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**THAT LONG SILENCE: JOURNEY FROM  
IGNORANCE TO KNOWLEDGE**

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# That Long Silence: Journey from Ignorance to Knowledge

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**Abstract –** Women writers like Shashi Deshpande has left no stone unturned in probing the tortured psyche of woman to present their hidden desires, aspirant, frustrations, pains and of course dilemma-what to do or not do. There is no denying in the fact that Shashi Deshpande tried her level best not only to highlight the plight of traditional Indian woman but also went further to offer a positive way. Though there is no dearth of Indian female writers who show their concerns for Indian women, but it is quite commendable for those women writers who offered a radical yet reasonable way.

**Keywords :** Disgust, Frustration, Submissiveness, Silence, Journey, Pain.

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A woman especially in Indian society is expected to be meek, submissive in relation to her husband. A husband in such a scheme becomes “a sheltering tree” (32). She was taught the significance of remaining with the husband.

‘A husband is like a sheltering tree. And it was as if she had said ‘mau’ to me. I ignored her. After so many years, the words came back to me. Sheltering tree. Without the tree, you are dangerously unprotected and vulnerable. (32)

And it is too hoped that as a husband is a protector, so a woman should not reflect her grudge or any kind of protest. In the very novel, that is why, the protagonist, Jaya, tried hard to keep herself into this traditional world by seeking to become “smiling placed, motherly woman” (15-16) but in vain. Jaya, like Indu of “Roots and Shadows” and Saru of “the Dark Holds no Terrors” moves further from ignorance to knowledge. Through this journey she learns several qualities like self-discovery, self-context and becomes a confident who is ready to face the world with its all flaws.

At the outset of the novel, the heroine is an orthodox, middle-class conserving, educated, motherly-woman (15-16) who learns in the line, to suppress her own feelings and behave accordingly her husband's. Her husband Mohan, an engineer who values money, fame and materialistic things. He is charged of taking bribe and an enquiry is on. Jaya and Mohan live at various places till he leaves her to clear himself of the charge of bribery. Jaya bore him two children and the third was aborted. She tried hard to fit into family by penning out about her and family. She was resolved to break the shackles, to break the very long silence. Jaya suffered isolation though it had been ages living

with Mohan. Mohan never understood her feelings as a result she was split from within. Shashi Deshpande uses a beautiful image to describe Jaya's conjugal life.

Mohan trampled the woman and the writer in Jaya as he neither loved her from the bottom of his heart nor he encouraged her. He has been largely sole responsible for Jaya's frustrations, miseries. The loveless married life results in total failure and a motif of disgust, frustration. Having married for seventeen years, their relationship is just like a mechanical. The absence of love in her marriage pushes Jaya towards Kamat, a middle aged lonely intellectual. Kamat though is not wealthy or socially significant as Mohan, but he is friendly, warm. He considers Jaya as an equal and Jaya finds herself at ease with Kamat shares those things with him, which even she can't disclose to her hubby. Her physical closeness with Kamat is characterized by spontaneity and sudden death of Kamat proves a fatal blow to Jaya.

Jaya is much perturbed and disappointed by the way Mohan left her, in fact this very act of Mohan stuns her and awakens her to her real place in life. She realizes that she can have her identity only, if she has Mohan with her. She does journey a full circle, from searching for her identity in loneliness to her relationship with Mohan and her children. During her journey, Jaya comes to know that meaningful co-existence may only exist if there is respect, understanding and compassion not through domination, subjugation. Jaya is also right when she learns that she is too responsible for her problems and it was she who had to fight her own battles and come out with a right solution. So she feels the necessity to break the silence, reflect her

predicament and assert for her identity. She knows that there is always scope for discussion and compromise and men can't be blamed solely. She decides that she will live now without sacrificing her identity and her decision to give up writing for the newspaper column 'Seeta' signifies giving up her traditional role-model of wife. Now she will write what she wants to write and will not act accordingly to others wishes. Jaya has enough talent within to become a good writer. In the words of Vimala Rama Rao:

"Jaya is one of the rare narrative voices in Indian English fiction who poses and displays literary sensibility commensurate with her fictional role as a writer telling her own story, one whose college education reading habits are in evidence in her speaking voice .This indeed is an achievement"(Rao 76-77)

Jaya raises her voice to make a bold statement on the totally unfair system existing in our society of the submissiveness of women. This makes her journey or one can say her discovery of self-complete.

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