



## **Voices Beyond Borders : The Journey of Indian Writing in English**

**Dr.J.BEAULAH WISELINE, ASP/English**

Associate Professor of English

Fatima Michael College of Engineering and Technology, Anna University, Madurai,  
Tamilnadu.

[bwiselin@gmail.com](mailto:bwiselin@gmail.com)

&

**Dr.V.VASANTHI, ASP/English**

Associate Professor of English

Fatima Michael College of Engineering and Technology, Anna University, Madurai,  
Tamilnadu.

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Indian Writing in English (IWE) serves as a vibrant platform for expressing both personal and collective tales from postcolonial India. Among its notable contributors is Shashi Deshpande, who offers rich depictions of women facing tradition, silence, and inner struggles. This article delves into her acclaimed novels *That Long Silence* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, discussing themes of identity, gender roles, marriage, silence, and self-discovery through the lens of Indian womanhood. By analyzing psychological depth and narrative style, the article sheds light on the challenges women face in finding their voices in a male-dominated society.

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**Keywords :** Shashi Deshpande, Indian Writing in English, Feminism, Patriarchy, Identity, Silence, Gender, Women's Writing, Self-realization, Psychological Fiction.

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## 1. Introduction

Indian Writing in English has become a vital tradition that captures the varied and enriched cultural tapestry of Indian society. Shashi Deshpande, through her insightful storytelling, offers a unique view of Indian women's lives. Her characters, though not conventional rebels, are ordinary women striving for independence and self-expression in a restrictive cultural environment. *That Long Silence* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors* are essential for understanding these women's silent suffering and resilience. This article examines how Deshpande employs English as a means of expression and critical reflection on social norms.

### 1.1 Research Questions

1. How does Shashi Deshpande depict the psychological challenges of her female characters?
2. How do silence and communication act as resistance tools in Deshpande's works?
3. How does Deshpande utilize storytelling to convey inner conflict?
4. What is marriage's role in shaping female identity in *That Long Silence*?
5. How is motherhood portrayed in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*?
6. How do characters balance traditional values with modernity?
7. In what ways does Deshpande question patriarchal norms?
8. How does the urban environment impact characters' emotional lives?
9. What part does memory play in constructing identity in these novels?
10. How does Deshpande's style enhance themes of isolation and self-discovery?

### 1.2 Literature Review

Shashi Deshpande's work, particularly *That Long Silence* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, is widely examined for its psychological complexities and feminist themes. Scholars like Nagendra Kumar and Jasbir Jain highlight her intricate portrayal of women's struggles within patriarchal systems. Deshpande uses silence and reflection to depict emotional constraint and resistance. Critics such as Rukmini Bhaya Nair underscore how storytelling and speech offer female empowerment. M.K. Naik explores the tension between tradition and modernity in her educated, urban characters. Her work critiques gender norms subtly, emphasizing quiet transformation over open rebellion. Shantha Krishnaswamy acknowledges her contribution to psychological realism in Indian women's fiction. Collectively, these studies confirm Deshpande's influence in Indian Writing in English.

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## 2. Discussion

### 2.1 Exploring the Inner World: Stream of Consciousness

Deshpande employs a stream-of-consciousness technique to explore her characters' internal thoughts. This approach allows readers to experience the complex and often conflicting thoughts of Jaya and Saru. Their mental journeys are filled with doubt, guilt, and realizations, reflecting the disorder of suppressed identities.

## 2.2 Marriage as a Conflict Zone

Both novels portray marriage as a realm with predefined gender roles. In *That Long Silence*, Jaya's marriage to Mohan highlights emotional disconnection and communication failures:

"We don't talk about such things... we pretend it doesn't exist." (*That Long Silence*, p.122)

Similarly, in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru's relationship with Manohar becomes abusive, illustrating how traditional roles can turn into tools of control and violence:

"He needed to be humiliated, she realized, for her to be safe." (*The Dark Holds No Terrors*, p.199)

These excerpts highlight marriage as a battlefield overshadowed by dominance and repression rather than love.

## 2.3 Motherhood and Its Challenges

Saru deals with a difficult relationship with her mother, highlighting the challenges faced by mothers across generations. Her mother is distant and unloving, while Saru longs for affection, leading to emotional pain. Deshpande shows that motherhood is often difficult and complex, rather than the idealized role society promotes.

## 2.4 Finding Identity and Understanding Oneself

Deshpande's stories focus on journeys of self-discovery. Jaya writes in a journal and reflects on her life, which helps her regain control over her narrative. Saru confronts her past and childhood trauma, aiming to see her emotions clearly. These novels convey that self-awareness often requires enduring pain, facing harsh realities, and achieving acceptance. Jaya's clarity is captured when she states:

"I'm not afraid anymore. The panic has gone." (*That Long Silence*, p.191)

## 2.5 Tradition vs. Modern Life

The novels reveal the clash between old traditions and modern desires. Even though the characters are educated and live in urban areas, they feel trapped by cultural traditions. Deshpande emphasizes that embracing modernity doesn't guarantee freedom, especially for women balancing past and present values. Saru questions rigid gender roles:

"A man is not supposed to cry. A woman is not supposed to make money. Why not?" (*The Dark Holds No Terrors*, p.137)

## 2.6 The Female Body and Sexuality

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru's experiences with her sexuality are filled with pain and shame. Her husband's cruel behavior highlights society's discomfort with female

desire. Deshpande explores how female sexuality is controlled and often punished. Saru struggles with internalized shame, partly due to her mother's treatment:

"If you're a woman, I don't want to be one." (*The Dark Holds No Terrors*, p.73)

Her experience of marital assault is vividly depicted:

"The hurting hands, the savage teeth, the monstrous assault of a horribly familiar body. And above me, a face I could not recognize." (*The Dark Holds No Terrors*, p.112)

## 2.7 Strength through Writing and Reflection

For Jaya, writing becomes a powerful form of self-expression. Deshpande stresses the healing power of sharing personal stories and reclaiming control. Through reflection and storytelling, women assert their identities and challenge societal limitations.

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## 3. Conclusion

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors* deeply explore the inner worlds and struggles of women in a patriarchal society. Her characters are everyday women facing extraordinary challenges. Through moments of silence, memory, and introspection, Deshpande's narratives question gender roles and invite readers to reconsider traditional expectations. Her contribution to Indian Writing in English is significant, giving voice to the unsaid and making personal experiences universally resonant. Jaya's realization:

"I'm not afraid anymore. The panic has gone." (*That Long Silence*, p.173)  
marks her journey toward self-empowerment.

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