

ROOTS AND SHADOWS: A STRUGGLE FOR DIGNITY, CONFIDENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract:

*In **Roots and Shadows** Shashi Deshpande says that women do have a right to live on her own but not under the shadow of essentialism and biologism. The novel is a symbolic representation of man and women who always strive for power struggle. Indu plays a central role and her inner self is explored through this novel. Indu represents the new woman who is educated and who lives in close association with narrow-minded society. She is a creative writer who works in a women's magazine. Indu writes a book according to her taste. She thinks and dreams of winning acclaim and appreciation for her work but she re-writes her story according to the wishes of the editor which is a kind of self-flagellation. Indu lives in an ancestral home where a woman's life had no choices but to accept and submit. In order to show her resent she leaves the house and marries Jayanth but slowly she realizes that her decision is wrong. Deshpande's women protagonists revolt against the traditions and values and there is always a search for identity.*

Key Words: *Essentialism, Biologism, Power struggle, Self-flagellation, Search for identity*

*In **Roots and Shadows** Deshpande says that women do have right to live on her own but not under the shadow of Essentialism and Biologism. The novel is a symbolic representation of man and woman who always strive for power struggle. In this novel, Roots stands for tradition and shadows signify the marginal culture. Deshpande wrote this novel in 1983 and received Thirumathi Rangammal prize for the year 1982-1983. The inner self of Indu, the protagonist is explored through this novel. She is free to do whatever she likes and has freedom to talk about personal life, politics, and corruptions but things change accordingly.*

Indu is a motherless child. Her father leaves her in his ancestral home where a woman's life had no choices but to submit and accept. Indu lives in this suffocative house for 18 years. She wants to lead a life of her own. In order to show her resent she leaves the house and marries Jayanth but slowly she realizes that her decision is wrong. Both of them stand on different planes, belong to different levels and think in different ways. While Indu is sympathetic to the ills of society, Jayanth is without any excitement towards the social maladies. While Indu is a writer who is in search of artistic satisfaction, Jayanth's interest lies in material happiness. She lives a dependent life with a man who is merely generous. She is like a beggar who is grateful to her benefits. All her deeds are based on sympathy and sacrifice. In a patriarchal society a man always expects his wife to be obedient, unquestioning meek and submissive. Indu realizes this soon but, her total submissiveness is not for love. She does not want a conflict and she wants to show her family and the world that her marriage is a success. Indu suffers from isolation and she always refers to her loneliness. Indu does not express her feelings freely. She neither loves nor hates anybody but suppresses her anger in silence

Indu is interested in creative writing. She works for a women's magazine and strives for its benefit. Women not only face problems at home but also at work place. In a male dominated society women's creative and professional success is not recognized. She has to face lot of hardships in search of her identity. This is well portrayed through Indu by Shashi Deshpande. Indu's professional career is not successful. She once interview's a woman who receives an award for her services in the field of empowerment of women. When she wants to publish the editor says "Don't tell me Indu, you really believed all that you wrote? I thought you had got over it long back. Did you truly think that woman was all

this? (18) She could not fight against him because the editor thought her as a foolish girl rather than a brave person. So, she rewrites the story according to the wishes of the editor. Indu writes a book according to her taste. She thinks and dreams of winning acclaim and appreciation for her work but in reality it becomes vain. A writer always goes under the pressure and has to compromise to write the kind of things that are acceptable, popular and easily sold. Notwithstanding with all these pressures she takes a decision to resign but her husband says “That's life: what can one person do against the whole system! No point making yourself ridiculous with futile gestures. We need money, don't we? Don't forget, we have a long way to go (19)

Jayanth does not behave to the expectations of Indu. He is not a sheltering tree to her; instead she surrenders before him and yields to the demands of marriage willingly. Indu plays the role of an ideal housewife which has restrictions like freedom of thought and expression and progress in her career. She has rejected the family and tried to draw a magic circle round Jayanth and herself but she becomes alienated. Indu gets attracted towards Naren who is three or four years older than her, Naren is her old uncle's grandson. After twelve years, when Indu returns to her ancestral home she gets a chance to meet Naren. Indu opens with Naren about Jayanth and her unsuccessful marriage. She sees a friend, lover, admirer and well-wisher in the eyes of Naren. She moves freely with Naren. She does not feel sorry for her relation with him. She feels that it is not infatuation and there are no lingering feelings which made them uncomfortable. Slowly she realizes that she has been chasing shadows leaving her roots far behind in the family. Naren with whom she develops an adulterous relationship is nothing more than a mere shadow to her. He has no permanent place in her memory. She has created a hell out of a heaven. She has locked herself in a cage and has thrown away the keys. She realizes that marriage has suppressed her individuality because she has regarded marriage as a 'trap' but not as a bond. Deshpande's heroines realize their mistakes at the end and with a compromise note they return to their homes. Indu is not an exception as she does the same. Thus Indu who longed for her self-expression finally finds the roots in the home and with her husband. Shadows disappear from her vision and she sees a clear light of day with the realization that “freedom lies in having the courage to do what one believes is the right thing to do and the determination and the tenacity to adhere to it. That alone can bring harmony in life”. (203)

The meek, docile and humble Indu of the early days finally emerges as a bold, challenging, conscious and rebellious woman. She resigns her job thus protesting the male authority, hierarchy and woman's masked existence. Her self-discovery is the frightening visions of the feminine self's struggle for harmony. She comes out of her emotional upheaval and decides to live a meaningful life with her husband. The home which she leaves to prove her individuality becomes the place of refuge, of solace and consolation. Indu now feels a sense of hope for existence forgetting the idea of non-existence. The novel ends with a note of affirmation. Indu strives and struggles for her individuality as a woman and also as a caretaker in the endless cycle of life. Through the character of Indu, Deshpande talks about the women whose development is arrested though they have economic independence. They lead mechanical life and their happiness is only a materialistic one. The patriarchal family and the male dominated society also control the development of women. Women are expected to perform the role of a wife and a mother. Female child is brought up in these circumstances and a grown up child wants to prove herself as a good woman by following traditional values. This feeling obstructs the growth of a woman. During the recent times women started raising their voice against the suppression. Women should be united to achieve self-reliance, self-sufficiency and self-respect.

References

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