

REALISM IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THAT LONG SILENCE

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Abstract— Realistic literature represents life as it is mirroring the real world. Shashi Deshpande's women protagonists undergo great mental trauma in their quest for identity before they affirm themselves. She deals with the genuine problems of contemporary Indian woman. Her attempt to give an honest portrayal of their sufferings, disappointments and frustrations makes her novels realistic. She does not make her women characters stronger than they are in their real life. The elements of Deshpandean heroines in every woman of today's Indian society are seen. They hold the authenticity of flesh and blood. Deshpande has handpicked these characters from real life and readers can equate these characters with themselves.

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* tells the story of an Indian housewife, Jaya who maintains her silence throughout her life. She finds herself satisfied with writing under the pen name, Seetha. Jaya is shown compromising at every step to make a happy living with Mohan. Jaya's life shows that Indian culture chooses to ignore the reality that a woman is also a significant part of the family.

The term realism and the emergence of novel writing are closely associated. Simply putting, a character, setting or an event is regarded realistic because it is based on our everyday life reality. According to Oxford Dictionary, it is an attitude of mind in which one accepts a situation as it is and prepared to deal with it, without pretending it is different.

Realistic literature represents life as it is mirroring the real world. The image of women in the novels of Shashi Deshpande are trapped between tradition and modernity. Her women protagonists undergo great mental trauma in their quest for identity before they affirm themselves. She primarily focuses on the captivating problems and the suffocating environs of her heroines, who struggle hard.

She deals with the genuine problems of contemporary Indian woman. With her works she could convey the depths of female psyche. Her protagonists are crushed under the weight of a male dominated and tradition bound society. Her attempt to give an honest portrayal of their sufferings, disappointments and frustrations makes her novels

realistic. She does not make her women characters stronger than they are in their real life. The elements of Deshpandean heroines in every woman of today's Indian society are seen. They hold the authenticity of flesh and blood. Deshpande has handpicked these characters from real life and readers can equate these characters with themselves.

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* tells the story of an Indian housewife who maintains her silence throughout her life. Jaya's attempt at breaking the silence represents in general all oppressed women in the male dominated society. She finds herself satisfied with writing under the pen name Seetha. She begins to write what people want to read and not what she wants to write. Shashi Deshpande's novels present sensitive and delicate portrayal of Indian woman hood with a focus on the predicament of women. The inner most recesses of women have been probed into a better perspective of life's experiences. In *That Long Silence*, she realistically depicts the inner conflicts of Jaya.

The novel describes Jaya's disappointments in her married life and her suffering in isolation. Shashi Deshpande describes the conjugal life of the contemporary middle-class people with the help of animal imagery and tries to draw parallel between a couple and a pair of bullocks yoked together. "A pair of bullocks yoked together... a clever phrase, but can it substitute for the reality? A man and a woman married for seventeen years. A couple with two children. A family somewhat like the one

caught and preserved for posterity by the advertising visuals I so loved. But the reality was only this. We were two persons. A man. A woman" (LS 8).

Jaya is shown compromising at every step to make a happy living with Mohan. She is conscious of the distance in the parent-child relationship. She describes the character of her husband as a sad bewildered man, an obsessed man reconciled to future. She further compares herself with Gandhari, the wife of Dhritrashtra who bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband to probe herself as an ideal Hindu wife as Gandhari. "If Gandhari could be called an ideal wife, I was an ideal wife too. I bandaged my eyes tightly. I did not want to know anything" (LS 61).

In *That Long Silence*, Vimala, the sister of Mohan speaks of her mother's unwanted pregnancies. She says, "almost all my childhood, I remember her as being pregnant" (LS 37). The lack of information about safe methods of sex and facilities for safe abortion has made Vimala's mother continue to bear in silence a series of unwanted pregnancies. She has six living children and has lost four or five babies. Unsafe conditions of abortion carried out by untrained doctors has brought many problems to the women. Yet Vimala's mother "went to a mid-wife and got herself aborted" (LS 38). The narrator investigates the facts that the Indian culture chooses to ignore the reality that a woman is also a significant part of the family. Women are not given importance in the matters of inheritance of family name or property. None of the women,



including Jaya finds a mention in the family tree that Ramukaka has prepared.

In *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande has portrayed the irony of a women writer who is also a young house wife. Being a writer, she is supposed to present her views and ideas before the society but still she remains silent probing into her past, struggling with her present and trying to establish a rapport with her future. She is an intellectual, who finds herself out of place in the society meant only for men.

Bibliography

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