

SELF-DISCOVERY OF INDU IN ROOTS & SHADOWS BY SHASHI DESHPANDE

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ABSTRACT

Indu, the protagonist of "Roots and Shadows" by Shashi Deshpande, is an embodiment of the emerging woman, who is proficient in education and closely correlated with society yet eschewing all of its constrictive norms. The novel explores *Indu's* inner self and her quest for identity and self-assertion. This essay examines *Indu's* fortitude, bravery, and unorthodox actions as she attempts to come out of the "encagement and entrapment" of societal norms. The working of *Indu's* consciousness is examined in detail, as she plunges into periods of psychic disturbance. The novel provides a bold treatment of self-discovery, as *Indu* navigates her way through societal expectations and her own desires. Deshpande emphasises the exploitation of women by traditional rules of oppressive patriarchy via the journey of *Indu*. Overall, "Roots and Shadows" is a powerful exploration of the complexities of self-discovery and the challenges faced by women in patriarchal societies. The paper will analyze the conflicts, compromises, and peculiarities of an Indian, Brahmin, joint family and how it affects *Indu's* journey of self-discovery. The research paper will be a significant contribution to the study of Indian English literature and a thought-provoking analysis of the complexities of human relationships and the struggle to find one's place in the world.

Keywords— *Self-discovery, independence, individual self, inner struggles, Roots and Shadows, Shashi Deshpande*

INTRODUCTION

Deshpande's paramount is to describe the torment and friction of the new Indian women who are educated and career-oriented caught between traditional bounds and patriarchal society on one hand and self-affirmation, own identity and freedom for the other hand. Her writing captures women's need to fully realise who they are as human beings with entire souls. She has depicted all types of pain, broken relationships, violence, marital rape, adultery, violation of women rights in her novels. Her true contribution lies in the way that she creatively depicts the intricate

network of ties that exist between people, especially between men and women. She desires for her women to defy established norms, shatter conventional constraints, and advance with self-assurance and unwavering will. She has loudly argued for women's rights in opposition to a society that is ruled by men. Like man, a woman is born free but she is tied to chains, though we must remember not everywhere and always. Every woman has both positive and negative sides they can be creators like Goddess *Durga* or destroyer like Goddess *Kali*. During the vedic age Indian women have the supreme place with extraordinary scholars like *Gargi*, *Matregi* and *Lopamudra* who walked equal with men. Even *Sita*, *Savitri*, *Draupadi* and *Shakuntala*, *Ahilya*, *Kunti* and *Gandhari* who play a prominent role in history were not said to be passive, submissive, obedient, and psychopathic. *Sita* in the Ramanaya had challenged the demoniac aggressiveness of *Ravan*; *Shakuntala* in the Mahabharata proved the inner strength of her nerves by meeting the confrontation with *Dushyanta*; *Draupadi* showed the female brutality by cleaning her hair in the blood of *Dushasana* who had tried to disrobe her in the *Kaurva's* court.

She is highly interested with her audience's reactions to the conflicts and decisions that women make when they are caught in a web of male-female connections. Although her female leads have a strong sense of entrapment and pressure in knotty relationships, marriage is a cage for them where they refuse to live; they don't follow fossilized traditions and stereotypically idealised identities. Her women characters are well known about the cultural and societal shortcomings to which they are exposed in a patriarchal culture. They compete with their male counterparts to obtain freedom and acceptance, but they ultimately run against deeply ingrained societal rigidity. Her women stand at cross roads of cultural beliefs. They search for new feelings, new beginnings but within traditional norms they do not seek to reinterpret them but only make them alive with self respect and dignity. They want to enjoy their marriage but with self affirmation, their own job and salary, they persist in their self recognition and want the love, care, affection and equal rights to live as human beings. As she notes in her candid interview with Gita Vishwanath from 2003, the parent- child bond and its complex nature is a significant matter of concern. She explains how more than simply marriage, the family is vital to her. She further adds in addition to marriage, interactions between parents and children are crucial. These are the two connections that people often worry about.

Finally, the generational divide between "then" and "now" defines connections. Parents who are perceived as being authoritarian and domineering and who constantly work to enforce societal norms and conventions through their assertiveness serve as a representation of this "then." Children, on the other hand, are a representation of "now" because of their risk-taking conduct, attitude towards independence or liberty, and wide- open and accepting perspectives. As a result of having opposing viewpoints, being at opposite poles results in generation gaps, which frequently lead to family strife. The path of its rebel heroine *Indu* was described by Shashi Deshpande in her most popular and ultimate book, "Roots and Shadows" (1983). The author's variety and intellectual vigour as a novelist are demonstrated by this book. Due to this, the book was awarded the Thirumathi Rangamalam Medal as the finest English literature in 1982–1983. She rose to a higher place among other contemporary Indian women authors because of her writing style, narrative structure, and rich characterisation of her characters' inner selves. Her relentless bold step to reveal the truth of characters, societal issues and their boundaries, her crystal clear depiction of all things is a real charm of her writing and of writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE:

The title "Roots and Shadows" is significant in the novel as it represents the two major themes of the story. The word "roots" refers to *Indu's* family and her connection to her ancestral home. The word "shadows" refers to the conflicts and struggles that *Indu* faces in her life. The title suggests that *Indu's* struggles are rooted in her family and her past, and that she must confront these issues in order to move forward.

The word "roots" also represents the traditions and customs of *Indu's* family. The novel explores the conflicts that arise between tradition and modernity, and the struggle to find a balance between the two. *Indu's* family is steeped in tradition, and she must navigate the expectations of her family while also pursuing her own dreams and desires.

The word "shadows" represents the inner struggles that *Indu* faces throughout the novel. She is juggling her responsibilities between her loved ones and her working life, individual objectives, and communal requisites. She is struggling with her own identity and her role in the family. The novel delves into the inner self, psyche, and consciousness of *Indu*, who is trying to assert her individuality and realize her freedom.

WRITING AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES THAT MAKE THE NOVEL ALIVE:

The first-person perspective of the novel lets the reader experience *Indu's* emotions as well as her thoughts. Deshpande's writing style is simple and straightforward, which makes it easy for the reader to understand *Indu's* struggles. The language used in the novel is also significant in conveying *Indu's* inner struggles. The use of metaphors and similes helps to create a vivid picture of *Indu's* emotions. For example, when *Indu* is struggling with her identity, Deshpande uses the metaphor of a bird in a cage to describe *Indu's* feelings of being trapped. The use of imagery helps to create a powerful image of *Indu's* inner struggles. Deshpande also uses dialogue to convey *Indu's* inner struggles. The conversations between *Indu* and her family members are often tense and fraught with emotion. The dialogue helps to reveal the conflicts that exist between *Indu* and her family. The use of dialogue also helps to reveal *Indu's* inner thoughts and emotions. For example, when *Indu* is struggling with her relationship with *Jayant*, her inner turmoil is revealed through her conversations with him.

The structure of the novel is also significant in conveying *Indu's* inner struggles. The novel is divided into three parts, each of which represents a different stage in *Indu's* life. The first part of the book centres around *Indu's* youth and her relationship with her family. The second part of the novel highlights *Indu's* marriage to *Jayant* and her struggles to find her place in the world. The third part of the novel revolves around *Indu's* return to her family and her attempts to reconcile with them. The narrative's primary female heroine, *Indu*, bravely departs from her family home in *Roots and Shadows* in order to find independence and develop her own identity. But soon enough her hopes were dashed, she discovered that she was a failure, unsuited to be a wife, a talented journalist, or a good writer. She began seeking for her lost feminine identity, which can be considered the period of learning about oneself and an abrupt shift from dependency to disagreement and a desire for identification, in order to rediscover a sense of worth or reputation.

THE COURAGEOUS CONCEPT DEPICTED BY THE NOVEL:

Shashi Deshpande writes using a contemporary style in which she emphasises the need for young women to be seen as unique individuals. *Indu's* father, *Govind*, is a journalist by trade and a widower. His work requires him to stay detached from his home and his infant daughter *Indu*, who continues to be nurtured by *Atya*, *Kaka*, and other family elders. However, by insisting that

she attend a school with an English medium, he plays an integral part in her life. Indu is now able to take the first step towards realising her aspirations thanks. *Govind* had performed an intercaste union. So when his daughter marries outside the group, he doesn't object. The only members of the family present for the wedding are him and his older brother *Anant*. He never makes concessions to his moral principles, aspirations, or high moral standards. Regardless of his consistent absences from the family home he has made an indelible effect on *Indu*. He serves as an inspiration to *Indu*, who intends to be an honest person, upholds his moral, ethical, and intellectual standards.

Naren, an educated boy understands her inner pain, her agony, her dissatisfaction; He questions her and then tells her the reality about life. From *Naren*, she gains an appreciation for space. She perceives an identical air of remoteness even in her interaction with the old uncle; she is mindful of:

“The attachment, desires and involvement with someone is the root cause of all sufferings and humiliation which is called human predicament.”

(Roots and Shadows, 1983, p.109)

One of Deshpande's novels' strong female protagonists is *Indu*. She seeks out the answers to her loneliness at the ancient family home, avoiding her hardships and challenges in the process. Here she meets *Naren*, a distant cousin. *Naren*, an elderly uncle's grandson, spent his entire life feeling alienated from the family. He was an orphan. They eventually crossed paths. *Naren* is a man who is erratic, disorganised, and careless. *Indu* enjoys spending time with him and confides in him her feelings of anguish, loneliness, and unhappiness in her marital life. She comes clean about the fact that, while appearing to be content and successful both in her life and as a writer, *Jayant* makes her sad and she is a failure as a writer. He enlightens her on life's ups and downs, many joys and many sorrows, and he also comforts her about them. Both *Naren* and Old Uncle are healers for *Indu*. In *Naren's* presence, she experiences both inner contentment and mental tranquilly. She confesses to him that she feels completely abandoned, rejected, dreary, and troubled inside. She twice surrendered herself to *Naren* since he was her only hope. She feels whole and content when she is physically fulfilled by *Naren*.

Any indication of desire on *Indu's* behalf is denied by *Jayant*. He prevents her from experiencing any physical contentment during their marriage. Later, she confides in *Naren* that *Jayant* was ardent and ready when he abruptly stood up and said:

“No, not now; when I had taken the initiative.”

(Roots and Shadows, 1983, p. 91)

She continues:

*“When I am like that he turns away from me. I have learnt my lesson now
and so I pretend I am passive and unresponsive. I am still dead.”*

(Roots and Shadows, 1983, p.92)

She has also gone still and dead, like the other housewives in *Akka's* home.

She makes an effort to concentrate on her studies and her writing career, but the pressure of being a woman as defined by society keeps her from feeling at ease. She writes for the magazine despite the fact that she is not happy with them, but only because *Jayant* needs financial assistance from her. She must write what the magazine desires and requires, not what she feels compelled to write. Commenting on the monotonous subject assigned to her for writing, she argues:

*“Women, women, women.....” I got sick of it. There was nothing else. It
was a kind of narcissism. And as if we had locked ourselves in a cage and
thrown away the key. I couldn't go on....better this than that.”*

(Roots and Shadows, 1983, p. 78)

She put on a mask before *Jayant*, by not disclosing to him her true self. She claims:

*“...my marriage had taught me this too. I had found in myself an immense
capacity for deception. I had learnt to reveal to Jayant nothing but what he
wanted to see, to say to him nothing but what he wanted to hear. I hid my
responses and emotions as if they were bits of garbage.”*

(Roots and Shadows, 1983, p. 38)

An extreme transformation occurs in a woman after marriage. She frequently disregards her need for self-fulfillment due to her selfless commitment to her spouse and family. The same thing happens to *Indu* as well; she states:

*“When I look in the mirror, I think of Jayant. When I dress, I think of
Jayant. When I undress, I think of him. Always what he wants. What he
would like. What would please him. And I can't blame him.”*

(Roots and Shadows, 1983, p. 49)

She acknowledges:

“It’s not he who has pressurized me into this. It’s the way I want it to be. And one day I had thought...isn’t there anything I want at all? 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.”

(Roots and Shadows, 1983, p. 49)

Distressed, she thinks:

“Are we doomed to living meaningless futile lives? Is there no escape?”

(Roots and Shadows, 1983, p. 52)

After an absence of eleven years, *Indu* visits her ancestral [*Akka's*] home to attend her cousin *Mini's* wedding. She moved away from home when she turned eighteen to wed the love of her life. She has time to reflect on her life from earlier times till the present day while dwelling at her familial house. She is shocked to find that regardless of her degree, she is just like the other ladies she used to look down to in her childhood there. And her husband, who seems to be a well-educated modern man, is like all the other regular Indian spouses. She has been acting the passive, submissive wife to keep her husband *Jayant* happy and satisfied, just like the other women of the home who walk around the *Tulsi* plant to lengthen their husbands' lives. She used to think of herself as intelligent, educated, and independent; now she painfully realises that she is no superior to her *Kakis* and *Atyas*.

Indu learns from *Narmada* in her ancestral home about how *Akka's* early years influenced her outlook on life. When *Akka* was twelve years old, her husband was in his thirties. She was forced to endure her in-laws' cruel treatment at such a young age without saying anything at all. She failed twice in her attempts to flee the place after receiving this atrocious treatment. She suffered severe torture by her mother-in-law after being apprehended and imprisoned for three days. Her husband's desire to introduce a mistress into the home only made matters worse. Additionally, because *Akka* was unable to have a child, her misery at her husband's home left an irreversible mark on her psyche. She explains to *Narmada Atya* about marital life based on her personal experiences and recalls:

“Now your punishment begins, Narmada. You have to pay for all those saris and jewels.” **(Roots and Shadows, 1983, p. 70)**

Indu recognises that women have a dual battle to wage: one against sexist male thinking, and another opposing the social conventions and women that endorse such mentality.

Naren's untimely death by drowning shatters *Indu*, who was close to him. She was overcome by a sense of complete melancholy of the human spirit as she witnessed *Naren* terminating there, apart from the connection they built and free of any feelings. After *Naren* passed away, *Indu* discovered the need of self-awareness and restraint. She becomes aware of the cycle being carried out between mortality and life, which results in the replacement of one life by other. *Indu* claims she was gazing at existence itself, which she feels is eternal, unbounded, formless, and grace-filled.

Finally, she makes a decision, resolves the property dispute, and consents to sale the ancient house to *Shankar Appa*, who eventually decides to remake it into a hotel. She continues *Akka's* promise, much to *Kaka's* relief, and urges him to set a wedding date for Mini and she'll fund the costs. The old house ultimately comes to an end after having sheltered four generations, having witnessed many deaths, and having exchanged both laughter and tears, but it will live on in the echoes of the family and in memories of *Indu* as a place where she found her true self.

She finally reaches a moment of self-realization and experiences a full psychic shift after much self-examination and discontentment. Her newly acquired self-awareness causes her perspective to deepen. She emerges as a fully integrated, self-sufficient entity after achieving internal harmony. *Indu* starts pondering restoration as she realises the significance of *Jayant* and how incomplete she would find herself without him. This extended separation from *Jayant* gives her the opportunity to rekindle her relationship with him. She decides to head back home with a freshly acquired independent self and the necessary fortitude to declare her independence after her the courage to resolve a looming property issue, thanks to her life as an individual and a suddenly altered choice.

She makes the decision to keep some things confidential in her "No Man's Land" and vows never to tell *Jayant* what transpired between her and *Naren*. She would speak of her resignation from her position to *Jayant* among other things. This liberal and unfettered declaration of her own desires demonstrates the transformation of the charming and modest *Indu* of earlier times into a fearless, demanding, conscientious, and rebellious woman authority. *Indu* is resolved to be in charge of decisions on her own, heading forth and to live her life how she sees fit.

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