

Pritom Sarma (2026). A Study of Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence Through the Lens of Spivak's "Feminism and Critical Theory". International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(9), 227-233.



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH & REVIEWS

journal homepage: www.ijmrr.online/index.php/home

A STUDY OF SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THAT LONG SILENCE THROUGH THE LENS OF SPIVAK'S "FEMINISM AND CRITICAL THEORY"

Pritom Sarma

(MA English, Bodoland University, Kokrajhar), Guest Faculty, Department of
English, Commerce College Kokrajhar.

How to Cite the Article: Pritom Sarma (2026). A Study of Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence Through the Lens of Spivak's "Feminism and Critical Theory". International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(9), 227-233.



<https://doi.org/10.56815/ijmrr.v5i9.2026.227-233>

Keywords	Abstract
Feminism, Marxism, Third World Women, Colonization, Housewife and Knowledge Production.	Feminism is a movement and a set of ideologies set by the society for the social, economic, and political equality of all the sexes, aiming to dismantle sexism / racism and oppression to achieve full gender equality. It addresses issues like bodily autonomy, equal pay of gender, property ownership and equal and fair rights in every sector, and fair treatment for all genders, and is characterized by distinct historical "waves" of activity that is different waves of feminism, each with its own focus and goals. If we talk about Feminism in Third World Country then we found that it mainly emphasizes how women's experiences are shaped by colonialism, racial, ethnic, and class struggles, rather than just gender. It critiques Western feminism for failing to recognize these intersecting oppressions and for imposing universal ideas of womanhood and also homogenizing the sufferings of third world women with the western feminism (CT Mohanty, "Anthropology and the Third World Women as a Native"). Instead, it centers on local cultures, historical contexts, and the agency of women to define their own paths to equality, promoting principles like antiimperialism, self-reliance, and communal interdependence. The Long Silence, announces the intention of this talented contemporary Indian writer to break the long silence that has surrounded women, their experiences and their world. For a long time, woman has existed as a gap, as an absence in literature, whether Western or Indian. The Long Silence is also a societal critique of our



**The work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution
Non Commercial 4.0 International License**

Pritom Sarma (2026). A Study of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* Through the Lens of Spivak's "Feminism and Critical Theory". *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(9), 227-233.

	social institutions like marriage and family, the way they stifle individual growth and free expression. These institutions place individuals into slots such as wife, husband, brother, sister, daughter, son, etc., and prevent free communication between human beings. This is what happens in the novel with the protagonist Jaya's relationship with Mohan. In the Indian context: "Once a girl is married to a man, be it a love marriage or an arranged marriage, the husband takes complete control over her. Whether the husband follows the right or wrong path, she must follow blindly in his footsteps". When Mohan is caught misbehaving and is supposed to be unavailable for a period of time, he assumes that Jaya will accompany him. Although she does not want to follow the example of Sita and Savitri, paradoxically she is forced by situations and circumstances to follow the principle that "both are bound together, so it is better to go in the same direction than to go in different directions. We can relate the whole incident with the theory of Spivak's Feminism and Critical Theory where she criticizes that dominant Western feminist and Marxist frameworks fail to represent the voices and experiences of the "subaltern"—particularly women in the Third World. She highlights the risk of Western feminists imposing their own perspectives, thereby silencing the subaltern even further.
--	--

INTRODUCTION

Spivak once says that "One could indefinitely allegorize the relationship of woman within this particular triad, use, exchange, and surplus by suggesting that woman in the traditional social situation produces more than she is getting in term of her subsistence, and therefore is a continual source of the production of surpluses, for the man who owns her, or by the man for the capitalist who owns his labor power." By this statement Spivak is pointing towards the condition of a Housewife or a Homemaker like the one in the novel *That Long Silence*, where the protagonist, Jaya one of existential and identity crisis women, fueled by suppressed individuality, marital discontent, and the monotony of her traditional role as a wife and mother. She experiences deep psychological distress, helplessness, and a profound sense of having "half-lived" her life, culminating in a period of profound silence surrounded her. In another essay of Spivak *Can The Subaltern Speak*, where she is talking about those marginalized women and their life which is full of sufferings and pain and we can relate the idea of Subaltern with the novel's protagonist Jaya who is also a subaltern woman in her own home having no rights to speak and whose voice remain unheard by the family as well as by the society. Jaya embodies the idea of the subaltern, representing the voiceless and marginalized in a patriarchal society. Jaya's journey illustrates the silent struggle of an educated, middle-class Indian woman whose identity is systematically erased by patriarchal norms and values. The question, "who am I?" haunts her (Jaya) 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." Hence her agonized cries: "I can't hope, I can't manage. I can't go on." In such a stifling and suffocating domestic ambience and patriarchal set-up, she finds her female identity as getting erased. Deshpande executes the stream – of – consciousness technique to project the psychic reverberations of her characters in order to make the story more real and authentic. Deshpande mainly portrays a life of a married woman who remains just an object of satisfaction for her husband, her voice



Pritom Sarma (2026). A Study of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* Through the Lens of Spivak's "Feminism and Critical Theory". *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(9), 227-233.

remains unheard and she become voiceless. Through the character of Jaya, Deshpande try to portray the whole married women community and their life struggles that they are supposed to face throughout their life without raising a single question against it.

OBJECTIVE.

This report is on the condition of the Third World Women in Indian Households with the help of Spivak's theory this paper try to show that how the women is actually facing after getting married. This paper aims to portray the worst scenarios in every household whether it is an Indian or a western doesn't matter. The study further discusses the condition of not only housewives but as a general what is being a women means and how each and every women's sufferings and problems varies from each other. The paper further tries to examine this deeply rooted problem in Indian society with the help of required theories such as Spivak's, Subaltern theory, Feminism and Critical theory and CT Mohanty's, Third World Women Theory. And also discusses about how the problem is in early times and what is the situation in present is actually suffering both the gender. The paper further goes on discussing about how the women goes on finding the solution for the problem and how they did overcome. The main aim of the study is to basically portray how the condition of a Third World Women in an Indian Household is getting deteriorated day by day and also it breaking the family structure as well. Through detailed analysis, this study discusses briefly about the issue of identity crisis, double marginalization and the psychological impact of marriage in women's mind, which actually creates problems for both the gender and creates a situation of chaos and doubt in their married life, and also the paper goes on finding a brief solution to the problem.

METHODOLOGY

Comparative and Analytical analysis is done between the novel *That Long Silence* and different essays and articles such as, *Feminism and Critical Theory* and *Can the Subaltern Speak ?* by Spivak and *Anthropology and Third World Women as Native* by CT Mohanty and articles such as, *Study of Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence Summary and Analysis*, by Dr. Divya Kumari, *From Silence to Speech: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence*, by Zubair Al Mahmud and *Third World Women and The Politics of Feminism*, by CT Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres, to evaluate the presence of this deep rooted discrimination that restricts the women and the Indian housewife to raised their voice against the suppression that they are facing. Many theorists and writers have addressed the issue of the double marginalization of women and what is being a Third World Women feels and how to tackle the condition of that patriarchal structure in Indian households, to those suppressed / oppressed women. In modern time as well the women are not considered more than animals hence, this paper will be an attempt to address such issues from the view point of existential crisis. This study also focuses on the earlier scenario of the women and their condition in contemporary time as well.

REPRESENTING THE THIRD WORLD WOMEN CONDITION IN "THAT LONG SILENCE".

In *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande represents the conditions of "Third World" women, particularly Indian women, through the protagonist Jaya's struggle against patriarchal societal



Pritom Sarma (2026). A Study of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* Through the Lens of Spivak's "Feminism and Critical Theory". *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(9), 227-233.

structures and gender discrimination. The novel depicts how these women, despite being educated, are forced into silence and subservience by family and community pressures, highlighting their suppressed identities, emotional turmoil, and internal conflicts between modern ideals and traditional expectations within the Indian context. In the novel Deshpande critiques the patriarchal structure of Indian society, which relegates women to a subordinate position, denies them equal status, and forces them into traditional roles defined by male superiority. If we look at the character of Jaya we observe that, as an educated writer she is unable to express her true feelings and thoughts, which symbolizes that how the patriarchy is dominated in Indian society where the broader experience of women who are compelled to remain silent and are denied their self-identity due to social conventions, societal pressures having complex familial structure which is also dominated by the men of the society.

Some of the quotation from the novel which critically portrays the condition of Jaya as a married woman. "Silence had been the basis of our marriage. Not honesty, not communication, but silence." (Part – 03) This statement clearly portrays that how Jaya has been forced into silence to maintain harmony in her marriage with Mohan. This line powerfully captures the emotional suffocation she experiences. Another quote from the novel from part -03, "I had learnt the pleasing ways of a wife. I had learnt to keep my mouth shut." This given quote by Jaya also admits that how she has moulded herself to fit the expectations of a submissive wife, giving up her individuality and her voice, because she knows that her voice always remain unheard by the family and by the society as well. Another mind striking dialogue by Jaya in Part – 04 is, "Somewhere, somehow, I had lost myself." This statement clearly shows us that she had accept the reality now that she is nothing for her family or for her husband only and object which are being used by her husband for his own purpose. Jaya accepts the fact that her identity has been erased within the constraints of marriage. The novel delves into the complexities of her marriage, relationships, and her own identity. The silence between Jaya and her husband Mohan serves as a metaphor for the unspoken emotions and unresolved issues that plague their relationship.

The 21st Century has witnessed progress in all forms of life in India. Women are increasingly educated and employed. But they are still unable to escape the influence of chauvinistic norms. Jaya is one among them. The whole of her life, she was suffering between societal expectations and her inner urge to be free. She is well-educated, and mature enough to take her own decisions, but she is denied a chance to exercise her will in majority of the cases. She has freedom to think independently; however, she cannot mould her future life according to her views. She is forced to lead her life on the lines drawn by the head of the family. If we look this instance from the Third World Women point of view by applying Spivak's theory, we observe that, the women in a third world nation is only considered as an object of production, where the woman bodies are considered as a tangible site of production and this idea is critique by Spivak in her work, "Feminism and Critical Theory". Another problem raise by Spivak is that, the own native Men did not protect the own native Women, same in the case of Jaya where her own husband dominated and subjugated his wife, so what she can expect from the society. So, Spivak mentions that women are in between "Instrumentum vocale" (the speaking tool) and the "Instrumentum semi – vocale" (the animals and livestock).



Pritom Sarma (2026). A Study of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* Through the Lens of Spivak's "Feminism and Critical Theory". *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(9), 227-233.

PRESENT DAY CONDITION OF INDIAN MARRIED WOMEN WITH REFERENCE TO "THAT LONG SILENCE"

In the context of the novel *That Long Silence*, the "long silence" refers to the suppressed emotions and silenced voices of married Indian women, a condition that persists today through patriarchal norms where women sacrifice their dreams and identity for their families and maintain silence in the face of male-dominated traditions. While the novel depicts middle-class, educated women struggling with marital discord and the conflict between tradition and modernity, the issues of gender discrimination and female subordination continue to impact Indian married women, where patriarchy always remain dominated. The novel illustrates how women like the protagonist, Jaya, experience deep frustration and a lack of identity within their marriages, her married life is not going smoothly, she faces struggle in every aspect of her life.

The "long silence" symbolizes the subordinate position of females in a patriarchal dominated society, where they are expected to bear suffering silently and accept decisions made by men, where they had to accept everything without raising a single question against their family or society decision. In the novel *Jaya*, a married, middle-class woman, embodies the struggle between traditional expectations and the desire for personal freedom and an independent voice, a common dilemma for Indian women. Women like Jaya often find themselves sacrificing their personal aspirations, such as writing, for the sake of their families and the marital bond and also if we look at our present day situation, we found that the condition didn't change much, a married women still had to give up her dreams or her ambition for the sake of maintaining the marital bond and behaving in a certain way as the society or the family expect from the women.

The novel's portrayal of male dominance and family pressure continues to be relevant today, with patriarchy still influencing relationships and marriage and limiting women's autonomy. Issues of marital adjustment and the inequality in the husband-wife relationship is not a new thing in Indian society, it is from earlier time as well and still relevant in our present society, as depicted in the novel, we clearly observe that the character of Jaya who sacrifices her own life for the sake of maintaining her marriage and always remain voiceless whose voice is always remain unheard by the society as well as by the family. This problem remains a significant challenge for many married women in India. The quest for a personal identity and the struggle to find one's own voice, central to *That Long Silence*, is an ongoing challenge for many Indian women navigating the complexities of marriage and society and how both the institution work together. The novel concludes with the protagonist Jaya's decision to break her silence, reflecting a contemporary yearning among many Indian women who want to express themselves and overcome the deep-rooted traditions that enforce silence among them. Jaya explain 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". (*That Long Silence*. pg no. - 61). Jaya says that, "I had been just myself". (*That Long Silence*. pg no. - 153)

And currently if we look around us we will be able to find that, women writers not even in India, but across worldwide raise their voice against women suffering, mental or psychological level, abusing behavior, physical or emotional torture by her husband or some time her husband family members.



Pritom Sarma (2026). A Study of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* Through the Lens of Spivak's "Feminism and Critical Theory". *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(9), 227-233.

The word family comes from the Latin word "familia" that signifying of a slave who belongs to a powerfull person that is called a "MAN". Many Indian women novelist such as Anita Desai, Kamla Das, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee and some others notable feminist writers whom they discussed women condition in marriage bond with her responsibility, sexuality, frustration, emotional or mentally level, described through their writing in literature. Further we can see that how Spivak in her work clearly argues about the Hegemonic Global Theory of Feminism and try to deconstruct the set up ideologies, values or norms of hegemonic or hierarchical structure or establish the subversive power of women's work.

CONCLUSION

'That Long Silence' is one of the unique works of Shashi Deshpande which signifies the pathetic or miserable condition of Indian women. It also reflects how women suffer deeply and ends up life silently baring molestation of male power. The novel illustrates the image of women in the middleclass family and the way she is suffered between the tradition and modernity Jaya's journey from "self" to "society" and from "society" to "self" records the traumatic experiences that she has undergone in patriarchy dominated society. Though brought up in a traditional Indian family, she is able to maintain her individuality till she reaches marriageable age. Life after marriage has transformed her into a conventional woman of no voice. She has led her marital life for 17 years by means of unwilling compromise and suppression of her "self". Through her self-exploration at Dadar flat, the truth has dawned upon her that compromise has not brought her any happiness in life. She decides that the long-maintained silence has to be broken. "There had been nothing I could not say to him". (*That Long Silence*. Pg. no. - 153).

This novel describes the blend of traditional and modern status of women, in the case of Jaya, she comes to believe that self reliance, self confidence, moral courage and inner strength is the only remedy. Her whole life revolved around her husband's wishes. Now that he doesn't want anything, she's at a loss. She had been like a compass leg, her whole life arranged on the circumference of Mohan's life and activities. But now she doesn't want to hang around Mohan in silence. She wants to give up her traditional role model of a wife. In her novel *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande presents on one level the condition of women in Indian society, her role model and how different types of women fulfill their roles through their silence. The title emphasizes the silence that the protagonist Jaya wishes to break and search for her own self, her role as a wife, and her true individual self.

AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.



Pritom Sarma (2026). A Study of Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence Through the Lens of Spivak's "Feminism and Critical Theory". International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(9), 227-233.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

All authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright and ethical matters will take care by all authors. Journal and editors are not liable for aforesaid matters.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

The authors received no financial aid to support for the research.

REFERENCES

Deshpande, Shashi. That Long Silence. ISBN – 9780140127232. 1988.

Kumari, Dr. Divya. Study of Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence Summary and Analysis. ISSN - 22790837. Volume 25, Issue 7, Series 1 (July. 2020) 65-69. IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science.

Mahmud, Zubair Al. From Silence to Speech: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence. ISSN -24556580. The Creative launcher, vol. 7, no. 5, 2022.

Raju, T. Akki. Mani, K. Ratna Sheila. Homecoming from Society to Self : A Reading Of Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence. Research Journal of English Linguistics and Literature. ISSN – 24570508. Vol.1 Issue 1, 2017.

Renu. Jha, Dr. Barun Kumar. Condition of Married Women in that Long Silence. IJIRT. Volume 9, Issue 6. ISSN – 23496002. November 2022.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakraborty. Feminism and critical theory.

Torres, Lourdes. Russo, Ann. Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism. 1991 by Indiana University Press.

