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## **Tradition and Modernity in Shashi Deshpande's Roots and Shadows**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Shashi Deshpande is one of the eminent novelists in contemporary Indian English literature, who intricately explores the crisis of women caught between tradition and modernity. Her fiction often portrays urban, educated, middle class women struggling to assert individuality while simultaneously confronting familial and social obligations. *Roots and Shadows* (1983) is a quintessential family novel that depicts the tension within a traditional joint family structure, where Indu, the protagonist, experiences conflict between inherited customs and her personal quest for freedom. Through Indu's return to her ancestral home and her encounters with Akka, Mini, Jayant and Naren, Deshpande illustrates how women grapple with patriarchal power, matriarchal authority and the contradictions of modern aspirations. The novel symbolically juxtaposes "roots" as tradition and "shadows" as marginality and disillusionment. Ultimately, Indu realises that liberation within a patriarchal society remains elusive and her struggle reflects the broader dilemma of contemporary Indian women negotiating between past traditions and modern identity.

**KEYWORDS:** Shashi Deshpande, *Roots and Shadows*, Tradition, Modernity, Feminine Sensibility, Patriarchy, Family Novel, Indian English Literature.

**INTRODUCTION:** In the line of Tradition and Modernism Shashi Deshpande is one such name. She has often used her own experience and write stories on family, culture, marriage. She exhibits her instinctive ability to articulate the feeling of contemporary, urban, educated career women. Who is caught in the traditional period between tradition and modernity? Shashi Deshpande is one of the eminent novelists of contemporary Indian literature. She creates figures that take her readers through the social state of urban society and their cultural setting. Deshpande's Novel are family novels. Her novel 'Roots and shadows' is one such novel in which she illustrates conflict of old tradition and modern thoughts in a joint family. It is a story of traditional joint family and talks about conflict that joint family faces between tradition and modernity. Character are mini, Indu, Akka, Narrative from Indu's point of view, a novelist and a short story writer, occupies a predominant position among Indian English novelists.?

Indu visits her ancestral home with her husband, Jayant to attend the marriage of her cousin, Mini. The house was ruled by powerful Matriarch, Akka (The women head of the family). Indu is a determine girl who always wanted to be free and independent.

When Indu reaches home after a gap of ten years, she finds that Akka is in her death bed, Before her death, Akka reveals to her that she has chosen her, Indu, as her heir. After Akka's death, Indu realizes that Akka had made arrangements for Mini's marriage to rough and bad mannered, under



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educated young man, with lot of property. Mini was daughter of Kaka and Kaki. As they were poor. Indu feels that it is really an injustice that Mini had to marry a man who is not all a match for her. A lot of quarrels and arguments take place at home because they were anxious about how Indu will use the money. When Indu finds that Mini is content to marry the man Akka had chosen for her, Indu decides to finance the marriage. During the visit Indu meets Naren, Son of an old uncle. They were childhood friends. During this visit, she re opens her friendship with Naren. Her interaction with Naren helps her to regain her inner strength. However, before she leaves, Naren dies. She is unaware about the fact whether she has broken the strangle had of family and tradition only to be dominated by love for her husband. She realize 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. She goes back to her parent's home to find out of the roots but she finds the shadow instead. Indu laughs at the Idea of not calling one's husband by his name as it shortens the age of the husband. Later, she realizes that she too is not different from other woman. Indu ultimately realizes that she has been chasing shadows, leaving her roots far behind in the family and in Jayant.

She desire to establish that image of modern woman in no longer a child under the control of man. Novel highlights the protest by the Indu against the restrictions imposed upon her it depicts her confrontation with the family, with the male world and society. The situation and reason for compromise may differ froerson to person. But the core reason for all women to compromise is "security

Indu sell the ancestral family home to a local businessman, Shankarappa, After Mini's marriage, Shankrappa demolish the house and builds a hotel in its place. Kaka and Kaki goes to stay with their eldest son, Hemant. Another aunt called Atya comes to stay with Indu and Jayant. Here ends the story of Roots and shadows. The destruction of Ancestral family and practices are everlasting. They will crumble down one day.

Despande's novels often portray women characters who are trapped in between tradition and modernity. Male and female domains are carefully portrayed in the novel. The spheres of activity and realms of influence of two sexes are well defined. Woman are assigned the task of running the household on keeping the things in order.

Akka is a woman. However, the power exercised by her is patriarchal. The irony is that she herself suffered inequality and marginalization as a young bride, Women like Kaki and Atya spend their lives slaving for others. Though the memories of Indu, growing up within a traditional joint family as woman is clearly marked. Though Indu married Jayant by her own choice.

Like her mother she was set apart from the family for challenging the traditional mode of setting marriages. Indu is interested in creative writing art which articulate her to voice against social capture, but Jayant does not approve her writing. She desire to establish that image of modern woman is no longer a child under the control of man. Her dreams are to attain the state of



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detachment, “to her surprise, she finds herself involved and attached in many ways her mind is tattered between two extreme, on the one hand she is so attached to her house which became the part and parcel of her life and on the other she is like caged part.

She is being taught that she is made for household work and their world is limited. Indu gets hurt when she finds same feelings and who are rooted and shaped by the Indian customs. Shashi Deshpande is a prolific writer who does with the crisis within the family and relationships. The subtle interplay of jealousy and frustration complete she definition of joint family, Indu’s homecoming was an indirect rejection of new relation with Jayant including his domination of new relation with Jayant including his domination and obsession and with it she embraces the old forsaken relations. She feel nostalgic on coming back old traditions and conventions are not allowed to be changed. Modernism perfectly changed the thinking observation, acceptance and behavior of new concept in art, literature, music and sculptor. It was a break from old traditions, conventions and rules, to religion from early decade to the present century. It is very difficult to get into the relational bonds in a large family, but Deshpande combined the relation perfectly with old culture and modernism.

The Novel Roots and shadows is genuine effort of Shashi Deshpande to probe into the various dimension of female sensibility. “Roots” means here for tradition and ‘Shadows’ stands for the marginal culture. “Roots and shadows” can be explained as synthesis of dualism of tradition. It suggest that over the root is removed; life is bereft of binding force given way to new path. In novel, ancestral home is a symbol of manifestation of Indu’s affinity with her tradition. She find herself at the threshold of great change. Deshpande accepts that in tradition frame work, marriage is a social obligation. In spite of her external grace, assertiveness and urge of freedom, she failed to come out of barriers in which she was placed by nature and the tradition of society. Her attempts to liberate herself from the shackles of the age old customs prove to be deceptive.

Her novel reveal the man made patriarchal tradition and the uneasiness of modernization in being a part of them. Roots ad shadows is an exploration of protagonist’s the realization of her inner self the assertion of her individuality and liberty with reference to her relationship with Jayant, her husband and the members of her ancestral family suppressed in Indian patriarchy, the protagonist of the novel, rebels against Akka, the head of matriarchal family. In the quest of freedom and happiness, she leaves her parental home with a very simple dream that her marriage would help her to realize her need to belong, to be wanted, to be needed and to loved her real contribution lies in her artistically and realistically portraying complex relation of human. Indians are caught between traditional beliefs and values and the fast changing world with new ideas, beliefs and values. She wants to challenge age old constraints and restraint imposed on her in an Indian patriarchal set up and to set forward with confidence and determination.



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## CONCLUSION:

Shashi Deshpande's *Roots and Shadows* is a significant exploration of female subjectivity within the framework of Indian patriarchy and modern consciousness. Indu's confrontation with her ancestral family and her relationship with Jayant represent the conflict between roots (tradition) and shadows (modern aspirations). Although she desires independence, creative freedom and self assertion, her choices ultimately reveal the deep entanglement of women within patriarchal and familial bonds. The destruction of the ancestral home at the end of the novel symbolises the decline of traditional joint family systems and the inevitable rise of new social structures. Yet, Deshpande carefully shows that modernity does not guarantee absolute liberation. Women continue to negotiate with tradition, compromise for security and struggle with their individuality. By realistically portraying the paradoxes of Indu's life, Deshpande highlights the complexities of being a modern Indian woman—torn between belonging and detachment, freedom and restraint, individuality and familial obligations. Thus, *Roots and Shadows* is not merely a narrative of personal struggle but also a broader commentary on the socio cultural condition of women in India. It suggests that while modernity offers a promise of liberation, the shadows of tradition continue to bind women within deep rooted patriarchal frameworks.

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