



Woman and Marriage in Deshpande's *Roots and Shadows*

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Abstract:

The very first work of Sashi Deshpande is Roots and shadows. The author has received the Thirumati Rangammal Prize in 1984 for her outstanding work in the novel Roots and Shadows. She has also received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1990 for the amazing work she has done in That Long Silence. Nanjangud Tirumalamba Award was given to The Dark Holds No Terrors in 1990. Her work is well appreciated as all the recognitions have proved that she wields her pen with a mastery that she stands out as an unrivalled artist in her own creative spheres. Roots and Shadows is a wonderful novel that talks about tradition, family life, marriage, patriarchy, domestic abuse, self-delusion and adultery. This paper aims to discuss the voice of Indu and how she outgrows the patriarchal norms.

Keywords: Women, dominance, patriarchy, sexes, identity, institution, marriage

Divakaruni's concern towards the world she experiences is expressed in her work. Revolutionary woman she indeed is. She is against dominance starting from her childhood. Even as a small child, she hated obedience and passivity at her ancestral home. Her father left home when her mother passed away. She was brought up by her aunts. In her novel *Roots and Shadows*, Akka is the rich tyrant of the family and she dominates the family. But Indu here refused to be cowed down by her. It is to be well understood that the concept of feminism not only raises a voice against male dominance, but also against women who cherish the values of patriarchy. She decides to marry Jeyant who is from another caste and breaks tradition there. When Akka dies, she returns to her ancestor home. She is astonished to find that, Akka has left all the property to her. Now Indu is put in a place where she has to rethink about her life, her journalistic career, her marriage and her hard-won independence. When Indu meets her cousin Nareen, she is convinced that he understands her more than her husband Jeyant. She could be seen to be sharing all her thoughts and problems to Nareen but in the end, she comes to Jeyant and this time she is in a new self.

Indu is an indomitable new woman who is educated and lives in close association with the society, brushing aside all its narrow conventions as per the definition of the author. Though she is married to Jeyant, she is free to use the words like 'kiss', 'rape', 'deflowered and orgasm' with Naren. The main aim of the author is to bring out the inner struggle of an artist to express herself through the character of Indu. Indu could be seen to be ready to bid adieu to her monotonous service despite the fact that Jeyant stand against it.

It is in fact to be understood that Indu has a feeling of self alienation which constantly increases when she is put in a conflict demands made on her by her desire to conform to a cultural ideal or feminine passivity against her ambition to be a very creative and independent writer.

Women own emotional needs remain unfulfilled though they serve their family. This is seen in Indu's feeling of isolation which finds an expression in the words, "I am alone " (RS 10) and again

her disorientation is expressed in her questions. “Our own people? Who are they? Where do I draw the boundary?”(RS 10).

The author tries to bring out that women are left with no choice. It is to be clearly understood that there is a shadow of male dominance in every aspect of their life which forces them to reconsider their progress towards their success in their own lives. Being a woman is also put in the same place with no choice. Acutely circumscribed is how her life is. She says, “A woman’s life, they had told me contains no choices and all my life especially in this house, I had seen the truth of this”(RS 11).

Marriage is not the same thing to a man as to a woman. The two sexes are different from each other though each one has the necessity of the other. But this necessity has never brought about a condition of reciprocity between them. Women have never constituted a caste making exchanges and contracts with the male caste upon equal footing. When considering men and women marriage is not the same for both of them. The two sexes could be seen to be very different and their needs a different while they also need each other. But this need never created a condition of reciprocity between them. Not in a position where they can meet its changes and contracts with the mail upon the equal footing.

When considering the case of Indu she has no direct influence upon her husband as she is a woman. Sure the husband is seen to be impervious to her emotional urges. On the other hand she is the one who has to cater to the needs of his urges and his drives. Women March herself into others and neglect her own self due to this patriarchy. She loses her identity and begins to live according to husband's needs. Jeyant on the other hand betrays in the hopes for harmony and integration for peace and happiness not the sea act as a shelter to her.

I call with the firm tone of humanity for my arguments Sir, are dictated by a disinterested spirit – I plead for my Sex nor for myself. Independence I have long considered as the grand Blessing of life, the basis of every virtue and independence I will ever square by contracting my wants though I were to live on a barren health. - Mary wollstone craft.

Throughout the twentieth century, there has been a study of a ubiquitous male control over every aspect of a woman's existence Sarah observes:

Man has subjugated woman to his will, used Her as a means of selfish, gratification, to Minister to his sexual pleasure, to be instrumental in promoting his comfort: but never has he desired to elevate her to that rank she was created to fill Feminism strives to undo this tilted and distorted image of woman whose crises for freedom and equality have gone and still go, unheard in a patriarchal social structure, Kamala Das writes: I don't know politics but I know the names Of those in power and can repeat them like Days of weeks or names of months (Ramamurthu: 148-9)

The novel *Roots and Shadows* is seen to be bringing out the shame that is euphemistically put over the institution of marriage and how it is in today's Hindu fold. In the case of the protagonist it is very important to understand that though she happens to be the central figure of the novel marriage and happiness can be said as two different unrelated ideas. It is said that in traditional view, marriage automatically leads to happiness. In the modern context of a materialistic Hindu society, does not stand scrutiny. Indu says: "But marriage.... It makes one so dependent" (RS 106). Again, she says: "Faith, love, devotion...do they always have to be unbalanced, obsessive, unreasonable" (RS 105). She adds "To me, life seems simple. You work, you earn a living, you have a family, you

look after them, you are cared for.... And what more one want? (RS 107). She (Indu) does not take time to throw back: She says "To care for anyone too much.... It's all pain. A punishment" (RS 108).

But the old man in his usual calm comforting way argues out: "That's not right, Indu. That,s the coward's way. Attachment...we can't escape it. It's the law of life" you can never protect yourself against love" (RS 107-108). Again, he also says: "It's (marriage) the only thing that matters. It means continuity. It means I'll never die" (RS 108), and for her: That's the hope that keeps us going (RS 108). Indu has got her own exclusive reaction; she is worried about my dream, my ideal of detachment. As she is against the secure serenity-inspired soothing view of life turning happy through a renewal of hope' She says: "I don't know why, but my keeps harping on this theme of detachment and loneliness. Will I never reach that stage.... No passions, no emotions, an unruffled placidity?" (RS 108).

A great satisfactory image of Deshpande as a writer in line of troll greatness by the attachment detachment dichotomy which is brought out in an impeccable and astounding neatness with reference to marriage following her ideal-Jane Austen, the perfect writer. As for her reader the deep mystery of life conveyed through a whole impenetrable complex array of motives and intentions of the people among whom our predicament-ridden lot is most woefully cast. Deshpande's moral Prescription to morality, true to herself, true to her beliefs and truly interested in unraveling these for her readers.

In a patriarchal, male-bastion culture, many sexual and gender roles are imposed upon women. The male prejudice against female children is also explained by the author. With the family he hated and despised, Indu's father had parted her 15-day old baby. Until she was more than a year old, he had not even come to see her. The author also tries to suggest a solution as she is conscious of the problems and dilemmas of women. All the age old traditions and beliefs binding her feet with

falter can only be broken by the woman. In the end, Indu can be seen to be deciding on what she wants. She could be seen to be clear with her decision to resign from the job and do the kind of writing she had dreamt of doing.

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