

SHASHI DESHPANDE'S ROOTS AND SHADOWS --- A JOURNEY OF A WOMAN

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Abstract

Right from the beginning women have been deemed as goddess in family. She is mother, daughter, wife and sister. In spite of having such a bonding with a woman she is still treated as a second class being. She is a goddess she needs a private place at home. She should be submissive and remain prepared to make sacrifice wherever her sacrifice requires without any foregrounding. These are notions prevailing regarding womanhood in society. With the advancement of time new demands have cropped up like commercialization and industrialization. In these requirements woman feels a need to earn money as money earned by male is quite less to meet the expenses of family. So woman has to come out of the house to generate resources to supplement in the income of her husband. Being an earning woman she became a little empowered but at this point she has to make another sacrifice that she is not enough liberated to spend her money by her own choice or she has to take opinion of her husband to use the money. The present paper will discuss this very fact that, what are the rights of a woman in family and this analysis has been done in connection with Shashi Deshpande's novel "Roots And Shadows".

Keywords: Feminism, liberation, Realization, Surrogate mother, Emancipation, Emotional bondings.

Introduction

Novel is an instrument which is used exclusively for social reforms. This genre appeared in 18th century with the publication of Rajmohan's wife. Since the time of beginning till the age novel has changed drastically. The fiction that came after independence generally concentrated on reforms, liberation, education, women's issues and so on. The women's matters are too controversial to pick up but some writers show courage in writing on gynocentric themes. The writers like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandya, Shobha De, Geeta Mehta and Shashi Deshpande paved the way for women's emancipation. The women writers brought those hidden crisis of women lives into forefront that political thinkers carried forward to amend and enact new laws for women. Deshpande is one such writer who wrote only on women. She described the plight of women's point of view and she rebuked those male feminists who write on woman's concern to romanticize the problems of women.

Shashi Deshpande belonged to moderate Feminism though she denied to be called as feminist yet her themes are focused on women's role in society as well as in family. She wrote seven novels and many short stories. All of them talked about women's predicament and challenges. Deshpande through her works promulgated an idea of women's emancipation. She not only shares her view point on women's role but she suggested some ways to women for having emancipation in their lives. Her protagonists are educated, intelligent, sensible and a silent speakers. One of her lady who possesses all of attributions of femininity and at the same time gives the testimony of liberated women is Indu in "Roots and shadow". This novel

published in year 1981 presented a daring lady Indu who is on the road of self realization. Indu is free lance journalist who writes only those write ups which are she is being directed to write. She is in frustration and wants to get rid of angst and affliction. She wants to leave the job but she reluctantly continues it as she lacks determination to speak against the wishes of her husband Jayant a master in disguise. Her husband Jayant a male chauvinistic, convinced Indu to do works with the agency as they wanted to settle down their lives. Her husband Jayant is sophisticated, educated and having liberal attitude but when he comes to his role as a husband he is too conservative to permit her wife to live her life independently. One of the critic supplemented his view point in his paper regarding the attitude of Jayant "The hegemony of men does not allow the liberation of women from the labyrinthine of family ties"(216)¹. Indu has an intellectual mind she realized the present work place provides her only job but not satisfaction. She faces struggles in herself but she has no other way out. She has fed up with her life suddenly one day she received an invitation from her surrogate mother Akka whom Indu called a domineering female. Indu hates to go Akka's place but she finds an opportunity to keep herself away from Jayant for sometimes to work over her inner crisis, so she decides to go there. When Jayant came to know about her going to Akka's place he mocked over at her decision because he had formed low opinion over Akka. He said "What is she of yours? Your father's aunt, isn't she? Rather a distant relation"(20).(92)² Indu didnot argue with Jayant on Akka's invitation, she silently came at Akka's place. Deshpande threw light on the behavior of Indu that she

wanted to live her life but Jayant pecked her incessantly, she feels final settlement of her problem has become mandatory at this stage she has to break the ice now. She might have tried to fell down the facades of her life but she did not succeed. Under this obligation she opted to stay at Akka's place. On her arrival she finds Akka on her death's bed. One thing surprised her that before her death Akka bequeathed all of her property to her. She was astonished on Akka's action but she prostrated in front of Akka's wish. With the property of Akka Indu emerged new master of inherited property. Not only Indu but all members were baffled over Akka's last moment decision. Indu recollects once Akka scolded her as she was talking with a boy in her college. This was very offensive for a girl who belonged to middle class taking such a liberty. Indu could not understand what mistake she had made she was just taking with a boy in library of college but it was a blunder in eyes of Akka. Indu is an educated lady whereas Akka was a paragon of patriarchy. She believes in doing only those works which were being sanctified by male members in family. Indu. Indu hates patriarchy of Akka. Akka believes males are the real owner in family. A female should only be a subordinate to male and she should follow male in his decisions. After marriage with Jayant Indu refused all the tit-bit of Akka and endeavors to accommodate herself in the new environment. As she entered into Jayant life she found love, and affection, but soon segregation and suppression became the order of her new life. With the passage of time she realized after being married to Jayant she has opened a new chapter of her life, the chapter taught her about slavery on the name of marriage and she has acclimatized herself in slavery. Earlier she was the responsibility of Akka now she has taken care by her Husband. When she reached her parental home everything was in scattering condition, of course Akka is no longer part of family and she received the legacy of Akka's property it is her duty to settle down each complication of family. Indu releases Akka is no more but her strong presence is making fun of Indu's incompetency in managing the financial crunch. Indu noticed Akka was still that woman who has lost everything but her arrogance persisted. Indu abhorrence towards Akka increased when she came to know she [Akka] again made her loser in winning-losing game of life. Indu is not conservative like Akka but she is still struck to old values especially when it comes to the question of her integrity towards her husband Jayant. She realized she is willingly adapted to those valves which were ingrained in her mind

by Akka. Akka was the motherly figure to every child in family. Indu began to form good opinion about Akka when Atya made her aware of Akka past life in her in-laws home. She was a child widow she married off to a man who possessed a giantly figure like demon. He was landlord and a staunch follower of patriarchy. Atya informed Indu , Akka had to agree on the proposal of marriage as in their times girls were not choosers. He was her double in age and he exploited her sexually. After marriage Akka was in great distress when she bore no longer the atrocities of her in-laws she made attempted to escape but each time she got caught and was sent back to him whenever she was caught she cried and pleaded her mother in law for locking her up in a dark room but not to sent her into husband room. She beseeched "Lock me again in room, donot sent me to him" (59)³ Deshpande through this miserable condition of Akka conveys that in married life the lady has no choices she has to accept whatever comes in her way and our society is too biased and snubbed any woman to express their choices or transgress simone de, a legendary feminist talks on the same issue she expressed the boys tell their choice but the girls have to content with the things given to them under these circumstances some girls have to content with the things given to them. In this frustration most of girls make someone confide of their sorrows like diaries whatever a girl writes on it, it is their suppressed emotions, anger and thoughts. By means of the writing they released their unwanted emotions. This mode facilitates them in having solace. After coming out of the emotional deluge they feel adjustment and refresh minds again the cycle continues. Akka has borne atrocity of her husband. Not only atrocities she has tolerated but she has seen 'second woman' in her husband's life. Akka performed all the wifely duties expected of her till the husband had paralytic shock. After this attack he became independent Akka entirely. Akka kept him speckles clean, provided him his needs. Besides it is Akka only who could understand his saying his voice got so hoarse because of stroke that whatever he uttered in moaning pain Akka figured out easily. In spite of having a best partner in his life like Akka one day he demanded his mistress Akka scolded him. As Akka denied him his desires the man who had giantly figure began to behave like a small childhood and Akka did nothing to console him. Akka who had posed a composed being before him during the day wept bitterly during night. Deshpande tried to say the new Akka has resisted the unnecessary demand of husband she did not give in easily but her inner self left her at that very moment

when she has given refusal to the demand of her husband. the plight of Akka shook Indu whereas she always looked Akka an old woman who has nothing to do accepts to make mess of others life. As Indu came to know the real Akka realized Akka has the power to change her destiny. It is only Akka's preverence, patient, hard work and right decision made her a lady of substances she was too frail when she became wife to middle age man but she gained power after the torturous years of her marriage. She became a strong woman because of the struggle within marriage. Although Akka patronized male dominated world yet somewhere she recognized the real strength in woman she found this strength in India. that is why she bequeathed all of her property to Indu not to any men. Akka was not domineering woman but only conditions transformed her. Akka realized she has to choose someone as a care taker of her property. After revised the evens and odds in family her choice finally stayed at Indu. Indu was the right choice she is educated a sensible decision maker, dutiful daughter and possessed lot of experience of worldly affairs, Akka was also aware of this fact that she would never allow any member to influence her decision. Deshpande explored the lives of middle class women. She presented multiple facets of womanhood. One has been acted by Akka who was full of appreciation for male patriarchy. Indu comes at second place where a woman is a sandwiched between values and modernity. The woman like Sumitra Kaki who are opportunity seekers neither sensible like Indu nor decision maker like Akka is just woman, she believes in satisfying her wishes. Moreover, women like her are commoners nothing is important for them only the fulfillment of their demand is their priority. Though the portrayals of Indu and Akka Deshpande gave insight to traditional values that clinched to every Indian strongly and modernity that has been already sneaked into Indian homes from the back door is still struggling for a proper place. Indu is representing this aspect where modern women is on the verge of adopting western modes but still the women like Akka dissuades them to do so. Indu is not radical feminist who wants change instantly but she believes traditionalism should support a woman in family and family allow a women to perform well in professional life. Women cannot have parting ways from her family. After attaining the status of Akka Indu realizes everyone wants her favour.

"Roots and Shadow" is a journey of woman, Indu who wants to assert herself. She does not bring up in modern values nor she bounds to traditional mores. Not having

these things in her she wants to know where she belongs, which her place. Her husband dominated her because for him she is just a 'chattel'³, she has no soul and heart. Indu wants recognition and dignity. Jayant protected her but never allowed to take her own ways. Indu recollected Jayant snubbed her many a time. Indu decides to suspend her duties for time being and tries to search herself. She finds she resembles to those women who are financially depended on males as they are excluded from decision making. Like them she is a receptacle. Akka provides Indu time to think over herself. Indu needs a space as Sarita in "Dark Holds No Terror" wants to have. Sarita life is brimmed with frustration and reached the level of impasse. Indu is in same condition she has family but family just let her down at each moment. Sarita life became hell when a lady journalist had come for her interview she asked: "How do you feel when your wife not only earn bread but butter too" (204)⁴. This interview derailed the life of Sarita. Similarly Indu job gave her strong tremor she wants withdrawal from job for a time being. Both of protagonists long for having permanent solution of their crisis and they wanted settlement once for all. Indu is in Dilemma. She cannot say anything in a clear tone to Jayant that she wanted to resign for job. She keeps everything in her mind. During sojourn at parental place she got chance to observe indigenous culture of her parental home. She learnt women have own respective place in family. A woman should be accomplished in carrying out household jobs like cleaning washing, looking after children as well as elderly persons in family if she tries to reverse the role she herself bears the consequences. Staying at Akka's place helped her to identify the weakness and strong points of her personality. She also saw deaths in family. The death of Nareen, old uncle and especially Akka made her sad. She decides she should take her own decision for family and herself. She made up her mind to sell out the ancestral house but it should be remained with family till Mini's marriage would over. For herself she chose she would go back to Jayant and declare her decision. Deshpande here stressed that Indu needs to do it as it her life she is professional she knows which professional is conducive to her. She takes a sensible and bold decision. Through Indu Deshpande shows ways to many other strayed women who remain procrastinate and never mutter up enough strength to declare their selves. Indu shows determination and courage. First she decides to discuss the problem with Jayant. R.S. Pathak writes about Indu in his book "Indu symbolizes the new woman who is educated" (87).⁵ Indu is

main character she presented her story in her own voice. Actually novel maintains the first person narration and had adopted the technique of subconscious. The story moves smoothly with a little digression of to and fro events. Indu comes out a winner. She explores herself and becomes a woman of her own type. The final words of Indu shows she has attained freedom "May be Jayant would understand"(187).⁶

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