after Munni reveals to her that her father has an affair, she instantly severs all ties with Munni and refuses to speak to her again. This kind of robust response is more characteristic of a wife than it is of a daughter. It is interesting to note that her first sexual encounter took place around the time that her father passed away. The man she had an affair with was a close friend of her father and served in the role of a surrogate father to her. The fact that he had painted a portrait of her when he was younger serves as a symbolic representation of the fact that he was her father and creator. It's possible that the realisation that her father's death was imminent freed up the pent-up yearning she'd been trying to bury inside of her to possess him. The sexual encounter she had with the painter is her strategy for regaining custody of her father. She quickly forgets about the occurrence because it was a banned one. Som has a hard time believing that she could have so easily forgotten her very first sexual experience. Even the readers could think that it sounds a little bit forced.

The entirety of the situation is the only one in which one may make sense of it by considering it to be a prohibited fact that her subconscious mind has consigned to the background. The memory was reintroduced to her after a period of time had passed in the form of a dream. In the dream, the body that was found inside the gunnysack represented the memory that had been repressed for a long time. Hari is a son-figure to Madhu, and the figure is reinforced when he mutters "Adityaya namaha," which revives in her memories of her dead son Adit, and that must be why she recoils at the comforting touch of Hari. Her clinging attachment to her son is also usually Oedipal. Madhu's attachment to Hari is typical of Oedipus. Two clear indicators of a healthy personality are the process of coming to terms with one's own identity and developing meaningful relationships with other people. Writing is a form of self-expression, but it comes with a lot of challenges.

CONCLUSION

Overall, "That Long Silence" is an impressive piece of writing that stands out as a powerful piece of literature because it tackles the age-old questions of who we are, how we express ourselves, and how we might find personal independence within the context of Indian society. It continues to be captivating and it continues to prompt thinking, which makes it an important contribution to the literature of contemporary India.

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