CHAPTER III

Together and Yet Apart: Roots And Shadows

Let he who cannot be alone, beware of community. Let he who is not in community, beware of being alone (Bonhoeffer as qtd. in Jacob, “Reconnecting Relationship” 8).

This chapter is an attempt to make a questioning study of the subjective nature of wide-ranging relationships, as it finds expression in Shashi Deshpande’s novel Roots and Shadows. With exploration of the inner world of her characters as the key agenda, Deshpande delves deep into their inconsistent personalities and also into their strivings to realize self-realization. Since the culture of her novels is generally the chaotic mind-set of her protagonists, there is no plot in a predictable setting in Roots and shadows. As the protagonist grapples with her mental tumult, she discovers many intricacies of her relationships with other characters and exposes the conservative and patriarchal value-system, which dominates over the socio-cultural landscape of the novel.

Shashi Deshpande was awarded Thirumathi Rangammal Award for Roots and Shadows as the best Indian novel of 1982-83. The novel like most of Shashi Deshpande’s other novels is all about relationships, the stuff that life is made of. Within the ambit of human relationships; the novel’s main thrust is familial relationships, relationship between husband and wife and the dilemmas of the latter, relationship between grandparents and children, relationship between the mother-less protagonist and the members of the extended family of kakas, kakis, mother-surrogate atya and the cousins making the large family a motley-crowd. Unlike The Dark Holds No Terrors and That Long Silence, which have a limited number of characters; Roots and Shadows can be safely categorised as a rigmarole of relationships; despite the author’s earnest efforts to simplify the things with a family-tree at the very beginning of the novel.

The main scene and the setting of the novel is its well-knit joint family, proud of being upper-caste Brahmns, but having a narrow vision thriving on patriarchy and
caste-system, internalised by all its members. The domineering head of the family is Akka, who has a complete hold on the family and is disliked by Indu. Akka’s act of making Indu a custodian of all her money and jewellery is a challenge to Indu and a shock to all family members for whom this news is difficult to digest. Rigmarole of relationships like Sunanda, Sumitra, Hemant, Vishwas, Sanju, Sharad, Sunil, Lata, Geeta-with variant characteristics like selfishness, deviousness, pride and greed on one hand and innocence and simplicity on the other hand, make Indu’s new role in the garb of Akka very challenging and serious. She could analyse the pride of Sunanda and Sumitra, helplessness and patriarchal victimization of Atya and Padmini, sincerity and diligence of an orphan like Vithal who eats food in different houses on different days and reads in moon-light as the family denies him electricity. The other family members exploit him but Indu being a responsible lady, decides to finance his education out of Akka’s money, ensuring at the same time that everyone gets his due when she sells the house to the lower-caste Shankarappa who decides to build a hotel there. Indu’s decision to demolish the ancestral house symbolises demolishing of the caste-system and patriarchy, ushering thereby an openness, honesty and trust in relationships and she being the torch-bearer of revolutionary and radical changes in the family set-up. Roots and Shadows focuses on Indu’s interactions with the diverse personalities in the joint family and the manner in which she becomes the godmother, resolving their future as well as her own personal and present conflicts.

The protagonist Indu is capable of amazing resilience in the hours of difficulty, with an astonishing ability to bounce back from traumatic or unhappy experiences with her husband Jayant. She succumbs to depression but eventually comes out of it, devising new terms with the family and her husband. Shashi Deshpande reveals a rare perception into the psyche of educated women like Indu, who despite having a career and marrying men of their choice, feels incomplete in the conventional world and mind-sets of their husbands. Indu’s longing to find love and companionship with her husband is quite overt when she says:

Jayant and I ... I wish I could say we have achieved complete happiness. But I cannot fantasize. I think of the cries that had filled me earlier...I want to be happy. The cries are now stilled. Not because I
am satisfied, or yet hopeless but because such demands now seem to be an exercise in futility. (Deshpande, Roots and Shadows 13)

The protagonist realizes the disillusionment in her marriage but instead of protesting or simply having an open discussion with her husband, she learns to stifle her desires over the years. She, as the narrator of the novel, moves from a young lady wallowing in self-pity and frustration to ‘indomitable’ like Akka and ‘a pillar’ in the words of Jayant, as she becomes the crusader for the entire family by inheriting Akka’s legacy.

Roots and Shadows exhibits the traditional sexist bias of the Indian society towards the women who despite being educated and seemingly liberated are still the victims of the tyrannical attitude of their male counterparts. Pallavi and Rashmi Gaur in their article “The Roots of Girlhood Casting Shadows on Womanhood: Shashi Deshpande’s Roots and Shadows” throw light on this aspect of the novel:

Roots and Shadows projects the educated women who are unable to enfranchise the traditional background in which they are reared. The crux of all the prevailing problems of women is their subjugation which is always present in the form of silent servitude. Their social conditioning generates slavish attitude which in turn creates compunctions in their psyche, when they decide to remould or change it (Mohan, Shashi Deshpande: A Critical Spectrum 1).

Roots and Shadows is indeed, a woman-centred novel which implies perception and involvement in relationships from the view-point of a female. Through the evolution of the character of Indu, the author discloses many intricate patterns of her relationships and associations with the other members of her family. Along with that Deshpande also gives minute details of the physiological and psychological development of a girl child. The novel gives the impression that the author has a strong revulsion to female bodily functions like menstruation, pregnancy and child birth. Actually it is not the author’s revulsion; rather it’s her conviction that women are not mere breeding animals, but normal beings and have a right to be treated as human beings irrespective of their gender. In “Denying the Otherness,” an interview with Geetha Gangadharan, the author says, “I have a very strong feeling that until very recently, women in our society have been looked upon as “breeding animals.”
They had no other role in life. I have a strong objection to treating any human being in that manner (Pathak, _The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande_ 252-53).

Indu’s character was not penned down in haste. Rather it was a product of Deshpande’s laborious and painstaking mental study and analysis of the women in her parental house. This fact has been made stated very overtly by the author when she says in her article, “On the Writing of a Novel”:

Life as I saw it in a small town as a child, as a growing girl. Life as I saw it in Bombay as a woman. To be a child is to live in a world apart from the world of adults. To see the world of adults from a distance. And I saw it… the line dividing the world of men from the world of women. As a child, I could cross over easily from one world into the other. Often I was the bridge. But as grew up, I realized the bridge wasn’t any more… But the women came to me all the same. And I watched them from a distance… the childless widow, the deserted widow, the deserted wife, the scheming woman. I saw; these again with Indu. And now, the knowledge shaped into words, ideas. The power of women. The deviousness of women. The helplessness of women. The courage of women (Dhawan, _Indian Women Novelists_ 34).

Looking at the psychological development of Indu, one finds streaks of rebellion in her personality right from her childhood. Indu’s mother dies at the delivery-bed and Indu is brought up in the joint orthodox family. Like Saru, the protagonist of _The Dark Holds No Terrors_ who hates her mother, Indu also hates Akka for her dominance in general. Indu’s act of marrying Jayant, a man of other caste, illustrates her rebellion against Akka and the entire family, abandoning thereby the authority of the rich and dictatorial Akka. Like Jaya and Saru, the protagonists of Deshpande’s other novels, Indu also finds no fulfilment in her marriage despite being deeply in love with Jayant. Self-exploration at the parental home, which is again a common feature in many of the author’s other novels makes Indu realize the true dilemma of her life. Realizing her ‘roots’ and responsibilities to take care of the huge family; she resolves to remove all ‘shadows’ or fears from her life. The awakened
Indu is determined to follow her inner voice. She decides to continue her writing career but write something of her choice and tell Jayant about it. At the same time, she is not very sure that Jayant would like her decision or not, “May be Jayant would understand. May be he wouldn’t. But even so...” (187). Therefore, this novel too, has an open-ending with the protagonist’s unflinching faith in the continuity of life, despite all odds and obstacles in the path of her relationship with her husband.

Indu is a representative of urban Indian women who is caught between traditions and conventions of the joint family which force her to submit, despite having a rebellious nature which is partly a product of her natural mind-set by birth and partly due to her education and urban life. The conventions or upbringing in the joint family enforce her to submit to the authority of her husband by doing everything which pleases him. Simone De Beauvoir, a well-known feminist tells how a girl-child is conditioned and moulded to inculcate in her all type of feminine qualities, “One is not born but rather becomes a woman [...] ; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature [...] described as feminine” (Beauvoir, The Second Sex 267). Right from her infancy, Indu is conditioned by the elders in her family to annihilate her ‘self’ in such a manner that it seems a kind of natural process to her. She is not allowed to meet boys even in her childhood. She never forgets the domination of Akka and the oppressing atmosphere of other elders of the family and remembers:

As a child, they had told me I must be obedient and unquestioning. As a Girl, they had told me I must be meek and submissive. Why? I had asked. Because you are a 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 (158).

Like the protagonists of the other novels of Shashi Deshpande, parental home is a safe-retreat for Indu, where she gets a much-needed opportunity to analyse her conjugal relationships with a critical eye. Realizing that her life revolved around Jayant and his likes and dislikes towards every trivial matter; a monologue recurrently goes in her mind:

Always what he wants. What he would like. What would please him. And I can’t blame him. It’s not he who has pressurised me into this. It’s the way I want it to be (49).

This monologue in Indu’s mind clearly reveals that the internalisation of her role as a self-sacrificing woman confirming to the expectations of her husband, was a subtle strategy of the patriarchal and conventional joint family set-up. This subtle weapon was camouflaged and projected very ingeniously as a convenient way for a woman to internalise her submission to the male authority by preparing a girl-child very cleverly right from her childhood. In case of Indu, her conditioning seeps into her mind-set, making her forget to think of her own desires and longings and rather unthinkingly submit to every expectation of Jayant. Many a time her inner-self cries for expression but she learns “to reveal to Jayant nothing but what he wanted to see” (38); thereby making herself a bitter, frustrated and discontented woman over the years.

Sex forms an integral part of most of Deshpande’s fiction. One of the major reasons of Indu’s frustration is the repression of her sexuality. She hates submitting to Jayant whenever he wants sex, as she cannot express her own sexual desires due to inhibitions. Indu’s tragedy is further compounded by the fact that Indu’s love for Jayant is limitless and she has to be contented with Jayant’s philosophy of women not expressing their sexual needs. The sayings of religious leaders like Manu and also the cultural ethics which are unsaid and untold but have penetrated deep into the family as an institution; have relegated women the status of a child-bearing machine with no sexual longings of her own. Manu, the religious leader says, “A good wife...must never do anything that would displease him, either alive or dead. A woman attains paradise...as a result of her obedience and devotion to her husband” (Manu, The Ordinances of Manu 253).

Jayant is a personification of the traditional privileged norms laid down for men and views a woman expressing her sexual needs as “not a pure woman...Not a faithful wife” (83). Indu learns gradually that Jayant looks with contempt at women who express their passions without inhibition and therefore she starts pretending to be “passive” and “unresponsive” (83). This constant suppression of her bodily needs for years together, leads to annihilation of her ‘self’ and gradually making her a crazy,
cunning and scheming woman in her own eyes. At the same time she cannot think of living without Jayant and there is an overwhelming desire to be with him all the time. One explanation of Indu’s over-dependence on Jayant is that she is a childless woman who has consciously deprived herself of the greatest joy and fulfilment which maternity offers to a woman. Therefore, Jayant seems to be an anchorage to sustain. Indu, though assertive and rebellious, is very lonely at heart and subsequently becomes over-possessive of her husband. She leaves her writing career to please him. Indu’s desire to please Jayant stems from her own insecurities. Dogmatic ethos of Indian society frames dictums suited to men but deprives women of their capacity to think in a rational and independent way, subsequently making them suffer from a lack of clarity, as it happens with a man who feels, “What I wanted to have, I did not know” (105).

The narrative in Boots and Shadows can be rightly described as a journey into the psyche of a victim of patriarchal society, who despite her education, defiant nature and prowess; is helpless to wriggle out of her traditional feminine role. Elders in the family demoralise her, as Kaka says, “Women and children should know their places” (48) or even Indu’s favourite Old Uncle says “Indu, We like our women not to think” (33). The author very cleverly exposes the cleverly devised societal norms which need redefinition to restore equality and dignity to women.

Tradition and modernity is a repeated theme in a majority of the novels of Deshpande. Social structure of India is in a state of rapid transition but at the same time the mind-set or the notions related to gender roles are difficult to shed for the males, thereby making women fearful, perplexed and angry. People like Old Uncle say, “For a woman, intelligence is always a burden, Indu” (33). Such remarks of the people whom the protagonist values a lot, further add to her bitterness. Deshpande portrays the character of Indu as an educated and determined woman who is projected against the women belonging to the older generation. She is confident and independent but puzzled and baffled when sees herself put beside another set of women like Akka, Narmada, Sumitra Kaki, Kamla Kaki, Atya and Sunanda Atya who are complacent in their traditional roles, “to get married, to bear children, to have sons and then grandchildren” (128). These women belonging to the older generation, believe in the nothingness of a woman’s life and never dream of a woman
having an independent identity or 'self', as for them “a woman who sheds her ‘I’, who loses her identity in her husband’s” (54) is the ideal one. Through juxtaposition of educated and new generation woman like Indu and the uneducated and older generation women in the family; the author has presented the impact of culture and tradition on the two sets of women in the Indian set-up. Women like Indu strive to listen to their inner voice, and think about their career but paradoxically lose their individuality into their husband’s identity, thereby neither being happy with their husbands nor feeling complete without them. Indu’s predicament is quite pathetic, as she is well-aware of her love-less marriage but submits to her new generation husband in the same manner as the older and uneducated women in her ancestral family mechanically surrender to their older generation husbands in order to avoid any conflict. She reveals her turmoil:

The hideous ghost of my own cowardice confronted me as I thought of this...That I had clung tenaciously to Jayant, to my marriage, not for love alone, but because I was afraid of failure. I had to show them that my marriage, that I, was a success... And so I went on lying, even to myself...Which meant that I, who had despised Devdas for being a coward, was the same thing myself. I had killed myself as surely as he had done (175).

Shashi Deshpande is a marvellous story-teller whose keen eye never ignores any issue related to women of any age. If the novel has Indu as a protagonist who is young, educated and the so-called modern woman; the narrative is also replete with many detailed accounts of wretched women ranging from younger generation like Mini, to the widows of older generation like Ajji and Atya. She dextrously weaves a rich tapestry of different characters with their variant needs and expectations from relationships. The author also invariably, makes a comparison between the younger generation who have self-imposed problems and mental blocks and the older generation whose exploitation is more due to their widowhood or orthodox set-up.

There are mainly four important female characters that play a significant role in the relational cinematography of Roots and Shadows. A very significant and loving character is that of Atya. Through her character, the author highlights the miserable
plight of women in rural families. Atya’s life is like that of an outcaste, who has to bear humiliation at the hands of family members. Therefore she leads a life of silence with her shaven head and cooking food for the whole family. After the demolition of the old house, she lives with Jayant and Indu. Indu feels as if she “was a child again, secure and loved” (21) in Atya’s embrace. Indu’s husband also has a very pleasing relationship with Atya, which makes Indu often amazed. She thinks:

I had often wondered how Jayant would accept her with her regulated widow’s way of living...her rituals, her fasts and her self-deprivations. But now, I can hear them talking as I work. A pleasing background to the staccato tattoo of my typewriter. Jayant, I can see, gets something from her undemanding affection-something he never got from anyone else (13).

A young female character in Roots and Shadows is Indu’s cousin Mini, who without any sort of bitterness inculcates in her own personality all the feminine traits. She submits to her parents’ decision of getting her married to an aged and uneducated man. When Indu probes her for giving her consent to marry this man, she simply says, “What choice do I have, Indu?” (125). The author successfully shows how a young girl has been moulded into obedience and submission by constantly dinning into her ears for years, absolute submission to her elders as her real duty. The author also highlights an ugly phase in the life of young girls like Mini who have to parade before the respective families of the boys and how this convention demoralises a girl. This is a crude fact even in the contemporary age that despite the young girls being highly-educated many a time, the shackles of conventions and traditions are difficult to break. Mini opens her heart to Indu, “He’ll look after me. And no one can say to me, “How old are you? And not married yet! What a pity! I’m tired, Indu. I don’t care what kind of a man he is. Once we are married, and he becomes my husband, none of his flaws will matter” (126).

Indu is a well-qualified woman who is pained at the contrived moves of patriarchy, which make a woman like Mini see her parents’ home not as her real home and instead getting married as the sole aim of her life. She replies to Mini in utter disappointment, “The Indian way. The husband. A definite article. Permanent. Not
only for now, but forever. To be accepted. Stop” (126-127). Indu’s words make no sense to naive Mini but Indu could sense that “years of blindfolding” (125) has made woman like Mini submit to her parents’ decision of getting her married to a man who is too old and rough for her, just because, “I’m marrying him because there’s nothing else I can do”(125). Mini has been assigned all kind of household chores right from her childhood, and conditioned to absorb the established trends of the family. She was sent to school and college not to be an enlightened and independent self but to find a better husband. Indu too, despite her education, tries to find out fulfilment only through her marriage. It is the social strictures that make girls like Mini and Indu consider marriage as the basic aim of their life. Matina Horner, an experimental psychologist at the University of Michigan, raises the same point when he says:

In this age of lip-service to equality and self-realization for all, parents encourage their daughters to fulfil their entire potential and allow them some of the advantages given to men. The encouragement, however, is essentially hollow. Somewhere around a girl’s junior years in a college, if not before, the parents’ strong desire surfaces: that the girl be securely married, rather than take the unconventional and risky course of becoming a serious working person (Horner as qtd. in Whitten, Being Human Today: Psychological Perspectives 73).

A strong but negative female character in Roots and Shadows is that of Akka, an archetype for other women of the family. She is the youngest sister of Indu’s grandfather. Her rough and dominant exterior never allows anyone to know her traumatic and underprivileged past. Indu considers her a callous woman without any love and compassion towards any of the family members. It was only when Narmada Atya, the daughter of Indu’s grandfather, narrates the true story of Akka’s life to Indu, that Indu realizes her false perception of Akka. She tells Indu about Akka being forced to get married at twelve to an old and wealthy man, tolerating brutal sexuality of her husband and the tortures of her mother-in-law on not being able to give birth to a living child. She suffered and bore her exploitation with willing fortitude, leading a life of physical and mental-slavery, without any complaint. But as dawn comes after every night; the pathetic Akka changed into a dominating and aggressive woman when her husband became bed-ridden. She took care of every need of him but never
allowed his mistress to go near him. Instead she declares vehemently to her husband, “Listen to me. It’s my turn now. I’ve listened to you long enough. She came here. Twice. She wanted to see you. She cried and begged to be allowed to see you just for a short while. I threw her out. You’ll never see her again” (71).

After her husband’s death, Akka returns to her parental house as a rich widow, equipped with all techniques of dictatorship to keep all family members as her subordinates. By giving Akka, a powerful role of maintaining full hold over the family, Shashi Deshpande thinks that suppressed women can become oppressors in their turn. Akka’s character is remindful of Darwinian principle of the survival of the fittest. Pallavi and Rashmi Gaur comment on this aspect of Deshpande’s narrative technique:

Deshpande’s narratives bear the authenticity of woman’s signature. She has rejected the masculine dialect and the masculine perception of virtue, relationships, content and laid bare before us the subversive role of tradition in perpetuating the secondary role of women and emphasized the need of discrediting its legacies if women have to emerge as liberated and emancipated beings (Pallavi and Gaur as qtd. in Mohan, Shashi Deshpande: A Critical Spectrum 6).

Pallavi and Gaur feel that Akka’s dominance and obduracy was an attempt to hide her weaknesses. They also feel that social ethos perpetuates submissiveness of women as a part of their existence, fostering fortitude and bearing insults without complain. Such women camouflage their weaknesses in the name of virtues like tolerance and contentment. But their pent-up frustration finds an outlet when they become personification of obstinacy, by being callous and insensitive to other weak members of the family.

Family is the most powerful instrument in shaping an individual’s personality. In the contemporary age, there is a change in family structure from a joint family to a nuclear family, thereby reducing its functions especially in meeting the emotional needs of its members. But Roots and Shadows delineates the story of a wider collective of kin who are bound by interdependence and meet interactional, emotional and security needs of each other. In this respect it would be significant to mention the names of George Caspar Homans and Peter M. Blau, the two well-known
sociologists, who have developed a theoretical framework for human interactions in their books. Homans, in his book *Social Behaviour: its elementary forms* and Blau in his book *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy: A Study of Interpersonal Relationships in Two Government Agencies*, have argued that relationships between and among people are assumed to be based on fair exchanges. If one person wants to talk and the other person is willing to listen, their relationships are smooth and fair, which can be called a fair exchange. But if one person wants to have a frank communication with the other person, and the other person never realizes the need for it, they have an unfair exchange. In *Roots and Shadows*, the joint family comprises of a few members whose relationships are also based on fair exchange. These relationships are the relationship between Indu and Naren, Indu and Old Uncle and also between Indu and Atya. These characters fulfill each other’s needs for communication and security. On the other hand Akka’s relationships with the other family members comprise of unfair exchange as Akka wants to dominate over every one, causing pain to all her relations in this process. In a way, Indu’s relationships with Jayant can be also called relationships based on unfair exchange, as there are communication barriers which make Indu unable to express her disillusionment in sexual relationship with him. In an overall, Indu’s family with positive and negative characters is a microcosm of society, encompassing fair and unfair exchange amongst its people.

The essence of inter-personal relationships is that both the partners must interact and relate with others. Sexual relationship is the most intense, intimate or personal form of inter-personal interaction. An important proposition in *Roots and Shadows* is that men’s attitude towards love and sexual relationship is conditioned by their inherited attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes. The psychologists Byrne D. and Nelson D. have argued in their article “Attraction as a linear function of proportion of positive reinforcements” that inter-personal relationship is a kind of “a linear function of the proportion of similar attitudes—which means that the greater the proportion of similar attitudes people share, the more they will be attracted to one another” (*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 660). Byrne believed in the sharing of similar attitudes between two people, to maintain richness in relationships. But it is also quite possible that a person may be similar to another person on some attitudinal issues and also dissimilar to him on other issues. This paradox can be explicitly stated in Indu’s
relationships with her husband Jayant. She loves him intensely and cannot think of living without him but at the same time cannot disclose her sexual needs to him. Her response to his needs was natural but the patriarchal mind-set of Jayant could not think of a woman taking sexual initiative. Therefore, they are on two different levels as Indu thinks, “And now, that fulfilment was possible, it seemed so natural. And perfect. But there was, even then, a small crack in the perfection. Jayant, so passionate, so ready, sitting up suddenly and saying, ‘No, not now, when I had taken the initiative. A crack then. A chasm now? But I drove away those thoughts” (83).

There are a number of obvious reasons for Indu’s unhappiness; like the resentment against her father for leaving her with his family when she was fifteen days old and motherless, resentment against callous Akka and resentment against her family members for their orthodox and tradition-soaked minds. But the constant cause of her frustration is the difference between Jayant and her in their different sexual attitudes, needs and levels, which make her lead a life of pretence and consequently belittling her for her own needs. Indu gives vent to her feelings by confiding in Naren when he tries to kiss her, “And now I know, it shocks him to find passion in a woman. It puts him off. When I’m like that, he turns away from me. I’ve learnt my lesson now. And so I pretend, I’m passive. And unresponsive. I’m still and dead” (83).

Indu’s tragedy is the tragedy of being “a woman who loves her husband too much. Too passionately. And is ashamed of it” (83). She is an intelligent and sensitive young lady who was once proud of her logical and rational thinking but now feels trapped in her marriage, as she can never be forceful about her sexual needs to Jayant, knowing that there is an ‘immeasurable distance’ (83) between her sexual expectations and those of Jayant. She confides with Naren in an angry outburst, “It’s not that he doesn’t care. It’s more like...like... we’re on different levels. You know the stage setting they have for some plays nowadays? It’s like that. We’re on different planes. He chooses his level. And I...I try to choose the one he would like me to be on. It humiliates me (82).

By choosing a proposition of equality and liberty for both the partners in the expression of their needs including the sexual ones; the author has chosen a relatively shocking theme for her readers. Roots and Shadows was published in 1983. In the
contemporary times, that is, almost two and a half decade after the publication of this novel, there is an attitudinal change in both the male and the female sex. But the women are still more or less sexually inhibited persons and there are very few men who believe in love as mutual sexual-satisfaction. It also depends on the culture in which a couple is living and therefore, varies from one culture to another. But for an average Indian, it is still shocking to see sexual passion in a woman. His expectations of a typical marriage contract imply fulfilling all needs of his wife- emotional, social, sexual, economic and otherwise. Therefore, the women generally recognise the internal constraints imbibed through conditioning and patriarchal values. They feel that if they do not accede to them, they will offend their husbands. This conflict between their urges and internal restraints makes them feel dejected, frustrated and guilty or ashamed. It would not be therefore appropriate to thrust all the responsibility for Indu’s repressing tendencies on Jayant; his personal attitudes and values. Rather it will be better to look at Jayant’s attitude in the wider perspective of traditional and cultural values in India which are responsible for giving him a culture shock to accept dominant sensuality in his wife.

The psychologists Harari and Kaplan, in their book *Psychology: Personal and Social Adjustment*, have expressed their concern towards the growing marital problems. They feel that the infidelity is the greatest threat to the marital bond. The tendency to indulge in extra-marital affairs is increasing because traditional marriages stifle the growth of the female partners. They have quoted the psychologist Gilmartin using a very interesting term “faithful adultery” (115) in the context of relationships. Harari feels that the psychologist Gilmartin has given a very justified explanation of the term “faithful adultery.” According to Gilmartin, partners should be emotionally faithful to each other. They can engage in adultery and yet maintain feelings of fidelity and honesty to their partners. Interestingly enough, in most of Shashi Deshpande’s novels, the protagonists find solace and ease in the company of their male friends but this does not harm their relationship with their husbands and other family members. Rather it makes them analyse their relationships with their spouses with a crystal clear vision. It also gives them the quality of courage and steadfastness to talk to their spouses, about their needs, longings and aspirations from them. The protagonist Indu’s act of adultery with her childhood friend Naren might be called
“faithful adultery” as love and sex for Indu, are pleasant sensations for which she is almost starved. She and her husband Jayant remain like strangers as Jayant never tries to break the wall between them and make Indu feel close, feel one, feel the exhilarating moment of oneness in sexual act. There is no intimacy in their relationship, rather Indu feels shut off and isolated. On the other hand, her relationship with Naren was “a joyous sense of release, of passion I could experience and show and participate in. I clung to him convulsively, marvelling that I did not have to hold myself back” (152). There was no feeling of guilt in her and she thought of going back and lying on her bed with Mini as before but defiantly went to her bed and began folding the covers. She talked to herself courageously “I don’t need to erase anything I have done, I told myself in a fit of bravado” (152).

The deepest need for Indu is the need to overcome her loneliness. Disillusionment and loneliness in marriage might have led her to insanity, if she had not met her childhood friend Naren. She clings to Naren, ‘as if he were a pillar’ (156) knowing at the same time that he was “irresponsible, unreliable, fickle, amoral” (156). Unification with Naren acts as a catalyst in the process of annihilation of her loneliness. The sexual union with him puts her in spell and a rapture which she had never experienced with Jayant. She feels like a free bird soaring as high in the sky as her wings could take her; whereas with Jayant, she always felt like a bird in the cage. This is all because of the fact that Naren listened to her patiently and gave her his full attention. Indu consulted him on important matters like distribution of Akka’s property. But with Jayant, she never had any communication in the real sense, where she could speak straight from her heart. Shashi Deshpande again draws attention, as she has done in her other novels too, to the acute need for communication in all kind of relationships. Prateek Sinha, a media consultant, shares a similar experience with his wife who threatened to leave him as he never listened to her. Sinha says, “The fire in a relationship dies when there is no free expression of basic emotions (Sinha, as qtd. in Kundu, “Couple Act” The Times of India). Sinha ultimately enrolled in a Vipasana Course which taught him the value of communication and listening, to remove alienation in his relationships with his wife.

Indu’s second act of physical intimacy becomes a desperate attempt on her part to overcome her loneliness and to escape the anxiety engendered by her separation
from Jayant. There is a slight feeling of guilt and remorse the next day after the first act of sexual intimacy, as she thinks of the enormity of what she has done but also observes her thoughts with objectivity and remorselessness as if she was thinking of someone else. She even doesn’t hesitate to use words like ‘kiss’, ‘rape’, ‘deflowered’ and ‘orgasm’ while talking to Naren. The novel is indeed, a manifesto of a modern woman’s voice, articulated through her body.

Shashi Deshpande seems to be raising another pertinent point that nurturance of relationships is an art and needs to be learnt like music, painting and drawing. Unfortunately, Jayant never considers it worthwhile to learn and understand the frustration of Indu, making her feel that he could invade her without her ability to react; arousing shame and a feeling of guilt and consequently resulting into heightened anxiety. In her essay, “The Writing of a Novel,” Deshpande writes about Indu, “Indu sprang out of the claustrophobic world with a courage I admired. She was free. But often to be free is to be lonely. I shared this bleak thought with Indu” (Dhawan, Indian Women Novelists 35).

The concept and meaning of equality in the contemporary capitalistic society has undergone transformation. Erich Fromm, a renowned psychoanalyst, offers a thought-provoking definition of equality when he says, “Equality today mean ‘sameness’ rather than ‘oneness’” (Fromm, The Art of Loving 12). Shashi Deshpande shares the same concept about equality in no uncertain ways when she says in many of her interviews that equality does not mean loss of individuality. She looks with cynicism at the achievements of a section of women in terms of their education and job-profiles which are considered the signs of their progress or equality. Her conviction substantiates and validates the conviction of Erich Fromm that the polarity of sexes is disappearing and women must be given the societal sanction to follow their own desires. Men must respect the sexual needs of their spouses. If the sexual needs are always dictated by the husbands, as is the case in Roots and Shadows: the sex act becomes more of a ‘work routine’ rather than a ‘pleasure routine’ in the terminology of Erich Fromm; as it is exemplified through Indu’s prescribed and prefabricated performance.
Erich Fromm also believes that love for oneself and love for others is conjunctive. A selfish person is interested only in himself and values ‘taking’ more than ‘giving’. He or she has no respect or regard for the dignity and integrity of others because he is basically unable to love. Indu is an unselfish person who does not want anything for herself in the beginning. There are many people in her life that she had cared for, like Atya, Kaka and old uncle. After her marriage, she lives for Jayant and satisfies Jayant, feeling proud that she does not consider herself important. But over the years, she is perplexed to find that suppressing her longings and thinking just for the happiness of Jayant has made her unhappy and cynical. It makes her see her marriage as, “Maybe the comic strip version 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? (61).

Introspective analysis by the protagonists at their parental homes is a common thread binding most of Deshpande’s novels. Indu, the protagonist of Roots and Shadows too, indulges in introspection at her ancestral house and moves from self-pity, frustration and guilty complexes to a mature, self-respecting and above all, a self-loving woman. She realizes that there is nothing guilty in expressing her needs to Jayant. Respect for her own integrity and uniqueness, and love and understanding of her own self, is inseparable from love for her husband and family members. She recognizes the dire need to talk to Jayant and instead of being an escapist, decides to face her problems. This change in Indu cannot be called a compromise; rather it is an absolute transmutation of Indu. Deshpande calls it “the biggest revolution” and elaborates upon this concept while talking with S. Prasanna Sree in an interview entitled “In Conversation with Shashi Deshpande”:

You want the women to run away from the house and because, these things don’t happen you consider it as a compromise. I don’t consider that the revolution comes out of escaping the situation, but facing the situation with a different idea of “what I am”... this is to me the biggest revolution. I know what I am now, I am going to live my life knowing what I am. There is no greater revolution than that. So I don’t agree with compromise at all (Sree, Woman in The Novels of Shashi Deshpande 146).
The novel also portrays the protagonist’s relationship with Old Uncle; a grand-fatherly figure. Indu has a great respect for him and values his advice. Her relationships with Old Uncle cross generation gap, as she can discuss anything with him like pictures of “big busted female stars” (p-101) in gossip film magazines or her own relationships with Jayant and her decision to sell the ancestral house. It is Old Uncle who gives his pearls of wisdom to Indu, when she expresses her disillusionment with the large family as “large amorphous group of people with conflicting interests” (104). He tells Indu very patiently, “The family...it’s all right to sneer at it. But tell me, what have you got to put in its place? What will you have it instead? It gives us a background, an anchor something to hold on to... (104).

The novel reveals Shashi Deshpande’s finest perception of the practical realities of a woman’s life, which entails acceptance of the dictates of the male sex in the pretence of customs, rituals and tradition. Being an educated and a sensitive woman, Indu is hurt at the clever moves of men in the name of ‘inner strength of women’; and is pained at the lot of women who have no right to express their liking or disliking for their prospective grooms. She is pained at the lot of her cousin Mini and says:

Inner strength...I thought of words as I looked down on Mini’s bowed head. A woman’s life, they had told me, contained no choices. And all my life, specially in this house, I had seen the truth of this. The women had no choice but to submit, to accept. And I had often wondered...have they been born without wills, or have their wills atrophied through a life time of disuse? (6).

The above lines also reveal a skilful weaving of diction, syntax and poignant vocabulary with acute analytical abilities and understanding of relationships. Here, the words are not just meant to be read but to be reflected upon carefully, as these seem to be coming straight from the hearts of the characters. The characters seem to be living, speaking and moving in front of us as in real life. The novel abounds with examples of finest vocabulary, making it a bonanza for all the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. Here are a few lines, making a strong visual appeal, “Outside, here in the courtyard, they had lit huge wood fires on which gigantic pots of water are
being heated for the baths. The logs hissed intermittently, sending up a sudden shower of sparks with a crackling sound. ... As the flames danced and leapt, I saw it was Mini (1). These lines are replete with sensuous words like ‘hissed’, ‘danced’, ‘leapt’, ‘crackling sound’ and ‘serene’. Everything seems to be happening in front of the eyes of readers. Again, the language used for the description of Champak tree which is right in the middle of the house and has to go with demolishing the house, evokes powerful emotions of ‘desolation and bereavement’ in Indu:

The tree whose trunk I had been unable to embrace even as a child. The sense of mystery and wonder that it had aroused in me, growing as it did out of the damp darkness within the house, emerging triumphantly above the roof into the sunlight. The evergreen leaves, the golden flowers, pervasive fragrance had, it now seemed to me, permeated all my life (183).

Shashi Deshpande dwells heavily on sense of smell to create sensuous pictures like, ‘ropes of the fragrant white mogra’; ‘moistened and dewy’ and ‘more subtle and cunning-the fragrance of the champak’ (6). Sense of touch is another very significant and valuable tool or medium to determine the intensity of inter-personal relationships ranging from total coldness or frigidity, to the warmest or dependable relationships. An almost absence of a casual touch is a signifier highlighting the vital need for it in the maintenance of relationships. The hyper-sensitive mind of Indu secretly longs for touch whereas Jayant never realises its need. Indu thinks vaguely:

Early morning...you wake up, aware of the shape, the feel, the taste of your own body. The whole of you becoming one aching emptiness. You want to touch and feel, to be touched and felt; finally inhabited. You turn around to meet the warmth, the hardness, the intimate contact of another body. Then you realise there’s only you. And you feel cold and alone and bereft (148).

It’s a paradox that Indu’s friend Naren uses the tool of touch to win Indu, to create passion and sensuousness in her. Naren has postulated his own paradigm of touch when he says:
I have a theory about contact, Indu. I mean literal contact. People touching each other. We always need it. Babies crave to be touched by the mother, a parent. Then we move away from the family to generalised contact. Have you seen boys and girls going about their arms around each other? Later the craving gets a focal point. You want to be touched by, to touch, one person of the opposite sex. It gets magnified and exaggerated beyond proposition only that person, and as often and as long as possible (160).

Touch or contact for Naren, is another name for love. Indu never liked to be touched in childhood because she never had a mother. But she longs to be touched when she grows up. Touch by Naren gives her a feeling of rejuvenation, a great joy. Ironically, she feels this important key missing in her relationships with her husband Jayant and says, “Husbands and wives...their worlds touched briefly only in the darkness of the night” (42).

Giving philosophical and memorable quotes, through the thought-process of the protagonist as a narrator, is a clever strategy of Deshpande to reveal her own philosophy of life and relationships. Roots and Shadows is a reservoir of meaningful chunks which haunt the mind of the readers for a long time after reading the novel and thereby making them marvel at the philosophic truths about human life. To quote a few:

Does not each relationship have something unique to offer? (13)

Neither love nor happiness comes to us for the asking. But they can sneak up on us when we least expect them (13).

There have to be some rules so that life can have both dignity and grace. We can always find measures of freedom within these rules (15).

If one thing ends, something else has to begin (21).

Without wants there is no ‘I’ (49).
Through the use of such memorable language, the author deals essentially with the philosophical angle of relationships. Such a language also gives a spiritual value to human relationships.

The novel attempts to picture the conflicting dilemma of the protagonist who craves for understanding in relationships and makes desperate attempts to achieve it towards the end of the novel. One of the relevant points which the author tries to focus is the psychology of the female sex. Deshpande feels that the women generally give priority to an emotional union before the physical one. Indu wanted and secretly craved for communication, sharing and reciprocation of feelings and a kind of emotional union with her husband who was contented with just meeting her at a physical plane.

The novelist, as usual, believes in giving a sort of open-ending to this novel, giving a suggestion and not a panacea to sort out differences through communication. She believes that relationships can be reconstructed through self-analysis and opening all the channels of communication. This realisation comes on Indu towards the end of the novel when she thinks that as she would tell Jayant, “That I was resigning from my job. That I would at last do the kind of writing I had always dreamt of doing. That I would not, could not enrich myself with Akka’s money. That I would, on the other hand, pay for Mini’s wedding.”

Through Indu’s relationships as a wife to Jayant, as a daughter of a joint family, and as a friend to Naren; it’s all one ‘self’ portrayed in all the ways that she needs to be. The novel reflects the totality of the implications of all kind of relationships. Daniel Jacob, a relationship writer and counsellor, also believes in fulfilling one’s all relationship duties but nurturing and fulfilling the needs of the ‘self’ at the same time. Jacob says, “The Gift of Relationship is to create a space where a Oneself can “come apart”— vividly experience what his differences are--- and then pull himself back together again. This is the Dance of Two as One. It’s a thrill a minute, and well-worth the effort (Jacob, “Relationships 2: The Dance of Two as One” reconnections.net).

Coming out of the emotional wreckage that had shattered her; Indu decides to start a meaningful life with her husband, and her uncompromising and paradoxical
feminine self finally finds its roots in her husband’s home, with all the shadows disappearing. The past, a tradition of unity, of respect and commitment, comes to an end and Indu takes a decision to go back to Jayant with nothing from the past. She understands that there is no such thing as non-existence or escape, and therefore she needs to reconcile her need for freedom with her need for love, without breaking away from her bonds.