

# Shashi Deshpande's Depiction of Man-Woman Relationship

Virender Singh\*

Extension Lecturer, Department of English, Govt. College, Loharu, Haryana, India

**Abstract – Man-woman relationship is a man-made relationship and it is the basis of all other relationships. Indian woman occupies an important place in all human relationships. Outwardly, man-woman relationship appears to be based on mutual love and trust and understanding, but inwardly it is marred by the evils such as male ego; male- domination and gender discrimination. There has often been a conflict in a man-woman relationship as the man doesn't find both, the mother and the sweetheart in one and the same person. As an Indian English novelist, Shashi Deshpande concretizes in her fiction the major themes such as man-woman relationship, gender discriminations, marginalization, rebellion and protest. To vindicate and authenticate her selfhood and self-expression, she insisted on being called simply 'a writer' and not a 'woman writer' much less 'a feminist writer'. She maintains that she writes about relationships, and that she should not be evaluated by gender, and that her authorial position stays beyond male or female dichotomy.**

**Kew-Words: Relationships, woman, realization, identity, Jaya, Man-woman relationship.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpande is a powerful and persuasive voice in Indian literary arena. A close study of her works reveals her struggle for female autonomy against the back drop of patriarchal cultural pattern. They are compelled to live their life strictly in accordance with social norms. Deshpande's uniqueness lies in the fact that her protagonists are not rebels but they earn in due course of time the power to cope with male orientation. Deshpande's novels have earned great appreciation for her insightful and realistic illustration of characters and creation of incidents. Her attempts to depict harmonious relationships in the family are reflected strongly in all her novels. If all her novels are taken together, we find that Shashi Deshpande is obviously a master in painting inter-personal relationships. The flow of consciousness and the outpouring of human emotions change the very structure of relationships.

Shashi Deshpande has vigorously tried to paint the humiliating and stifling environment where women feel themselves fettered. She has protested against the several types of exploitations of women. In the present novel, silence has been used as a metaphor. Silence is a patriarchal symbol. Girls are socialized to be silent as being eloquent and loud are not the traits that society deems fit for them. Consequently they keep on being silent and bear everything with this weapon but gradually this very silence eats away the very vitals of their existence. Jaya is a writer and

she makes it quite clear in the beginning of the novel that she is writing a story but it is not the story of someone else's but rather it is her own story where she herself is the heroine and her husband the hero. But writing her story where she is her own heroine is not an easy task. Generally a writer hides many of the factors which perhaps are not for the world to be known. So presenting an objective amount of one's personality is always a convoluted process.

## OBJECTIVES:

The main objectives of the present study to attract the attention of the readers and lovers of literature towards the simplicity of Shashi Deshpande who is undoubtedly a writer of relationships, but it is strange that this aspect of her fiction has remained unnoticed by the researchers and critics.

## JOURNEY OF THE SELF

The problems in conjugal relationships as presented in the works of Shashi Deshpande are related to the attitude of middle class male that under estimate the woman the moment she becomes his wife. Making a sweepers observation, Avadesh K. Singh remarks:

Incidentally, the pattern of relationship remains more or less the same in various ways in her

novels--be it the case of Sarita-Manohar or Jaya-Mohan. (1998:114)

### JAYA: THE NEW WOMAN

Jaya is married to Mohan. The desperations and frustration of her seventeen years long marital existence, her failure to maintain harmonious relationship, her urge to break the silence-- all the thoughts begin to haunt and torture her. This way she becomes representative of girls who are brought up in middle-class families in post-Independent India. *That Long Silence* depicts Jaya's self-doubts, fears, guilt, silent indignation towards articulation and assertion. Suman Ahuja, a reputed critic, observes:

Jaya caught in an emotional eddy, endeavors to come to terms with her protean roles, while trying albeit in vain to re-discover her true self, which is about an ephemera... an unfulfilled wife, a disappointed mother and a failed writer.<sup>52</sup> (1999:103)

### HOSTILE MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

Family is the greatest gift of God to everyone. The relationships, love and affection, sharing and caring, pain and suffering, everything is learnt in the family. It is a small world of creations. Women play a specific role as a mother, wife, sister, daughter and sometimes everything. In Indian myths, women are revered as an immortal source of love, affection, sacrifice and learning. But social, cultural and economic liberalization has adversely affected the harmonious filial relationship.

### HARMONY AND UNDERSTANDING IN RELATIONSHIPS

One of the cardinal principles of interpersonal relationships is harmony and understanding. It also implies perfect communication between two individuals. There should be no question of domination or subjugation. Indu is independent and refuses to be imprisoned by false notions and obsolete traditions. In her parental house, women were not allowed to have their say in important matters. Even Akka was not allowed to have her say in her youth. Indu thinks:

Akka... I thought she was just an interfering old woman. But she was more than that. She was a prop. One of the strong. A family... it's like any other group. There are the strong and the weak. And the strong have to dominate the weak. It's inevitable. And Akka thought I was one of the strong ones. That's why she put the burden on me. And now, it is an obligation. I have to carry the burden. And to do that, I have to be hard. If I am soft, I'll just cave in. Can I just put down the burden and walk away... Can I enrich only myself? I can't... This is my family, these are my people.<sup>74</sup> (159)

Deshpande wishes to convey that interpersonal relationship cannot be one way affair. In fact, these relationships become invigorating only when they are tinged with an element of harmony, affection and perfect understanding. But when the basic needs of a person are ignored, there is only hate in relationships. That is why, perhaps, Indu tells Naren:

I despise them. They are mean and petty and trivial and despicable. I had always told myself... I won't be like them. I won't live like them. And I thought... I've got away. But to what, Naren? To what have I got away? Is that any better than this? Is there no more to life than this? Are we doomed to living meaningless, futile lives? Is there no escape?<sup>75</sup> (160)

### SUMMING UP:

To sum up; the research scholar comes to the point that Man-woman relationship is a man-made relationship and it is the basis of all other relationships. Indian woman occupies an important place in all human relationships.

The present paper is a thorough study of Shashi Deshpande's treatment of inter-personal relationships in *That Long Silence*, her social and cultural perspective and a record and reflection of a broad spectrum of the experiences of her life. It is a moderate endeavor to explore inter-personal relationships in the novel where Jaya finally realizes the need to break her silence of the seventeen years. She has decided that no longer will she live life unprotected. She keeps a hope in her heart with her firm determination to erase her silence which stands in her way for the assertion of her feminine voice.

The title of the novel *That Long Silence* proposes that the era of silence and silently suffering of woman is now over and a new concept of modern woman is emerging. The silences of the novel are not those of peace and tranquility. Rather, they are an amalgam of pain, anger, defensiveness, and rejection. Silence takes various shapes in the novel, ranging from Mohan's mother's silence of absolute despair to the resigned silence of Vimala who impassively bleeds to death, the unthinking silence of Kusum as she sinks into insanity, the stoic silence of the maid Jeeja, whose sole purpose in life was to go on living. In the beginning of the novel Kusum is portrayed as a parallel character to Jaya. She is the touchstone against which Jaya tests her sanity. Kasum's mother was constantly burdened with child rearing. She, therefore, looked after the youngest child on her lap while others were neglected. In this paper; the research scholar tries to write that Deshpande's novels have earned great appreciation for her insightful and realistic illustration of characters and creation of incidents. If all her novels are taken together, we find that Shashi Deshpande is obviously a master in

painting inter-personal relationships. The flow of consciousness and the outpouring of human emotions change the very structure of relationships.

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### Corresponding Author

**Virender Singh\***

Extension Lecturer, Department of English, Govt. College, Loharu, Haryana, India

[virendersingheng@gmail.com](mailto:virendersingheng@gmail.com)