CHAPTER IV

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* is the award winning novel which depicts the prolong silence of women in the society. She realistically portrays the inner conflict of the protagonist Jaya and her quest for self or identity. Jaya represents the silenced women, silenced by the tradition and man-made rules. Shashi Deshpande says about *That Long Silence* as:

And then I wrote *That Long Silence* almost entirely a woman's novel nevertheless, a book about the silencing of one-half of humanity. A lifetime of introspection went into this novel, the one closest to me personally; the thinking and ideas in this are closest to my own. (Sidhartha Sharma, *Shashi Deshpande's Novels a feminist Study*, 38)

Jaya represents half the humanity. Jaya, like Indu of *Roots and Shadows* and Saru of *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, journeys from ignorance to knowledge through suffering. Going through a process of introspection, self-analysis and self-realization, she emerges as a confident individual, fully in control of herself, significantly more hopeful and able to accept life just as they do. If Indu is a journalist and Saru, a doctor, Jaya is a successful columnist and an aspiring novelist.

Shashi Deshpande analyses the problems of Indian women of different strata. Her sincere description of women and their inner problems makes her writing realistic and naturally leads to feministic thinking. When her writing is labeled as feministic she says:

It is a curious fact that serious writing by women is invariably regarded as feminist writing. A woman who writes of women's experiences often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have angered her, roused her strong feelings. I don't see why this has to be labeled feminist fiction... When a man writes of the particular problems a man is facing, he is writing male propaganda. Nobody says that, why is it said only about women writers. (*Dilemma of a woman writer*, 54)

Though Shashi Deshpande says it is natural to write woman’s problems and woman’s feelings, the very title of the novel, *That long Silence* leads to a feministic ideology. It is derived from a speech delivered by the American actress Elizabeth Robins in 1907. Deshpande quotes the words of Robins in the Epigraph to the novel, “If I were a man and cared to know the world I lived in,
I almost think it would make me a shade uneasy, the weight of that long silence” (Sunita Reddy, *The Novels of Shashi Deshpande*, 72). Shashi Deshpande uses this silence as an epithet to her protagonist’s surrender as well as defiance to the existing system of suppression.

Shashi Deshpande describes silence as a trick in a relationship. She puts the meaning of silence herself - “You learn a lot of tricks to get by in a relationship. Silence is one of them....” (*That Long Silence*, 191)

Jaya, to begin with, is a conservative educated, middle-class smiling placid, motherly woman” (15-16) who learns to suppress her own wishes and act according to her husband's. She who cannot dare to protest, “I had learnt it at last no questions, no retorts. Only silence” (143) has finally unlearned her silence, refuses to be led by nose and affirms with confidence, "I'm not afraid any one"(191).

In *That Long Silence* Jaya refuses to follow her husband Mohan in hiding as he is accused of financial crisis in his office. She has accepted his illegal learning without a word. She has digested his opinions about her creative writing and changed her writing according to her husband’s wish. She has followed her husband as mythological Gandhari closing her eyes. But it is high time to analyse her mythological role models. As in other novels in this novel also the protagonist analyses her position with self-examination before coming to a self-realization. Shashi Deshpande creates a strong woman protagonist refusing to be crushed under the weight of social suppression.

The narrative technique of the novel combines the present and the past. Deshpande uses the flash back method instead of a straight forward narration in this novel in order to draw the attention of the reader. The first chapter deals with the present, but the later chapters are more anachronic with the final chapter ending in the present. Shama Futehally writes: “It is a device which is useful either when some element of suspense is needed. For this novel chronologically charity is essential as the reader already has to cope with an abundance of characters and their complex interactions” (*Of That Elusive Self*, 30).

*That Long Silence* is very close to the real life experience and so achieves the credibility from the facts about the protagonist’s aspirations, frustrations as well triumph in life in the end.
Y.S. Sunita Reddy observes: “The narrative with its slow unknottedting of memories and unraveling of the soul is like an interior monologue quite similar to the stream of consciousness technique employed by Virginia Woolf” (*The Novels of Shashi Deshpande*, 81)

The real representation of the woman, trying to break off the silence and in quest of self-identity is depicted by the modern woman, Jaya. The novel starts with Jaya and her husband moving to a humble flat away from their home. Her husband Mohan is an engineer but more traditional in his attitude. Jaya is a failed writer and a housewife. The novel starts with the problem in Mohan's office and he is involved in some malpractice in his office and there is an inquiry against him. He has to be away from his house and hide somewhere for a while. He decides to move to Dadar flat which belongs to his wife. He has to leave his Church gate bungalow to Jaya’s humble Dadar flat. He takes her so much for granted that she is not consulted about shifting. Yet she acquiesces to his decision and follows him. He never discusses with Jaya to decide anything. Jaya has to follow his decisions without a word. They send their two children Rahul and Rati to a long tour with their family friends. Jaya follows her husband into exile as unhesitatingly as her mythological counterpart Sita displaying her ‘Sati-dharma.’

Jaya is not pleased to the idea of going to her Dadar flat as it is so humble. She is not willing to go there but she accepts Mohan's decision in silence. She does not dare to voice against Mohan's decisions. She is used to follow her husband in complete silence. However, Jaya seems to have gained confidence as he begins to lose it being in trouble. When Mohan demands the key, Jaya refuses to hand it over. Jaya recollects their post wedding game where she and Mohan are asked to find a coin; “The one who finds the coin first, rules the other at home.” commented one of Mohan’s relatives during their post wedding game (*That Long Silence*, 6). Jaya describes Mohan at this game:

“my fingers scarcely moving, while his had scrabbled frantically through the grains, groping for the coin” (7). But it was Jaya who found the coin first, though as she says it “means nothing” (7). In Indian society which is male dominated, it is the husband who would rule the house. Now she refuses to surrender herself. She opens the door herself symbolizing her refusal to be servile, She is aware that "It was not he who had relinquished his authority; it was I who no longer conceded any authority to him"(9) and this act, says Jaya, “was part of the same subtle resistance I had offered, the guerrilla warfare I had waged for many years” (9).
Her Dadar flat is in no way comparable to her elegant, well-furnished Church gate home. Yet, she is perfectly at ease here, relating herself easily to her neighbors and servants. Adele King observes, “Jaya 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” (That Long Silence, a Study, 97). Emulating Mohan's mother and sister, she tries to adjust and compromise with her lot though every compromise shatters her individually. She surrenders herself so totally that she is afraid of expressing her likes and dislikes. Now she is a stereotyped housewife who is “nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support” (That Long Silence, 76).

The novel reveals the hollowness of modern Indian life with the convenience of arranges marriage and with the children studying in “good” schools. It is widely said that the material comforts appeals to the life of a woman in the society. “the glassware that had to sparkle, the furniture and curious that had to be kept spotless and dust-free, and those clothes, God, all those never-ending piles of clothes that had to be washed and ironed, so that they could be worn and washed and ironed once again”(57). With such comforts a woman has been considered as a happy soul in the life. She has not been happy with all her material comforts. Though she is a writer, Jaya has not obtained a self-expression. The novel expresses the narrowness of the narrator. The novel deals with the lack of communication between husband and wife as well their incapability to understand each other. Shashi Deshpande has presented the confused state of educated middle class Indian woman who goes between the reconciliation with a loveless marriage and a lonely life leaving the husband, “a sheltering tree” (2). Jaya finds a time for self-assertion as she is free from her household works.

The stay in Dadar flat gives Jaya a relief from her routine work. She is free from the monotonous household works and so she has a long time to think of herself. She travels back in her memory lane and recapture her past life and her childhood. She finds a good time to evaluate her position in her family and in the society. If there had been no crisis like this, she would not have thought of her life and her individuality. Adele King opines: “Jaya 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” (That Long Silence, A Study, 77).

Jaya appears to be a satisfied housewife leading an economically comfortable life and seems to enjoy an enviable life by any standard. But a closer scrutiny reveals the interior account
of her marriage. To achieve that satisfaction she has suppressed many traits of her personality that could not fit her as wife and mother. She has been shedding her parts of ‘self’ which are not necessary for the roles of loyal wife and lovable mother. To achieve this stage of fulfillment as a wife, Jaya has systematically suppressed every aspect of her personality that refuses to fit in with her image as a wife and mother besides a failed writer. As Suman Ahuja observes: Jaya caught in an emotional, eddy, endeavors to come to terms with her protean roles, while trying, albeit in vain, to rediscover her true self, which is but an ephemera … an unfulfilled wife, a disappointed mother and failed writer. (Review of That Long Silence, 2)

Jaya is not interested in sexist rituals of Hinduism for the welfare of husband or son. As a child, Jaya has understood the position allotted to a girl-child in the family. The preference is given to a male child as he is considered as the permanent members of the family and he would inherit the family name. She feels strongly about the ill treatment of girl child in the family. She refers to the Prakrit, a less polished language inflicted on women in the age old days. It is an imposed silence on woman. Though educated well Jaya is also “silenced” like the other women in this novel such as the half-crazed Kusum, a distant relative, or Jeeja, their poor maid-servant. These women are trapped in their own “self-created silence”, and they are incapable of breaking away from the family.

Ruminating on the past, Jaya sees how her marriage has reduced her to a mere automation. She realizes how she washed away the most valuable time of her life in arranging and re-arranging things, cleaning, washing, ironing, changing sheets. She is bewildered to find in her diaries that she had spent her life engrossed in such trivialities like what she bought, the dates the children’s school began, the servant’s absence, etc. These trivial matters had been given importance in making the record of her past. She has filled her personality with the bits of the household works to pose herself as a traditional wife.

Jaya has managed successfully to control her feelings in her seventeen years of her marriage life. ‘The silence becomes deafening’. She thought that suppression of feeling is an important quality of a good wife. To her being a good wife is more important than being a good writer. She has suppressed her desire of writing as well her association with her one-time neighbour, Kamat.

Jaya has been dreaming to become a famous writer but not willing to write against the will of her husband. Jaya has abundant resources 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 a literary sensibility commensurate with her fictional role as a writer telling her own story, one whose college education and reading habits are in evidence in her speaking voice. This indeed is an achievement" (A Well-Articulated Silence, 76-77)

In the early years of her marriage Jaya has started her career as a writer and at the threshold of achieving a place in creative writing. Mohan supported her and introduced her to the editors of various papers. On Mohan's advice, she begins writing middles, "Light humorous pieces about the travails of a middle-class housewife" (That Long Silence 148-149). These mere skimmings over life do not give her any satisfaction. She is an intense thinking woman longing to confront life through her fiction. She has made a good beginning with a story about a man “…who could not reach out to his wife except through her body” (144). This story has won a prize for its realistic portrayal of life and the story is appreciated by everyone. But Mohan is not happy because he assumes that the story portrays their own personal life. He was anxious that his acquaintance would think the person portrayed in the story is himself. Mohan said to Jaya that the readers would think that Mohan was that man. So he is not pleased about the idea of Jaya writing short stories further. Jaya knows that there is no truth in his accusation; still she does not try to reason with Mohan, as she does not like to risk her relation with him. Jaya says:

Perhaps, if Mohan had been angry, if he had shouted and raged at me, if he had forbidden me to write, perhaps I would have fought him and gone on. But he had only shown me his hurt. And I had not been able to counter that. I had relinquished them instead, all those stories that had been taking shape in me because I had been scared - scared of hurting Mohan, scared of jeopardizing the only career I had, my marriage. (144)

Jaya did not want to jeopardize her marriage life and so she gave up her career to pacify her husband. She believes that she had done something wrong to her husband through her writing. She says, “Looking at his stricken face, I had been convinced. I had done him wrong. And I had stopped writing after that,” (144)

But the writer in her goads her on to keep writing. She begins to write under a pseudonym, which doesn't help, and her stories are rejected one after another. Jaya writes the stories without any strong passions. Her writing is autocorrected by her own mind and swipes the traces of the
emotions and anger. The stories are rejected by the magazines as they are the mere narrations but not loaded with real feeling. Her neighbour Kamat, analyses the reasons behind the successive rejection and tells her that her stories lack strong emotions as she has suppressed her anger and frustration. He analyses her stories objectively and tells her how she could make them "more forceful and hitting". (148) and says that she has made her stories impersonal by carefully censoring the anger. Jaya argues that it is not womanly trait to show anger. Here she is merely repeating the words used by her husband on the occasion of their first quarrel after marriage. She asserts,

“A woman can never be angry. She can only be neurotic, hysterical, frustrated.’(147) Kamat refuses to pamper her mood of self-pity and warns her instead: “Beware of this 'women are the victims' theory of yours. It will drag you down into a soft, squishy bog of self-pity. Take yourself seriously, women. Don't skulk behind a false name" (148).

To maintain peace in the family Jaya has to tear her career into pieces. As it is in the case of Indu in Roots and Shadows, Jaya also cannot work to her fulfillment. Anyhow, Jaya is allowed to present simple writings in the columns in a female magazine. She starts writing humorous pieces in the pseudonym 'Seeta'. The change of name symbolically articulates the change in the personality of Jaya. She had learnt to control her anger, as Mohan considered this trait in a woman as "unwomanly" (83). She tells Kamat: "Because no woman can be angry. Have you ever heard of an angry young woman?" (147). Later she begins to write light humorous pieces on the travails of a middle-class housewife in a column entitled "Seeta". She not only gets encouraging response from the readers but also a nod of approval from Mohan. Jaya says:

Seeta had been the means through which I had shut door firmly on all these women who had invaded my being. Something for attention; women I had known I could not write about, because they might, it was just possible, resemble Mohan's mother or aunt or mother or aunt (149).

She is not ready to endanger her marital life and therefore she smothers her inner conscience. Thus she denies her writing which is the reflection of her individuality and self in order to play the role of an Indian middle class woman. The statement reveals that women writers have all along abstained from telling truth, giving greater credence to their roles as wives that to themselves as individuals. Kamat, as a hard critic knowing well that she is capable of writing better
stuff, he says: I never can imagine you writing this. I mean, I can see the woman who writes this ....',
he's narrowed his eyes as if focusing on some vision, 'she's plump, good humoured, pea brained but
shrewd, devious; skimming over life......' (149). Adele King aptly observes that in a self-referential
parody, Deshpande makes Jaya a writer of woman’s magazines fiction. In Jaya's stories they lived
happily ever after although she knows the falsity of the view of life. Also the mixture of surrealism and
fantasy in some of the experiences the writer undergoes is an important aspect of the making and
unmaking of fictions in That Long Silence. (That Long Silence A Study, 98)

Jaya is unhappy that the writer in her could not come to light in the estimation of Mohan
to whom she“.... had been no writer, only an exhibitionist” (144). She does not stop writing. Her
writing is also ‘a kind of breaking the silence’. Shashi Deshpande’s protagonist breaks her silence
at two different levels one-through the act of writing itself, another – through renegotiating
interpersonal relations within the family.

She writes the kind of stuff which pleased the publisher and made her husband feel proud
of her as a writer, but she herself has fallen like an imposter. She writes a column for a woman's
magazine where a character called 'Seetha' says and does things in which Jaya does not believe
herself.

That column, yes, it had made me known. My profile silhouetted in stark black that
accompanied each article frightened me each time I saw it. It was like seeing
someone masquerading as myself, or as if I was masquerading as the woman who
wrote that column. (119).

At every stage of her life Jaya compromises to conform to the role of an ideal Indian
woman. In order to become an ideal wife, she has to snip off the bits of her that had refused to be
Mohan's wife. As a result, she has been masquerading not only as the writer of 'Seetha' but also as
'Suhasini'. Jaya smother her despair at being forced to live a life of deception. She feels that she
will 'break down', that she can't go on, and 'can't cope' but does not give expression to these feelings
because of her fears- her fear of hurting Mohan and jeopardizing her marriage, her fear of
destroying the veneer of the happy family she tries to project and her fear of failing as writer.
Discussing gender, Catherine Stimpson says:

Cultural laws of gender demand that feminine and masculine must play off against
each other in the great drama of binary opposition. They must struggle against each
other, or complement each other, or collapse into each other in the momentary, illusory relief of the androgynous embrace. In patriarchal cultures, the struggle must end in the victor of the masculine; complementarily must arrange itself hierarchically: androgyny must be a mythic fiction (Prasanna Sree, *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*, 74)

Jaya, more or less, feels in the same way when she says: Man and woman - it was then that I realized the deep chasm between the two. They are separated for ever, never more than at the moment of total physical togetherness. (*That Long Silence*, 98)

Marriages in India “.... never end, they cannot - they are a stated of being” (127). This is mainly because of the necessity of conforming to cultural edicts. As a result, marriage seldom corresponds to the personal experience or aspirations of the individuals involved so that the relationship is often like Jaya's description of her own marriage. “Ours has been a delicately balanced relationship, so much so that we have even snipped off bits of ourselves to keep the scales on an even keel” (7).

The other most important aspect of Jaya’s personality which clashes with her image of wife and mother, is her association with Kamat, a widower living above her flat, she is drawn towards him as he treats her as his equal, and offers constructive criticism to Jaya on her writings. Jaya sends mail to him to help her avoid any confrontation with her husband because he disapproves her writings. Kamat because of his loneliness showers his attention on Jaya. He is different from other men as he has no aversion for cooking or any other household works which are meant for women. Jaya feels so much at ease with the company of Kamat as her womanly inhibitions wither. She feels free to open up her problems to him. He warns her against wallowing in self-pity. He asks her to pursue her writing career which the expression of her real inner self.

Jaya enjoys her intimate friendship with Kamat to share her ideas and opinions about her stories and writings. This she cannot do with Mohan. She feels free as she is treated equal by Kamat and she can be in her own self with him. She opines: It had been a revelation to me that two people, a man and a woman, could talk this way: “with this man, I had not been a woman. I had been just myself” (153). Though Mohan encourages her writing that is according to his expectation. She is so much uninhibitive towards Kamat. But there is the idea of endangering her marital life always lurking in her mind. Her relationship with him leads to a physical attraction.
He is father like sometimes his relationship moves to the level of lover-like. Though both are at ease in each others' company, Jaya is not bold enough to maintain the relationship. Kamat likes her company and even given remarks on her physical appearance. He says: "I prefer clean, spare lines in a human being. You, for example - your name is your face" (152). On one occasion they are very close to each other and she is nearer to surrender herself to him. When he consoles her at her remembrance of her father's death, she finds herself in his arms. Though there had been ample opportunity of physical indulgence she dare not endanger her marriage. Even at his death she had been passive. On one of her visit to his flat she found him dead on the floor. She was passive and moved in silence in order to secure her marriage. Thus she is always with idea of maintaining her marriage life. It makes clear her fettered self of a so-called middle class wife.

She is unable to pay homage to her friend for the fear of getting involved in any scandal that may endanger her marriage. She was filled with a terrible feeling of guilt. But she remains helplessly passive. Sarla Palker says,” She perhaps does her role of wife to perfection. But fails as a human being” (Breaking the Silence, 169). Through this incident, Shashi deshpande also highlights the plight of the so-called educated women still bound firmly by the shackles of tradition and convention. As in G.D. Barche’s words,

Unhesitatingly the modern educated young woman’s crusade against years of slavery, suffering and suppression is a serious one. However, in the process of this crusade, we see her suffering from certain weaknesses and complexes which have been highlighted by the Indian women novelists. The first weakness she suffers from can be summed up in what Pope has said of Addison ‘Willing to wound, yet afraid to strike’. (Feminism in Indian Literature in English, 19)

Though the creative writing and relationship with Kamat are the two glaring examples of Jaya’s inability to seek her own identity, there are many other factors which are hinder to the development of her individual identity. Jaya has been keen in performing the role of a perfect wife and a loving mother and so her identity has been relegated to the background. Jaya, as a girl, was taught by her father to have confidence in herself. He named her Jaya which stands for Victory and has encouraged her to be resilient and courageous. He has made her feel that she is someone special, and someone different from the other girls who would normally end up becoming housewives.
He would dream that Jaya either bags an international award or goes to Oxford. Her father has made her different, indifferent to social taboos and familial rituals, as he often said—“You are not like others, Jaya”, Appa had said to me, pulling me out of the safe circle in which the other girls had stood...You are going to be different from others, ’Appa had assured me” (That Long Silence, 136).

He thought that Jaya was different from other girls and born to win a great thing. He gave her good education and freedom. However, his untimely death shatters her dreams and makes her to face the reality that she is after all like any other middle class girl destined to be a wife and a mother. Her father’s death brought a complete darkness on her life. She was made to come down from her elevated ideas and brought down to the reality. She became an ordinary girl like others. She had not been a unicorn but a mule.

Generally, a woman’s identity is defined in terms of her relationship with men as daughter, wife and mother. She has never been assigned any individual identity. Even the name does not show her ‘identity’. In keeping with the ritual of re-naming the bride on the wedding day as in some Brahmin communities, Jaya also has been renamed as "Suhasini" means a soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman, who makes herself loving and also lovingly nurtures her family. With this new name, it appears that the light-spirited and courageous Jaya has been reduced to a mere proud housewife and mother. Jaya thinks of her childhood when she has enjoyed the freedom and support given by her father. Jaya wants to retain her own name given by her father, meaning victory. Her refusal to adopt the name "Suhasini” becomes manifestation of resistance to the stereotyping that is inflicted on every woman in the Indian society. However, Jaya's rejection of the name "Suhasini" now remains as a token of victory as she cannot afford to insist on for long as she has been taught to regard her husband as a tree of projection and so represses her anger and resentment.

Though Jaya has not changed her name she has been changed to a lovable mother. In her zeal to play out the role of a loyal wife and a caring mother, she smothers her real self. Like the other women she has been indoctrinated right from her childhood. She does not protest the change of her name from Jaya to Suhasini at her marriage just to keep Mohan happy. She changed her appearance to suit his idea of a modern woman. She cuts her hair. Wears dark glasses, and ultimately gets so completely absorbed into the family fold that from a fiercely independent
woman she is transformed into the “stereotype of a woman: nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support?” (76) Her dress and her appearance are proof of her submission to Mohan's liking, replicating an absorbed family-woman. She has proved that "subtle indoctrination atrophies woman’s desires to change her position as an object and to exercise her free will. She compromises her stand for she is taught the importance and necessity of stable marriage and family-as security, as a source of emotional strength. But the same is denied to her.

As a child she was chided by her grandmother for asking many questions and was told that no husband could be comfortable with a woman who asked questions and retorts. Ironically even though Jaya never asked questions, she now retorts with her husband and there is no smooth relationship. Her relatives taught her the importance of being with a husband. She has been insisted to be with her 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. A sheltering tree. Without the tree, you're dangerously unprotected and vulnerable. (32)

Jaya proceeds to "keep the tree alive and flourishing even if you have to water it with deceit and lies"(32). She marries Mohan not out of choice but out of convenience. He is from same caste, decent, good looking and has a good job. Jaya has no reason to reject him. She says: "And, if there had been no reason why I should have married Mohan, there had been no reason not to marry him either"(93).

She holds on to her marriage and sees Mohan and herself as a pair of bullocks yoked together. In her own description, her married life is:

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 preserved 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. (8)
The image of the pair of bullocks yoked together suggests that yoked bullocks should share the burden between themselves, but no one knows whether they love each other or not. The image of the beasts performing their assigned duties mechanically undermines the relationship of husband and wife, who are united in marriage for love, but not for leading a mechanical life which results in ending up in mutual hatred and distrust.

It is only by negating her own personality that a woman, who is powerless in the patriarchal order, can survive: Jaya in order to maintain her marriage as a happy one, slowly transforms herself to this ideal of womanhood, where she learns to repress her anger. Jaya always works up to please her husband. Jaya even transforms her appearance to suit his idea of a modern woman- cuts her hair and wears dark glasses. She ultimately gets so completely absorbed into the family fold that form a gets so completely absorbed into the family fold that forms a fiercely independent woman, she is transformed into the stereotype of a woman.

Jaya has no necessity nor has she a wish to look outside, she wants to be safe looking after her husband and children. The outside world has so far not, affected her life, though at times she feels dissatisfied with her life.

Jaya, in search of an individual identity, turns back ruthlessly on Kusum, and she fails to show understanding and has not maintained any human relationship with Kamat in the hour of the need. Further, Jaya realizes that this reaching out beyond the self is not a deviation from womanliness but a means of fulfillment, to find her identity as an individual. Jaya learns to reorder the relationship with her parental family, her husband, children and dependents. The memories of the past modify her expectations about the present.

After her self-examination Jaya understands her own mistake in losing her real self. In her seventeen years of marital life she has met only boredom and dullness instead of intimacy and friendliness. She has lost her life in the name sacrifice to maintain the role of an ideal wife and an ideal mother. She says, “I’ve failed him(Mohan). He expected something from me, from his wife, and I’ve failed him” (185). Her incapability to deal with her son Rahul’s complexities make her say: “A mother? ... I had been unfit to be trusted with the entire responsibility of another human being” (178).
The relationship between a wife and husband is expected to be not only cordial but intimate and enduring. But this relation between Jaya and Mohan is an epitome of failure and an emblem of disgust, disappointment and depression. This is so because there was no love between them. This disgust of living a man who does not love the woman the way she expects him to, is a burning problem the educated woman has to face in the contemporary society. Marriage is India means marrying the husband's family traditions. The psychological and social realities in which women live have remained virtually unchanged.

For Indian women marriage and motherhood are considered mandatory for fulfillment and happiness. One of the primary tests of gender differentiation is the dominance of a man over his wife, the superiority of the male over female and every woman is to endorse this ethics in the relationships with man. Jaya is the representative of this unequal status of women in our society. In the words of Tapan Basu, "... Jaya who has input, a life time in surrender of her will to social mores and customs that had relegated women to a second class status". (Qtd. by Prasanna Sree, *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*, 79)

The crisis at Mohan's office affects the family. Jaya realises that Mohan has lost interest in her. At the Dadar flat she has time to ponder over her relations with Mohan, and also to analyze and recognize her suppressed "self". Her emotional crisis comes to such a pass that she is afraid lest something should happen to Mohan. She cannot imagine a life without Mohan or his support:

The thought of living without him had twisted my insides, his death had seemed to me the final catastrophe. The very idea of his dying had made me feel so bereft that tears had flowed effortlessly down my cheeks. If he had been a little late coming home, I had been sure he was dead. By the time he returned, I had, in my imagination shaped my life to a desolate widowhood. (96-97)

Jaya's words exhibit the split psyche in her. She represents the urban middle class educated woman who has the exposure to Western ideas. But the suppression of the self has been insisted by her upbringing to survive in her marriage. She has been twisted by the totally different ideas. Unable to free herself from the traditional code of conduct, her inner voice remains inarticulate even in her writing and her pent-up feelings make her neurotic. The counsels of her aunts keep ringing in her ears, and this becomes the cause of her undoing. For instance, Vanita Mami counsels just before her marriage: "Remember Jaya, a husband is like a sheltering tree. Keep the tree alive and flourishing,
even if you have to water it with deceit and lies" (32). She further says: "If your husband has a mistress or two, ignore it. Take up a hobby instead, cats, maybe, or your sister's children" (32). Although Jaya does not take Vanita Mami's counsel seriously but for her part she does not prove herself different from her. In spite of her flippant attitude towards Vanitamami and her advice, later in the course of the novel, Jaya proves that she is no different from her. Jaya resembles Indu and Saru in having subdued her independent spirit to the desires of her husband. When the choice of selection comes between her husband and family, unhesitant Jaya chooses to be with her husband, however assertive and independent individual she may be.

The traditional structure of the woman has been built on the submission of her feeling and surrendering her inner self. The woman's role in the family depends on the will of her husband. She has to fulfill the wishes of her husband as she should not have any other wish for herself. The image of being a submissive wife to maintain the marriage life fills her mind and suppresses her liberal ideas.

Jaya is caught in this dilemma, firstly trying to be a suitable wife to her husband and secondly, struggling to express the emotions of women's experience, but seldom expressing them in a male-dominated, chauvinistic society. If she suffers, it is in silence, if she revolts, it is also in silence. She suppresses her feelings lest they should spoil her relationship with her husband.

One of the most structured patterns of Indian society is the roles assigned to man and to woman - woman is the follower, man the leader. Woman is the sufferer, man the ordainer. Woman is of the home, man of the world. Deshpande describes it thus "Sita following her husband into exile, Savithri digging Death to reclaim her husband. Draupadi stoically sharing her husband's travails..." (11). If it is so, as Dr. K. Madhavi Menon observes: “When woman asserts her right to take a different path and ceases to be the silent sufferer, there is hostility” (Qtd. by Prasanna Sree, *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*, 79). As it happens in the case of Jaya who reflects:

No, what have I to do with these mythical women? I can't fool myself. The truth is simpler. Two bullocks yoked together... It is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. To go in different directions would be painful: and what animal would voluntarily choose pain? (*That Long Silence*, 11-12)
Though Mohan explains to assure Jaya's company with him, he never looks into her demands and neither does she communicate anything directly to Mohan and hence, there always remains a gap between husband and wife and silence prevails in the house.

Mohan, steeped in the norms he had learnt the his own family says to Jaya, "My mother never raised her voice against my father, however badly he behaved to her" (83) Jaya feels hurt and becomes angry at the accusations Mohan flings at her during a quarrel, but she is struck dumb:

I was full of a sense of angry confusion. What was he charging me with? And, Oh God, why couldn't I speak? Why couldn't I say something? I felt foolishly inadequate, having nothing to offer him in exchange for all the charges he was pouring on to me. (119)

Jaya had already killed Suhasini. When unable to bear Mohan's angry accusations, she breaks her silence to retort back unable to restrain herself, she points out bluntly that she has given up writing because of him.

But as if I'd been struck dumb, I could say nothing. I sat in my place, pinned to it by his anger, a monstrously huge spear that went through me, excruciatingly painful, yet leaving me cruelly conscious (121). When silence fails as a protective cover, hysteria becomes the only shield. Jaya tells herself, considering the gravity of the situation. She does laugh at Mohan and finally lands herself in a more hopeless situation. “Laughter burst out of me, spilled over, and Mohan stared at me in horror as I rocked helplessly. When finally, I recovered myself I was alone in the room” (122).

He is agonized to see Jaya in place of Sushasini: Mohan’s eyes, as he spoke of her, were agonized, the eyes of a man who’d lost a dear one. He could not bear the reality.

Suhasini was dead, yet that was it, she was one Mohan was mourning, she's walked into the sea at last. No, the fact was that I'd finally done it. I'd killed her. No, that was not right, either; we had killed her between us, Mohan and I. (121)

When the times are smooth, the relations between the two moves on smoothly. But the crisis unmasks the two-Jaya and Mohan. Before the crisis, like her mythological counterpart Sita and Gandhari, she remains stuck to husband and children. But after the crisis she is not willing to go into hiding with her husband unquestioningly. She is ashamed of the incident, and Mohan
defends himself by saying, "It was for you and the children that I did this. I wanted you to have a
good life. I wanted the children to have all those things I never had" (9). Mohan's trouble is his
own making and he expects her to share this crisis unconditionally.

Through this episode, there is a glimpse of Indian concepts of ethics. Mohan as viewed by
Indian standards, ‘a dutiful son by extension’ and ‘a dutiful husband and father’. He regularly
sends money to his family and attends the death anniversary of his father, bearing the expenditure
involved. He accepts corruption so that his family can move into a posh plat and live a comfortable
life. Deshpande makes a relevant point indicating the casual way of exploring the code of morality
flouted by Indians to whom “dishonesty, nepotism, and corruption, as they are understood in the
West, are merely abstract, concepts”(Sunita Reddy, The Novels of Shashi Deshpande, 79).

Mohan has married her as he wanted to marry a convent educated girl. After their marriage
he became a stranger to Jaya. There is no intimacy in their relationship. In their physical union he
would ask, ‘Did I hurt you?’ and her answer is ‘No’. It is sex that bring both of them together not
love. She realises love is a myth, without which sex with the same person for a lifetime would be
unendurable (97). Jaya has shaped her life according to the desire of Mohan and loses her own self
and identity. She admits:

It hadn’t been Mohan’s fault at all. And it had been just a coincidence, though it had
helped, that just then Mohan had propelled me into that other kind of writing. ‘I
encouraged you’, he had said to me. He was right. But, I went on with my chest-beating
out of penitence, Mohan had not forced me to do that kind of writing. I’d gone into it
myself with my eyes wide open. (148)

A woman is considered as having no right to express her physical desires. She has to submit
to the desires of her husband. Jaya also follows the same tradition and that leads to frustration. She
could not build any emotional communication between her and her husband. There is only
emptiness and suppressed silence between them. She opens her mind to Mukta: “… nothing
between me and Mohan either. We lived together but there had been only emptiness between us”
(185). She realises that only their bodies are occasionally meet together not their souls.

In the small Dadar flat, Jaya breaks her self-imposed silence. She gradually unmasksthe
superficial aspects of her marriage life and reveals the hard core of its reality. Indira Bhatt observes
that Shashi Deshpande unmaskst both Mohan and Jaya when they face the crisis in their lives. They
have run into stormy weather which washes away the ‘water colour painted’ secured and sheltered life. The reaction of both differs in the critical situation. Mohan feels insecure and confused since he is away from his routine work. He expects his wife to empathise with him as he has done all these things only for her and their children. Mohan wants to "use his wife as buffer, an opiate to soften the impact of the forces he has set into motion against himself." In his feeling of insecurity, he wants to hold Jaya as an ‘anchor in the tempest’ (Indra Bhatt, *That Long Silence, A Study*, 156).

But Jaya herself is in the traumatic condition. She has been in the state of false complacence. She has been content to follow the footsteps of her husband in silence as the mythological role model, Sita. She has tried to emulate mythological Gandhari. Shashi Deshpande is very realistic in the sense that she suggests marriages are not based on love but convenience. She happily plays out the role model of Gandhari:

If Gandhari, who bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband could be called an ideal wife, I was an ideal wife too, I bandaged my eyes tightly, I didn't want to know anything. It was enough for me that we moved to Bombay; that we could send Rahul and Rati to good schools, that I could have the things we needed-decent clothes, a fridge, a gas connection, travelling I class.(61-62).

But unlike Sita, she fails to accompany her husband into exile. Mohan's heydays were over, and their marriage runs into rough weather. But she cannot be said to be wholly responsible, as Mohan too has his own share of responsibility. He wants to use Jaya as a cushion in this crisis. Jaya has changed much after her marriage. Her aunt's counsel, her father's advice- never to hurt Mohan- has made her bear things without opposition. Soon after marriage a quarrel made Mohan lapse into silence. She has a guilty conscience and begins to use silence stratagem to avoid any confrontation. The bubble of this long silence gets had been lulled into silence till Mohan was a "sheltering tree". His safe job and career provides shelter to her and their children. But sudden change in their position, inquiry on Mohan makes Jaya feel insecure.

In addition to the insecure feeling, Jaya has to put up with the burden of her husband’s fear and feeling of inadequacy. It is an irony that when Jaya herself wants a shoulder to lean on, Mohan accuses her not supporting him in his tragedy. As Jaya is not being given any importance in the
home, she has taken back all her wings into the shell of silence. Mohan has taken her for granted every time. At the crucial moment he wants her to support him but cringes under the subtle hint of withdrawal by Jaya. He feels cheated by her failure to communicate with him on the critical issue. Though Jaya is away from her routine work, she is not away from her silence. She does all the house hold works as usual indifferently. This makes Mohan to feel that Jaya is not interested in him as he is not in the secured job. He feels insulted and bursts out:

I’ve always put you and the children first. I have been patient with all your whims, I have grudged you nothing. But the truth is that you despise me because I have failed. As long as I had my job and position, it was alright. But now because I am likely to lose it all … (12)

The silence or lack of communication between Jaya and Mohan makes their marital life unsteady. Jaya feels anger at the time when Mohan accuses that he has taken bribe only for her and her children. She cannot accept the very idea of “being a partner in the crime and ally, when she has no role to play in the whole affair is revolting.” (31)

It is important to note that how a husband’s will and social conformity become most obligatory for a woman. Jaya struggles much to be the beat house wife. She never questions her husband’s ways. She never resists the decisions of her husband. But when she is accused by her husband as she is responsible for their present state she could not bear that false accusation. She knows that Mohan is actually lying as he is so much engrossed in the power of the materialistic world that his morality has taken a back seat. He is in the situation what Jean-Paul-Sartre calls ‘bad faith’. In his book Being and Nothingness, Sartre says: “To be sure the one who practices had faith in hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth. . . . in bad faith…. I am hiding the truth” (63).

His accusation on Jaya continues after sometime: “Do you think I haven’t seen how changed you are since we came here, since I told you about my situation” (12). It's a tragedy that she herself needs somebody to console her that at last everything will be all right. On hearing this Jaya begins to laugh hysterically, and cannot help it. She herself doesn't know the cause why she laughed at that crucial moment. Jaya hovers between submission and assertion, the former rather a more dominant note in her character. But the repeated allegations and accusations of her husband compel her to react sharply. When Mohan expected a firm support from his wife, she laughed at him without a word of console.
Mohan becomes restless when he has no work in the Dadar flat. He is not used to ‘waiting’. Jaya as other Indian woman has been spent most of their life in ‘waiting’.

Wait until you get married. Wait until your husband comes. Wait until you go to your in-laws home. Wait until you have kids. Yes, ever since I got married, I have done nothing but wait. Waiting for Mohan to come home, waiting for the children to be born, for them to start school, waiting for them to come home ….. (30)

She has fed up with waiting and she expects some miracle to change her position, change her role in the traditional setup. She cannot tolerate the false accusation against her and she feels that she has not done her duty as a dedicated wife. She wants to support him in the crucial situation but she cannot do it. In the emotional burst she cannot express her suffering in words. She feels guilty as she has failed in her role of traditional wife.

When Jaya begins to laugh without control, insulted and irritated Mohan leaves the house that leads her to engage in self-introspection. She wants to shout at Mohan, “ I didn’t mean to laugh, I wasn’t laughing at you, I was laughing at everything – marriage, us, this whole absurd exercise, we call life” (155)

Mohan is so enraged that he leaves the house in a huff as if he would never return. His absence unnerves Jaya. She never expected his absence but now she is left all alone. She thinks her world will fall apart. She has been said that she could not live without the shelter of her husband. She is afraid of living all alone without Mohan. But at present she has to face the world without the “sheltering tree” (32). Shashi Deshpande uses an appropriate image of a crawling worm into the hole, to describe the state of Jaya, a budding writer, doomed to dwindle into a stereotyped Indian house wife: “Oh God! I had thought I can't take any more, even a worm has a hole it can crawl into” (192).

Jaya sees Mohan as a complement of her life. She recollects the words of Dr. S.K. Vyas, her brother’s classmate, invites her to his house with Mohan: “And drop in some time–with your husband, of course. With your husband, of course – what did he mean by that? Was it impossible for me to relate to the world without Mohan? A husband is like a sheltering tree … Vanitamami, did you, without knowing it, speak the most profound truth I’m destined to heart in my life”? (167). A woman is subordinated in a number of ways which result in disharmony between the two sexes. A husband denies his wife the right of her individuality. He wants her to
see the world around her only in the way he would like her to see. He expects complete devotion, complete allegiance to his vision of life from his wife. This is what Mohan wants from Jaya when he is charged with corrupt activities. He seeks emotional support from Jaya. Having failed to get any sympathy from Jaya, Mohan leaves the house.

At this juncture Jaya receives news which shatters her totally. Their son who has gone for a holiday trip with their family friends has disappeared suddenly. She has become a tender tree in a storm. She has been in the traumatic condition for many days. Her thought swings forth and back but not holds in the present. She forces her mind to come to present with mental equilibrium. She comes out of her emotional upheaval.

The most trying moment comes to Jaya in her life when she finds two male accomplices fondling the breasts of a narcotic-smoking well-doing girl at the bus stop. Extremely shocked by the behaviour of the two men, Jaya begins to doubt the credibility of her romantic ideas sag as she fails to combat her first encounter with reality. She realizes that the fact of her husband's accusation of having let him down is sufficient to shake her revolutionary ideas. The narcotic-smoking girl's contemptuous attitude shears her of all her self-assumed importance of a 'glass-house existence'. She realizes that she is secure only with Mohan.

She feels that she should bear the responsibility for Mohan's shady business practices since she shares his desire for greater wealth. Jaya moves to accept mutual responsibility in marriage. Painfully, she realizes that she has tried to make Mohan the scapegoat for her failure as a writer and blames her parents too like 'glowering teenager. (153) She considers her husband to be a 'sheltering tree' and by doing so, she tends to underrate her responsibility.

When Jaya finally comes out of her emotional upheaval, she has sorted out a few problems with herself. She at one point feels that she hasn't achieved anything in her life but soon even this feeling of desperation goes when she reflects:

What have I achieved by this writing? The thought occurs to me again as I look at the neat pile of papers. Well, I've achieved this I'm not afraid any more. The panic has gone. I'm Mohan's wife, I had thought, and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan's wife. Now I know that kind of a fragmentation is not possible. (191)
She gets the news that everything is all right. Rahul is back and she also gets a telegram from Mohan that “All is well” (192). Now she has come to terms with herself. Before the state she has gone through a mental agony analysing her place in the relationship with her husband and her son. She spent two nights in the Dadar flat before Mohan and Rahul return there. In this loneliness she pours out the innermost thoughts and gives a vent to her suppressed feelings, her fears, her doubts and everything that she suppressed in the long silence of seventeen years. As Subhash Chandra comments: “By permitting her story, she has achieved articulation of her predicament, her constraints, her anguish and has hereby broken her silence” (155). In this state of catharsis she realises the dawn of her new life:

The panic has gone. I am Mohan’s wife. I had thought and cut of the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan’s wife. Now I know that kind of a fragmentation is not possible. (191)

During this period of long silence she has articulated the inner voice- her self-assertion. She has progressed a long journey in silence to find the real spark in her. Her mind is clear and she has come out of her fears, her doubts, and all that she had suppressed during the seventeen years of her marriage life. She pours out her experiences in words and then she decides not to be passive and silent thereafter.

She has come out of the cocoon and feels the free air around her. She has to act as she wishes. Her expression will be true without thinking of the expectations of Mohan. She need not cut off the shade of her personality and she is complete. Now she rejects the image of ‘two bullocks yoked together’. She recollects when she learnt Sanskrit, Prakrit assigned to the women characters while the male characters speak in Sanskrit. The Sanskrit is meant for the male while Prakrit for the female ones. Further, Jaya's realization prompts her to pay:

While studying Sanskrit drama, I'd learnt with a sense of outrage that its rigid rules did not permit women characters to speak Sanskrit. They had to use Prakrit-language that had sounded to my ears like a baby's lisp. The anger I'd felt then comes back to me when I realize what I've been doing all these years. I have been speaking Prakrit myself. (192-93)

Jaya realises now that she no longer speaks Prakrit as her mental dilemma has gone and she is ready to be as her own. She resolves to “plug that hole in the heart” (192), and speak as well
as listen, in order to erase the silence. After the purgation in her heart, Jaya has decides to break off from playing the role of a passive wife. This is the hardness and ruthlessness Deshpande mentioned in the foreword. A man is conditioned to it right from the beginning, but a woman learns through her experience.

Shashi Deshpande provides the traditional treatment of women in the novel with the help of varied incidents. In an earlier incident when her paternal uncle Ramu Kaka shows her the family tree wherein even boys of the family find mention but her name is missing. She questions this patriarchal family tree at which he says: “How can you be here? You don't belong to this family. You have no place here” (142-43). Jaya is also shocked to find no mention of her mother, her aunts and even Ajji who kept the family together. She is full of anger and desperation over such gross gender discrimination. The family consists of only male members and all the women are not important enough to be mentioned. They do not have the equal rights to share the place in family and in the family tree. The patriarchal society has been depicted by the family tree. Jaya realises the treatment of women by the society.

Parents in the middle class inculcate in their girls a certain duality, sometimes unconsciously: on the one hand an impulsive desire to be emancipated and liberated, and on the other hand, an almost instinctive urges to be traditional and conservative Sahkuntal Bharvani aptly comments thus:

The women of today, therefore, speaking in the language of psychology, has a near schizophrenic personality; one side steadily "accepts" while the other craves to speak, to think and express the life of the mind. (Qtd. by Prasanna Sree, Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande, 79)

The protagonist, thus, has realised the real zeal in her through a journey into her own art of silence. The long silence is the symbol used by Deshpande to refer the suppressed soul of a woman. The silence meant for the tyrannical rule of the patriarchal society which tangles the voices of woman in all ways. The role of a woman has been defined as a silent puppet dancing to the tune of the male. The inner voices of the women have been subjugated for years in the name of tradition as well family. The total silence torments the souls of women when they have the chance to look inwards and they could realise the fettered souls sing as 'caged birds'.
Through her self-realization she can understand the reason for her unhappy married life. Her silence is nothing but her suppressed anger. She decides to break her long silence to restore peace and harmony.

She decides “to plug that hole in the heart… I will have to speak, to listen, I will have to ease that long silence between us” (192). She decides to be assertive and to be of her own self. S.P.Swain observes:

The tragic predicament of the Deshpande protagonists is the outcome of male-domination in a patriarchal culture. Their silent suffering is socio-psychic in nature. In her quest for identity, the Deshpande protagonist moves from despair to hope, from self-negation to self-assertion. Her struggle throughout is to attain wholeness, completeness and an authentic selfhood. (S.P.Swain, “Feminism in Shashi Deshpande’s Novels.” Contemporary Indian Writing in English: Critical Perceptions. 125)

Sometimes the silence of woman symbolises helplessness but it is unfortunate that men thinks that silence as a symbol of contentment. Rashmi Gaur observes:

Jaya’s journey towards a well-defined self-hood is mired in the labyrinthine mazes of societal pressures, feminine conditioning to fashion oneself according to the accepted norms of behaviour, suppressive and egotistic male chauvinism and the continued dilemma of attaching a purpose to her life, culminating in a long silence. Her silence is symptomatic of alienation and apprehension rioted in every woman’s soul in different forms – a silence which is often misunderstood by men as a symbol of woman’s contentment”. (Rashmi Gaur, Images of Indian Woman in Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence – stereotypes, Myths and Realities, 179).

The novel shows the composite picture of various women characters as victims of gross gender inequality. They too suffer the pressure of silence in them. Mohan's mother and his sister Vimla are such victims. Mohan narrates his mother as an epitome of traditional wife. His father was a drunkard who frequently beat her up. Mohan narrates a poignant incident when his father returned home late one night and found that chutney was not served with rice to him. He flung the
plate away and walked off. Mohan's mother cleared the mess and made fresh chutney and rice again. She did not disturb her children to help her. She never complained or said a word against her husband. Mohan says: “God, she was tough; women in those days were tough” (*That Long Silence*, 36). Mohan visualises his mother as a champion of traditional values and praises her for her rigidity. But Jaya has a different point of view. She writes: “I saw a despair so great that it would not voice itself. I saw a struggle so bitter that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender” (36). She sees the silence used as a weapon against the cruel, sharp attacks of male chauvinistic harpoons. The silence is not a shield to protect but it is a sphere to protest. Jaya also comes to know about the tragic death of Mohan's mother through Vimla. But Vimla too met a tragic end. She died of ovarian tumour which she never revealed to any one not even to her mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law’s response to her illness proves this, “God knows what’s wrong with her. She’s been lying there on her bed for over a month now. Yes, take her away if you want to. I never heard of women going to hospitals and doctors for such a thing. As if other women don’t have heavy periods. What a fuss. But these women who have never had any children are like that” (39).

This is a typical response of a patriarchal society. At last Vimla bleeds to death in silence.

Kusum, Jaya's mad cousin, is a deserted wife. The image of "sheltering tree" is contrasted with the picture of Kusum who does not have a home. Jaya keeps Kusum in her home despite the objections of her mother and brothers. When she recovers little from her madness she has been taken away from home. But she commits suicide the day before her husband come to take her to his house. Kusum represents the tragic part of the traditional woman who finds it very difficult to live their own life without the support of her husband. Her madness symbolises the trembling and frightened mind which is threatened by the words “you are homeless when you are deserted by your husband” (22).

Deshpande brings out the similarities and differences among Jaya and other female characters in the novel – among women of different generations (Jaya, her mother and her grandmother), among women of the different classes (Jaya, Nayana and Jeeja), among women of the same class and generation (Jaya, her cousin, Kusum and her neighbour, Mukta).
The novel portrays the endless suffering of the low class women through the characters of Jeeja, Tara, Manda and Nayana. Their condition is really pitiable. They have to work to run their family even from their young age as Manda does. They would be married off when their parents decide their suitable age. Marriage will make their life worse as they have to tolerate ill treatments of their husbands. Jeeja, Jaya’s maid servant, is a typical example of the oppressed woman. She is battered about by her good-for-nothing drunken husband. She accepts and supports him without a murmur of protest. She provides him her hard-earned money to take liquor. She never grudges when he takes up another woman. She justifies his action by saying, “God didn’t give us any children. That was his misfortune as well as mine. How could I blame him for marrying again when I couldn’t give him any children?” (52). She has only one question: “With whom shall I be angry” (52). After the death of her husband and his mistress she willingly takes up their son and brings him up. He is not very much different from his father. Tara’s life is another example of the suffering and the marital problems of the lower class woman. Her husband, Rajaram, is a drunkard and he treats her very badly. Jeeja however does not allow Tara to abuse or curse her husband. She silences Tara saying, “Stop that, don’t forget, he keeps the kumkum on your forehead. What is a woman without that?” (53). She has been the perfect follower of Manu who gave these rules to perform.

The life of Nayana, another housemaid of Jaya, is also like a hell. Nayana has an apathetic attitude to life. She wants a son not because she expects any help from him in her old age, but because she does not want her child, her daughter, to suffer at some drunkard’s hands as she herself has suffered. Nayana says to Jaya, “Why give birth to a girl, behnji, who’ll only suffer because of men all her life? Look at me! My mother loved me very much, she wanted so much for me … a house with electricity and water, shining brass vessels, a silver waist chain, silver anklets … and what have I got? No, no, behnji, better to have a son” (54).

The situation of women belonging to middle class is different. Work outside the house, for them, in most of the cases, is not a compulsion but a matter of choice. They receive much better treatment as compared to lower class women. But the idea that marriage is the only career and husband, the only destiny for a woman does not lose ground here also. They also become victims of trends, but their suffering is more mental than physical.
There are other women as Jaya’s widowed grandmother, confined into an empty room, and Vanita mami performing pujas and fasts to be blessed with a child. The acquaintance with these women makes Jaya to think over her position compared to these women.

Though brought up as a unique personality, at this stage in her life, Jaya does not wish to belong to this special category. Mohan’s going away stuns her and awakens her to her real place in life. Life for her is believed fully in relationship with others.

Jaya feels that she can have her identity only if she has Mohan with her. She journeys a fully circle, it is not the same point to which she returns. Having realized her position, now she rejects even the image of two bullocks yoked together signifying a loveless couple. Now she has belief in herself—she can choose now. The intense searching of the self has brought knowledge of life which cannot be lived in a vacuum. Jaya does not look at herself and Mohan as two bullocks yoked together in marriage. Instead she looks at herself and Mohan as two individuals with independent minds. “Two bullocks yoked together—that was how I saw the two of us the day we came here, Mohan and I. Now I reject that image. It's wrong. If I think of us in that way, I condemn myself to a lifetime of disbelief in ourselves” (191). She realizes that the fault is her own. In the Bhagwad Geeta, Krishna imparts knowledge to Arjuna, by uttering “Yathecchasi tatha kuru” (‘Do as you desire’ I have given you knowledge. Now you make the choice) (192). It is for Arjuna to make the choice. So also it is Jaya who has to give up the language Prakrit. For her, it is not “women are victims”, but it is “women also can assert and change themselves”. Further, Jaya realizes that one cannot remain static throughout one's life. One must change and hope for the men also to change. “… it's possible that we may change even over long periods of time. But we can always hope. Without that, life would be impossible. And if there is anything I know now it is this: Life has always to be made possible” (193).

A change is discernible in Jaya, a change in the right direction and at the right time. The earlier impulsive Jaya becomes a mature woman.

Mohan will be back ‘All well’ his telegram says. Does he mean by this that we will go back to being ‘as we were’? Does it mean that, now that Mohan has sorted out his problem, and no longer fears prosecution, joblessness and disgrace, we can go back to our original positions?
Does it mean that he will come back and give me a carefully edited version of what has happened -as he has done so often till now-and then ask me, ‘What do you say, Jaya?’ (192)

Now Jaya will not say what he wants her to say. As Indira Bhatt puts it, she seeks “a reorientation of her relationship and also Mohan's new awareness of his relationship to her” (qtd. by Prasanna Sree, Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande, 85).

A determined strong willed modern woman, who is prepared to face life, accept her responsibilities squarely and not escape from or avoid them. During the process of her articulation, Jaya also observes that meaningful co-existence can come only through understanding, respect and compassion, not through domination or subjugation.

Freedom is relevant only when there is responsibility - responsibility to oneself (to one’s creative needs). Freedom is to survive ‘whole’ within the system, and Jaya ultimately feels it is possible. Usha Tambe remarks:

The confused and clumsy Jaya appears a contrast to the smiling, efficient housewife Suhasini. But finally come to grips with herself and realises that her total personality will have to co-ordinate both of them and that fragmentation of self is not possible. (86)

Jaya makes a powerful statement on the totally unfair system prevailing in our society of the subjugation of women. As she realises, it is fear on the part of woman that has allowed the subjugation to continue. Women need not succumb and assume the roles cast upon them. She says, “... in this life itself there are so many cross roads, so many choices”. (That Long Silence, 192)

This prompts Sarala Parker to remark that: The important insight that Shashi Deshpande to us through Jaya is that women should accept their own responsibility for what they are, see how much they have contributed to their victimization instead of putting the blame on everybody except themselves. (Breaking the Silence, 169)

The difference between ‘consciousness’ and ‘cognition’ is given in Indian philosophy. ‘Consciousness,’ is the power or nature of the self whereas ‘cognition’ is its effect, generated through a certain process. While making her dependent on her husband, patriarchy simultaneously deprives the woman of ‘cognition’, of exercising her power of consciousness to arrive at knowledge of the self. When she was deserted by Mohan, Jaya felt unanchored: “I had a queer
sensation, as if something was breaking up, a design or a pattern I was familiar with. Without it, I would have to face the unknown …” (That Long Silence, 54). But she has to come to her ‘consciousness’ leaving behind the social shackles. She has nothing to do with his fault and she has her own ‘self’ which has to be freed from the fetters of ‘cognition’.

Accordingly she feels the necessity to break the silence, articulate her predicament, and establish her identity. She knows that there is always room for discussion and compromise. It is not the fault of men alone that has caused the feminine discontent. A patriarchal order can be subverted if only women take their ranks in the order of intelligence and individuality. Jaya shows, as P.Rama Moorthy affirms, that, "... It is possible for a woman to live in the world where men also live" (My Life is my Own, 38). She decides that she will live from now onwards without sacrificing her identity or individuality. She will make adjustment but it will not be a servile one. Her giving up writing for the newspaper column 'Seeta' symbolises giving up her traditional role-model of wife, now she will write what she wants to write and will not look up at Mohan's face for an answer she wants. This makes her voyage of discovery complete.

The whole novel is a preparation for that articulation which will break her long silence. The reader is given sufficient hint that she is going to break her passivity; even Jaya asserts “will have to erase the silence between us, but the actual drama is postponed to the future” (That Long Silence, 192). Having realized her position, Jaya would not accept the earlier image of a pair of bullocks yoked together, signaling a loveless couple. She comes to realize that life can always be made possible. The earlier impulsive Jaya becomes a mature woman, and with her realization, shadows that befall between wife and husband tend to disappear.

Deshpande makes the point clear in her essay ‘Telling Our Own Stories’: “Actually, as far as women are concerned, the mother myth, an immensely powerful one, is a huge burden ... When I became a mother, I found such a discrepancy between what I was told about how mothers felt, and what I really felt, that I was deeply disturbed” (Writing from the Margin and other Essays, 97).

Another myth used to trap women is religious myths. Ancient Indian myths such as those of Sita and Savitri constantly call upon the woman to accept a secondary position vis-à-vis her husband and to follow him passively. But Jaya knows better: “Sita following her husband into exile, Savitri dogging Death to reclaim her husband, Draupadi stoically sharing her husband’s travails
No, what have I to do with these mythical women? I can’t fool myself. The truth is simpler” (11).

Deshpande elaborates upon this in ‘Telling Our Own Stories’:

In India, myths are perhaps even more powerful. For they have been with us in a very long and, what is even more significant, an unbroken tradition … they are part of our personal, religious and Indian identity … … what is intriguing is that men are not expected to act up to the counterparts of these female role models. (88-89).

Jaya does follow her husband, but does not hesitate in making him realize his shortcomings and in asserting her individual opinion about their situation.

Shashi Deshpande says her opinion on the traditional models of Sita and Savitri that she is trying to deconstruct these myths:

It is not my idea of replacing one model with another. I am just de-constructing these myths. Now you take the myth of Sita, as a perfect woman. When I see Sita, I ask myself, when your husband ditches you, abandons you when you are pregnant, how do you feel? I am going to be angry and upset… You know this is what I mean by saying deconstruction. ...... All these myths were created by men, and not by women. So we are in the process of discovery now and we are not just going to move aside some models and bring in new models. We are in the process of discovering ourselves. (100)

It is true that a woman should inculcate in herself the qualities like love, kindness, faithfulness and tolerance, but self-assertion is not to be regarded as contrary to these values. This is the main focus of the present novel. Deshpande here suggests that woman should not succumb to the roles cast upon them. Woman should get rid of the fear on her part that allows the oppression to continue. It is not only man who subjugates woman. She is also responsible for her own predicament and should struggle to achieve her own identity. Adjustment should be made but not a servile one. Very appropriately Sumitra Kukreti remarks thus: “The realization that she can have her own way - yathecchasi tatha kuru - gives a new confidence to Jaya. This is her emancipation” (Qtd. in Prasanna Sree, *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande: A Study*, 87).

Shashi Deshpande discusses the mute supplication of Jaya to her husband as well to her father and her elder brother. She continues her obeisance from her childhood to her marriage life. Jaya’s life
is portrayed as a living example of a middle-class, educated woman of today’s society, who compromises at all the stages of her life just for the sake of her state in the family. Jaya with her ambivalence and consequent mental suffering presents the perfect picture of a modern woman. She is a reflection of “present time woman of indecision, who wavers between family and self-assertion. It can be said that an Indian woman cannot be peaceful by denouncing her family. But at the same time she cannot flourish suppressing her desire to spread her wings in the clear sky to achieve anything. To make a balance between her family and her career, the present day woman has to wriggle out of the pressure of the family and assert herself, further she has to perform both the duties.

Shashi Deshpande discusses the relationship of husband and wife with the symbol of ‘a pair of bullocks’. The image explores the compulsion in the relationship as well the drained emotions between the two. The man and woman relationship is portrayed not as a lovable union but a compelled process of life. There is no equality in the relationship as it does not care for the feelings of the woman. Deshpande upholds marriage as the infrastructure of the healthy society. But the persona of the woman in the institution of marriage is painful. To come over the state of negligence, woman has to assert herself and find the way to achieve career with family.

Deshpande sums up this success of her novel in her essay ‘Masks and Disguises’:

Today I see That Long Silence as an important novel, because in writing it I was breaking the bonds not only of Jaya herself, but of Jaya the writer – in other words I was breaking out of my own bonds. It is Jaya’s novel and the telling, the writing of it is in itself the achievement, it is the final resolution. Self-revelation is what she has to reach and she does. (186)

Shashi Deshpande establishes here that it is not only the patriarchal society which is responsible for the condition of women in India. But the condition of women is based on their own denial ‘to refuse, to raise a voice, and to achieve the goal’. That Long Silence comprises the different states of woman depicting how she emerges from her weakness and her feeling for failure and at last emancipation after her self-realization. Shashi Deshpande told Joel Kuortti in an interview:

That Long Silence is a hysterical novel in the sense that inside of me I was kind of screaming, but when it came out - as you said, one steps back from that screaming self – and one says, look Jaya is very analytical. There is no point at which she
gives way to her emotions or self-pity or anything. Throughout she is analyzing herself, her life, her relationships, and I think that is how it has been for me. I think it was really the culmination of the anger and all the repression; everything came out in That Long Silence (qtd. by Prasanna Sree, *Women in the Novels of Shashi Dehpande*, 86).

The images of Jaya as Suhasini and Seeta are not totally Jaya herself. Shashi Deshpande reveals the idea of new woman through these images of Jaya. ‘Suhashini’, ‘Seeta’ and ‘anti-kusam’ have the psychological facets of the same ‘individual’ Jaya. Suhashini represents the loss of identity after the marriage, Seeta as diminutive state of woman in her career and anti-kusam as the dilemma between tradition and modernity as well the new woman’s will against the tradition. Jaya emerges as an individual to come out of the shell of conventional believes. She has broken the self-imposed wall of silence to meet the world in her own heart.