

**STUDY OF SHASHI DESHPANDE'S NOVEL 'ROOTS AND SHADOWS'
FROM FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVES****DR. CHANDRAKANT R. MANDLIK**Principal
Shiv Chhatrapati College,
Junnar (Pune)**ABSTRACT**

All human beings are equal. 'Woman is not born but made'. She is born and brought up in the society. We recognize the seeds of exploitation of woman from the beginning of her life and she becomes the puppet in the hands of male dominated society during her growth. Therefore, there is need of women movement which can take effort to stop women exploitation'. Shashi Deshpande's novel 'Roots and Shadows' represents the inner world and thoughts of woman protagonist, Indu.

Keywords- Woman, Exploitation, Self- Identity, Capacity, Development.**Introduction**

Being a human being woman is given right of freedom and fraternity. It is accepted principle that no discrimination is made on the basis of man and woman. Both are equal from the beginning of birth. Consequently the woman has got humanity. She feels free from the traditional exploitation. She started to realize her own identity, development of her capacity and participation in the social life. Instead of locking herself in the domestic matters she understood fulfillment of duties in the life.

Identity of human being is mainly determined by a gender, a community class, sex and self image. There must be freedom of equal opportunity and dignity which is essential segment for the progress and development. When we think of identity of Indian woman in the home and in the society we have to focus on cultural norms, family structure and social organization. Indian woman's identity is decided by the society in which she lives in because it is the only source for her protection and even happiness. In a true sense woman in India is considered as 'Mata'. India woman is metaphor of purity, chastity and sanctity of the ancient spirit that is India'. (Chandra, 2006:150) In the old films image of woman was presented as dutiful daughters, devoted wives and self-sacrificing mothers. The Marathi film 'Satich Van' is still very much popular because of wholly, true image of woman 'The cultural representations of women in the image of a Sita or a Savitri or an Ahilya-women known for their exceptional devotion to their husbands- still proliferate in popular media as well as in serious literature. (Daiya, 2006:65)



Woman before 20th century

The writers in the 20th century began to raise voice for women community. Woman was treated as the inferior to man. Her place in the house was in the corner as a rejected object. She was considered as a tool to look after husband, children and domestic matters. The male beings did not allow her to participate in literary matters and other valuable decisions like son or daughter's education, marriage and about financial matters. All the decisions regarding family were taken by the men. The role of women was totally passive. Men looked at them from the point of sexual fulfillment. She was a source of productive process and her major role was to create an heir of the family to enrich the status. The great Indian poetess Kamala Das in the poem 'An Introduction' expresses agony on the women condition in the words:

*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.
(Ramaamurti, 1995:148-9)*)

The freedom fighters and social workers, political thinkers worked for women's progress and development. Mahatma Phule began education for women in Bhide Wada in Pune, the place which is recognized as 'Vidyache Maherghar'. Mahatma Gandhiji's movement of 'Swaraj' gave an opportunity to the women to break the walls of prison house and come out of it to enjoy liberty. Woman had no freedom, no identity, no education, no right to express. But change in political, social and economical situation brought a surprising change in a women community. They realize values of life, the women have started to understand, physical and mental abilities. One may underline that they need support of their husbands.

Shashi Deshpande and her feminism

Indian women writers have began writing about Indian women, their problems and needs. Shashi Deshpande is one of the prominent writers in Indian English literature who writes about middleclass woman in Indian society. Her creativity gave her recognition as an outstanding writer. Shashi Deshpande elaborated the issues like frustration, loneliness, misunderstanding and alienation of sensitive woman. She tries to describe man-woman relationship and problems of woman protagonist. Shashi Deshpande presents Indian shades of feminism in her novels. Projecting inner mind of woman Shashi Deshpande portrays female character who has urge to establish her own identity and wants to grow according to her own desire and ability. Her two novels 'The Dark Holds No Terror' and 'That Long Silence' have taken her on the port of literature to enlighten and enrich Indian English fiction.

Shashi Deshpande's first novel 'Roots and Shadows' focuses on the inner world and thoughts of woman protagonist. Indu is shown revolting personality. She possesses qualities like sensitiveness, self-consciousness, brilliance and creativity. All these distinctive features have made her character remarkable. From the beginning of childhood Indu is fighting against dominance right. She does not fear Akka. Akka is a cruel ruler of the rich family and dominant person in the home. Indu realizes power of her husband, Jayant so she refuses to be



a puppet in the hands of him. It underlines Indu's quest for self identity and notion of rebellion. The rebellion may be considered as deviation.

On visiting ancestral house Indu thinks and rethinks her life and problems occurring in her married life. She finds her journalistic career, marriage and independence in the darkness, where gleams of individuality are not bright. She feels very free to discuss her problems of life and views with her cousin, Naren. Like Savitri in R.K.Narayan's *'The Dark Room'* (1938) Indu returns to her father in law's house which reflects philosophy of *'Return of the native'*. In this sense *'rite de passage'* underlines Indu's development. Her growth is reflected in her return to the ordinary and normal state of existence. Indu's rebellion is momentary. The fears of loneliness and unsecured world outside the house compel her to return to the home of her husband.

The feminist writers from year's together struggle to present pathetic life of a woman who wants freedom and equality in their practical life. But the social structure and family taboos do not allow her to peep through the window which is eternally curtained. Mary Wollstonecraft writes about the voice of neglected woman who suffers from need of the liberty. Voice for the freedom to the woman is reflects feministic approach. Mary Wollstonecraft says, 'I call with the firm tone of humanity, for my arguments sir, are dictated by disinterested spirit I plead for sex, nor for myself. Independence, I have long considered the grand blessing of life, the basis of every virtue and independence, I will never square by contracting my wants, though I were to live on a barren health. (1994:10)

While struggling for freedom woman has to confront with men community, social and life conducts which are imposed upon her. Indu is educated woman. She creates an intimate association with the society and attempts to disregard old conventions and traditions. Indu enjoys freedom of thoughts. Consequently she speaks freely about the issue she desires. Indu utters words like 'Kiss', 'rape', 'deflowered' and 'orgasm' which women generally avoid to speak. Living with her husband Naren she moves freely from place to place. Indu symbolizes a 'new woman'.

There is tremendous change in the science and technology. Woman is given freedom. But the society is a major obstacle in their path of enjoying liberty on the ground that they are female. In fact, woman plays main roles in the home a sister, a mother a wife a grandmother and mother in law. She is a care taker of the family members and children. In her absence members in the house feel creeping in the darkness. But nobody bothers her dreams and emotions. Sometimes she is isolated and does not find a way to express her feelings. The same agony is expressed by Indu when she suffers. 'Then we are out. It is dusty, a totally barren place, the glare and the heat are both fierce.... I had rejected the family tried to draw a magic circle around Jayant and myself. I had pulled in my boundaries and found myself the poorer for it. Alienation, I know now, is not the answer.... 'I am alone,' they seem to me to be the most poignant words in any language (Deshpane, 1983:6)

There is men dominance over the activities of the women. Without permission of the man they do nothing. They have no choices. Their wishes are rejected. Indu's cousin Mini, has to get married. But she cannot have choice to find a man for marriage. Her opinions are not



taken into consideration. The youngsters have no free choice of emotional relationship. The choice of partnership is decided by the family and the society. All the important decisions are left in the hands of the elder men in the house. Mini's feelings are expressed in the words, 'A woman's life, they had told me, contained no choices. And all my life, especially in this house, I had seen the truth of this. And I had often wondered that they been without wills, or have their will atrophied through a life time of disuse?' (Deshpande, 1983:6)

When there is a question of marriage everybody realizes that injustice is done to woman. Marriage is not a need of one person. Still man and woman are not treated the same. The place of woman is taken for granted as the secondary one. The men always think that woman is a substitute. Therefore she has to behave as a senseless and voiceless woman. They are in search peace happiness. The women are unable to love if they feel so. They are indirectly or directly compelled to be content with what they have. One may underline that they are exploited mentally and physically.

Woman lives under the influence of man. Being a woman Indu does not find any way to express herself to the society except her husband. Indu has strong eagerness to communicate her feelings, thoughts and emotions through her husband to the society. But her husband Jayant is found very much impenetrable and neutral to his wife's emotional yearning. Forgetting her parents and close relatives a woman accepts husband and his family mates. "A house wife struggles against orthodoxy and tradition but finally yields to the ways of family." (Singh' 1999:18) She deals her rest of the life according to her husband's wish and acts on the direction of the family. Burning her own wishes Indu has to live for the fulfillment of her husband's wishes. Because of Jayant she has to sacrifice her own hopes for peace and happiness of the house. Indu has no other option except yielding her own identity and surrendering before male supremacy of Jayant. Indu says, 'I had learnt to reveal to Jayant nothing but what he wanted to hear. (Deshpande, 1983:38)

Woman before marriage at parent's house has liberty and she can show her own identity. But marriage makes her slave. Women started feeling that marriage life is like a caged life where she loses herself and finds no shelter, peace, and comfort. She cannot spare time for herself and not allowed to cross the threshold of the home without husband's permission. Shashi Deshpande expresses her thoughts about the marriage through the lips of Indu in the words: 'It's a trap....that's what marriage is. A trap a cage....? a cage with two trapped animals glaring hatred each other. And it's not a joke, but a tragedy'. (Deshpande, 1983:61)

Conclusion

Men and women, after all are human beings. Their needs, thinking power, and knowledge are same. The only difference is of gender. In order to put an end to the woman suffering women must invent their roots and shed the shadows. A single woman can't do this work. All the women must be united and fight against slavery. In the novel, '*Roots and Shadows*' Shashi Deshpande illustrates experiences of women. She suggests mutual understanding between man and woman. The novelist advises liberty for growth and development of a woman. The novel gives optimistic vision of life which needs conflict for harmony and sanity. The vision



of feminity is reflected by the novelist in the novel through the problems of women in a orthodoxy and traditional society.

REFERENCES

1. Camus, Albert. (1951). *The Rebel*, Trans. Anthony Bower.1986; Harmondsworth.
2. * Chandra, N.D.R. (2006). “*Mulplicity of Feminine Gender Identity in The God of Small Things*”, *Indian Woman Novelists in English*, ed. Dodiya Jaydipsinh. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons.
3. Daiya, Krishana. (2006). “*Shashi Deshpande’s Roots and Shadows: A Critical Study*”, *Indian Woman Novelists in English*, ed. Dodiya Jaydipsinh. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons.
4. Deshpande, Shashi. (1983). *Roots and shadows*. New Delhi: Orient Longman Limited.
5. Narayan, R. K. (1938), *The Dark Room*, 1986 ; Mysore: Indian Thoughts Publication.
6. Ramamurti, K.S. Ed. (1995). *Twenty Five Indian Poets in English*. Delhi: Macmillan.
7. Singh, P. K. ed. (2001).*The Novels of R. K. Narayan: A Critical Evaluation*. New Delhi: Atalantic Publishers and Distributers
8. Wollstonecraft, Mary. (1994). *A vindication of the Rights of Woman*. 1792; Oxford.