CHAPTER-III
PRIMITIVISM IN THE STRANGE CASE OF BILLY BISWAS AND TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN ROOTS AND SHADOWS – A STUDY OF QUEST OF CONTRAST

Billy’s escape from a civilized society to a primitive world is not for the sake of his becoming a Yogi, but because the phoney atmosphere of the modern society which is nothing more than “the making and spending of money” (SCBB 96) is not to the liking of Billy Biswas. O.P. Bhatnagar rightly points out in the book The Fictional World of Arun Joshi that Billy “renounced this materialistic society and civilization not to be an ascetic but to fulfil all the demands of his self to the perfection of participated joy” (Dhawan 55). After his escape into the tribal world, Romi in one of his official visits of the district meets him by chance and asks him to give an explanation, Billy Biswas tells him about Delhi society getting on his nerves; and in this respect perhaps all city societies are more or less the same. Billy speaks out the so-called glories of the modern civilized society—nothing but mechanical and oft-repeated gestures of human nothingness.

Thus Billy Biswas prefers leading a life with the primitives to that of a city society where one has no time to stand and stare. The tribals are not interested in the mundane affairs but only in the rhythms of nature. The alternatives before Billy were limited, “I had two clear choices: I could either follow this call, this vision, whatever the cost, or be condemned to total decay” (SCBB 102). Bilasia, the essence of the primitive force, becomes the beacon light of his tribal life. In his contact with her he gets a kind of tantric spirituality. Their union revives the glow of the Chandtola peak, extinct since the death by poison of the tribal king and queen long ago. The revival of
this miracle makes the tribals think of them as reincarnations of their old king and queen. They deify Billy who, according to them, is capable of creating miracles including reviving the dead and turning the ferocious tiger away.

Billy Biswas wanders through the labyrinths of the civilized life and finding a dead end in it, goes to seek the simple ways of the life of the primitive people. White American is “much too civilized for him” (SCBB 9) as the aboriginal black America is more to his liking. As an anthropologist he has an urge for travel, a little bit in America, but mostly in India, to explore fascinating societies existing there. The interest in the primitive men is the quest of his existence. In the quest of primitive force he makes a quest of the anarchy of the wild which he tames. Billy in his letter written to Tuula Lindgren considers himself “a visitor from the wilderness to the marts of the big city and not the other way round” (SCBB 96). In his tirade against the civilized society he writes to her:

I sometimes wonder whether civilization is anything more than the making and spending of money. What else does the civilized man do? And if there are those who are not busy earning and spending-the so-called thinkers and philosophers and men like that-they are merely hired to find solution, throw light, as they say, on complications caused by this making and spending of money. What need would there be of psychiatrists, research foundations, learned societies, great scholars, scientists, ministerial advisers, ambassadors, generals, had the world not initially been hung on this peg of money. (SCBB 97)
Thus Billy is very critical of the organized society and its so-called measures of civilization. It is the peg of money, as he says, upon which everything rests. The problem hinted at by Billy is that of the existential problem of reality, identity and absurdity of the human creation. When Billy thinks of the absurdity of family relationships and the crisis of identity arising out of the problem of thinking, the identity of the self and other members of the family, Billy “cannot decide who they are or what accident of creation has brought us together” (SCBB 97). In a series of letters written to Tuula Lindgren, Billy amply justifies the crisis of identity, the mesh of which has engulfed him. All these letters she refers to the narrator Romi Sahai. In one of them Billy speaks of the impossibility of perfect communion: “To speak, I am afraid, if you address the deaf” (SCBB 96). Billy also reveals himself in his comments upon his visit to a temple in the evening aarti time. He becomes sceptical even of the existence of the divine.

Romi saw that Billy Biswas had in him all incongruous elements. Taking up an engineering degree, he was doing his Ph.D., on anthropology and it has been otherwise estimated by him ‘thoroughly crazy, even by Indian standards’. His taste on research made him appear a different man of composition and got him a name that he was not a run on the mill kind of person. His taste for his dwelling appeared curious. He selected Harlem as his living place. In his choice of dress too, he was peculiar in wearing “faded jeans, white T-Shirt and a bright red baseball cap” (SCBB 9). His taste for seeing a broadway drama called Avocambo was another factor for his quest for anything primitive or tribal. This drama of Avocambo was about an educated New York chap who went to Congo and became crazy after hearing the primitive music who with his shot-gun started killing everybody. What was fascinating in the drama was the display of deranged mind in between each shot.
Thus an incongruous person having a serious look but laughing face, no doubt attracted the attention of the biographer of Billy none other than Romi. He was born in upper class where one of his grandfathers happened to be a P.M. to a famous princely state of Orissa. His father was a student of law from Inner Temple and at the time of his study in U.S.A, he was a judge of India’s Supreme Court. In one of his conversations, Romi enquired him what drove him to take up anthropology as his Ph.D research, he answered his love for travel, also his love for aboriginals and his love to visit their place and come to know about their lives. This tendency in him appeared to have gone deep into him and blossomed into an infinite passion to come to grips with their live styles, their ethical, social, moral, marital and religious beliefs. His passionate involvement in his studies made him appear to be an odd person working on irregular timing. His studies on his subject of anthropology compelled him to leaf through. They led their day out of their dictates of impulse. He happened to be a man caring the present and believed that future would take care of itself.

He had already completed his prelims for his Ph.D. Curiously he had shown keen interest in crimes connected with his subject for which his explanation was, that crime was an attendant factor happening along with archaeological expeditions. On one occasion, Romi was introduced to Tula Lindgren. She was Swedish and had come to the United States for advanced training in psychiatric social work. Their friendship developed in a strange circumstance that both came about each other in a greyhound bus en route from New York to Kansas City. She was on her way to work in a mental hospital at Topeka and Billy was on his way to Vancouver in British Columbia to discuss matters with an anthropologist who was teaching at the university there. She showed much interest about India and she interpreted Gandhi’s non-violence tool as a
Freudian concept. In her talk, she made clear to him the theories of Freud, Carl Jung and Adler.

Billy quite suddenly expressed his willingness to tutor anthropology to her had she got him a job in the mental hospital. For Billy, the insane persons were not mentally deranged but they were beings “looked at life from a totally different point of view” (*SCBB* 13). He was taken aback to see many insane persons of the hospital appearing to be normal in many matters and for what they were admitted remained to him a matter of puzzle.

Similarly such a great scholar born in a very high family noble lineage with all marks of civilization becoming a tribe at the age of thirty eight wearing only a loin cloth talking in British accent and conversing with Romi in a ruined temple at the foot of the Maikala hills, was of a strange matter for Romi who wrote about his biography through these pages. Once at New York, a black girl from neighbourhood and a couple of Billy’s Negro friends, including his room-mate George attended a party. On that day Billy played on bongo drum. The listeners of his music felt mesmerized and he too played on the drums that its effect produced on them a strange reality fathomed deep into their black mist of unconscious layers suddenly leapt out into their sensibilities. From Tuula, Romi was given to understand that he had in him a primitive force about which he was afraid of or tried to suppress it. Romi did not rank well in his academic pursuit. But his bondage of friendship with Billy cemented that and they talked from ordinary to cosmic fields of activities and in all such varied matters he found his friend Billy so intelligent and his wit so sharp and shrewd in revealing everything tangibly without any complexity. After a year, Romi returned to Delhi. His father died already. His uncle had some connection with Bombay’s film world. He wanted him to become an actor. But finding his idea too complicated to be
carried out, he decided to appear for competitive exam. He managed to scrape through the written and oral exam and finally got selected. On the day of his selection, he got two telegrams. One from an age old professor, now a paralytic patient wishing him all success and the other from Billy Biswas. In spite of his two letters, Billy sent a postcard from Acapulco wherein he mentioned his separation from Tula.

Three weeks later after this incident a stranger knocked at his door. It was Romi’s sister who threw open the door and found a stranger calling his brother’s name in an affectionate manner standing before her. She told her that she was a lecturer teaching Economics at Delhi University. He told her that he was also teaching anthropology along with Dr. Shenoy at the same university. In the meantime Romi came out from his room and entered into their conversation. From Biswas, he learnt that he arrived India two months before and spent sometime at Bombay to look after her financial problems. His father did not like him to be an anthropologist since his concern and preference for education was either law or engineering. Rest of the objects according to him was a waste and persons pursuing other than these two courses were also worthless in life.

After Romi’s return to Delhi, he was invited by Billy to pay his visit to his home. There he met his father and mother. His father considered his son’s education, pursuit and his present job a waste. From his assessment of education, this subject and his teaching profession on this subject was not lucrative. At this point, Billy explained to them that many anthropologists made high money after their return from expedition. What all antiques he brought from such expeditions fetched them massive profit since women of modern society were mad after collecting such primitive articles which was an act, they called, of collecting artistic objects of the primitive tribes and thereby upholding the values of their traditions.
The point of discussion was about a government clerk who did the act of killing a twelve year old vagrant boy under the influence of temporary insanity. He committed this crime over a period of premeditation. What law was he to be governed or judged for this heinous act either in this mundane world or to the world where he was in company with goddess Durga. He committed the murder to cure his leukaemia son. A government servant murdered a vagrant boy of twelve under the mystic spell of Goddess Durga. It was in such an offering of that boy to Goddess Durga he was given by the Goddess Durga a spiritual promise that his son suffering from leukemia (pigmentation problem of the skin) would get cured. Ironically his son got cured. But he was arrested on the charge of murder. He argued that he was only instrumental in the hands of Goddess Durga who wanted him the boy to be offered to her as a sacrifice for which she promised his son’s cure. According to law he was a criminal. But according to spiritual plane above reason he was not a culprit but only a tool in hands of something inexplicable and sinister. When they discussed this problem Billy thus said “All I am saying is that there are worlds at the periphery of this one, above it and below it, and around it, of which we know nothing until we are in them” (SCBB 40).

Before taking his assignment at Jhansi, Romi went to an odissi performance with Billy and Meena. It was during the course of the performance that Romi saw the same expression on Billy’s face which he had already seen on the road to Simla while he was stooping to knot his shoes after hearing the music of the girl. Billy’s explanations with regard to the criminal Krishna contained a straw of truth but it touched on the mysterious awakening of spirit on Billy that slowly took control over him for his breaking away ties with civilized world. After having settled at Jhansi, Romi got two telegrams one stating about Billy’s engagement with Meena off, the
other stating his marriage on. Both the telegrams figuratively carry the message of Billy’s contradictory nature whether it be good for to be a civilized modern man or it be good to become a primitive. Immediately after Billy’s marriage, Romi too got married to Sita. It was after this wedding, Billy wanted to take up tribal expeditions in this part. Incidentally his wife Meena, by this time got conceived and therefore he did not take her with him. But Billy took up some boys with him and set out for this expedition.

Then Romi met the Biswases in one of the parties hosted by the East European ambassadors. Along with Meena, Billy was found missing quite disinterestedly, Meena told him that he should be in the varsity engaging himself in his idle pursuit of tribal life. From the tone he realized that there existed a serious gap between her and him. She herself vouchsafed that things started falling apart. Then she took him home. There were quarrels often in their house on matters that had nothing in it to be quarrelled. When enquired beyond limits, he used to reply that he was trying to sort out things. He did not divulge what the things were. When he was about to leave Meena’s house, Billy met him at the gate. He took him inside his home as a shield to protect him from the angry onslaughts of his wife. Billy stopped her whining quarrel that there would be no use in fighting which would only bring further division between them. Romi also promised Meena to make Billy back to his square of reason and also make him behave as any normal husband ought to have behaved.

Later he invited him for a lunch in one of the restaurants where he found old Billy in his high spirits. Now he appeared as he used to appear as a student in New York except now he was clad in rich dress. There was no occasion raised for Romi to get an answer for what troubling him. He found his questions about his trouble were incongruous and each time when he tried to ask his ‘sober edged wit’, he beguiled
him to elicit any answer. What impression that Billy created in that afternoon lunch was nothing wrong with the life of him.

After a brief moment, they parted. Before that Romi enquired about his next expedition. For this Billy replied that he would be in touch with him if had come back. He means that he would not come back. On the second day of this meeting, Billy totally disappeared into thin air. It was believed that he vanished into the Saal forests of Maikala Hills. There were three theories propounded about his disappearance. One was that he happened to be a spy for princes of Baston whose Kingdoms had recently been absorbed into the Republic of India. Second one was that he had eloped with an American woman (probably Tuula) who came to India only for this purpose. The third one was that he was killed by a man eater. This was the theory adopted by the C.I.D. After two years his case was closed. Romi went along with the investigation officer to the place from where he was supposed to have vanished.

Billy started asking about his quest “why else this constant blurring of reality? Who am I? Who are my parents? My wife? My child?” (SCBB 70). He used to have a dilemma whether Meena and a son born to them belonged to him or by accident of creation they were all brought together. It was in Bombay he had developed a sudden feeling that God for him did not appear in his dream hereafter but only fate that was going to guide through his life of meandering. It was clear from this letter that Billy lost his grip on modern society as well as his filial ties. So called God of the civilized society did not draw in him any hope for his proximity with his family members. What guided him was fate that drove him all these days into all phases of lives from New York to the hills of Maikala.

After ten years of Billy’s disappearance, Romi got transferred to central India. That year central India experienced severe drought. There was no timely monsoon.
All forms of vegetation became dry. Cattle died for want of food and water. Villagers belonging to tribal community faced untold miseries. They starve to death. Though Romi knew the enormity of the situation, Govt.rehabilitation convoy did not reach the ill fated arid desert land in time and relieve the sufferings of the people.

When he was inspecting in one of such desert places, his driver told him the same drought hit almost all places of central India. It appeared that nature found delight in causing such damage to tribes who all had such a faith in it for their very existence. Their faith and hope on nature ever ready to protect them from their miseries now duped them and the country up to the Maikala Hills everything was nothing but dust and dust. People living in that marginalized state became thinner and thinner for neither nature nor men provided them anything to feed on. It was in one of such hamlets Romi stumbled on Billy quite unexpectedly. He was found standing by the side of a boy who was introduced to him as his son.

Billy after ten years of his previous meeting now “wore a loin cloth and nothing else. He had lost weight heavily since the night of the party so that he was even thinner than I (Romi) had known him in New York” (SCBB 75). But now he appeared to be a vital person. On their way back to banglow the jeep’s radiator became hot and it had to be watered. When the guards stood nonplussed it was Billy who located them a shallow but a tank with water in one of the rocky ridges. This was quite evident that Billy knew the area inch by inch. From his appearance and his knowledge of the people one would jump into conclusion that he was so naturalized with the surroundings.

Then he started telling to Romi how he had come to Maikala range of mountain. This place had many tribal villages of primitive people; “the baigas, the gonds, the pardham and several others” (SCBB 77). Billy came to know about them at
Delhi. He did not get any first hand information about them. Then he told his dwelling near chandtola - “a whitish cliff faces to the right, like the mouth of a limestone quarry” (SCBB 77). When Romi told him about the death of his mother, he showed his emotion. Then when he came to know his wife Meena now running a boutique making lot of money he was rather moved to hear the news. As a son and as a husband he did not complete his duties that he ought to have performed. This guilt of not performing duties as a son and a husband touched him quick. He caused weary to his mother that consumed the life of his mother, where as his desertion of his wife emboldened her wife to face challenges in life and gave her strength to stand on her legs against all odds.

Weary of his mother and boldness of his wife were the outcome of his leaving the family to quench his thirst for his ever lasting dream of making a meaningful life out of associating with the tribes totally organized in their matters of existence of nature. Fed up with the economic crisis of the country, exploitation at all layers of the so called civilized society and its hollow men caring for money and not on any human values, Billy’s search for truth in the midst of such tribal people gave him mental solace. That is why he had thrown away all the signs of modernity including his dress and now appeared in loin cloth, the very sign of simplicity, purity and piety.

Then they talked about the economy of the area which was totally sheltered out of drought. He made a remark that in that year there would be a heavy rain after twenty-eight days. He predicted this happening out of watching three stars in heaven. This method of prediction was among tribals who out of watching nature usually adjusted their pattern of life and thereby lived close to nature. There was no scientific reason or unnecessary ratiocination in their mode of life. Nature taught them everything. They had their lives guided by their intuitions. This intuition got its guidance from nature.
In the modern society out of education and its values men led their lives out of their intellect. This often failed them to take their lives on their desired paths and reach its destination of victory. Misled by their intellectual knowledge groomed by shallow education, men in cities wallow in miseries because they lost their touch with nature and its natural guidance through intuition. Billy took up anthropology as his special subject to get a fuller life out of understanding the essence of existence by means of getting real knowledge from nature as a guiding force for his intuition. It was his intuitive spirit that partially surfaced on three occasions already in his life. In USA, while he played drums for his friends, he was having the experience of his essence of his intuition that gave him immense happiness. Next in Simla while he was on his way back home with Romi after a saunter the song of a girl from the nearby mountain hut entranced him that he forgot his own self and experienced the oneness with nature. Similarly he experienced the spiritual bliss of oneness with all while watching kathak dance with Romi and Meena at Delhi.

Guided by such ‘hallucination’ as he himself called, he took up an expedition to the central part of India along with his college students. Duping his students, he slipped into the forest to meet Dhunia, a village head tribesman. He knew him already and stayed with him for two months in one of his previous expeditions. He even cured his niece by giving some antibiotics.

Though tribes got their cure from the herbs of nature at times, these herbs did not cure all of their diseases. Nature’s bounty failed them occasionally. On such occasions help from a civilized being like Billy was really needed. Many-a-day they did not get it. Doctors were not appointed by government to cure them. There were no sincere and devoted young doctors coming forward to serve them selflessly. They are all after money and comfort available in modern cities. In this context the gesture of
goodwill of Billy in curing his niece naturally won the heart of Dhunia that gave him shelter among his community. He realized his worth in him that he a Saviour for their lives sent by God to cure their maladies naturally protected him from the search of the police.

Billy’s own personal hallucination to be a product of real truth among tribes found its significance and in that glory of achievement he lost his entire civilized family for which he felt no regrets. He had only faith on friendship of Romi which he continued to sustain even after his transformation into a tribe. Lack of knowledge of nature and its tribes and lack of knowledge of city dwellers and their reason oriented lives interact with each other and its outcome is creating cleavage in Billy drove him to choose his choice of becoming a tribe a suitable one to his age long search for identity for his meaning of existence.

Billy got a dream after his meeting Dhunia. He was given a tribal drink. He was there to get a rope for erecting tent. He also met Dhunia’s niece Bilasia. She lived a lonely life because her husband ran away from her. It was in this place, Billy never talked with them any civilized topics like “prices of food grains or new seeds or roads or elections and stuff like that” (SCBB 83). They talked “of the supernatural, violent death, trees, earth, rain, dust storms, rivers, moods of the forest, animals, dance, singing. And we talk, I am afraid, a lot about women and sex” (SCBB 83). How strange it ought to have been for a civilized man who found such an interest on strange subjects was the answer of Billy’s quest for existence. Anything supernatural, anything wild in nature and anything about women, sex and dance were all the subject which hovered in Billy’s mind and now his choice to be with tribe of Dhunia fulfilled his long awaited desire. “You thought New Delhi was your destination. How mistaken you have been! Mistaken and misled. Come now, come. Take us. Take us until you
have had your fill. It is we who are the inheritors of the cosmic night” (SCBB 88). He felt that he had lost his sanity. A metamorphosis had taken place that “layer after layer was peeled off me until nothing but my primitive self was left trembling in the moonlight” (SCBB 88).

Similar experience he underwent when he was fourteen. At that time, he spent his vocation with his doctor uncle at Bhubaneswar with her mother. He happened to be a normal boy till he touched the soil of Bhubaneswar that he developed a feeling as though “a slumbering part of him had suddenly come awake” (SCBB 89). He was of the view that kind of transformation would occur naturally to all during adolescent period that was responsible for the passion around. In some cases a sudden interest on music would be developed. In some cases it would be painting or literature or the sciences. Infact at this stage “one’s life starts to take the final mould” (SCBB 89). This Bhubaneswar was in the state of growth at that time and his uncle had his home at the out skirts of this place. His uncle was one of eleven people who had cars at the time. There were a lot of temples but none of them were impressive. Most of the people were adhivasis. The place with rocky terrain or the low hills had in them “a magical glow” (SCBB 90) that attracted him on his visit to konark. He was not much attracted by the erotic sculptures. But what appealed to him was the shade of the spirit—“much older force, older than the time when man first learned to build temples” (SCBB 90). According to him, adivasis alone knew the secret of such spirit “who carried about their knowledge in silence, locked behind their dusk inscrutable faces” (SCBB 90). One night he went with his uncle’s car driven to an adhavasi village. There he witnessed a dance when a boy and girl loitered past him giggling and tumbled into the bush beyond. The shock of the erotic energy was followed by the same feeling of unreality. It was a bit like having taken a dose of a hallucinatory drug.
Something similar he realized when he was in Mexico. He developed in him a strange feeling at that time that he was born to live among them. Listening to the drumming, he had in him a brief elation, followed by severe depression.

Billy had entered into a region in his mind that waiting alone was his physical existence and all other matters like getting Degrees, giving lectures, making money, aiming for security, cultivating a middle class marriage, then rearing up a child and started living for its welfare, preserving the dignity of the family, being just being well dressed and for being normal that all those civilized men could do as their duty, all appeared to him non sensical and a terrible premonition dawn on him that he would not go back. (SCBB 99)

Realizing his purpose of existence, he joined hands with Bilasia whose naked body in rhythmic movement suggested to him that it was a passing moment in his life to discover the bit of himself that he had searched for all his life and without which his life was nothing more than the poor reflection of a million other. “For him Bilasia was the primitive force” (SCBB 103) after the hill and the forest that communicated in the language of vision that stayed with him throughout his life.

Dhunia and other members of tribe called him a Kalapathar- a black stone capable to bring all flourish and nourish them from all ills fated for them to undergo. Dhunia further explained that after having metamorphosised into such a divine black kala stone Billy’s earth earthy frame of body and mind started functioning according to the dictates of the Black Rock-“master of Billy as well as others” (SCBB 115).

From his account it is clear that Billy happens to be one of the chosen few called by the black rock to make him realize his value of existence and that is to serve suffering mankind selflessly and relieve their distress. He is like any other saints of the universe
who at the awful daring of moments of surrender attained his essence of prudence to serve humanity. Here in his case the tribes could never be retrieved. Thus Billy has become priest, saviour, protector and demigod of the tribe whose presence among them blesses him with all magical powers of the black rock chandtola glowing and make him also glow as an inseparable entity of man and nature or nature in man.

Billy told the story to Romi wherein the king becomes mad after chisteling a fine statue without a face. He could not make the face of the god. This statue was found in the temple of the deepest forest near chandtola which was accidentally discovered by Billy. To this place, he took Romi and told all in detail about his transformation. The details what Dhunia told about him as something equal to demigod was totally discarded by Billy. He told that with his hyponotic power he chased the tiger away from human habitation. Dhunia’s grandson’s coming alive was a matter of his treatment on the boy for his harmless snake bite. All of a sudden, he talked about Tuula. It was from her he learnt the value of altruism. Tuula’s philosophy is that a man could exist comfortably with minimum needs. Such needs for a comfortable life there is no much exertion of efforts. They are easily available in any society.

For Billy, his marriage with Meena was an affair of anchorage for his sustainable stay among the society. Meena’s temperament did not suit him. Brought up in a cosy atmosphere she considered marriage a gleaming knot of providing ever material gains from her partner. Billy’s temperament was always dubious ever after experimenting with all social norms for his hallucinatory malady. He spent his days with Meena like water on lotus flower. When a chance occurred Billy left her in the middle for his wish-fulfillment. For him Meena is a tool for his taste in family ties.
Billy’s craving desire to become a tribe took possession of him as a result he left her in lurch.

When Romi asked him for his breach of conduct for not serving the duties of a husband and a father he replied that his aim in life was after cementing tie with his soul longing to serve the marginalized underdog tribes. Thus in Billy the primary duties of a husband and a father became null and void. When he stood at the cross road of selecting the worldly selfish life of filial attachment or throwing oneself into the selfless service among tribes thereby finding a meaning for his existence. Finally the thirst to serve family gave way for his quest in finding a spiritual meaning in the company of tribes. While Romi tried to probe more, he developed a feeling that they were not alone but being watched by any factor very old saying “Beware, it seemed to say. There are things that the like of you may never know. There are circles within circles and worlds within worlds. Beware where you enter” (SCBB 137). Then they departed. Romi could not get any more mystic experience in the darkest of the night and he left the place on his jeep. Billy preferred to go alone without any fear while his physical strength remained strong even after hectic days of roaming. But Romi felt exhausted and sleepy. This incident proved the fact that Billy attained a shape in his manhood which could not be realized by any scale of humane standards of reason.

Romi did not see Billy for the next two months. By this time, his wife Sita joined him. Romi felt sad about Billy’s state. He also believed that he used to see him at close quarters hundreds of times in roads “Without recognizing him” (SCBB 139). He could have ordered for his search but that would have been a breach of faith.

As predicted by Billy that part of the country started experiencing heavy showers. There was transformation both in nature and people. The hills that “appeared chocolate due to heat now transformed into blue” (SCBB 140) and the querulous
“Whining of the people had been replaced by a lot of singing and dancing and rash of fairs” (SCBB 140). As Billy had once said here “it was the sky that dictated everything and now that the sky turned generous, so had the men” (SCBB 140). On one such generous day of nature’s bounty, Romi saw Billy hovering near his bungalow’s fence. He was misunderstood by the guard as one of the uncultured tribe and that made him show his menacing gesture to stop Billy entering his house. This was accidently seen by Romi who chided the guard for his churlish behaviour and allowed Billy to come into his house. Billy visited Romi, he was informed of Sita’s acute meagrine. He wanted to relieve her from this distress. He promised to meet him after midnight. He did not want his wife to know about his method of treatment. He wanted to be alone with his wife for his treatment Romi himself thus vouchsafed that as an official of govt of India, he neither believed magic nor in the potency of the forest drugs. But only these things gave remedy to Sita who fell asleep after many days of her meagrine pain.

What medicines of doctors failed to give her, such relief and rest Billy was able to provide her with his herbs. This treatment of him, though his reason oriented mind refused to accept, had made him realize that there were things in Heaven and Earth that are not dreamt in his knowledge of modern medicines. Even Sita could not believe that it was Billy, a person according to her estimate dead and gone ten years before, responsible for her cure. Even to tell her the truth, Romi had to wait for two days. It was the mentality of moderns ready to refuse magic and anything beyond their reason. But Sita insisted on knowing the secret of his remedy. It was because, she in her trance saw a person resembling a magician performing some rites after administering some herbs on her. It was her insistence to come to know the facts of her cure. She was made to understand by her husband that her cure was none other
than the tribal ritual- ridden medicinal practice of Billy Biswas- supposed to be dead
ten years before now stood before her and provided her much needed relief. It was
after this incident, Romi related her all about Billy and his strange disappearances.
She constantly tried her best to make him contact Meena and Billy’s father and tell
them about this news… Romi kept quite for sometime. The promise he had given to
Billy that he would never divulge his presence to his father and his wife Meena now
saw a Tsunami effect. There was also another official police aspect who closed his
file after his strange disappearance out of their inability to locate him- a fact but when
known would bring a blemish in the entire police machinery. For such an act of a
letting such a crime another official in the rank of a collector responsible, would be
summarily viewed very serious, endangering Romi’s future prospects of being a
collector as well as Billy’s future life of safety in the midst of his own life of choice.
What Romi thought about had materialized. Fully knowing Mr.Biswas’s influence, he
tried his best to put reason into the minds of Billy’s father and Meena. He told them
all the story of Billy. Even after hearing all these things, they did not realize the
essence of his spiritual quest. They considered it a ‘childish escapade’. Meena, as a
real Hindu wife with immense faith thus replied “Little does he know, she said, “that
we would have forgiven anything. Anything” (SCBB 148).

She did not realize at that time, Billy had crossed the stage of a being to be
forgiven and attained the godly stage of forgiving all for their lapses. Billy’s father
left for Bhopal to meet the Chief Secretary and requested him to order Romi to find
his son. But for Romi, it was a disaster. Billy’s father brushed all his advice aside and
left for Bhopal. Next day, he got a trunk call from the Chief Secretary who
reprimanded him severely for his lapse and also considered his act had “an ulterior
motive” (SCBB 151). For this, Romi gave his piece of mind that in that case, he
would resign. Realizing the gravity of the situation, Chief Secretary gave special powers to S.P. of that area and ordered him to act according to his instructions. Rele was the name of the S.P. of that area.

Rele sent a police party to arrest Billy. But his expedition did not bear any fruit. One of his constables was killed by Billy with his spear. Elder Biswas, father of Billy who was at that time sitting before Romi, heard the news that his son had killed a constable. This was the irony of situation. He wanted to see his son who was away from him for ten years. He did his best to see him. But that ultimately became a trap for his son committing a murder crime- that too a government servant. Combing activities to arrest Billy for the assault of murdering a constable were started by S.P. For this, Romi also went with them into the thick forest where his house was situated. It was the first of Romi’s visit to this unknown area. After his visit alone, he realized how hazardous the task was to live in such a god forsaken place.

Leaving S.P. Rele at one point, Romi went to meet Billy at his hut. It was Billy’s son who took him to his place. It was the first time that Romi saw his tribal wife Bilasia. After confronting her alone, Romi realized how true Billy was in his mention in the letter he had written to Tuula about the appearance of a strange woman often he dreamt.

A strange woman keeps crossing my dreams. I have seen her on the streets of Delhi, nursing a child in the shade of a tree or hauling stone for a rich man’s house. I have seen her buying bangles at a fair. I have seen her shadow at a tribal dance, and I have seen her, pensive and inviolable, her clothes clinging to her wet body, beside a tank in Benares. And once I saw her, her face strangely luminous in the
twilight, loading a freight train with sulphur on a siding in one of our eastern ports. Yes, this woman keeps crossing my dreams causing in me a fearful disturbance, the full meaning of which I have yet to understand. (SCBB 162)

This Bilasia who appeared in the dream of Billy now stood in flesh and blood before Romi with all descriptions he was already familiar with his letter. She did not care about his collector status. On facing her, he felt that he was not only facing a human being but also “an embodiment of that primal and invulnerable force that had ruled these hills, perhaps this earth, since time began and that our proud claims to the contrary, still lay in wait for us not far from the doorstep of our air conditioned rooms” (SCBB 162). After saying that she had to allow her husband to come with him, Bilasia could not believe his statement. She even wanted him to swear on the head of Billy’s son that he would not take him away. She knew fully well the consequences of his arrest. Further the police force also scared her. She realized that the police never did right but only wrong in their attempt to safeguard the interests of the people. This knowledge of her about police was really true because one of the havildars alone was responsible in killing Billy. She also said to Romi that her husband had an immense faith in Romi and called his heart a heart of gold … “sone ka Dil” (SCBBB 163). He also told her that the consequence of his arrest would bring disaster to Romi since his tribal people would rise in rebellion against this act, and in the course of this event terrible deeds would follow endangering Romi’s life. He wanted to avoid the clash between his people and the police. He did not want Romi to be pinned for the clash. Hatredness among his people would result in violence and vandalism and in order to avert such ugly turn of events police would employ its strict force. In between his people’s hatredness and the police resistance, Romi’s life and
his family alone would get sandwiched for no fault of his. His people knew that as a collector, he alone was responsible for the combing of his arrest. They had no knowledge about the technicalities of the governance that the S.P. out of the special powers of chief secretary now acted for which Romi was only a silent partner. This lack of knowledge among the tribes would bring calamity to Romi. Billy knew it very well because his civilized part fully realized the gravity of the situation. That is why he did not want to make any contact with his father Mr.Biswa and his civilized wife Meena. He wanted only amity for which the best possible means was to stay away from them and do the needful for the tribal society- a mission about which he had had a lot of dreams and finally those dreams now become a thing of reality. Finding nothing in the civilized world, Billy got everything in the tribal world. They all worshipped him as their demigod. He was their saviour. He was their priest. He was their sooth sayer. He was their guide in all matters right from telling the changes of climate to settling family disputes. For matters bordering on spirituality to communal and social everyone relied on him. Every one evinced faith that he alone would bring them all prosperity. Everyone believed that he after four hundred to five hundred years of not getting any true spiritual guidance was now sent by their God-chandlota to relieve them from their miseries. But circumstances developed contrary to Billy’s plan to avert a clash in which he himself got killed. This attempt of Billy saved the life of his friend Romi. This sacrifice of Billy at one level appeared to shield Romi at the personal level and at the general level, his men realized the limitations of divine in human form and death for such a form inevitable. This realization stopped them from not indulging in any form of violence causing trouble for them and the civilized society.
But Billy in his practical life is hardly after solving these problems even though he realizes that “becoming a primitive was only a first step, a means to an end” (SCBB 161). He is actually never in search of this end in his life with the tribals. In the Maikala hills, living with Bilasia, a tribal widowed lady he becomes godhead for them; but even in this capacity he hardly solves questions which he has posed regarding the identity and the existence of individuals on earth. As an anthropologist, “he wasn’t just some hairy-fairy academic” (SCBB 130). He was deeply interested in his area of specialization in the tribal affairs which took him on study tours with his disciples to the tribal world of the Maikala hills into which he escapes and identifies himself with the tribals shedding off all his association with the civilized world where lived with his parents, wife and child. The root cause of Billy’s crisis of consciousness is what a Swedish researcher Tuula Lindgren calls ‘urkraft’. The dormant tribal urge explodes out of him as he leaves the civilized world to take refuge in the tribal world.

In spite of Billy’s upbringing in the modern society with its socio-cultural and educational values, his inner urge compels him to stay in the midst of primitive society as a remedy-provider for all their maladies. This urge in him also gets him a meaning for his existence. In the modern society, he feels alienated where as among the primitive society, he derives immense joy of driving away all the pains, sufferings and sorrow of the primitives. His happiness lies in finding solutions to the primitive people and in the modern society he feels he is a misfit. The real values of life like give, control and sacrifice are found only in the primitive world. In the modern society, these values are matters of debate and not matters of live-practice. In Roots and Shadows, Indu out of practicing these values in the domestic front gets all the members of the family comfort and solace. As a modern woman, Indu reasons out what are essentials for one’s upliftment and what are things to be discarded. For
example, her choice to sell the traditional house which has out lived its purpose of stay is to be sold down and out of getting the proceeds, she tries to rehabilitate the lives of many irrespective persons like Anand Atya and old uncle shall be left to live in directionless-motiveless and uncared beings of degeneration. But these elder people lived their lives and they were left with no option except to accept the authority of the youngsters under well beings like old order yielding place to new.

It is in *Roots and shadows* Despande portrays the experience of an Indian woman, Indu who journeys across a hostile masculine world represented by her ancestral home and the inmates of the grand house. This house is the last bastion of a social system that is fast fading. *Roots and shadows* is a symbolic representation of the dialectical nature of man and woman set against each other in material terms for power struggle. ‘Roots’ stands for tradition and ‘shadows’ signifies the marginal culture. The dying tradition is soon to become shadows against the backdrop of an apocalyptic change. Also it suggests that once the root is removed, life is bereft of the binding force giving way to new possibilities. Waugh says in *The Quest*, “A woman’s experience is primarily defined through interpersonal, usually domestic and filial relationships. Her identity exists largely as being- for- others rather than being- for-itself” (Dwivedi Bhavana 116).

To Indu the concept of a successful marriage is a hoax and she insists that nothing should be judged. A perfect understanding is based on, “Don’t judge me. Don’t criticize me. Just appreciate me. See only my virtues, not my vices. My strengths, not my weaknesses” (*RAS* 108). Shashi Deshpande brings out the problem of marriage as an evil social practice because right from the beginning to the end, it is the history of a woman’s suppression, a long- drawn- out drama of negotiation in which she feels uncertain of her position. This is a deal in which the poor woman is
literally bracketed with an animal, for she cannot exercise her reasoning or intelligence and express her genuine individual concerns. Deshpande is at her best when she dwells upon this subject: “Millions of girls have asked this question millions of times in this country…. 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 no more move out of your cage of no-choices” \(\text{(RAS 116).}\)

Indu’s Cousin Mini’s wedding was well celebrated. Mini was so devoted to her father Kaka (Anant) that even on the day of the marriage she took hot water to her father. Such was her devotion to family that all Indian womanhood had to imbibe. Further it was one of many duties that a girl in a traditional village Hindu family had been assigned and from that unwritten rule she did not severe a bit on the pretext of her own taste for conduct on any important days like the one of her marriage day. Such was her duty consciousness; such was her involvement, such was her temperament. Further, marriage is an occasion of joy and on that score one should forget one’s “animosities, misgiving and conflicts” \(\text{(RAS 14).}\) Though this was a tough task for an individual like Anant he had to wear the mask of geniality for the sake of the smooth conduct of marriage. When Indu looked at Mini on the marriage day no woman in India having such a “heavy, coarse features and crude mannerism” \(\text{(RAS 14)}\) as their bridegroom would appear to be romantic in spite of their dreaming of a bridegroom. Similarly Indian brides like Mini knew pretty well “What was marriage after all, but two people brought together after cold-blooded bargaining to meet, mate and reproduce so that generation might continue?” \(\text{(RAS 14).}\) Thus Mini as a Indian bride knew this fact very well that did not put on a gleeful appearance. But
her mother, Indu’s aunt, Kaki was overwhelmed with joy since her daughter was going to be married, really a matter of achievement. Her sense of pride of her achievement was found expressed in her clad of a costly saree. For Indu her uncle Anant bought the costliest saree as she was specially a pet object of liking of him. On such occasion providing such gifts like sarees is a benign gesture “of uniting the strong bond, a common loyalty” \( (RAS\ 16) \) among the members of family thereby creating an impression of “we”- togetherness and “not they or us” \( (RAS\ 17) \)- separation.

On appearing in the sky-blue Sari, Indu bore all the resemblance of the great Akka-the female titles of the family “indomitable” \( (RAS\ 16) \) and it was on her she bequeathed all her property. While she was watching the progress of the marriage, she was wafted with the smell of champak. Naren, her old uncle’s grandson alone used champak scent. The thought about him disturbed her greatly. As she had no chance of seeing such a bustle and excitement of her marriage with Jayant all that appeared on that day thrilled her. On hearing the Shehani Music, Indu also got the hint of Naren’s presence the old uncle who happened to be brother of great Akka who stayed with her after his wife’s demise. He had a daughter by name Saroja who died in an accident with her husband. Her only son Naren was brought up by him. He studied well. He got first class in M.A., Economics. But he was a rolling stone but gathered enough knowledge out of his test of strength on many jobs. Now at the time of Mini’s marriage, he was jobless. He had a fascination for Shehnai music. For him “Music fills me and there is no more “I”. Just the music” \( (RAS\ 18) \). His smell and his music filled the air of the marriage hall and only Naren, Indu and Govind, Indu’s father alone had such a common artistic taste in the family.
Because of this taste all of them had in them many common traits that did not fit in with the material minded beings of the house. Indu had a dream. The dream appeared to be real for her. In that dream she was in a large hall and it made her also feel that the place resembled an underground. A man who was dressed in white led her. He sported a Christ-like beard. He impressed her out of his ascetic but powerful appearance. In that hall she saw people who all belonged to her family. Then she saw people who all belonged to her family. Then she saw a barren place with all heat and fierce glare. All her people appeared to be happy and they all wanted from her some promise. Then she found herself in a bus that took off in full speed. She cried ‘stop’ and all the people ran after the bus.

From that dream, she psycho analytically found out the significance of it that she as a member of her family rejected it and went with her husband Jayant. She was alienated and got herself drowned in the sea of loneliness. This dream of her impelled her to go back to her family. The occasion of her entry into the house came handy in Mini’s marriage. As a journalist, she took part in many exciting happenings on that occasion. Afterwards the traditional house responsible for the union of family got demolished under the supervision of Sankarappa. The lone member in the family Kaka (Anant) her father Govind’s elder brother who tried his best not to demolish the house was totally shrunk. After this incident and all his “laughter, jokes, just like the echoes of the past” (RAS 21) fell from him like “heaps of rubble, piles of wood and dust” (RAS 21). It was he who strove very hard to keep the house intact. He tried his best maintaining the staying power of family unit clung at roots level but it proved to be in vain. All his brothers Govind, Madhav, Vinayak and Vasant did not have in them such a spirit of bondage of unity with the house who all never cherished like Anant, so the memories of the house that too a live being like them as a brother
partaking in all ills and wells of the family’s historical happenings of the past and sharing its own feelings and emotions as if it also one of many intimate members of the family. After selling such a historic house with its roots deeply laid in the soil of mortals lived and living and their sweet heard and unheard melodies of woe, awe and glee now face disaster before the test of time. It is all because of new fangled temperament of modernity with its roots on materialism. The old house stood for human values of love, affection, concern, trust and harmony. But these hoary values of Indian soil got eroded out of the expansionism of material growth. Men of love of the elder generation had to yield to the new order of the market minded consciousness of the modern present day order. Persons like Anant considered that the house was not built on brick and mortar but built on togetherness of love. They tried hard to protect and permeate this old order of love, encircle, encompass and enliven all his family ties. But with his lone hand his attempts to save the house from disaster, symbol of traditional values of love and family unity became abortive. All his brothers wanted him to spend on repairs of the house, pay its tax and its maintenance since he and his family enjoy all the fruits of cosy comfort of the house out of his stay. He also understands their legitimate demand but with his limited income hard to meet both ends, he was unable to meet their demands and prevent the disaster. His three sons Hemant, Sumant (both married) and his last son Sharad did not rise up to his expectation, earn enough to fulfil their father’s cherished desire of saving their roots, that is the home. As modern men they cared for the profit got out of its sales rather than its protective role of their family integrity. If that was the case of his own sons, he could not expect any love or remedy to be extended to him from his brothers. After the marriage of his daughter Mini alias Padmini he sold his house and went to live with eldest son Hemant in a rented house. Old uncle who lived in that house for
many years died before the house came down. He was only a poor school teacher who retired early owing to bad health and came to live with the family as a poor dependent. Yet, when he died, it was “as if one of the pillars of the house had gone” (RAS 21). When Indu told this to her husband Jayant he pacified her that new order yielding place to the old. He also reminded her that Indu herself became now a pillar in the family.

Dramatically Indu inherited all the property from the will of Akka. She made her as her worthy successor and left a huge property she had to take care after her demise. She was the younger sister of Indu’s grandfather. She out of her authority and managerial skill saved the family from the financial crisis. She was a terror to all. It was her tall order that all in the house had to obey. Others had no right to question her. Everybody expected a share in her property after her death. To their disappointment she left all she had for Indu. Such an action of hers was not liked by her uncle Madhav’s son Sunil and her another uncle Vasant’s wife Sunanda. But others “reconciled” (RAS 21). His uncle Madhav approved of her gesture of spending the family property for their own welfare since “if they themselves did not help each others who else would help them...?” (RAS 21).

In that house, an orphan Brahmin Vithal, got the support of them all, did all odd jobs, continued his studies and had in him all green signs of becoming great in future. His sincerity, hardwork, devotion, keeping himself at a distance from the family matters, showing deep interest in studies, living comfortably within the limited income, showing respect to elders, never taking pride in his intelligence, never wasting time unnecessarily on idle pursuits and so on. Indu was ready to extend all help for his studies thereby he atleast could continue his educational pursuit and reach his goal of becoming great through that education.
At the same time his eldest uncle Anant had his last son Sharad who scrapped through his degree with a third class but had plans to start a hotel in the site of the old house. Had old Kaka remained and heard his plan she would have been shocked at the thought of his nephew, her father’s grandson, going into “idle hotel business” (RAS 22) she had hopes only in law, teaching and working in a government offices. For engineering and medicine, the new- fangled courses of studies she had no hope and Shard had in him no potential to show his sign of greatness.

Her aunt Atya (Narmada) came to live with her after the demolition of the house. Though she was the widowed daughter of Indu’s grandfather, she had no likes and dislikes of hers. For her, the old house and its inmates were her transactional world. Though she overtly remarked that for her, place of living was not a matter at all. Still she felt her living in Indu’s house, though her own niece’s house, she felt fish out of water. She found city life dreadful and the modern kitchen a frightening thing. She was too late to learn new tricks. She was deprived of the chance of living in the same old model in her familiar, known and accustomed background. She was well disposed with Jayant. After her mother’s death, Indu “got affection from her uncle Kaka, (her father’s eldest brother) understanding from old uncle and loving care from Atya” (RAS 23). Thus Indu’s formative years did not give her any guarantee of getting love from parents. Her mother died early. Her father Govind left her under the kind care of his brother and roamed aimlessly as an artist. Thereby Indu had developed the desire “to be loved and ever to be happy” (RAS 23). On account of her insecure early life- now in her prime age she realized love and happiness do not come for the asking. Fortunately she was wedded to Jayant who understood her thoroughly and gave her all support.
As she was brought up in the atmosphere of elders like old uncle, she inculcated the idea of living independently. He used to say “the whole world is made up of interdependent parts. Why not you?” (RAS 24). He also used to say that all things are connected. These two philosophies of independence and interdependence though appeared to be poles apart ideas, but could be polarised if proper exercise on freedom of action was applied on these two aspects. She left the family at her younger age because of her cherished value of independence. She joined late, with Jayant after Naren’s death because of her realization that life is a thing or an object that is to be made as a subject very essential for happy life of togetherness.

Indu has chosen writing as her job not to reform society. But she believes that by focusing on small aspects of kindness in life she believes that at one day she would enter into larger arena of greater heroism. She had the change of showing her might in the art of writing focusing on details that are small. But that piece of writing exposing the shameless exploitation of ignorance, poverty and need was not cared and the publisher was not ready to print. It was at that time of remorse she heard the news of Akka’s summoning her. Immediately after Indu’s arrival Akka’s “air of superiority” (RAS 28) did not show any sign of abatement. She enquired about her husband and also asked why he hadn’t taken him with her. Indu replied her how could she bring her husband without her proper invitation. On the next day, she fell in comma and died.

As a true devoted Indian wife, Indu expected honour to be extended from her family member to her husband Jayant. She happened to be a member of that large family but Jayant her husband had to be shown honour, due respect and congenial invitation for his presence in the house. None bothered to extend such welcome. This had become a great grouse for her and she felt this insult aimed at her only and not
against Jayant. Many in the family did not like Jayant because it was her choice. In
the traditional family daughters at home, however big they might be out of their
education should not violate the border of fixing husband of their own choice.
Getting husband was the consorted affair of the family. Such was her departure on
traditional moral plane in her selection of Jayant as her husband out of her individual
liking and taste which they all regarded her a violator of domestic moral norms.
Thereby he is not worthy enough to be invited among them and enjoy equal status as a
member born in that hoary traditional family. Her moral breach in her choice of her
family partner was a matter that many did not deign to pardon her graciously but at
the same time ready to snap her ties permanently. But Akka a few hours before her
death invited her. None in the house had the courage, audacity or boldness to
question her invitation. Such was the wielding power of authority on them all which
on many occasions appeared to be inhuman. But in the matter of requesting Indu
among them was really a benign gesture of her to bridge the gap that she expected to
surface after her death and in reality it surfaced after her death and such a gap, she
providentially envisaged would be bridged-thereby saving the honour and esteem of
the family for which only her niece, Indu had to visit the family and mingle in all
affairs after her death. What she thought was well exhibited after her death. But the
staying power now fell on Indu who proved her Akka’s dream of establishing honour
of the family.

Indu and Jayant thought marriage becomes meaningful only after having had a
child. But there surfaces a problem. Jayant’s mother is a perfectionist and he expects
his child in his own fashions. Indu, a motherless child would also expect the child to
be modeled after her fashion. But child as an individual will be having a model of its
fashion. What results in such case is total confusion, chaos, misunderstanding and
miserly. Therefore they postpone childbirth on the pretext that they need more money for the child’s care and well-being. When asked by Indu whether Narmada Atya had any wish to have children of her own, she replied shedding her endurance mark that she, like a person caged in a small room, would scream, shout and rage and bang her head against the wall, then after sometime she got used to it.

Indu was greatly interested to know about this surprise silence of relatives not asking about Akka’s money. While Kaki telling her about her husband Anant’s place of visit she made an ugly remark about her father Govind. From her estimate, her father, is a shirker of family responsibilities. “Is this house only ours? Are these duties only ours” (RAS 47). She had a grouse that her husband and she alone bore all the family responsibilities and all others helped them then and there and kept themselves away from all family duties on the pretext of their personal duties. She continues her allegations about other family members.

Then she continued her pique remarks about her father Govind. According to her, he was a very talented man. But he had become a waste on account of the sudden demise of his wife. This tragic incident sapped his talent. He did the fault of getting married to such a woman not belonging to their caste. Had she been their caste there would be a lot of chances of getting her mended, shaped and cast into the design of their family tradition. This deviation, otherwise a factor of deprivation, caused him dearly that he lost his wife, lost his purpose in life, lost his grip and interest in life, and became a wandering photographer. For a daughter like Indu, born to such a father of rudderless sailor and anchorless husband, the entire family deemed it essential for her to have her well thithered on any ground that might be even alien, foreign and distant. Her tone now got adjusted to the tune of finding fault, her love marriage, though a departure, but all approved for her welfare without the moral,
physical and financial strength of parents. If a daughter like Indu, born to such parents the maximum help or comfort or support that a traditional members of family expected to have extended to save her honour and prestige that her Kaka Anant and she had done to their utmost perfection and satisfaction without giving room to any personal rancour, vendetta or animosity. By saying this Kaki brushed aside all the expectations of Indu about their involvement shown in her marriage about which she had her own grouse against them all. Thus Anand Kaka and Narmada Kaki, though did not approve of her love marriage much against the traditional value they did not show a stout and stiff remonstration against her lapse since she was born to a careless father and a mother dead secured her family with a husband that was much more an essential factor rather than the blemish her marriage caused dearly to their family honour.

Kaka talked about the condition of the house. He showed the house to be repaired and to be white washed. He had no money to pay the tax. Two years back he borrowed money from his brother Govind. It was his another brother Madhav who paid the tax last year. Then Indu realized that there are only two types of people “one giver and another taker” (RAS 59). This is the philosophy of Indu. Indu developed doubt among family members who after Akka’s death started showering affection and love on Jayant as if he had now only become husband to brother’s daughter and thereby for the entire family their son- in- law. This attitude of them was well watched by Indu which suggested to her that they all were ready to accept him as a member of the family after a very long year. She could not measure the attitude of them all in a positive manner.

Her other Uncle Vinayak Kaka a licentiate doctor “a small roly- polyman” (RAS 60) with his three daughters and along with his wife had arrived just two days
earlier of the funeral ceremony. He happened to be a person of good humour. Madhava Rao’s wife Sumitra Kaki along with her daughter had come a day earlier. They all brought urbanity in their disposition. Madhava Rao’s younger daughter Geeta started moving freely with Indu. She also enquired about the ‘family trend’ developed after Akka’s death. She, like her mother Sumitra always bore a pained expression out of seeing the joy of others, Indu correctly judged that Geeta too would develop her mother’s trait of getting irritated at the sight of happiness on others. Indu counted her own blessing in not having a mother, who if had foul temper like Sumitra, she too would imbibe the same foul character as according to the saying just like the silk thread that speaks volumes of a saree, so also mother’s traits shall be embedded in daughter’s gait.

Indu found out among her family members “readiness to revile others, to misunderstand, to see the worst” (RAS 62). They all appeared to be apparently united but at any point of time they were all ready to draw daggers at each other and hew them to pieces. When asked about his brother Sarad, Hemant replied that he hadn’t seen so far such an irresponsible person like him who wasted away his time in “zooming around on a borrowed motocycle” (RAS 62). Indu wanted to change his complaining nature by means of appreciating his best handwriting for which he replied in dismay that was because of his best out of his wasting his life as a clerk. Thus, Hemant breathed discontent, disgruntlement and thereby dissipated all his positive potentialities ever wallowing in the mud of complaining others. When he showed such signs of hatredness for his job Indu advised him that it would be better for him to resign the job. But he reminded her responsibility as a husband to his wife and as a father to two children. Because of this family responsibility, he had to wallow in misery without knowing how to free his filial ties. He also complained
about marriage. For him it is a trap. For which Indu thus replied “trap? Or a cage? Maybe the comic strip versions of marriage….a cage with two trapped animals glaring hatred at each other….isn’t so wrong after all. And it’s not a joke, but a tragedy. But what animal would cage itself” (RAS 63). He had also a grouse that his next younger brother Sumant became a graduate. In his voice, there is an element of dissatisfaction for which he is not ready to accept his own short falls, misgivings and wrong judgment but finds fault with others alone responsible for his job failure.

Then comes the painful story of Akka- how women like her ill- treated in the traditional family known for culture, custom, discipline, chastity, morality …It is in the story of Akka one could sense how fate had made her so bold to withstand all the onslaughts of life. She lost her mother at an early age. Her father was known for his aloofness. He never mixed freely with others nor he shared his feelings. It was one of the traits of traditional Hindu Brahmin who bore the cross all alone without shedding or sharing his agonies and ecstasies with others. As he had no female folks at home to find a partner for his lone daughter, fate had made to choose a tall bulky man with large features as his son- in- law. Akka was small and dainty really pretty with a round face. It was only after marriage she had attained her age. None knew how much she had endured in her in-law’s house. Before she became thirteen, she tried to run away from in-law’s place twice. Both on these occasions she failed. On both these occasions her mother- in- law whipped her and locked her up for three days. She preferred to remain in that locked up room instead of locking her up with her husband. As a giant of man, he knew no taste. He considered women pleasure pots. He was a monkey on whose hands, women were like garlands torn to pieces. He had a weakness for women. He always ran after mistresses. As a result of these things, Akka did not bear him any child. Even when she bore they bled out of her as
miscarriage. Her mother-in-law threw the blame on her. She never realized how could a woman with such a beastial man lead a life of harmony which alone is responsible for a happy conjugal life leading to a peaceful child bearing....! He developed an intimate affair with a woman. She gave him freely all her jewels and silk sarees. For fear of mother he did not bring her home. After her death Akka found it intolerable to lead a domestic life with him. She took her costly jewels and came to live with her father. Her husband stormed her place demanding her jewels. But her father did not budge a little and sent him away like a beaten beggar. In the mean time, her husband had a stroke. He lived in an immobile condition for two years. Akka served him well. She gave him food. She cleaned his shit. She washed his body. She kept him tidy. She did all her duties that a traditional Hindu wife was supposed to do. Atya went with Akka to help her. At time the giant cried like a thunder. He wept at times. From his expression Akka found out his agony. He was still longing with the idea of his mistress to live near him. But Akka was adamant. She said, “If that’s what you want, you can go on wanting. She won’t come here. I won’t let her. You’ll never see her again” (RAS 72).

That was the stern temperament of Akka. It is only Atya who asked her for the first time why she cried during nights. For this Akka replied that it was Atya who happened to be the first person in her life coming out for an answer for her malady. From then only Atya understood her tenacity, her moral strength, her steadfastness, her uprightness, her sense of purpose, dedication and upholding the family honour. Such a brave and heroic lady Akka had chosen Indu as her worthy successor of her property. Indu was spell bound on hearing the pathetic plight of Akka’s past life steeped in traditional assault on woman and their marginalized existence. She stood stoic in all the brutal attempts aimed at her during her stay in her husband’s house and
found in Indu the same stoic temperament and selected her as her legal heir to look after the family matters after her demise.

When all at home came to know that Akka left her reigns of control to Indu after her death, became nonplussed, she is now “the heiress’ of the house” (*RAS* 73). Indu’s nostalgic memories about her stay with Akka now appeared in her mind’s eye. News about Indu talking with a boy in one of the corners of the library reached Akka’s ears and she was furious on hearing the news. In spite of Indu’s repeated requests to put reason into Akka that in her conduct there was no violation of family honour. Akka did not approve of her. On that day due to Akka’s wrong assessment of her conduct that was responsible for her leaving the house.

Indu met Naren in his room when he was listening to a devotional song. By nature he was restless at all times. But whenever he hears such devotional music “he becomes completely at peace with himself” (*RAS* 75). At such moments there was peace and tranquility radiated from him. That peace now permeated Indu as well. Indu could not understand Naren’s faith in the love for music. It was the song sung by Meera who experienced the love she had and the faith in her loved one none could separate her from anyone. Naren’s union of Lord Krishna out of hearing the song experienced the object of love and the faith of the subject on such an object capable to love becomes one leaving behind oneness of mind- realizing the state of peace, tranquility and rest of the mind. In that integrated state of the object- subject confluence of oneness of existence is got through the devotional music by Naren and at such a moment he becomes calm, peaceful and tranquil.

Then he appreciates her skill of writing. Indu shared the view of an editor who wanted her to write stories entertaining and educating audience. Indu considers writing is the expression of the experience of the individual writer’s choice of taste.
While writing the writer cares for his or her area of interest and he or she will never think about his or her readers at the time of creation. What he or she writes, is his or her source of entertaining or educating and it will never be a reader’s choice of entertaining and educating. He tells her that working in a women’s magazine is a boring job. For him it is a kind of narcissism. For him it is something like getting locked up in a cage and throwing the key away.

Indu hated the attitude of Indian women writer’s ever portraying women born to bear the brunt of suffering patiently without giving room to air their views on all matters including sex. The very thought of the society about womanhood nothing but a stage of bearing babies alone she could not digest, she hated even the function of the menstrual cycle of women responsible for making them fit to carry babies. She “could not bear it, she even felt an immense hatred for it” (RAS 78). On certain occasion she was surprised to hear remarks from a woman reader that she could not believe that a woman like her touched on areas of sex a pet and prerogative subject matter of men and men alone and she would ask her “if I hadn’t written it was you who had written that story, I’d have thought it was a man” (RAS 78). If that was the restriction imposed on female writers in her choice of subject how could a writer like her write freely, liberally and independently on all matters expressing her own perspective on such matters from a female point of view.

There are now two issues tormenting them. One is marriage expense of Mini or Padmini. Another to maintain the house. It was Madhav Kaka who came out with his suggestion that maintainance of the house was beyond the means of many of them. Personally he had two more daughters to be wedded for which he expected some financial support out of selling the house. At that context lawyer Shyamaro came out with the idea of Shankarappa’s offer to buy the house. But for Anand Kaka it was a
disgusting matter. For him Shankarappa had no honour of status to buy the house. Selling the house to him was lowering their own status. This act of lowering was for him an abominable conduct. His stout protest in not selling the house to him hit them all like thunder bolt. Shyamaro tried to put reason into his mind. Shankarappa had an ignoble history of past. But now he had all bright chances to become the next MLA. He had made money out of business. It was very bad to neglect his offer which is really very good. Madhav and others too accepted this point.

Then Anant came out with his fate when the house was sold off. He was rather sentimentally emotional bordering on his personal protection. He had no means to get rental house. His sons did not earn any appreciable sum. He himself had a job getting only a meager income. After his daughter’s marriage all his personal savings were drained. His voice was heard by them all as an agonized cry of a father without any financial support from his grown up son.

Then the topic of discussion turned in the direction of Mini’s marriage. Indu openly condemned the traditional arranged marriage of Hindu Brahmin “you’ve thought of everything…The families …The communities…the stars … the gotras…everything” (RAS 94). Her open denouncement about Brahmin arranged marriage shocked them especially Madhav Kaka. He then started arguing in favour of traditional Brahmin marriage on mathematical precision. Naren himself was once ready to marry Mini. But Akka refused the proposal. No one had the guts to say ‘no’ to her decision.

People like the old uncle who had no roof to take shelter or ready to live under any roof out of age long practices now find it difficult to move from the hoary house and start a life afresh in a different surrounding. They have neither strength to move nor guts to get adjusted to new environment. This is what is called “self flagellation”
(RAS 98). He does not support the idea of selling the house. He argues the house stands for them as “a background, an anchor, something to hold on to” (RAS 99). But Indu answers him that for “amorphous group of people as in her family” (RAS 99) there is no meaning to hold the house. Old uncle then comes out with the following remark that is the crux of the meaningful life. If all aspires to lead an individualistic life then what is the meaning of family?”

A husband, wife and children? But what, when the children grew up and go away, as they are bound to do? Is it only a husband and wife? But that too need not last forever? It is easy enough now to dissolve that tie so, what’s left? An individual? Is that what we should live for…. One’s own self. (RAS 99)

Old uncle asks her what is the meaning of existence except a man’s singular success in life. The ideas of tribe, class, community and family all appear to be hoax for a man of success. For elders like him there is atleast one ideology dominating in them that is patriotism. But in the modern context, there is no such ideology except “to earn’ so much, spend so much …” (RAS 100). What is expected of man like him..? For the modern man success is the aim in life. But there are people like him impossible and unimaginable to achieve success, because such people like him think it is unbearable to have a life of success alone without any other motives. This will make people like him to become self conscious and destroy the very root of self confidence. Such people like him even in the midst of singular concentration of achieving success after success for his own singular growth for whatever they do or he does. Slowly his talk made them to think and feel that there lies something beyond success. Success after success they would aim for they would drive them to ‘complete bankruptcy’ making one realizes the achievement of success they or he had
in their gain was nothing and then what they or he wanted to have success after success finally they or he did not know. “But soon the lights would go off, the voices fade out and our games would become …what? Nothingness in the midst of nothingness” (*RAS 100*).

Though every activity finally ends up in nothingness the human predicament always aims for involvement. Humans know out of experience that they would get hurt, would get suffered up and would end in humiliation out of efforts. Still they never get detached from the fruits of their efforts. That part of involvement remains if even at the hour of death hoping “Not all of me shall die” (*RAS 103*). The tinge of involvement, its iato of it sticks in us all of which is the human predicament and causes pain an everlasting experience with the hope of relief never at one’s efforts. But still a belief of relief is never a dying matter but a living matter. Faith, love, devotion are all factors of belief for relief that are independently manifested in this world but are to be experienced only in their interdependent parts. Marriage brings in the belief of relief for the two diverse people of gender, caste, colour, creed and religion as independent entities shall bring happiness out of interdependence. Only when they mutually show, share and shower their mutual faith, love and devotion as interdependent factors and not as an “Unblance, obsessive and unreasonable independent factors” (*RAS 100*). Family happiness rises in the family horizon.

Success after success as the aim of modern man out of his individual efforts ultimately make him mentally cripple, lose his balance, become an obsessive being with no sense of reason that the means of achieving such successes having the attendant aspects of hurt, suffering and humiliation are interdependent factors of involvement of human predicament responsible for his independent success. Selling the house may be independent decision of many. The happiness of the result of such
a decision is to be got out of the interdependent aspects of pain and sufferings of many. It is in the sufferings of some, many have to derive happiness. It is in somebody’s sacrifice many reap the fruit of happiness. Thereby Indu’s decision of selling the house is a relief to all. It is not a total belief wherein lies the sacrifice of some like old uncle too out of their willing involvement to experience pain and suffering in order to provide happiness for some one. Gain of some is pain to some. Not all can gain without some’s pain. Not all are ready to undergo pain for some gain. Pain and gain are the two sides of a coin. If there is gain at one side it is due to pain on the other side. Success of some is pain to many. More and more successes of one means more and more pain for many. At one stage what out of success for many to have pain will shake the self-confidence. At that stage, independent success becomes interdependent pain.

Old uncle is of the view that though people like him want total detachment it is very difficult to practise this in real life. Even out of practising they don’t get peace but only hurt, suffering and humiliation. That is the human predicament. When she (Indu) went down to meet his family members and discuss partition she saw a traditional Brahmin lady covering her shaven head with a red saree looked at her ‘faintly’. She thought the sight of her was the look of assessment about her who knew 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 grand-children…they were still for them the only successes 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.

(RAS 109)
Each of them is to Indu, creatures living in a dark world ridden with “ignorance, prejudice and superstition” \((RAS\ 109)\). Such a type of Brahmin woman with her own idiosyncrasies without any independent entities of their own ready to lose their very names after marriage and feel proud of “having their names changed by their husband, during their wedding ceremonies” \((RAS\ 110)\) appear to wander as servants in such big traditional families and comment on behaviour of modern women like Indu who care for their names, for without name everything meaningless.

When asked what would be the fate of her (Kaki) Anant and Atya after the disposal of the house she said that she was willing to go and live in a small house. When Indu asked Atya how she would find safety in other places at this old age, she replied philosophically that she had to get along with others, and that is her life.

All others in the family had plans to get the money out of the sale of the property. Some wanted to buy a new house. Some wanted to pursue education. None had any real feeling for the loss. Everyone was selfish in their own manner. For Indians, marriage is a catalyst that brings two unknown families together without giving any scope to know about each other thoroughly well. The mystery of future out of such marriage match whether it is joyous or otherwise will surface only after the performance of marriage. In such a marriage the thrill of doom is more meaningful than the thrill of love. In such a marriage, getting to know each other is not more needed than the thrill of total understanding with each others. In such a marriage the thrill of compromise is not much more required than the thrill of expectation of both the families about each other. All of the family member left the house. His uncle Anant complained that all other male members in the family were ready to sell the house and it was only Kaki stood against to it. He could not tolerate how could a woman stand in the way for a common decision taken by all members in
the matter of the sale of the house with her small mindedness and behave like all women “spoiling the cooking to starve those they usually dislike” (*RAS* 122). He also comes out with his opinion that men understand well with each other but women ….. “God how they dislike one another?” (*RAS* 122). Now that Kaka left for heavenly abode. Generation of living together has gone. Now the present generation aims at asserting oneself within the limited span of life. They care for money, material prosperity, material expansion and they have the market minded consciousness of profit on all matters and not on men. They are ready to serve blood relation for material profit. In such a situation caring for living together is an obsolete entity. Struggling to survive is the order of the day. Everyone is after to save his or her skin. None cares for others skin to be protected. Selfishness is the order of the day. Selflessness is being looked upon as an anachronistic factor. Indu alone enjoys happiness for she has no expectations from Akka’s property and thereby she is free from being exploited by others.

It is from uncle, that Indu knows about Vithal whose father, though a cook, found his wife run away with someone after his days work, took the boy to his custody, made him study and study undeterrently. He too ran away leaving the boy finding his crumbs on the waste thrown away from hotels. It was Kaki who brought him home after seeing the sacred thread on his shoulder. When enquired about his taste to study, the boy nodded positively and from that day he had no other activities given in the house except to study. Indu decided to help for his education.

Indu is a provider for both (Vithal and Naren) since both lack in money and sex happiness. Both she has. For both she is the master. For both she is the authority. For both she is the source of happiness. With that singular happiness, she kindles their inner talents, potentials and zeal and put them on the track of happiness
for which there is no need for her to act on other’s advice. It is her individual choice rooted on independence for which no moral, spiritual, religious or traditional values offer their resistance to stop her flow of harmony of happiness. It is in providing happiness for others, Indu lives up to the perennial flow of mother Ganges an in that sense, she is a mother for Naren and Vithal.

Endearments, kisses, caresses, even foul abuse….nothing could shock me any more. And yet, at Naren’s words, at the sight of Naren’s face as he looked at me, the response of that prime, ignorant child came back to me. I controlled myself with an effort and said, ‘Nothing at all. I just wanted to know when you’re leaving. (RAS 135)

Thus for her, Naren not a lover, but a child made her realize that even in the urge of sex what resulted was not the happiness of physical union but the creation of a new being, a child. Happiness of sex elevated her status from the state of a ladylove to the status of motherhood. What her husband Jayant failed to give she got from Naren. As a being of wife, she did not become a mother. But her ladylove status got her motherhood status. She was only an incomplete sphere out of her marriage. She became a complete being out of her Naren’s relations. Her realization of motherhood status is more meaningful for a woman than the status of a wife to a husband. Her quest to become complete woman of herself got out of her relation from Naren, a family member but not from her past lover and pet Jayant, a total stranger to her family. She became a mother and protector to the family. After experiencing some of her married life, she looks down at marriage as a trap: “A trap? or a cage?…. a cage with two trapped animals glorying hatred at each other” (RAS 67).

Indu struggles hard to understand the life in reality, the actual cause which is destroying her married life. She feels that her sense of certainty, confidence and
assurance is being destroyed in the presence of Jayant. And when she talks of such feelings to him, he would call it only ‘nonsense’ and nothing else. This becomes the crux of the problem. Jayant never bothers to understand what she really wanted, what her feelings are. To be precise, we can say that there is no real communication between them. She toys with the idea of leaving Jayant when she sees that there is no real understanding between them:

Love, that’s word I don’t really understand. It seems to me an overworked word…. I love a book, word, sari…. etc., what I feel for Jayant… can I compress all of it within this word….. Sometimes I wonder if I will leave him….. The only way in which I can be, myself, my whole self again. (RAS 97)

She is in a confused state of mind. As a result, she goes back to Jayant with the vain hope that the things will change. Her mind unrolls thus: “Go back to Jayant. What kind of a life can you build on a foundation of dishonesty… Now I would go back and see that home could stand the scorching touch of honesty. Nevertheless I knew I would not tell Jayant about Naren and me”. (RAS 205)

One can see her failure as her new efforts are also rooted in dishonesty. Indu’s mind is torn between two extremes. On the one hand, she is so attached to her parental house that the house and the voice, the sounds, the smells and the members of the house have become a part and parcel of her life; and on the other hand the house turns out to be a ‘caged place’, ‘a trap’ and the family ‘a large amorphous group of people with conflicting interests’. She is always in a confused state of mind and struggling with the situations to reach a final solution.

Thus Deshpande has very exquisitely pinpointed the inner struggle and sufferings of the new class Indian women, through the character of Indu who has
raised many basic questions regarding modern women who are rooted and shaped by the Indian customs but influenced by the scientific knowledge of the West. There was a time when the Indian woman was hailed as a ‘Pativrata, ‘a Sati’ and something which has to be protected by man. But now she is a changed person who is aware of the stirrings of her conscience, her quest, her identity, her individuality, her place and role in the family and society. Indu represents this very woman. And now the question before the society is whether to reject and condemn her or to encourage and cooperate with her in her efforts to establish a new image.

Indu is the first spokesman created by Shahsi Deshpande to represent the authenticity of feminine sensibility beyond the traditional burden of guilt and shame. It was her first assertion of absolute freedom, her own choice beyond the choice of Jayant and Naren. She feels herself ‘light hearted’ and ‘liberated’. This external contentment of Indu however was not sufficient to sustain her inward sensibility. Her own sense of guilt against what she had done made her restless to share her innermost feelings with Naren. The image of seduction takes hold on her mind. Torn between her idealism of emancipation and biological need, she becomes an anguished person. She desperately confesses, “I don’t believe in love” and again says, it is a big fraud, a hoax, that’s what it is. They tell you it’s the greatest thing, the only thing in life. And you believe them and fall into trap” (RAS 137). Shashi Deshpande treads on a radical ground to seek a justification of man and woman relationship in the context of psycho- biological needs. Male companionship is an inevitable need of the life of a woman. Indu’s failure to resist her urges and to seek their culmination in the company of Naren, is her ultimate realization of the real womanhood. She cries out, “The sexual instinct…. that’s true. The maternal instincts… that’s true too. Self interest, self love… they’ve the basic truths” (RAS 150). In the company of Naren, it was not a
matter of submission but of realization since, it was an act of forced harmony, its consequences were to be horrible. Indu’s forced sexual excitement was an expression of resentment against the hostility in which she had been placed. She confessed:

“As a girl that had told me, I must be meek and submissive, why I asked. Because you are female. You must accept everything, even defeat with grace because you are a girl, they had said. It is the only way they said, for a female to live and survive” (RAS 150).

Thus Indu’s uncompromising and paradoxical feminine self that frantically longed for self-expression, finally finds its roots in the home and with her husband. Shadows disappear from her vision and she sees the clear light of day with the realization and discovery of her authentic female self. The novel ends with a note of affirmation. O.P. Bhatnagar comments for the end of the novel in the book Indian Women Novelists “Thus Shashi Deshpande makes her heroine choose security through reconciliation. The ethos in the novel is neither of victory nor of defeat but of harmony and understanding between two opposing ideas and conflicting selves. This is quite representative of the basic Indian attitude” (Dhawan 175).

The ideal of purposefulness of existence gets Biswas to live among rudderless primitives and as a captain he brings solutions to all their problems. His choice of this purpose becomes meaningful because he chooses this among primitives cherishing all positive values of life like give, control and sacrifice. The same ideal of purposefulness of existence gets Indu to dismantle all the sham traditional values practised at home front without the essence of three factors- give, control, and sacrifice. Thereby the traditional home becomes a cold war front and the human associations and the built- in values of mutual concern, care, affection, warm and sincere devotion to duty, etc were found missing, giving place to mutual mistrust,
mutual hatredness, mutual animosity, mutual jealousy, mutual digging of character, etc. As a modern woman, Indu breaks the traditional ties out of selling the house and with the money, she helps them all to solve their financial crisis. At this context, Indu though a modern woman is practicing the values of giving, controlling and sacrificing as an essential factors of bringing happiness to others and out of such practice, she also derives happiness, the aim of purpose of existence in one’s life.

For both, the ideal of providing happiness, the very purpose of existence as they got their desired result; out of his selfless sacrifice, Biswas is made as a demigod and Indu is made as a mother Shakthi for all her family members. It is only through sacrifice, individuals rise up to the godly level- Biswas and Indu attain this status out of their sacrifice from diverse factors of primitivism and modernity.