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## Portrayal of Indu as an Unusual Image of a Suffering Married Indian Woman in Shashi Deshpande's Novel Roots and Shadows

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### Abstract

Ever since the dawn of civilization image of woman has been undoubtedly integral to the study of literature all over the world. Woman has inspired literature and has been its pivotal theme too. She herself is a creator of literature and therefore a woman's presence in literature is all pervading. This is true to Indian English Literature as well. She has been presented as a myth, a metaphor, a symbol, a deity or a devil. Shashi Deshpande's novel Roots and Shadows reveals the theme of double standard practiced openly by man for centuries causing unspeakable misery to married Indian women. But the greatness of Deshpande in this novel consist in portraying an unusual image of a married woman (Indu) who, as a sharp reaction to the double moral standard of her husband, begins to practise clandestinely the double moral standard herself at the physical level including her hidden hunger and aspiration. This novel, like her the most successful novel, That Long Silence, underscores women's full autonomy to live a satisfying life throwing to the winds all the crippling conditions imposed on her by the male-oriented society. Thus, the image of woman painted in Roots and Shadows, is quite challenging.

**Keywords:-** Portrayal of Indu, an Unusual Image, Suffering Married Indian Woman, Shashi Deshpande's Novel, Roots and Shadows.

### Introduction

Indian English novelist have painted the image of woman variously in their novels. But the contribution of Shashi Deshpande is unique as she has handled the image of woman in her novels very remarkably, voicing the agonizing the plight and predicament of millions of married Indian women. In her renowned novel Roots and Shadows (1983) Deshpande unfolds a tale of triumph and tragedy of a house and a family. Manjari Shukla remarks that "it tells the story not of an individual but of an institution which is threatened by the forces of change and faces dissolution."<sup>1</sup>Akka, a grand old matriarch, is the presiding deity of this institution, who confers peace and security on her willing subjects

but who deals ruthlessly with the rebellious. Indu, a sensitive, educated and liberated young woman is caught in this vortex. She questions and challenges Akka's authority and walks out from the house to seek fulfilment in her own personal manner. Akka, however, remains unmoved by such spasmodic protests and refuses to slacken her grip as long as she lives. When she falls critically ill and realizes that her end is near, she chooses Indu as the heiress and wills her entire property including the house in her name. Indu is fully informed of Akka's illness and comes back to the family only to find Akka is dying. She meets Akka and notices that even in the face of death there is a quiet dignity about her.

"There was", Indu recalls after her death, "a triumphant gleam in them [Akka's eyes] I could almost see her thoughts... I made, you come home, didn't I? I brought you back, didn't I? " (18) In real sense Akka has been a deeply traditional woman in her life. When in the novel a final reconciliation takes place between Akka and Indu, the terms of this reconciliation are Akka's. Even while she is gasping for breath, she chides Indu for her wilfulness and immaturity. Indu is mesmerised. "There was", admits Indu, "in spite of her weakness, still that quality of arrogance in her voice that had always infuriated me. As a child it had surprised me that she, so abysmally ignorant, so what I-considered stupid, could assume such an air of superiority." (20) Akka is angry that Indu has come alone and not brought her husband with her:

I had something important to tell both of you'. 'You will have to put up with me.' And I wanted to see him, what kind of a husband you have got."

At that I had to laugh. 'Oh Akka, still intent on approving him, are you?

Three years after our marriage? And what if you don't approve him? Do I give him up? Her eyes showed Burt. You think that what you do is no concern of ours, do you Indu? You think your life is none of my business? You haven't grown up, child' (19). Akka has been a dominating woman in her life. She inspires Indu through her anger,

her hostility and finally left Indu untouched. After receiving Kaka's letter, Indu is in dilemma whether she should go to her parental home or not. She thinks "what does Akka want to see me for? She had never had any use for me at any time. Why now? And I had been unable to make up my mind. It had been Jayant who had made it up for me by saying, 'Do you have to go?'2

These are the last words that Akka speaks to Indu, these words of hostility and gentleness which set Indu thinking about the nature of her relationship with Akka. She recalls that Jayant had told her after receiving the summons for coming back. He had dissuaded her from going back to the family because Akka, in his opinion, was only a distant relation. "Do you have to go? After all, she is... what is she of yours? Your father's aunt, isn't she? Rather a distant relation, Indu. was furious. "Akka? A distant relation? It has sounded treacherous disloyal. At that moment I had decided... I will go" (20).

Manjari Shukla remarks that "why did Indu come? Did she come because she wanted to disprove her husband's opinion or was it the result of a seeking desire in her for the family reunion, some deep bond which tickled in her in spite of her anger and hatred for all that Akka stood for? Did Indu finally forgive Akka for her ruthlessness and her autocratic ways? Is there really a complete break, an unbridgeable chasm between the world and the values of Akka and those of Indu? Can one entirely break away from one's root and live a life in complete isolation from others, from obligations and responsibilities that normal social life involves! These are some of the questions which *Roots and Shadows* tries to answer."<sup>3</sup>

The story begins with Indu's arrival at the parental family during Akka's illness. Akka dies shortly afterwards, leaving the ancestral house and property in the name of Indu. It is a very large family encompassing three generations Akka, Indu and Padmini. Akka had, before her death, fixed the marriage of Indu's cousin Padmini called mini without consulting the girl. She had also earmarked a portion of her wealth for this purpose. After Akka's death, Padmini's parents and brothers are worried as to whether Indu would honour Akka's wishes to meet the expenses of Padmini's marriage. Indu honours her wishes, although she tries to persuade Padmini to marry Naren instead of the person chosen by Akka. But Padmini and her parents are not prepared for it. Y.S. Sharadha calls it "The Problem of marriage and Affirmation of self. Analysing Padmini's character she adds that "since a girl's mind ever since her childhood is tuned that she is a Paraya Dhan, she tries to attach a lot of importance to it."<sup>4</sup> Manjari Shukla remarks that "Indu broods over the fate of women in a large family and deeply resents the fact nothing more than puppets, without any identity, voice or nature. But her revolutionary idealism finds no takers in the family."<sup>5</sup> Even Padmini refuses to romanticise her marriage which for her is an arrangement arrived at for her own good by the elders whose wisdom must be accepted. Indu tries to argue with Mini but is deeply perplexed by Mini's response:

But Mini... marriage is... It means living with a man. You have to listen to him, endure his habits, his smell, his touch, his likes, his dislikes. You have to sleep with him bear him children. Can you do all that with this man? She put the nutcrackers down gently and picking up her still wet hair, knotted it at the base of her neck... What choice do I have, Indu? She asked me, resuming her snipping. Snip ship... the supari fell between us. Millions of girls have asked this question millions of times in this country. Surely it was time, they stopped asking it. What choice do I have? Surely it is this, this fact that I can choose, that differentiates me from the animals. But years of blindfolding can obscure your vision so that you no more see the choices. Years of shackling can hamper your movement so that you can no longer move out of your cage of no choices.<sup>6</sup>

Indu is even more deeply disturbed when she finds older women wallowing in their ignorance and even gloating over it:

I knew these women had their own standards for judging people. Nothing about me.... my academic distinctions, my career, my success, my money... none of these would impress her. To her, I was just a childless woman. To get married to bear children, to have sons and then grandchildren... they were still for them the only success a woman could have. I had almost forgotten this breed of women since I had left home. Now, seeing them was like discovering a new world. Each one of them, riddled with ignorance, prejudice and superstition, was a world of darkness in herself. And, even more amazing was their ignorance of their own darkness.<sup>7</sup>

Despite Indu's opposition, Padmini is married to the man chosen by Akka. Y.S. Sharaddha remarks that "It is indeed a tragedy that even in the modern age, Indian girls echo the same sentiment where it was marriage that mattered not the man."<sup>8</sup>

Indu who has married against the wishes of the family is surprised to hear about Padmini's acceptance to the proposal in spite of the fact that the boy had "heavy, coarse features and crude mannerisms". (3) Indu question Mini if she does not consider it a point to think of marriage. Mini replies "Why should I think of it? I am past twenty-four. I have to get married. What else is there to think about!" (124).

Indu had waited for Mini's marriage to be over before disposing off the house. Once the marriage is over, she decides to sell the house. There is some opposition from her uncles, but her cousins are all for the sale of the house and pester Indu to help them settle in their lives. The sale negotiations are completed, and Shankarappa who bought the house and build a modern hotel on its site. When the moment for the final parting with the ancestral house comes, Indu, the iconoclast, becomes very emotional and is flooded with memories of her past life spent in this house. The thought that the house would be demolished and would cease to exist jolts her;

Would it? The wall would crumble, the roof would crash down. The wood work would be neatly piled up in lorries and carried away. But what of the feelings, the emotions, the passions the house had sheltered? Would they not linger here, where they had been born and nurtured? If, not, where would they go? I had been a fifteen-days-old motherless infant when I had been brought into this house. I had lived eighteen years in it. Now, all those eighteen years compressed themselves into one moment of painful intensity and I lived those eighteen years all over again. ... The feeling of ease, contentment and indolence embracing the whole house. And the huge front door, which no child could ever push the whole way, standing wide open the whole day, so that people just walked in and became part of the family. And aura of warmth that didn't have to be said in words, smiles, dinners and drinks. This was home. Where one lived. Not stayed.<sup>9</sup>

But such moments of nostalgia and sentimentality are a passing fancy. The house was in fact a trap specially for those who had dreams of their own and wanted to live those dreams, for dreams are incompatible with authority and discipline, which is what the house symbolised. And it not Indu alone who had been a victim of authority and discipline. Akka's autocratic ways and iron rule ruined all the members of the house and reduced them to mere parasites because Akka believed only in surrender and submission. Defiance and disobedience did not exist in the vocabulary of the presiding deity of this house. Now that she was dead, the house without its deity held no sanctity, and therefore it must go. Those in the family who favoured the retention of the house were guided more by selfish considerations than by loyalty or commitment to Akka.

Indu fights back her emotional reverie. As soon as Padmini's marriage is solemnised, Indu hands over the house to Shankarappa. Shankarappa leaves, promising to be back with the demolition squad. And as he is leaving, he says to Indu: " 'come back home again. Soon', leaving Indu thinking of the meaning of his words. 'Home? Not anymore. There had been a morbid fascination in childhood in saying the words... 'the last time!' Now it was like facing death, knowing there is no after life." She remains cool and refuses to weep for the house when so much more had been destroyed within its four walls:

As a matter of fact, I felt neither mournful, nor desolate, but in a peculiar way, both light and free. Yes, the house had been a trap too, binding to the past I had to move away from. Now I felt clean, as if I had cut away all the unnecessary, uneven edges off myself. 10

In this way the three generations of dreams are reduced to rubbles. What had symbolised roots was in fact was a meaningless facade- at least for Indu.

According to Manjari Shukla, "family here provides emotional sustenance, and wards off loveliness or the sense of being lost. Therefore, while practically everybody in the novel resents Akka's authoritarian behaviour, nobody ever questions her contribution in keeping the family intact despite its contradictions and the clashing aspirations of its members. After all, Akka has had her own share of miseries."11 Akka came to this house as a widowed young woman, and after the death of her father looked after her nephews and nieces with the care and attention of a truly compassionate mother. Married in her early age she was unknown about love, sex and other husband wife relations and in such a way she was forcibly sent in her husband's room and there he brutally treats her. Finally, she leaves her husband's house and comes back to her parental home. Indu herself, whose mother died immediately after her birth, was never allowed to feel motherless. True, Akka sometimes becomes ruthless and dictatorial but there is no touch in her character of self-aggrandisement. She was cared by Akka. Her looking-after took place by Akka. That is why Indu is dominated by Akka's traditional ideals. She

wanted to keep the family intact because the family ensured security and happiness to all its members. Even Indu, the representative of the new generation and one who has a personal score to settle with Akka, concedes that Akka was a 'cohesive force' and always struggled to keep the fabric of family intact.

Next in the novel we find Indu the chief protagonist as a journalist lives according to her own wishes and desires. Indu (or the generation that she represents) hankers for freedom, little knowing that freedom may also become a trap. In the novel when she decides to marry Jayant in defiance of the wishes of the family, it was a symbolic act of self-assertion, a declaration of independence, and a bold affirmation of her identity as an individual. But once this freedom came to her, it became a routine. Whatever she did, even the way she dressed and spoke, fell into a pattern:

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 cannot blame him. It's not he who has pressurised me into this. It's the way I want to be.<sup>12</sup>

Indu herself accepts it that without Jayant she is incomplete. She has deep love for him. Even Akka is against it. She says:

This is my real sorrow. That I can never be complete in myself. Until I had met Jayant, I had not known it... that there was, somewhere outside me, a part of me without which I remained incomplete. Then I met Jayant. And lost to be alone. <sup>13</sup>

Indu comes back to her ancestral place from where she, against the wishes of her father and other members of the family, had accepted so many years ago to get married to a person of her own choice. She comes back to attend the funeral ceremony of Akka, the old rich family tyrant. The large family is on the threshold of change though everybody is unaware of it. And the key to their future lies in the hands of Indu.

Indu has been a determined girl, who always wanted to be free and independent. But, now, a number of questions come before her, which leave her puzzled and baffled. She is uncertain about the fact whether she has broken the stranglehold of family and tradition only to be dominated by love for her husband, which again, she feels, is not a true love. She realizes that she has accepted Jayant not for love as she used to think but because she wanted to show her family that she was a success. Is she her own self even when she is working or is it her tragedy never to be free and complete? Sarabjit Sandhu remarks that "She goes back to her parent's home to find out the roots, but she finds the shadows instead."<sup>14</sup> It becomes a time of reckoning for her. She thinks about her own life, her career, her love, the traditional concept of marriage, her own marriage based on love, etc. She revolts against Akkas hard and disciplined rule where there is no value of practical life. She is a traditional lady. In such a condition Indu projects against the women belonging to the older generation. Sarabjit Sandhu remarks that "Shashi Deshpande



has very artistically juxtaposed two sets of women in the Indian set-up. One set is represented by Akka, Narwada, Sumitra Kaki, Kamla Kaki, Atya, Sunanda Atya; and the other set is represented by Indu."15 To the old generation, a woman's life is nothing "but to get married, to bear children, to have sons and then grandchildren" (128). In the long list of these women characters, Akka deserves special qualities. She is a rich childless widow who opts to stay in her brother's house after the death of her husband. Since the day she enters the house, she maintains absolute control over her brother's children.

As the novel proceeds we see that day-by-day Akka becomes a bold lady. She is a lady of strong rule and hard discipline. Every member in the family fear to her as well as respect her. She is such a traditional and a lady of strong rule that when she is on her death bed. She refuses to move into a hospital because as she puts it, "God knows what caste the nurses are or the doctors. I could not drink a drop of water there." (24). Akka is also very particular about how a girl should talk, dress or behave. She reprimands Indu severely for daring to talk to a boy in the love corner of a library. It is a known fact in the house that she had put her foot down when Naren's mother wanted to learn music saying:

What, learn music from a strange man! Sit and sing in front of strangers! Like Those women? Are we that kind of family? Isn't it enough for you to sing one or two devotional songs, one or two aarti songs? What more does a girl from a decent family need to know.?16

Indu grows with no fond feelings towards Akka, learns her story through Narmada Atya, only after her death. She says in her own words:

She was just 12 when she was married. And he was well past 30. Remember him ill. was a tall, bulky man with large, coarse features. And she... she was small, dainty, really pretty, with her round face, fair, skin, straight nose and curly hair. Six months after her marriage, she 'grew up' and went to her husband's home. What she had to endure there, no one knows. She never told anyone. Our grandfather, her father, was a man who kept himself aloof. No one could approach him easily. And her mother, our grandmother, died when she was a child. But I heard that twice she tried to run away - a girl of 13. Her mother-in-law, I heard, whipped her for that and locked her up for three days, starved her as well. And then, sent her back to her husband's room. The child they said, cried and clung to her mother-in-law saying, "Lock me up again, lock me up". But there was escape from a husband then. I remember her telling me before my own marriage was consummated, "Now your punishment begins, Narmada. You have to pay for all those saris and jewels."17

But as time passes and confidence comes in Akka she tries to make herself bold and a disciplined lady. Next Narmada says that she controls her husband after he suffers from a stroke which leaves him totally paralysed. He lives for two years in this condition when Akka takes care of him excellently, displaying her sati-dharma. But she gets back at him for all that she had endured earlier by not allowing

his mistress, whom he adores, to meet him. She even takes a vicious pleasure in informing him that she threw his mistress out when she had come to meet him. Narwada, who is just a child then, is moved to tears by the grief experienced by Akka's husband on hearing this from his wife. Later that night Narmada also finds Akka in tears and learns from her that no night passed when she did not cry after getting married. Y.S. Sunita Reddy remarks that "in arranged marriages a husband who finds his wife incompatible has at least the option of finding for himself another woman to satisfy his need; but a wife in a similar situation has no option but to lead a lone less life. "Is In the same context Neena Arora remarks:

Man considers it as normal behaviour to satisfy his desires at both the emotional and physical levels outside marriage, while it is ruthlessly condemned as adultery in case a woman indulges in it even though accidentally the slightest hint of any deviation on her part which may not even involve sex, man turns violent and hostile towards his wife and starts prosecuting her. This condemnation is dictated by man's interest in preserving his property rather than by any moral consideration."19

In the course of time Akka's married life could not be a successful life. Akka returns to her father's house after the death of her husband. Here at her parental home she maintains strict rule for all. Indu, the central character in the novel. She says to Indu that a woman should never utter her husband's name as it would shorten his life span and that it showed disrespect. But Indu reacts such talk and exclaims, "what connection can there be between a man's longevity and his wife's calling him by name? It is as bad as praying to the Tulsi to increase his life span." (35) We see Indu is presented by the novelist as an educated, upper-middle-class woman who revolts such traditional practices where women are not more than a puppet. She breaks the clutches of tradition and finds that there is no difference between the women who circumambulate the Tulsi plant and who believes that a woman's good fortune lies in dying before her husband. Indu has a love marriage and she loves her husband enough to want him by her side all the time, forever. Her husband, Jayant, in spite of his seemingly western style of living, is no different from the average Indian male.

After her marriage Indu always tries to keep her husband happy and satisfied. Even during such time, she continued to write for the magazine although Jayant knows that it is very frustrating for her. At this juncture she narrates that how she once interviewed a social worker who received an award for her services. Indu was suitably impressed by the woman who was "soft-spoken, articulate, seemingly sincere and dedicated". (18) After writing up the article, Indu was given another article written about the same woman by an old man. Indu was shocked to read it. She thought: "This... was a story of shameless exploitation of ignorance, poverty and need. A story of ruthlessness and unscrupulousness in the pursuit of fame, power and money, all of which had come now." (18) She went to her editor with both the copies



and, worldly-wise as he was, he refused to accept the copy written by the old man, though he admitted that he was true. Indu was taken aback by the hypocrisy of the woman and the attitude of the editor. She narrated the story to Jayant and expected him to stand by what was right, but contrary to her expectations he replied. "That is life! What can one person do against the whole system! No point making yourself ridiculous with futile gestures. We need the money, don't we? Don't forget we have a long way to go." (19) Later on we see that Indu continues writing what was accepted by the editor and the public. It also disturbs her to realize that she has left her middle-class values behind to become a part of the success-oriented society. She is overcome by a sense of futility. She, perhaps, would have continued to live this way if she was not summoned by Akka and if she did not meet Naren. Her reunion with Naren offers her an opportunity to vent her frustrations and review her life objectively. She relates to Naren her life with Jayant in detail:

We belong to the smart young set. Do you know what that means? Fresh flowers in the house every day. Can you believe it, Naren? I've gone and done a course in flower arrangement? The best places, whether you go out to eat or to cut your hair. Freshly laundered clothes twice a day. Clothes yes, we have to keep up with the latest trends... we don't have friends, but the right contacts and "people one should know." Who entertains us just as often as we entertain them? And when we get together oh, you should listen to us Naren.... We are rational, unprejudiced, broad minded. We discuss intelligently, even solemnly, the problems of unemployment, poverty, corruption and family planning. We scorn the corrupt. We despise the ignorant, we hate the wicked — and our hearts bleed, Naren for Vietnam, for the blacks, for the Harijans but frankly we don't care a damn not one goddamn about anything but our own precious selves, our own precious walled in lives."<sup>20</sup>

Here Indu tries to prove that she has full control over herself in order to protect her marriage. It is difficult for her to accept her compromise in this matter as she had all along flooded herself that she was different from her Kakis and Atyas. In this respect, P. Bhatnagar comments that "It baffled her to realize that she who had considered herself to be so independent, so intelligent, so clever, she who had been so proud of her logical and rational thinking: she who had seen all set to reform Indian's womanhood and fallen into the trap waiting for her."<sup>21</sup>

This quotation proves that Indu is very conscious of the unfairness prevailing in society with regard to women. Right from her childhood, Indu observes the secondary position occupied by woman in the family. She laughingly asks her Kaka, "Can you imagine them sending up a cup of tea for me.' Women and children should know their places." (33). In spite of her being highly sensitive to the injustice shown to women, and in spite of being educated and economically independent, Indu realizes that she is no different from the women like her Atyas and Kakis.

Indu feels that she is disillusioned by her husband. He expects his wife to be demure and coy, without shedding her inhibitions even in the privacy of their bedroom. Indu herself narrates that "Jayant, so passionate, so ready, sitting up suddenly and saying, 'no not now', when I had taken the initiative." (91) She continues saying her passive relations with Jayant to Naren that "I don't know'. I put my head on my knees and stared at the carpet unseeingly. 'Nothing really, when I try to rationalise. But... you know the word "deflowered" they use for girls, Naren! I thought of it when Jayant touched me for the first time. I felt as if my body had.... I looked up at him and smiled. I remember I even thought of a good phrase... I don't know, but I told myself my body had "burgeoned into a flower of exquisite felicity." (82-83) Indu also adds that 'I had, for some time, loved Jayant. But between the idea and the reality there is an immeasurable distance. To see, to feel a real man was so far removed from the idea of love as it was to me then... Hearing these all Naren smiles who has been watching Indu silently saying her past love with Jayant. (83).

Later on, Indu feels deeply attracted towards Naren and feels natural response. She herself says "my response natural, so much beyond me and outside me..." (83) She feels warm and exciting moment now but in her heart a place for Jayant was left even now also. Her this state in the novel proves it when she says that "When Naren tried to kiss me, I thought... this is Jayant (83) She says to Naren that "I am not a pure woman. Not a too faithful wife. But an anachronism. A woman who loves her husband too much. Too passionately. And is ashamed of it." (83) She finds her alter ego in to him was so Jayant. She feels that in marrying him, she is complete. In Jayant, she thinks that there is the other part of her whole self, total understanding and perfect communication. And finally, she feels that she is cheated by Jayant, feels ashamed in loving her.

Next Jayant says that 'you don't understand me', ... we had so often flung the words at each other. And one day I had realised that what we were saying was... Don't judge me. Don't Criticise me. Just appreciate me. See only my virtues, not my vices. My strengths, not my weaknesses. This is what we want. And we call it perfect understanding."(115).

It has now become difficult for Indu, however, to remains totally indifferent to her husband. Her home-coming after a long exile makes her feel tremendously happy but, for her, this happiness is incomplete without Jayant by her side. She thinks "This is my real sorrow. I can never be complete in myself." (34) But as time passes, she prepared in her mind an idea to become an "ideal woman" A woman who sheds her 'I', who loses her identity in her husband. This desperate need to assert herself combined with the attraction she felt for her cousin. Naren and the easy compatibility between them makes her take a daring step in surrendering herself to him. She thinks —

I can go back and lie on my bed, I thought, and it will be like erasing the intervening period and what happened between Naren and me. But deliberately I went to my bed and began folding the covers. I don't need to erase anything I have done, I told myself in a fit of bravado.<sup>22</sup>

She feels that her sexual encounter with Naren has nothing to do with Jayant, and so she resolves not to tell him anything about it. Commenting on her decision not to reveal this to her husband, P. Ramamoorthy says: "This sheds a brilliant light on Indu's awareness of her autonomy and her realization that she is a being, and not a dependent on Jayant. The novel gains its feminist stance in Indu's exploration into herself but it also moves beyond the boundaries of feminism into a perception of the very predicament of the human existence."<sup>23</sup> In the entire novel we get the same echo. On the terms of her married life Indu feels that "her casual matter and matter of fact attitude to what she had done is shocking have our morals really gone so low that women commit this sin for nothing, just to prove that they do not lack courage? Is this really representative of the modern Indian woman?" (129). Y.S. Sunita Reddy says that "perhaps this is Deshpande's answer to the double standards practised by our society where only men are allowed to take sexual liberties."<sup>24</sup>

At the end of the novel Indu feels an emancipated woman. She is now the owner of Akka's money. This very freedom of money motivates her to spend money on Mini's wedding and Vithal's education. Finally, she does achieve her freedom refusing to let herself be influenced by Kaka, Atya or even Jayant, in doing what she believes is the right thing to do. Y.S. Sunita Reddy remarks that "in a global drama involving the dance of the sexes, she emerges as an intelligent, attractive and wholly practical woman who is not lured into a relationship but enters into it fully aware of the consequences and confident that she is not stretching her moral obligations."<sup>25</sup>

In this way we noticed that *Roots and Shadows* reveals the theme of double standard practiced openly by men for centuries causing unspeakable misery to married Indian women. But the greatness of Shashi Deshpande in this novel consists in portraying an unusual image of a married woman (Indu) who, as a sharp reaction against the double moral standard of her husband, begins to practise clandestinely the double moral standard herself at the physical level indulging her hidden hunger and aspiration. This novel, like the succeeding novel, *That Long Silence*, underscores woman's full autonomy to like satisfying life throwing to the winds all the crippling conditions imposed on her by the male-oriented society. Thus, the image of woman painted in *Roots and Shadows*, is quite challenging and sensitive.

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