

Improvisational Credos and Concepts on Child Psychology in the Work of Shashi Deshpande

Paramjeet Kaur ^{1*}, Dr. Jayashree Hazarika²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of English MRIIRS

² Assistant Professor, Department of English MRIIRS

ABSTRACT

A child is the pivotal character of healthy future of home, society and nation. A contented home and a prosperous society can be propounded only if the atmosphere and the upbringing, which will be given to a child, are right and favorable. Child psychology grows in a healthy and peaceful manner with good thinking and great rational power. I wish to write this paper to give the light to a term 'the child psychology' with context of Shashi Deshpande's best novel named *That Long Silence* in which the key character Jaya suffers from her childhood to till married life with psychological trauma and agony. Eventually she learns to overpower all her melancholies and to live the life with new zest and self-confidence.

Keywords

Psychology, Upbringing, Healthy, Society, Rational power, Peaceful, Trauma, Self-confidence

Introduction

A child's upbringing is very important. It is rightly said that as we sow, so shall we reap. As we provide best food and environment to plants for their better growth and development and so they impart better result to us. Similarly, a child grows well, physically and psychologically if the environment, provide to him or her is healthy and mannered. In the same way, child's attitude, aptitude and behavior would be more refined and good. We always like the children because they are more amiable, real, open-minded and emotional. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru quotes that "Children do not think of differences amongst themselves". I feel that children are not deceptive and fake and we always wish to live our childhood again in life. Ruskin Bond writes in *Scenes from a Writer's Life*, "I don't suppose I would have written so much about childhood or even about other children if my own childhood had been all happiness and light". Shashi Deshpande depicts an intense perception on woman in her works. She has interpreted very minutely about a woman's life, her childhood at parental home and then her married life, along with the incidents and moments regarding her upbringing and past life. When we talk about child's psychology, Shashi Deshpande has dealt with this subject in such a way that it makes the reader fully understandable, satisfied and commendable. Now here I will closely study Shashi Deshpande's famous novel named *That Long Silence*, which is a masterpiece.

I will study about the key character Jaya, her child-life then growing age, and finally from her upbringing to her married life through Shashi Deshpande's views and opinions that how Jaya succeeds to keep herself self realized and self confident in awkward and opposite situations of life.

The story of *That Long Silence* portrays the irony of a woman writer who is also a young housewife. Being a writer, she is supposed to present her views and ideas before the society but still she remains silent probing into her past, struggling with her present and trying to establish a rapport with her future. How Jaya outshines all her turbulences and problems of life from her childhood to an age of grown up young lady? Her disintegrated and dissatisfied married life issues with her husband and her children, to discuss and highlight these points in an authentic and real manner, are my objectives to write this paper. This paper is the depiction to interpret Jaya's intellectual, emotional and psychological growth by recapitulating her childhood's memories and her entering in adolescent age including married life. She is an intellectual who finds herself out of place in the society meant only for men. I feel that living under the male dominance and rigidity of old patriarchal norms, exploitation and disintegration in family, all cause to make Jaya a frustrated woman. She wants to build up her own identity and position. R.K. Narayan has invented in his book named *Swami and Friends* "essentially

for himself in order to explore and perhaps make some sense of his own emotional difficulties, to investigate the interplay of the world of facts and the world of imagination and to rediscover the heightened experiences of childhood". Jaya's husband, Mohan always interprets things in relation to the effect it may have on the society. He unobtrusively likes to conform to the social norms even if they are strong. The success of Jaya's novel depicting the relationship between man and woman is weighed in relation to what society would think in future. Mohan wants to make Jaya also think like him and induces her not to deliberate on such themes that would endanger their marriage. Jaya, a representative of the typical Indian women, in the present context, wants to mold herself as her husband wills. But all these male – chauvinistic ideas are not her own, but have been thrust upon her by the society in general and her father in particular. Her father made her think that she was different from others and hence, she could not cope with her hostel mates and kept herself aloof from other girls.

In her childhood, Jaya was a very sensitive child, she often get angered at small issues. Her parents loved her so much and brought her up in a loving and affectionate manner. But after marriage Jaya changes automatically, her anger withers away. "She was a child who used to get angry very soon. But after her marriage she tolerated her anger. She realized that to Mohan (her husband) anger made a woman unwomanly" (That Long Silence) (83). There has been an egocentric note in Jaya's character right from her childhood. Sigmund Freud states in *The Ego and the Id*, "The ego is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse". According to my analysis, her father loved the classical music and recommended it to Jaya, but the child Jaya was fond of the lilting music of Rafi and Lata. Her rebellion to her own father speaks to her temperamental nature. The egocentric vein in her temperament does not strive for the total fusion of identity with Mohan; she keeps intact a little bit of her own identity. As a married lady, she has become dependent on Mohan and this she considers derogatory. In this novel, the writer has presented this phenomenon through the character of Jaya, which means victory. This is the name given by her father when she was born, and

Suhasini, the name given after her marriage, which means "a soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman" (That Long Silence) (16). Both the names symbolize the traits of her personality. The former symbolizes revolt and the latter submission. The dreams of her childhood, to change the ascribed situation of woman resulting in achieving her goals, are shattered by the environment, the surroundings, and above all by the society which imposes all sorts of restrictions on women. She is absolutely helpless and is unable to do anything to improve her situation.

Ultimately, Jaya tries to adapt herself to the main current. She endeavors to follow the traditional values and principles as her father had put in her during her childhood. As a loving child of her parents, she had been facilitated by each and everything what she wished. She longs to be called an ideal wife. She revolts in silence. She does not show any anger and worry to her husband. She comments on a situation when her husband talks about women being treated very cruelly by their husbands and he calls it 'strength':

He saw strength in the woman sitting silently in front of the fire, but I saw despair. I saw 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)

The story begins with Jaya and her husband Mohan shifting from their well – settled, comfortable house to their old house in Dadar, Bombay, where they had stayed immediately after getting married when their financial condition was not good. They shift into their old apartment in order to escape the scene as Mohan has been caught in some business malpractice and an enquiry is in process. Here, in a small old flat, Jaya gets out of touch with her daily schedule and becomes an introvert. She sits deep in contemplation, thinking of her childhood and tries to analyze herself. Not satisfied with her married life, Jaya recalls her past days, her up – bringing, the environment in which she was brought up and the preaching that were thrust upon her when she was growing up. I realize here that Jaya has been totally scattered from her inside. She has been lost and broken by having these dull life experiences. In *The Lost Child and Other Stories*, Mulk Raj

Anand said a maxim by Guru Nanak- “We are all children lost in the world fair”. Although communication is absent in most relationships, there are a few in which the characters have made it possible. This leads to happiness and growth.

The novelist suggests that there are three types of relationships in which communication becomes possible. Jaya and Kamat exemplify the first type. It is remarkable that they are not ‘related’ to each other in any formal way. Kamat lives upstairs in the same building. They talk about Jaya’s writing, and if there is one person who understands Jaya as a writer, it is Kamat. Jaya’s writing is a link that connects them. Jaya wants to illustrate a child life. That is her foremost interest and through this she wants to give the interpretations on child-life and child psychology, which were so fascinating and fruitful to her. When Jaya’s story about a child widow is rejected, she is angry and frustrated, but Kamat tells her not to lose heart. He tells her not to blame others for the failure because her story lacks a personal vision and a personal view. She must learn to express herself freely instead of holding herself in. Jaya, being a woman writer, belongs to the suppressed sections of society and finds it difficult to express herself freely. She would have to attempt it consciously. Jaya’s predicament is not unique, but is typical to all women writers. Kamat says, “spew out your anger in your writing, woman spew it out” (That Long Silence) (147). Besides, making her aware of her shortcomings as a writer, Kamat also tries to show her the importance of her role as a writer. He encourages her to write what comes from within, for instance, about all those real life women she should keep knocking on the doors of her mind. Deshpande here suggests a danger that women writers have to be aware of. The woman writer must not use her writing to perpetuate patriarchal ideals and values. Instead, she must work hard to make women aware of the injustice done to them.

Thus, because the communication between Jaya and Kamat is about an ideal that transcends gender and involves no selfish interests, it is honest and sincere. There is no room for hypocrisy and lies here. Selfless in nature, it almost gains spiritual depth. Jaya is seemed to be a satisfied housewife to begin with. Having married a responsible man, Mohan, and blessed

with two children, Rahul and Rati, and a comfortable home, she seems to have almost nothing to ask for in life. For her children’s upbringing is very important and wants to treat them in the best way. She loves them a lot. As she herself was lovingly grown up, the same kind of affection and love she wants to give her children. She wants to impart them a free environment to express their feelings and thoughts. To achieve this stage of fulfillment as a woman, Jaya has systematically suppressed every aspect of her personality that refuses to fit into her image as wife and mother. According to my analysis Jaya desires to build, her own contended world, her own home of dreams in which she and her family will live happily and lovingly. George Eliot intones in the novel *The Mill on the Floss*, “There is no sense of ease like the ease we felt in those scenes where objects became dear to us before we had known the labor of choice, and where the outer world seemed only an extension of our own personality; we accepted and loved it as we accepted our own sense of existence and our own limbs”.

In my viewpoint, Jaya has been evolved as a strong woman psychologically as well as rationally. The second way in which the silence can be overcome is as follows: whatever may be our formal relationship to persons we must try to communicate with them as individuals. When placed in a rigid framework, a relationship forces us to try and act out a particular role. This is where deceit and hypocrisy enter. When Jaya sees Rahul talking very happily to his uncle Vasant, she wonders why Rahul cannot be so cheerful with her. Then it dawns on her that relationship between them is free of labels. She was very worried about her relationship with Rahul as a mother.

Watching the easy, intimate talk between him and Vasant at breakfast, the resentment comes back. Why cannot he be this way with me, with us? And suddenly as I am thinking this, something happens to me. I see the two of them, Rahul and Vasant differently. They are not Vasant, Mohan’s irresponsible younger brother, not Rahul, our difficult son, but just two persons, at ease with each other, with themselves (189).

The sudden catastrophe of the corruption charges against Mohan and their exile to the Dadar flat, however, compel Jaya to “excavate her own truths and those of the other women in her life and unlock That Long Silence”. If enquiry is carried on, Mohan will stand every possibility of losing his well-paid job, which will mean terrible insecurity.

Mohan takes the misfortune in his stride. He accuses Jaya of being indifferent and storms out of the house. Ultimately she lets her psyche take its own measures to manage the crisis. I think that Jaya was trying to adjust herself, to fit herself and develop a situation of resettlement in order to provide the best facilities and needy things to her children. She does not want her children to be disturbed from any thing. A pioneer of trauma theory named Cathy Caruth explains in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* “Traumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox: the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness”. Jaya’s aunt, Vanita Mami, counsels her just before her wedding: “Remember Jaya, a husband is like a sheltering tree, keep it alive and flourishing, even if you have to water it with deceit and lies” (That Long Silence) (32). Vanita Mami’s long suffering role of a martyred wife prompts Jaya at one time before her marriage to think that, may be, she too had been similarly counseled as a bride. “If your husband has a mistress or two, ignore it; take up a hobby instead — cats, may-be, or your sister’s children”. (31) In my observation, Jaya has been caught in a traumatic situation as she is perpetually having the traumatic experiences of life. The process to remember the things has become the cause of psychological pain, a mental agony. Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer write in *Studies in Hysteria* that traumatic remembering is termed as “pathogenic reminiscences”. In spite of her flippancy attitude towards Vanita Mami’s advice, however, Jaya proves that she is no different from her. When it comes to the question of a choice between her husband and family and asserting herself as an independent individual, she chooses the former without hesitation. She has been completely changed. In her childhood she

got angered at small topics but now she managed with totally opposite personality traits. Looking up to her husband as a ‘sheltering tree’, she had been lulled into a false sense of security.

To add to her despair, Jaya gets the news that her son Rahul, who had been holidaying with their family friends, has suddenly disappeared. This piece of news shatters her and hurts her with the force of a bolt striking a tender tree. She does not want her children get suffer from anything happen in life. They should be happy and satisfied and every time she efforts for them to fulfill their wishes and demands. I analyze that child’s psychology is like a blank paper if anything will be written wrong, it will affect the child’s thinking and ideas that eventually lead the child towards a harmful situation. Today, whatever children experience in life and go through, and whatever environment they live in, so their nature, thinking and perspective will be established. And this affects a lot to their forthcoming life. L.S. Vygotsky’s cognitive development theory opines “human activities take place in cultural settings and can not be understand apart from these settings”. In my opinion, child is considered as an innocent and an immature. Their behavior gets totally modified according to the circumstances and situations whatever they face in life. If the situation is favorable and satisfied, their mind gets enhance in reasoning and rationality without any tension and sorrow. Knowledge is also increased accordingly. Prominent child psychologist named Jean Piagets maintains in *The Psychology of the Child* “children act on their environment to learn”. I see that Jaya wishes her children to get always remain happy and live a contended life. And if something happen opposite in life then they able to face the situation. Later Rahul returns and she receives a telegram from Mohan that ‘All is Well’. George Eliot has interpreted in *The Mill on the Floss*, the sense of respect and self-awareness that will fold back upon itself in the “One Supreme Moment”. Before this happens, however, she lives for several days in a traumatic state. Her thoughts go back and forth in time, triggered by the slightest provocation in the present. There is no one she can turn to in her despair. Earlier her father’s death rendered Jaya’s family homeless and left for, bereft of an emotional support. But at

that time, the comforting hand of her elder brother saved her from further psychic crisis.

Jaya Kulkarni finds that her mental agony and emotional turbulence have not been reflected in this chronicle of daily events. She realizes that the “Essential core had been left out. The agonized cries--- “I cannot cope, I cannot manage, I cannot go on” That Long Silence (70). Jaya’s creativity provides her an outlet for her frustration. Mohan also takes pride in his writer wife, but wants her to write non – controversial middles only. The thought of failing as a writer had enfeebled her, but she blames it on the restrictions imposed on her creativity by Mohan. Suppression of creativity frustrates her. I notice that Jaya wants to live her childhood again by illustrating and unfolding her childish memories through her writings. As stated by a philosopher and writer named Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his novel *Emile or On Education* (Book 2) “Childhood has its own ways of seeing, thinking and feeling: nothing is more foolish than to try to substitute our ways”. Jaya’s thwarted creativity and attempts to acquiesce to Mohan’s desires generate a feeling of guilt in her, which makes her social poise somewhat artificial. Jaya’s need for Kamat also reinforces the truth of Maslow’s theory of “sequential motivational hierarchy”. Jaya’s awareness of her own incompleteness makes her more sensitive to the emotional needs of her husband. Later on Mohan limits her role only to the four walls of the house and to attend to children. He is of the view that Jaya somehow tries to air the family problems through her writings. It is not in his nature to tolerate the intellectual progress of his wife. He would like to have her as a housewife and nothing more.

Very soon she understood that if something was not done well, or on time, a button missing or the thing alike, she had to exhibit sorrow and guilt on her face. When there is any praise – worthy job, she should wag her tail. “In a way, the protagonist, Jaya Kulkarni, is any modern woman who resents her husband’s callousness and becomes the victim of circumstances. By implication the character of Jaya represents modern woman’s ambivalent attitude to married life”. Jaya decides to live her life by actively participating in it and not by running away from

it. Once Jaya understands it, she is able to find out the answer to all her pending questions, which had caused remorse, and grief to her earlier. Jaya’s first and the only out-burst with Mohan, soon after her marriage, results in days of Mohan’s silence. Since then, she adopts the silence stratagem and withdraws under it. She turns the direction of her anger on herself and her anger becomes self – destructive. It is, psychologically speaking, a displaced anger or reaction. In the case of displaced aggression that person “directs his hostile feelings towards some objects or person other than the one actually causing his frustration”. Thus, the other person who is not the actual cause of frustration is used as scapegoat. Sometimes the experience of anger may not find any scapegoat and “may turn his hostility inward and blame himself for his failure”. Out of her anguish, her long suppressed anger, she goes out of her house and in an unconscious state walks aimlessly in the streets of Bombay. But her hysteria as defense mechanism fails and ends in futility. “Finally totally exhausted, I’d gone back home” That Long Silence (191). The novel becomes a self-critique of Jaya. She understands that she also contributed to her victimization. Others can’t be blamed all the time. Neither total extinction of the ego, nor complete conformity can bring her realization of her true identity. Balanced relationship between ego and self can give balanced outlook of life. Anger or protest is not a convincing weapon for fighting our battle and realizing peace in life. She has fathomed the darkness of her self and has learnt to articulate her predicament. When she hears the news that all ends up well in the office of Mohan, and Rahul also comes back, she is again in danger of falling entrapped in the prison – house of marriage. She breaks her silence and refuses to be led by nose. Now she will continue as a writer and would not look up to Mohan for an answer he wants.

On the whole I can say Jaya’s character is an exceptionally accomplished portrayal of a woman trying to erase a ‘long silence’ begun in childhood and rooted in her and in the constraints of her life. As Veena Sheshadri writes: “One ends up by wondering whether. Jaya has imposed the long silence on herself not out of a sense of duty or to emulate the ideal Hindu woman of the ages gone by, but in order to camouflage the streaks of

ugliness within her". The third way is to assert oneself, to express what one feels, rather than what the other would like to hear. This approach can work as a bridge to connect oneself to others and to remove the barrier of silence. In the end, Jaya realizes that she has always said what Mohan likes to hear. This realization transforms her attitude and she decides to have lively and meaningful conversation with Mohan. Jaya has been completely modified. As she used to live her child life with senses of anger, agitation, and obstinacy but now after marriage when she has to suffer ups and downs in married life, she succeeds to attain tolerance, positivity, and self-realization. In my suggestion, we should never lose the hope rather life has opposite circumstances. William Wordsworth has beautifully expressed in poem My Heart Leaps Up, the sense of positivity by quoting The Child is the father of the man. A human being should not die the child in himself or herself. Like a child a human being should have retain the innocence, the love and affection, and an inevitable awe and joy. Jaya becomes a satisfied, happy, and an affectionate mother. She starts her life anew with great enthusiasm and power as a child's zest.

References

- [1] Bond, Ruskin. Scenes from a Writer's Life, New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd. 1997.
- [2] Narayan, R.K. Swami and Friends, London: OUP, 1935, 1978.
- [3] Deshpande, Shashi. That Long Silence, New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1989, P.83.
- [4] Freud, Sigmund. The Ego and the Id, Publisher: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag (Vienna), W. W.... 24 April 1923, P.15.
- [5] Anand, Mulk Raj. The Lost Child and Other Stories, New Delhi, India: Vision/Orient Paperbacks, 2007.
- [6] Eliot, George. The Mill on the Floss, Harper & Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1860, P. 160.
- [7] Caruth, Cathy. Unclaimed Experience. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- [8] Breuer, Joseph and Sigmund Freud. Studies in Hysteria, Vol. 2, trans. James Strachey, London: Hogarth Press, 1955 (1895).
- [9] Ali Bhai, Yasmin. "No Sheltering Tree", Rev. of That Long Silence, New Society, No. 5, Feb. 1988.
- [10] Vygotsky, L.S. Mind and society: The development of higher mental processes. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- [11] Piaget, Jean. The Psychology of the Child, New York: Basic Books, 1963.
- [12] Eliot, George. The Mill on the Floss, Harper & Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1860, P. 542.
- [13] Jung, Anees. Unveiling India: A Woman's Journey, New Delhi: Penguin, 1987, P.26.
- [14] Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. Emile or ON Education (Book 2) (1762, French), Translated by Eleanor Worthington, Formerly of the Cook Co. Normal School, ILL. Boston, 1886.
- [15] Maslow, A.H. "A Theory of Human Motivation", Psychological Rev. 50, 1943, PP.370-96.
- [16] Kumar Das, Bijay. Aspect of Commonwealth Literature, New Delhi: Creative, 1999, P.131.
- [17] L.Ruch, Floyd. Psychology and Life, P.464.
- [18] Ibid.
- [19] Sheshadri, Veena. That Long Silence, Literature Alive, II, 1, 1988, P.95.
- [20] Wordsworth, William. My Heart Leaps Up an epigraph to Ode: Intimations of Immortality,
- [21] 1807.