

21  
109

## From a Fragmented Self to a Untied Whole: Jaya in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*

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### Abstract

This paper depicts the transformation of the protagonist from a fragmented self to a united whole in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*. Jaya, the protagonist faces a lot of sufferings in the novel, which is Shashi Deshpande's usual approach to bring out the mental trauma of her protagonists. The story unfolds with Jaya and her husband Mohan moving back into their old flat in Bombay from their luxurious house. In that small flat, Jaya gets ample of time for contemplating of her past and being an introvert, she becomes a poor victim of depression. The memories of her past start haunting her and this creates differences with her husband and increases frustration in their seventeen years old relationship. The process of self-contemplation comes to an end with the decision of writing her autobiography.

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Voice, Self-contemplation, Mental trauma, Realisation, Assertiveness.

Shashi Deshpande won Sahitya Akademi Award in 1990 for *That Long Silence* which portrays the story of an Indian housewife who maintains silence throughout her life. The novel ends with her resolve to speak, to break her long silence. The novel depicts the life of Jaya, the protagonist, who finds her normal routine so disrupted that for the first time she can look at her life and attempt to decide who she really is. The question "Who am I?" (Deshpande, 24) haunts her so obsessively that she fails to find herself. She is "an utter stranger a person so alien that even the faintest understanding of the motives of her actions seemed impossible" (Deshpande, 69). Hence her agonized cries "I can't hope, I can't manage, I can't go on." (Deshpande, 71) In such a stifling and suffocating domestic ambience and patriarchal set-up, she finds her female identity effaced. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes in her article "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Between patriarchy and imperialism subject- constitution and object formation the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'Third-World Woman' caught between tradition and modernization. (137)

Jaya writes columns about the dilemma of the middle class housewives in the pen name of 'Suhasini' and 'Sita'. Both 'Suhasini' and 'Sita' as she says are "the many selves waiting to be