



A Feminist Approach to the Images of Women in *That Long Silence* and *Palace of Desire (Qasr Al-Shawq)*: A Comparative Study

Ghassan Dhahed Kawan¹ & P. R. Karmarkar²

¹Department of English, College of Arts & Commerce, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam-India. Email: dr.ghassandhahed@gmail.com

²Professor of English, College of Arts & Commerce, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam- India. Email: karmarkar999@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: Ghassan Dhahed Kawan

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the depiction of women in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and Naguib Mahfouz's *Palace of Desire (Qasr Al-Shawq)* according to the feminist approach. The study seeks to compare and contrast the way these two novels, which are considered among reputable 20th century fiction, represent female characters and their struggles for asserting their individualities in two types of male-dominated societies. That is to say, Shashi Deshpande, the Indian authoress of *That Long Silence* fathoms the struggles of women in a traditional Indian society. In this novel, she mirrors the great challenges that women face in such a patriarchal system. Therefore, this research traces the heroines' experience highlighting how the novelist has tackled misogyny and biased societal prospects. On the other hand, Mahfouz's *Palace of Desire* sheds light on the stereotyped images of women and feminists attempts to free women within the changing political and societal setting of Egypt then. Aida's personality represents the ambitious woman who reconciles with her desires and does her best to assert herself in a male-dominated society despite all the social constraints trying to limit her aspirations. In this comparative study between the two concerned novels, the researcher seeks to reveal the similarities and differences in the representations of women in two different cultural backgrounds. So, the paper examines how each of these two novelists criticizes the patriarchal structures and advocates feminism in his/ her society exposing the ways through which gender roles and societal norms are presented. The study shows a deep understanding of feminist literary criticism by highlighting the cultural influence of the two societies in which women's sufferings are revealed. So, the findings of the research offer new insights into the gender roles, misogyny, stereotyped images of women, old traditions and patriarchal systems in literature.

Keywords: Feminism, women, comparative study, patriarchal system, gender-role.

INTRODUCTION

In literary criticism, feminism appears as a branch tackling the literary works that highlight the women's right and depict their suffering to assert their individualities. In the 20th century, the time when the novels in question were written, the Indian and Arab societies had many common issues as they both struggled to be liberated from the British occupation and they both had such patriarchal systems with stereotyped images of women. Thus, this study dwells on the evolution of the female characters in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and Naguib Mahfouz's *Palace of Desire*, investigating their attitudes towards the presented status quo and biased social norm as well as their developments to defy the gender roles in their respective cultures.

The study fathoms the evolution of the major female characters in the concerned novels and traces their developments according to the feminist approach. Thus, the study first identifies the main female characters in *That Long Silence* and *Palace of Desire*. Then, it investigates the ways each novelist presents the female characters and the ways they undertake to embark on their feminist approach to criticize the gender roles and ask for women's rights in their societies.

Accordingly, the character of Jaya in Deshpande's *That Long Silence* is juxtaposed with the characters of Amina and Aida in *Palace of Desire* to show how each novelist adopts the feminist approach by analyzing these characters. So, the development of the women's characters against the patriarchal system and traditional norms asserts the feminist approaches that these two novelists adopt in their presentation of the women's journey for self-assertion in biased societies. The study emphasized the didactic message of literature on social reformation.

By studying and comparing these two novels on the basis of the feminist approach, the research aims to reveal both harmonies and deviations in the depiction of women's statuses and gender roles. So, the study evaluates how each author employs character development to criticize or reinforce societal norms, providing a deeper understanding of female identity and resistance.

Utilizing a feminist analytical approach, this study will examine the psychological and social factors influencing the protagonists' growth. Through a detailed comparison, the research

seeks to enhance the understanding of feminism Indian and Egyptian in literature offering insights into how narratives address and challenge the roles and experiences of women.

Historical Background

Feminism

The term "feminism" was introduced by the utopian socialist Charles Fourier, in the 19th century. Then, the term was adopted in Britain to refer to the movement that calls for women's political and legal equality in 1890 (Briate, 2020). So, feminism reflects a deep awareness of the woman's identity and emphasizes critical issues unique to women. In her book *Women Writers Talking*, Janet Todd (1983) dwells on feminism as a fundamental issue whose target is to assert the women's valid rights to criticize the status quo and gender roles and to perceive themselves as victims of patriarchal unjust society that sees them sub-equal to men on a gender basis. This injustice forms the axis around which the feminist philosophy evolves. Hence, it is closely concerned with the pursuit of gender equality and the end of biases.

Feminist movements have witnessed historical waves, mainly three waves; each of these addressed different types of women's rights. The first wave, extended from 1848 to 1920, focused on the legal rights of women such as voting and property rights. Among the early feminists were Simone de Beauvoir, John Stuart Mill, and Harriet Taylor, who advocated equal national rights and political freedoms for women. The second wave, which arose in the 1960s and 1970s, emphasized generative rights and called to end domestic violence and gender discrimination. Feminist scholars as Juliet Mitchell traced gender biases, capitalism, and patriarchal systems. The third wave of feminism started in the late 20th century and extended its objectives to address more critical issues such as race, sexuality, and global views. This wave condemned the traditional status quo of women as well as gender binaries and enhances a deeper understanding of women's experiences. Kathryn Cirksena and Lisa Cuklanz elaborated on the historical devaluation of women compared to men, while Sushila Singh emphasized the deconstruction of binary oppositions within third-wave feminist theory (Malinowska, 2020).

Feminism has profoundly impacted literature and societal views. Authors such as Bhisham Sahni, Virginia Woolf, and Amrita Pritam have explored women's challenges across various

contexts (Ibid). Their works reflect ongoing struggles for gender equality and efforts to redefine women's roles in society.

Feminism is not merely a movement but also a critical theory aimed at transforming social structures. It is defined in *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* as:

A development and movement in critical theory and in the evaluation of literature which was well under way by the late 1960s and which has burgeoned steadily since. It is an attempt to describe and interpret (and reinterpret) women's experience as depicted in various kinds of literature – especially the novel, and, to a lesser extent, poetry and drama. (Cuddon, 2013, p. 273)

Overall, Western feminism has significantly influenced literary criticism by emphasizing the portrayal of women's oppression and advocating their rights. This perspective has uncovered neglected voices and questioned existing narratives that reinforce gender biases. By redefining literary standards and pushing for more inclusive representation, feminist criticism is reshaping both the literary world and societal views on gender roles.

Indian Feminism

The feminist perspective in Indian English literature has been notably influenced by Western feminist movements. The leading figures of the Indian society, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who protested against girls' early marriage, played a great role in proceeding with the women's rights movement in India. Social reformers also supported the remarriage of a widow and called for improvements in career opportunities, education, and legal rights of women. Afterwards, the governmental procedures, such as types of employment and educational reservations, supported women's enablement. This is demonstrated by the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act issued in 2006. This Act, effective on October 6, 2006, provides protection against various forms of insult, including sexual, verbal, physical, emotional, and financial abuses, and addresses major issues such as dowry-related matters (Myles, 2006).

Indian feminist writers have contributed significantly to literature by probing the difficult experience of women and questioning the traditional gender roles. Shashi Deshpande undertakes thorough presentations of crucial issues such as patriarchal oppressions and marital difficulties in works like *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. With her, there were other

notable writers, including Kamala Das, whose writings, such as *My Story*, address the challenges of female identity and desires in a patriarchal system. Manju Kapur elaborates on the domain in novels such as *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman*, which tackle the significant themes of rotten tradition and personal freedom. So, these authors enrich feminist literature by highlighting both personal and general issues women used to face, supporting gender equality and empowerment in the modern Indian society.

Feminism in the Arab World

Feminism in the Arab world has arisen via a complex interaction of cultural, social, and political dynamics, depicting the diverse experiences of women throughout the Arab world. Leading early figures of feminism like Qasim Amin called for social reforms regarding gender roles, women's education and legal rights in the early 20th century (Mernissi, 1991). Subsequently, Arab women started persistently to protest against the traditional status quo of women and fight for their rights in education, employment, personal freedoms, and equality with men. Nowadays, feminist movements in Arab societies are often entangled with larger social justice initiatives, including economic and political reforms. Thus, the activists and writers initiated their struggle to elevate the voices of women and push for legislative changes that advocate gender equality (Hatem, 1999).

The author of *Palace of Desire*, Naguib Mahfouz, broadly asserted feminism in his literary works. He also contributed to feminist discussions through his investigation of gender roles and female societal issues. He had great novels that tackled the issues of women in the patriarchal Arab society; among which is *The Cairo Trilogy*, which presents a critical sight of women's experiences in a male-controlled culture. Mahfouz highlighted women's struggles to get rid of the social constraints (Mahfouz, 1956). Mahfouz focuses on critical issues involving authority and social norms to offer clear insights into the dynamics between genders in addition to enriching the discourse on feminism in the Arab world. In fact, he stands as an important figure in Arabic literature, especially in understanding and advocating the rights in a male-dominated society.

In brief, feminism in the Arab world is something that keeps on changing and is anchored into both historical backgrounds and current problems. Furthermore, the writings of early feminists and contemporary reformers such as Naguib Mahfouz and Nawal El-Saadawi help to understand the gender roles and challenges of women in the Arab world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review on the topic of this article reveals how literary texts both reinforce and contradict gender biases in the two concerned societies and cultures. This review dwells on the previous studies tackling feminism in Shashi Deshpandes *That Long Silence* and Naguib Mahfouz's *Palace of Desire* (Qasr Al-Shawq) and exposing how both authors depict the gender roles within their respective cultural contexts in their writings.

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* (1988) is a thorough exploration of female identity and oppression via the eyes of Jaya, the a middle-class housewife struggling to meet social expectations and reconciling them with her ambitions and individuality. The novel criticizes the constraints placed on women's voices and the constraints of domestic life. According to Nair (2006), Deshpande elaborates on the theme of female empowerment within a constrictive society by using Jaya's internal struggles to critique traditional gender norms. Joshi (2007) also asserts that Jaya's self-expression and personal growth are highlighted throughout the novel as a means of challenging traditional notions of what it means to be a woman and supporting the woman's independence and self-recognition.

Rai (2013) dwells on Shashi Deshpandes depiction of feminism in *That Long Silence*, arguing that promoting a more extensive women's rights feminism is based on a profound understanding of Indian women's internal struggles. That is to say, the article emphasizes how women's self-realization and mentality-shifting are essential for societal advancement. Santhi (2012) presented a paper at the National Conference of VHNSNC in which she argues that Deshpandes's novels are not to be considered feminist as she addresses the more comprehensive human relationships rather than depicting a man-versus-woman conflict. That is to say, the novelist portrays the struggles of a contemporary Indian woman in a traditional male-dominated society in *That Long Silence* in a way that sounds like a real presentation of realistic social humanistic issues rather than feministic.

In an analysis of Deshpande's gender role portrayal Singh (2015) contends that the book exposes the psychological effects of these limitations while also criticizing the expectations society places on women. According to Singh (2015) Jayas fight is a part of a larger feminist critique of Indian societys traditional gender roles. summarize.

In his study of *That Long Silence* (2019) Patel dwells on the relationship between cultural identity and feminism. In the context of traditional Indian values Patel contends that

Deshpande deftly captures the complexities of female identity. This viewpoint deepens our comprehension of the conflict between personal aspirations and social norms that underlies Jayas personal struggles.

Naguib Mahfouz tackles gender, class, and power issues in his depiction of women's lives in early 20th-century Egypt in *Palace of Desire* (1957). According to Saadawi (1999), Mahfouz provides a deep reflection of societal expectations and restrictions via his portrayal of female characters, particularly Aida. El-Saadawi (2000) emphasizes that Mahfouz's novel reveals women's struggles to assert their individualities in a patriarchal society. Additionally it sheds light on the constraints placed on women and their ability to protest. Because Mahfouz's works show how women deal with and resist social pressures. Therefore, they are considered within the feminist discourse.

Mahfouz's feminist viewpoint is also examined by Ghazoul (2001) in the *Cairo Trilogy* which includes *Palace of Desire*. According to Ghazoul Mahfouz offers a nuanced perspective on female agency and resistance in the face of shifting cultural norms as she considers the effects of social and political changes on women's roles.

Farouk (2014) explores Mahfouz's criticism of societal norms and traditional gender roles in *Palace of Desire*. In her research Farouk focuses on the confluence of gender class and modernity contending that Mahfouz's writings offer a critical analysis of these issues in Egyptian society.

Hassan (2020) adds to the conversation by analyzing Mahfouz's novels conflict between modernist aspirations and conventional values. Hassan draws attention to the ways in which *Palace of Desire* critiques the constraints imposed on women in a patriarchal society and depicts the fight for individual freedom.

Nukhrah, Muthanna, and Biag (2021) investigate how Naguib Mahfouz's presentation of women's images in the *Cairo Trilogy* reveals his feminist views and how he criticizes the status of Arab women. They argue that Mahfouz proficiently portrays the influence of feminism and recent liberal movements on Egyptian society in which emerged voices that advocated gender equality and respect for women. That would make a shift in the societal views of women.

A comparative study of *That Long Silence* and *Palace of Desire* within their cultural settings according to feminist criticism can contribute a lot to the literary studies. Deshpande's novel highlights the personal and psychological features of female oppression in the domestic realm, while Mahfouz's work tackles broader socio-cultural issues that affect women's lives. As appears in the studies of each novel, both authors criticize the traditional gender roles and advocate women's rights, from distinct cultural perspectives (Myles, 2006; El-Saadawi, 2000). Deshpande's focus on individual psychological growth is contrasted with Mahfouz's broader social critique in this study, demonstrating varied feminist approaches in literature.

Thus, while earlier studies have explored some aspects of *That Long Silence* and *Palace of Desire* according to the feminist approach in separate studies of each novel, none of them have embarked on a comparative analysis of these works. Accordingly, a comparative study that compares and contrasts Deshpande's focus on individuality and domestic struggles with Mahfouz's vast examination of socio-cultural constraints will provide a deeper understanding of feminist themes across different cultural settings. Such research fathoms how each author addresses gender roles and female status quo, enriching the overall discourse on feminist literature. Therefore, a comparative study of these novels could offer deeper insights into the diverse ways feminist issues are tackled and presented in the literature of various cultural backgrounds.

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

In this study, Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* (1988) and Naguib Mahfouz's *Palace of Desire* (1957) are compared with respect to how women are portrayed and gender dynamics. The methodology is grounded in feminist literary theory focusing on the narrative presentation of pivotal themes such as female status gender roles and identity.

The goal of the study is to examine how each author represents women's experiences and struggles within their respective cultural contexts by engaging with feminist theories from Western South Asian and Middle Eastern perspectives. The research attempts to track the portrayal of female characters their interactions with societal norms and the influence of gender dynamics on their personal development through an analysis of Deshpande and Mahfouz's narratives. This research highlights how each author challenges conventional gender roles and promotes women's independence within their particular historical and cultural contexts comparing and contrasting the gender issues raised in the two novels to

provide a thorough analysis. The narrative method entails a thorough analysis of the experiences of the female characters and how they react to social pressures and expectations. This comparative feminist methodology contributes to a deeper understanding of feminist themes across various cultural contexts by illuminating the ways in which each author addresses gender oppression self-realization and empowerment.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The study explores the ways in which female experiences and societal constraints are portrayed in literature through a feminist approach. The intricate plots of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and Naguib Mahfouz's *Palace of Desire* (Qasr Al-Shawq) are set in early 20th-century and Egypt, respectively. The feminist analyses of these novels reveal women's statuses in both cultures at that time and how they fight for their individuality and rights in male-dominated societies.

Feminism in That Long Silence

In *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande criticizes the stereotyped image of women and gender roles in Indian society at the time of writing the novel. The narrative is centered on Jaya, a middle-class housewife who, after her husband gets arrested, has to face reality. That is to say, Deshpande criticizes the limited roles that society places on women, which frequently restrict their identities and deprive them of many opportunities, using Jaya's experiences as a model for the woman of her time. "Jaya's life, a careful balancing act between her roles as a wife and mother, becomes a prison where her own desires are suppressed by the weight of societal expectations" (Deshpande, 1988, p. 93).

The great issue of women being constrained within traditional home roles and how these expectations compromise their capacity for self-expression and goal-pursuing is illuminated by Jaya's story. Deshpande explores Jaya's inner conflict, highlighting the ways in which cultural norms restrict women's freedoms and opportunities for personal development. The quotation that follows reveals the challenges that Jaya faces within the societal perspectives. "I had to bear the burden of what was expected of me—what was to be my role, my duty, my place in this world. But how could I reconcile that with the person I am, with my own dreams and desires?" (Deshpande, 1988, p. 58).

Jayas has an inner conflict expressing herself within her restrictive home environment as follows: “She could no longer distinguish between what was truly hers and what had been imposed on her. The silence was her only refuge and her only rebellion” (Deshpande, 1988, p. 143). This declaration reflects Jayas confusion and disillusionment as she attempts to distinguish between her true goals and desires and the expectations placed on her by her conventional roles as a wife and mother. From being just, a lack of voice her silence develops into a nuanced form of defiance against the roles that her culture has assigned her as well as a haven from social pressures. Deshpande skillfully utilizes this silence to highlight the psychological toll that strict gender norms take on women demonstrating how the quest for self-expression frequently requires juggling one’s own authenticity with an externalized identity.

Jaya finds it difficult to reconcile her own desires with those of male-dominated society, and Deshpande reveals this internal conflict in the novel. Jaya gradually comes to terms with her unhappiness and embarks on her journey towards self-assertion as she clearly expresses that saying: “For years, I had been silent, my voice muffled by the heavy weight of expectations. And now, as I look back, I realize how my silence was a form of surrender, a way to fit into the mold society had set for me.” (Deshpande, 1988, p. 92). This internal conflict reflects the feminist themes of self-assertion and identity and highlights the psychological effects of living in a patriarchal system.

Her aspirations seem to be constrained by the walls of her house which makes them seem to close in on her.: “The walls of her home seemed to close in on her, trapping her ambitions within the confines of tradition. She fought Aida’s ambitions were as vast as the cityt silently for her own identity in a world that offered no place for it” (Deshpande, 1988, p. 212). This emphasizes how Jayas traditional home environment places restrictions on her both physically and emotionally. Here Deshpande eloquently explains how Jayas personal goals are impeded by the larger constraints of societal expectations which are symbolized by the physical confines of her home. She describes these traditions as suffocating her sense of self and personal goals using the metaphor of walls closing in. Jayas nonverbal battle for her identity is a subdued but unwavering protest against a society that disregards her dreams. Through this portrayal Deshpande highlights the intense internal conflict between preserving one’s identity and adhering to traditional gender norms and criticizes the systemic suppression of women’s ambitions.

Jaya's eventual choice to raise her voice against her situation in the male-dominated society marks a significant feminist moment, symbolizing a break from traditional norms and an assertion of her individuality: "In the quiet moments of reflection, I began to see that my strength lay not in conforming to what was expected of me, but in challenging those very expectations and finding my own path." (Deshpande, 1988, p. 115). The heroine's personal resistance of gender roles within a constrictive societal framework can be challenged and redefined as Deshpande's narrative highlights.

Deshpande's highlighting of the domestic issues presents a critical investigation of the ways in which gender inequality is sustained by traditional roles. Deshpande emphasizes the difficulties faced by women in domestic roles and their attempts to assert their identities by placing the novel inside Jaya's home. Jaya's resistance of the gender roles reflects a larger critique of patriarchal expectations and reveals how feminist resistance can emerge from home.

Feminism in *Palace of Desire (Qasr Al-Shawq)*

In *Palace of Desire*, the Egyptian writer, Naguib Mahfouz, reveals the restrictions imposed on women in Egyptian society during the early 20th century. In this novel, the female characters swing in a society that is shaped by both modernist ideas and traditional values. Mahfouz provides great examples of how social and cultural norms impact women's experiences and roles in that unstable society.

The novel's female characters grapple with societal expectations, reflecting the broader tensions between traditional norms and modern feminist perspectives. Mahfouz's portrayal highlights the impact of these constraints on women's lives and the ways in which they navigate their roles within a changing cultural landscape: "In the heart of Cairo, where modernity clashed with tradition, the women stood at the crossroads of history, their voices muffled yet powerful, fighting for a place where their dreams could flourish unshackled by the past." (Mahfouz, 1957, p. 159).

Mahfouz's narrative also explores the impact of modernist ideas on female agency. The novel depicts women facing the changing dynamics of early 20th-century Egypt, where traditional roles are increasingly challenged by modernist influences. Characters like Aida embody the struggle between maintaining traditional values and pursuing modern aspirations, reflecting feminist themes of self-determination and empowerment: "Aida's ambitions were as vast as

the city itself, but the walls of tradition seemed to close in on her at every turn. Her heart yearned for a world where she could be more than just a name within the family tree." (Mahfouz, 1957, p. 67).

Amina's traditionalism reflects the values and expectations of an earlier generation, rooted in the established norms of Egyptian society. Her character serves as a representation of the cultural and social continuity that maintains traditional gender roles and family structures. Amina's adherence to these roles signifies the broader societal resistance to change and the persistence of conventional values. He reflects her strength in many ways. Yet, he portrays her character as the stereotyped woman who copes with the traditions due to social considerations: "Amina, though bound by the chains of tradition, carried a quiet strength within her. Her resignation was not out of choice but from a life where the expectations of society had long silenced her own desires." (Mahfouz, 1957, p. 113).

The life of Amina is an example of enduring traditional values. It highlights how central to her life and decisions these values are. She is presented as a suffocated voice to reject the status quo of women at that time: "Amina's life was a testament to the endurance of tradition, a quiet echo of an age that had long passed but still shaped her every decision." (Mahfouz, 1957, p. 77). She is totally submissive to everything: She represents the continuation of conventional roles and norms in spite of the changing environment around her as evidenced by her quiet echo.

In contrast, Aida's character represents the emerging modernist ideals and the shift towards new social and cultural norms: "Aida's refusal to accept the limits imposed upon her was a declaration of war against the expectations of her society. She dared to envision a future where she could be the author of her own destiny." (Mahfouz, 1957, p. 182). Hence, Aida's aspirations for education and self-fulfillment signify a break from traditional values and a move towards a more progressive vision of women's roles. Aida's struggles and ambitions highlight the generational and ideological conflict between traditional and modern perspectives within the novel. Her struggle mirrors the larger feminist issues of women's protest in a society going through change. Mahfouz emphasizes the impact of feminist thoughts on the roles and identities of women by showing them as engaged contributors to social and political change.

Aida struggles for recognition and personal autonomy within the confines of early 20th-century Egyptian society both internally and externally: "Despite the chains of tradition that bound her, she fought with a quiet strength, seeking a space where her voice could be heard beyond the limits imposed upon her." (Mahfouz, 1957, p. 156). Aida's chains of tradition stand in for the cultural conventions and societal expectations that limit her emphasizing the patriarchal structures and traditional gender roles that are pervasive in the novels setting. Her activities, goals and freedom are all bound by these symbolic chains. Aida's silent strength belies these constraints demonstrating her tenacity and will to overcome them. Instead of displaying overt rebellion her fight is marked by subtlety and perseverance illuminating a more subdued type of resistance that is frequently more internalized and intimate.

All in all, the clash between tradition and modernity is a central theme in *Palace of Desire* which also demonstrates how feminist themes are woven into the cultural narrative. The changing roles of the women in a society undergoing transition are depicted in the novel that presents women as both products and agents of social change. The subtleties of this intersection are traced by Mahfouz who highlights how feminist perspectives negotiate cultural norms while also subverting conventional wisdom. Mahfouz (1957) claims that the book provides insight into the ways feminist and modernist ideas influence social views and norms.

Comparative Analysis

By exposing the restrictions placed on women and their ongoing quest for self-realization, *Palace of Desire* and *That Long Silence* both adopt the feminist approach. Through the struggles of the female protagonists, Deshpande and Mahfouz fathom female sufferings in their respective cultural contexts and challenge conventional gender norms. That is to say, the female characters in both novels struggle to define their identities against the biased social and cultural expectations. The difficulties faced by Mahfouz's female characters as they negotiate the shifting social dynamics of Egypt are mirrored in Aida's attempts for self-assertion in *Palace of Desire* and in Jaya's trials to assert her individuality and go ahead with her ambitions in writings in *That Long Silence*. Similar feminist concerns about gender equality and self-assertion are reflected by both authors in the presentations of the resistance of their characters to the traditions and challenge of the patriarchal norms and attempts to redefine their roles (Mahfouz 1957, Deshpande 1988).

Both novelists tackle feminist issues but their cultural settings and narrative approaches are different. *That Long Silence* by Deshpande digs into Jaya's inner world through a first-person narrative emphasizing the domestic and personal aspects of feminist resistance. Deshpande (1988) emphasizes that this presentation emphasizes the intimate aspect of feminist activism in a conventional Indian context. On the other hand, Mahfouz's *Palace of Desire* uses a third-person viewpoint to portray the larger sociopolitical background of Egypt in the early 20th century. The book explores the relationship between tradition and modernity, showing how feminist concepts fit into a broader movement for political and cultural change (Mahfouz 1957).

To sum up, both novels significantly adopt the feminist discourse as they present detailed depictions of women's experiences and their struggles within their particular cultural contexts. The feminist writings in India have been influenced by Deshpande's *That Long Silence* because it tackles issues of female identity and assigned household roles. The way in which the novel portrays Jaya's journey toward self-assertion touches the reader's feelings and conscience, and it also opens arguments regarding the agency and voices of women (Deshpande 1988). On the other hand, the feminist discourses in the Arab world are influenced by Mahfouz's *Palace of Desire* which examines how tradition and modernity interact in women's lives in Egypt then. The roles of women are changing in Egyptian society, and the female characters challenge the social and political tradition. This provides insightful information about how feminism can be found with similar approaches in different cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this comparative analysis of *Palace of Desire* and *That Long Silence* reveals how the two novelists, i.e., Shashi Deshpande and Naguib Mahfouz approach feminism and the way women are portrayed in their respective societies. That is to say, Deshpande's emphasis of self-empowerment and domestic resistance is contrasted with Mahfouz's portrayal of women's roles within a larger socio-political context. Hence, both authors contribute significantly to the feminist literature with their proficient depiction of female experiences and the consequences of biased cultural expectations. While Mahfouz demonstrates how tradition and modernity coexist in women's lives, Deshpande focuses on the personal aspects of the feminist movement. Thus, gender and identity issues can be

explored in feminist literature in various ways and cultures, as these two novels reflect the feminist themes.

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