

Debunking Stereotypes of Gender and Identity: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's *Roots and Shadows*

AMIT NARULA

ABSTRACT

Shashi Deshpande's novels like *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *Come up and be Dead* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1988) *A Matter of Time* (1996). *Small Remedies* (2000) and short stories depict the anguish and conflict of the modern, educated, independent, Indian women roughly between the age of thirty and thirty-five caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand and self-expression, individuality and independence for the women on the other. She has examined a variety of common domestic crises, which trigger off the search. While revealing the women's struggle to secure self-respect and self-identity for herself, Shashi Deshpande subtly bares the multiple levels of oppression, including sexual oppression experienced by women in our society. What makes her an especially interesting author to study is her ability to depict situations, characters, and dilemmas straight out of everyday domestic life. Her novels and short-stories primarily explore the experiences of oppression of Indian women in the domestic setup, experiences which are rooted in the presumption that a woman is an inferior being, an unwanted female child, of having to battle an ingrained, deeply entrenched patriarchal system all of which give rise to the problem specific to their sex. It is among the class that the stereotypical values attached to the social role are most studiously inculcated in the girl child. She is considered as an outsider, a burden or prayadhan.

Roots and Shadows present the image of new woman. This novel explores the inner struggle of the protagonist, Indu. She tries to learn the truth about herself, deserting all the shadows that she had thought to be her real self. Indu presents a set of modern

women, who are educated and very much in contact with the society, dealing with the critical problems of love, marriage, sex, settlement and individuality. The novel deals with a woman's attempt to assert her individuality and realise her freedom. It depicts how it brings her into confrontation with family, with the male world and the society in general.

Keywords: Feminism, Suffering, Freedom, Patriarchy

Shashi Deshpande's novels are concerned with a women's quest for self; an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of the life and the protagonist's place in it. Shashi Deshpande began her writing with short stories that later developed to novel writing. *The Legacy* (1972), the first collection of short stories, is now prescribed for the graduate students in Columbia University. Other collections of her short-stories are: *It was Dark*, *The Miracle*, and *It was the Nightingale*. Eight novels that go to her credit are: *Roots and Shadows* (1982) won the Thirumathi Rangammal prize for the best novel of India. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980) has been translated into German and Russian languages. *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come Up and Be Dead* (1982); *That Long Silence* (1988), *The Binding Vines* (1992), *A Matter of Time* (1990), *Small Remedies* and *Moving On* which mark the image of woman and then quest for "selves". The traditional Indian women suffer, submit and adjust themselves to the circumstances. The women novelists like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala have, in their words, portrayed this aspect of women's life without having the firsthand experience of it. Shashi Deshpande has project this aspect of Indian women with more sensitivity and instinctive understanding as she belongs to this category, in the sense that, unlike other women writers, she is born and brought up on this soil, got her education in this country itself and wrote about India. Shashi Deshpande's novels deal with the Indian middle-class women's sufferings, frustrations, social agitations and their stillness as a means of communication.

Roots and Shadows presents the image of new woman. This novel explores the inner struggle of the protagonist, Indu. She tries to learn the truth about herself, deserting all the shadows that she had thought to be her real self. Indu presents a set of modern women, who are educated and very much in contact with the society, dealing with the critical problems of love, marriage, sex, settlement and individuality. The novel deals with a woman's attempt to assert her individuality and realise her freedom. It depicts how it brings her into confrontation with family, with the male world and the society in general. Indu, a middle class girl, brought up in an orthodox Brahmin family, headed by Akka (the mother surrogate in the novel) "left home full of hatred for the family, for Akka specially" and she had sworn, "I would never go back" (Deshpande 1983, 20). Indu who had lost her mother at birth, identifies throughout the novel, Akka as the mother-figure. She revolts against Akka, her world, her values and marries Jayant against the wishes of Akka. Akka bursts out at her marriage; "such marriages never work. Different castes, different languages... it's all right for a while. They realise" (74). Indu comes back to her parental home after a long period of eleven years when Akka is in her death bed and on Akka's death, becomes her sole inheritor of her property.

Akka, the mother-figure in *Roots and Shadows*, dominated the family and became an emblem of authority. She was a childless widow. She treated almost everyone under her guidance. She approves whatever occurs in the house. Until her death, "she had maintained her power, her authority over everyone," But Indu, a rebel, often wished to be free and unrestrained. Thus, she is presented as a model against the women belonging to the older generation. The novelist has presented two groups of women in Indian set-up. One group is represented by Akka, Narmada, Sumitra Kaki, Kamla Kaki, Atya, Sunanda Atya. Indu represents the other group. The life of traditional women is nothing but to go married, to bear children, to have sons and then grandchildren. And the ideal women is

one who does not have her own independent identity: "A woman who sheds her 'I' who loses her identity in her husbands (54). Indu presents new generation and reviews everything with reason. She explains the ideal of detachment and liberation and tries to achieve them. She tries only to listen to the voice of her conscience and revolts. But, unfortunately, she fails, in all her efforts, miserably either due to the impact of culture and tradition, or fear of stigma, or timidity, or all these combined together.

Indu, an educated young woman, is very sensitive. She longs to be free and complete in herself. She finds dominant Akka, and her family, a great hindrance to achieve her goal. When at college, Akka didn't let her meet the boys and cultivate friendship with them. Later she leaves her house and marries Jayant, a man of her choice. She leaves her parental house and enters the house of her husband to achieve freedom and completeness but soon realises the futility of her doing and decision: "Jayant and I... I wish I could say we have achieved complete happiness. But I cannot fantasize". (14) She speaks about her own incomplete status that this is her real sorrow that she can never be complete in herself. Until she had met Jayant, She had not known it... that was somewhere outside her, a part of her without which she remained incomplete. Then she met Jayant and lost the ability to be alone.

Indu contemplates on the existence of inner strength in the women of her family who have spent their whole life slavishly without a word of appreciation for their services. While following their footsteps Mini too accepts that the life of a girl is devoid of choices. Indu could gauge the reason behind Mini's submission before her parents' decision of getting her married to a man who was neither properly educated nor mentally sound. Mini's father, Anant, faces a financial crisis. With no job in his hands, his family depends on the cultivation of the land they possess. His sons having inclination towards office jobs were

reluctant to look after the lands. Anant was aware that with his weak financial position, he won't be able to get his daughter married. Finally he agrees to marry Mini to a distant relative to Akka as she promises to pay for Mini's wedding. In India, a girl's marriage is consummated only after satiating the demands of the groom and his parents.

Anant too accepts the proposal as he had no other option left before him. Mini's lackadaisical face makes Indu understand that she found the match incongruous. But in order to save her father from further complexities of her marriage, she poses a semblance of agreement and decides not to show her disagreement. Indu on perceiving the solidness in Mini towards her own marriage, requests her uncle to look for a better match. Anant rejects the idea stating:

Maybe he is a little ugly, maybe a little stupid [...] but everything else is fine. The family is good, it's known to us, they have money, she'll be quite comfortable. And Akka has promised she would pay for their wedding expenses as well as the dowry if this came through. What else could I ask for? (51)

Women, like Mini, who are always involved in the fetishes of traditions and household work, have no other point but to remain satisfied with the things provided. Women are also toned or conditioned to merge their aspirations and desires with those of their family. Mini too absorbs the trend established by the elder women of her family. She has been prepared for looking after the house and Akka's desire to educate her was not because of giving her an independent stand but because she feels that educated girls get a good match. Mini accepts:

Of course I'm marrying him because there's nothing else I can do. I'm not good at studies, I never was. I went to school because [...] I had to. And then to college because Akka said I must go. Boys prefer graduates these days, she said. So I went. But I failed and it was a relief to give it up. There's only one thing, I'm really good at [...] looking after a house. And to get a home, I have to get married. This is not my home, is it? (125)

Roots and Shadows also presents another facet of deprived womanhood through the character of Akka who is the youngest sister of Indu's grandfather. Indu always defined her as a callous woman lacking compassion and mercy. Akka returns to her parental home as a rich widow after the death of her husband and since then saddles the whole family by establishing herself as a dictator and treating her family members as puppets. Akka's formidable authority never allows people to peep into her life and understand her. It was Narmada-Atya, daughter of Indu's grandfather, who tells Indu about the traumatic and pathetic girlhood of Akka. She had become the victim of the evils of a patriarchal practices. At the age of twelve she got married to a man who was much older than her. Child marriage stifles her childhood which expounds to her the real trauma of being a girl. Her soul of a child withers when she has to tolerate the scathing and bestial sexual advances of her husband. Narmada-Atya narrates about panic-stricken Akka trying to escape her husband's brutality:

But I heard that twice she tried to run away [...] a girl of thirteen. Her mother-in-law I heard, whipped her for that and locked her up for three days. Starved her a well. And then, sent her back to her husband's room. The child, they said, cried and clung to her mother-in-law saying, "Lock me up again, lock me up" But there was no escape from a husband then. I remember her telling me before my own marriage was consummated, "Now your punishment begins, Narmada. You have to pay for all those saris and jewels." (69-70)

Akka's husband was wealthy man and he kept mistresses. Akka as a married woman was expected to bear children but she faces many miscarriages due to the kind of life she led. Her mother-in-law makes her life miserable for her inability to give birth to a living child. The chains of traditional marriage are heavy and the escape routes are not available to a wife, who often seeks consolation and refuge in obsessions, masochisms or mental slavery often leading to her physical decay and death. The social ethos which has been to the continuity of women

suppression sees to it that unacknowledged martyrdom becomes a part of a housewife's existence. She is expected to subordinate her own needs to those of her family. She is supposed to bear her exploitation and suffering with willing fortitude. Akka too has to endure and submit to insults, injuries and humiliations with a stoic patience and never complain. Her husband becomes obsessed with a woman which further deteriorates Akka's life. It was the fear of his mother which restricts him from bringing the woman to his house.

A change in Akka's personality appears when her husband faces a stroke. She looks after him with great care and keeps him "spotless" but she neither permitted the woman to see him nor submitted before her husband's desire to meet her. The situation has brought a change in her position. Earlier Akka was feeble, fragile and timid and so he saddled her but now he was dependent on the mercy of Akka thus she was not ready to succumb before his demands. She declares:

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)

Since then Akka learned the technique of domination. She became aware of the principle of survival of the fittest and grasped full control of the family in her own hands. She knew that the world was made up of two types of people-powerful and weak and the powerful always ruled over the weak. 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. Akka, in order to establish her supreme power over her family hides her weaknesses and emerges as

domineering woman and becomes the epitome of obduracy. Indu, the female protagonist of the novel has an estranged relationship with Akka. Like Mini, Indu too was advised by the elderly women as a child to inculcate in her the cherished feminine qualities as it is the only way to survive in male dominated families. But Indu has her own dreams and promise herself not to become their replica. She recalls:

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. And I [...] I had watched them and found to be true. There had to be if not the substance, at least the shadow of submissions. But still, I had laughed at them, and sworn I would never pretend to be what I was not (158).

Indu “resented” her womanhood as she was made conscious of her femininity by the elder women of her family. The onset of puberty perplexes her and makes her conscious of her own body. Almost all the women protagonists of Shashi Deshpande’s novels endure the restrictions of puberty imposed on them. She also focuses on the customs and rituals meant for women which expects them to perform ‘fasts’ and ‘prayers’ to earn eternal wifedom as well as peace and harmony for their family. Indu too perceives the women of her family involved in various rituals to ensure longevity of their husband’s life. She is also expected to perform them to secure good fortune. Indu too, accepts life as a curse without a husband but she does not believe in the superstitious rituals supposed to save oneself from the widowhood. She is always accused of questioning the established norms and of being cleverer and more educated than her predecessors. She points out that it had always been thrown at me like an accusation. As if it was a disgrace to be clever. I had sobbed out my heart to old uncle one day. And he said, for a woman, intelligence is always a burden, Indu. We like our women not to think.

Indu went ahead with her education and went for an inter-caste marriage with Jayant, who was of her choice. Shashi Deshpande writes in her essay, *'The Writing of a Novel'* about Indu that 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.

Again like her mother she was segregated from the family for transgressing the traditional mode of settling marriages. Shashi Deshpande has given us the glimpse of the rigid system of marriages in India which is decided not on the basis of compatibility but on caste, religion and dowry. Indu speaks against the traditional mode of settling marriages when she sees Mini being pushed into an incompatible marriage by their elders. In her marital life Indu could not free herself from "the shadow of submission". Shashi Deshpande specifies in the essay mentioned above that love leads to the certainty of marriage. But marriage invariably takes you back to the world of women, of trying to please, of the fear of not-pleasing, of surrender, of self-abnegation.

In her march towards emancipation and selfhood, the contemporary Indian woman has to struggle against the insensitive fatality of options and the indoctrination of centuries which silently yet persistently endeavours to fashion her into the mould of "womanhood" as he defined and defiled by the society. "The true woman", Simone de Beauvoir remarks, "is an artificial product that civilisation makes, as formerly eunuchs were made. He presumed 'instincts' for coquetry, docility are indoctrinated, as in phallic pride in man". Indu moulds herself of satiate Jayant and prevents herself from retaliating, as it will certify her marriages as a failure. Indu foresees it and decides to hide the frictions of her marital life from her family. She analyzes herself that the hideous ghost of her own cowardice confronted her as she thought of this [...] that she had clung tenaciously to Jayant,

to her marriage, not for love alone, but because she was afraid of failure.

Indu concludes that as a life partner they always expected for each other to overlook their vices and appreciate their virtues. Indu accepts that she throttled her desires not because of Jayant's pressure but because it was her own decision with which she had given up her identity and individuality. Soon she realises:

And one day I had thought [...] isn't there anything I want at all? have I become fluid, with no shape, no form of my own? At that moment a savage truth had stared me in the face (...) without wants there is no 'I' (49)

Shashi Deshpande in her talk on 'The Indian woman – Stereotypes, Images and Realities' states that the good woman – whether she is wife, mother, sister or daughter-in-law doesn't matter – is always so selfless that she negates herself to the point of extinction. Indu too experiences a void, a hollowness in her life, even though it was shielded by the deceptively beautiful screen of her social graces and obligations. Her stream of consciousness makes it clear that even in the educated upper middle classes, the intrinsic value of even highly intelligent and capable women is invariably affected by her social or married status, since the society treats her as an object and a possession, never as an individual.

Indu submits before Jayant's decision which asked her to continue with the job she despised as they have a long way to go and not to opt of a career as a writer. Indu helplessly and unwillingly acquiesces to his decision and continues with her job. She finds that her marriage has made her dependent and defines love as big fraud, a hoax, a trap – a process of making one humble and dependent. Finally, Akka, summons her and she accepts it as a welcome reprieve.

It is after returning to her parental home that she believes her past which helps her to understand her present. Akka dies leaving all her money and jewels in the name of Indu as she considered her shoulders as strong. Akka's childhood trauma as deciphered by Narmada – Atya shocks Indu and fills her heart with guilt and compassion for her. She understood the reason behind Akka's waspish and governing attitude. Since childhood Indu perceived in her family elderly people dictating and younger being impertinent towards them. She concludes that the existence of such kind of a family has no meaning. But gradually, she realises that dissociation from the family is not possible and decides that she cannot leave her family in lurch after enriching herself with Akka's money. Earlier Indu wished to purchase her parental home and maintain it instead of paying for Mini's wedding as she found that the match for her was not upto the mark. She wanted her elders to free themselves from the labyrinthine of rules and responsibilities with which they have enveloped themselves throughout their life. But then she realises that to fulfill one's obligations, to discharge one's responsibilities [...] can one not find freedom within this circle? It was perhaps my understanding of this that make it possible for me not only to pay for Mini's wedding but to attend it and enjoy it as well.

Finally, she considers the house as a "trap" which has always linked her with her past she had to move away from. She has been pursuing detachment throughout her life but she becomes aware that the detachment from the living is hard to achieve. The thought liberates her from the constraints of apprehension which engulfed her since her childhood and now she feel clean, as she had cut away all the unnecessary, uneven edges off myself and free. With this idea she also closes the chapter of her relationship with Naren who dies by drowning in pool. Her infidelity fills her with guilt and she accuses herself for cheating Jayant by hiding her true-self and pretending to be what she is not. Indu decides to go back to Jay ant as to think otherwise would be to take the coward's way again.

Simultaneously some firm decisions are made by her that I was resigning from my job. That I would at last do the kind of writing I had always dreamt of doing.

Indu mocks at the idea of not calling one's husband by his name as it shortens his age. Later, she realises that she too is not different from other women. The only difference is her reason for thinking so. After her marriage, she did what her husband liked. She herself says:

When I look in the mirror. I think of Jayant, when I undress I think of him. Always what he wants what he would like, what would please him. And I can't blame him. It is not her who has pressurised me into this. It is the way I want it to be.... Have I become fluid, with no shape, no form of my own (54).

It appears that marriage has taught her a lesson of deception and its high-sounding: "Her desire to assert herself had driven her from affection to hypocrisy." Indu herself feels that she had learnt to reveal to Jayant nothing but what he wanted to see. I hid my response as if they were bits of garbage. All these touching facts of losing her identity into her husband's frighten her. Gradually, Indu found that Jayant had not merely expected her to submit but had taken her submission for granted and she also, without being aware of it, submitted herself to him step by step on the altar of love. When she met the reality, she found it was not love but an adjustment, as she never wanted strife in her married life. She bore everything only to show her victory over her parents. She wanted to prove her success in life. This reason presents her pathetic predicament. She says that 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.

Here the novelist presents a veritable face of women in which modern women are bound to live between tradition and

modernity. Indu mocks the very word 'love': I love a book, a word, or a sari, a curry, a child, a man." (97) The experience that love has no place in her life drives her to the extreme stance of seeing only stratagem and betrayal, all around. She again feels how sex becomes an emblem of power and authority. Marriage proves to be another trap and woman feels like a caged animal. Indu doesn't believe in love. There is no love in her real life.

The protagonist, Indu, learns more about Akka, her past life, her concern and her distresses. Akka's traumatic married life comes before us when she uses her will in not allowing her husband's concubine to see him at his death-bed. Here she realises what her roots are – an independent woman and a writer, and what the shadows are – a daughter, a mother and commercial writer. She takes a solid decision regarding life.

The novel ends with a positive note with the hope of a new dawn. The novel expounds the indelible mark carved on the psyche of women by the conventions and norms established by the society which restricts them from exhibiting their true self. The mode and style of their development inculcates in them submissiveness, silence and passiveness which has a stronghold on their psyche. Even modern, educated women consciously drape themselves with these traits and find themselves in a fix. These traits which have become the roots of femininity always casts its shadows in women's life. Shashi Deshpande seems to suggest through *Roots and Shadow* that a change in the upbringing of girl-child is required. Only then she would be liberated from the mores preserved for women since ages.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande has presented her protagonist, Indu, as a paradigm of the new class of Indian woman who raised a number of basic questions regarding modern women who are rooted and shaped by the soil of India but influenced by the West. The traditional Indian women suffered, submitted and adjusted themselves to the circumstances but now they are changed persons who are aware of their status, her quest, her identity, her individuality, her place and role in the family and

society. Indu presents this sort of woman. Now there is a question before the society whether to desert and deny her or to concede and co-operate with her in her endeavors to establish an image of new woman.

She does not recommend a radical Eurocentric feminism because she feels that in the Indian context “aggressive feminism does not ring true” and that for Indian women, selfhood will come only from “probing and thinking for oneself.” Despite her denials to the contrary that she is not a woman writer but a writer, Deshpande admits that at a deeper level her writing is gender-specific and that only a woman could write my books they are written from the inside, as it were. Just as a woman cannot get deeply under a man’s skin, so too a man cannot fully appreciate the feminine experience. Deshpande’s feminism does not uproot the woman from her background but tries to expose the different ideological elements that shape her. These include religious and cultural elements such as myths, legends, rituals and ceremonies and social and psychological factors such as woman’s subordinate position in the family and her restricted sexuality.

For Shashi Deshpande, feminism means a balance between the traditional respect for the family as an Institution and the Western idea of self-identity and expression, as working philosophy for the Indian woman. In doing so, Deshpande belongs not only among the Indian-English novelists but also among the regional writers such as Ashapurna Devi, Baiamani Amrta and Ismat Chughtai who have similarly created details of a woman’s world with loving care and depicted the nuances of her consciousness with the empathy of an insider while advocating her liberation.

A glimpse of her novels reveals how poignantly she expresses the frustration and disappointments of women experience social and cultural oppression in the male-dominated society. *Roots and shadows*, her first novel, highlights the agony and trauma experienced by women in male-dominated and

tradition-bound society. The novelist exposes the absurdity of rituals and customs which only help to perpetuate the myth of male superiority. This shows how a woman grows from 'self-surrender' and 'self-abnegation' to assert her individuality with newly emerged identity. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* rejects the traditional concept that the sole purpose of a wife's existence is to please her husband. It reveals a woman's capacity to assert her own rights and individuality and become fully aware of her potential as a human being. *That Long Silence* traces the passage of a woman through a maze of doubts and fears towards her affirmation. Viewing the man-woman relationship objectively, the novelist does not throw the blame entirely on men for the subjugation of women. She observes that both men and women find it difficult to outgrow the images and roles allotted to them by society.

Shashi Deshpande's concern about the problems of women and their quest for identity makes one to consider her novels as feminist texts. But she disapproves the idea to label her novel as feminist texts and says:

A woman who writes of women's experience often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have angered her, roused her strong feeling. I don't see why this has to be labeled feminist fiction. (Lit Criterion 1985, 33)

She also vehemently objects to being called a feminist. P. Rama Moorthy remarks, in this context, that "....the woman she has created are feminists if she is no one" (Sushila Singh 1991, 7). Later, she changes her stand and admits herself be a feminist but only as a person and certainly not as novelist.

She declares in an interview her stance on the issue: "I now have no doubts at all in saying that I am a feminist. In my own life, I mean. But not consciously, as a novelist I must also say that mainly out of my own thinking and experiences and feelings. I started writing first, and only then discovered my feminism. And it was much later that I actually read books about it. (R.S.

Pathak, 1988: 248) Further elaborating her view point, she declares:

.....I am a feminist, I'm a very staunch feminist in my personal life... cruelty and oppression should not be there between the two genders this is my idea of feminism. I am feminist very much and I strongly react against any kind of cruelty or oppression, denial of opportunities to women because they are women... the important thing is we have the right to live ourselves. But as writer I'm not going to use my novels to carry the message of feminism. Then it becomes propaganda." (13-14)

More than being a feminist she is a humanist. Her views are more akin to the modern feminist thought which is no longer radical. She expresses her desire to be a humanist in an interview given to Vanamala Viswanatha:

...I want to reach a stage where I can write about human being and not about women in relation to men. I don't believe in having a propagandist or sexist purpose to my writing. If it presents such perspective, it's only a coincidence. (Pathak 1998, 237)

Shashi Deshpande describes, in unequivocal, terms, her idea of feminism. To a question from an interviewer whether she would like to call herself now a feminist, she reacts thus:

"Yes, I would, I am a feminist in the sense that, I think we need to have a world, which we should recognise as a place for all of inhuman beings. There is no superior and inferior; we are two halves of one species. I fully agree with Simone de Beauvoir that the fact that we are human is much more important than our being and women'. I think that's my idea of feminism. (254)

Thus, Shashi Deshpande is a writer par excellence when she deals with human issues which are of interest to all humanity. She effectively portrays the lot of Indian women and the convoluted state of things resulting in their self-abnegation in her writing known for courageous and sensitive handling of significant and intractable themes affecting the lives of women. Her works, therefore, constitute an outstanding contribution to Indian Literature in English.

WORKS CITED

- Deshpande, Shashi. *Roots and Shadows*. Bombay: Orient Longman, 1983.
- "The Dilemma of a woman writer." *The Literary Criterion*. Vol. 21, No. 4, 1985.
- Holomstrom, Lakshmi. "Shashi Deshpande talks to Lakshmi Holmstrom." *The fiction of Shashi Deshpande*. Ed. R.S. Pathak. New Delhi: Creativ Publishers. 1998.
- Ramamoorthy, P. "My life is My own: A study of Shashi Deshpande's women". *Feminism and Recent Fiction in India*. Ed. Sushila Singh. New Delhi: Prestige Publishers 1991.