

## A new woman in Shashi Deshpande's roots and shadows

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### Abstract

Indian English fiction gives the clear picture of our culture. The prose fiction in English written by Indians is undoubtedly "The most popular vehicle for the transmission of Indian ideas to the wider speaking world" (Williams 109). Women novelists have proved their worth by enriching Indian English fiction with their memorable contribution. Shashi Deshpande is one of the prominent contemporary women writers in India writing in English. She emerged on the Indian fictional scene in 1970s. She is almost incomparable for her portrayal of Indian middle class women. Her novels are mainly based on the lives of woman and their problems particularly in the Indian context. *Deshpande's novels are directly related to Feminism. She encapsulates her artistic vision of femininity.* In her novel "Roots and Shadows" deals with feminism in the sense of born out of the dilemma of Indian women placed between the two controversies Tradition and Modernity.

**Keywords:** culture, roots, shadows, shashi deshpande's

### Introduction

In the novel Roots and Shadows, Deshpande focuses on the conflict between tradition and modernity in relation to woman in the middle class society. In this novel, the protagonist Indu, modern, educated and career-oriented and middle-class woman, who is sensitive to the changing times and situations, returning to her ancestral place after eleven years for the funeral of Akka. Akka, a surrogate mother to Indu, is a domineering character in the novel. Indu rebels against Akka's authority and marries Jayant. She thinks that marriage will free her from all the ties, but ironically, she realizes her senseless decision,

"I think of the cries that had filled me earlier...I want to be loved, I want to be happy. The cries are now stilled. Not because I am satisfied, or yet hopeless, but because such demands now seem to me to be an exercise in futility. Neither love nor happiness comes to us for the asking. But they can sneak up on us when we least expect them" (23).

It is interesting to note that Akka chose Indu as her heir. This move makes Indu understand that she is seen as the "strong" one. She feels powerful holding the answers to everyone's wishes in her hands. Her return to her ancestral place acts as an eye-opener to her. Then she realizes that she is following the shadows leaving her roots behind. She is independent, rational and logical but after her marriage it shocked her that she becomes submissive as she is obeying the words and wishes of her husband.

Have I become fluid, with no shape, no form of my own? At that moment a savage truth had stared me in the face...without wants there is no 'I'. And a still more frightful, a comically thought had occurred. Am I on my way to becoming an ideal woman? A woman who sheds her 'I' who loses her identity in her husband" (53).

*She is the luckiest woman who bears everything without a*

*drop of tear. Through Indu, Deshpande voices her view of marriage:*

"It's a trap...that's what marriage is, a trap? Or a cage? May be the comic strip version of marriage...a cage with two trapped animals glaring hatred at each other...isn't so wrong after all. And it's not a joke, but a tragedy. But what animals would cage itself." (60-61)

The larger predicament of woman in contemporary Indian society especially the new concepts of western education and economic independence have completely shaken the roots of old Indian culture and social values. Indu, with her western education went for an inter-caste marriage with Jayant, of her choice. Indu express her loneliness in these words,

This is my real sorrow that I can never complete in myself until I had met Jayant, I had not known it...that was somewhere outside me, a part of me without which I remained incomplete. Then I met Jayant and lost the ability to be alone. (34)

Like her mother she was set apart from the family for challenging the traditional mode of settling marriages. Indu is interested in creative writing, art which articulate her to voice against social capture, but Jayant does not approve her writing. He betrays her hopes for harmony and integration, for peace and happiness,

"It is this realization that allows Indu to take the kind of firm decisions that she takes regarding her career and her future towards the end of the story" (11)

She desires to establish that image of modern woman is no longer a child under the control of man. Her dreams are to attain the state of detachment, 'to her surprise, she finds herself involved and attached in many ways. Her mind is tattered between two extreme, on the one hand she is so attached to her house which became the part and parcel of her life and on the other she is like caged parrot.

Indu empowers herself to face the social challenges on which she has been suffering. She longs to live as she desires to live without having any interference in her personal life. She becomes completely strong to face the obstacles, thus she stands as a strong example for woman empowerment. "Strange, that after all my dithering and agonising the solution now seemed to simple and straight. Yes simple, in spite of the fact that that I knew the opposition I would have to encounter" (166). The novelists pictures the fearful, panic-stricken and helpless woman in the beginning and ends on a note of determination by the protagonist who resolved to take wheels of her life into her hands.

Even modern educated women consciously wrap themselves with these traits and find themselves in a fix. The novel comes to an end with a note of compromise rather than revolt and revenge which is the basic attribute of Indian feminism. The novel ends with a positive note with the hope of a new dawn. The novel depicts the permanent mark engraved on the psyche of woman by traditions, norms and conventions of the male-dominated society which prohibit them from showing their true self. The mode and style of their development inculcates in them submissiveness, silence and passiveness which hold a strong clench on their psyche.

The paper discovers the pain of the protagonist Indu in the male-dominated society. But she tries to escape from this and discover her real 'self'. Her companionship with Jayant disappoints her and helps her to unveil her whole self; it is expressed in her following words.

What I feel for Jayant ... can I compress all of it within this word? It is much more, so overwhelming a response of the whole of me to him. Sometimes I wonder if I leave him one day and live by myself. The only way in which I can be myself, my whole self again (157)

The analysis of the novel highlights the protest by the Indu against the restrictions imposed upon her. It depicts her confrontation with the family, with the male world and society. Deshpande proposes through the character of Indu that she can attain a kind of selfhood that leads her to a more secure, meaningful and independent life.

Deshpande in her stories emphasizes the statement, "Life is nothing but a compromise." She allows her heroines to compromise as they do in real life. The situation and reason for compromise may differ from person to person. But the core reason for all women to compromise is "security". Shashi Deshpande proposes through the character Indu that there is a countless chance of cheerfulness for women if they learn to conquer their fears and assert themselves.

## Reference

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