

MENTOR EDUCATION CENTRE

ROOTS AND SHADOWS

Shashi Deshpande

- Shashi Deshpande (born 1938)
- an Indian novelist.
- She is a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award.
- She published her first collection of short stories in 1978
- her first novel, 'The Dark Holds No Terror', 1980.

- Won the Sahitya Akademi Award for the novel *That Long Silence* in 1990
- Padma Shri award in 2009.
- Her novel *Shadow Play* was shortlisted for The Hindu Literary Prize in 2014.
- Deshpande has written four children's books, a number of short stories, nine novels, and an essay collection entitled *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays*.

- The novelist, Shashi Deshpande studies these issues and problem of the contemporary middle class women. She pictures modern, educated and career-oriented middle class women, who are sensitive to the changing time and situations.

▪ **ROOTS AND SHADOWS**

- The story revolves around the female protagonist Indu and uses the first person narrative. The story foregrounds the dynamics in an Indian, Brahmin, joint family and all its conflicts, compromises and peculiarities.
- 'Roots and shadows' has won the Thirumathi Rangamal prize for the best Indian novel of 1982-83.

▪ **ROOTS AND SHADOWS**

- Indu's mother dies at childbirth and his father Govind, a photographer, leaves her in the care of his old aunt, Akka and his brother, Kaka (for Indu, real name Anant) who live in their ancestral home.

- Akka is the matriarch and rules the house with a whip. Apart from
- Anant and
- Govind, there is
- Atya (real name the Narmada, widowed sister),
- Sunanda (sister) and two more brothers (Madhav and Vinayak)
with their wives and kids.

- Indu grows up as a rebellious kid who wants to do things according to her fancy and understanding.
- She finally succeeds in her endeavour when she leaves the house at age of 18 and later marries a man of her own choice, **Jayant**.

- She works as a writer in a magazine but wishes to take up a different form of writing which would satiate the novelist inside of her.
- She is a dotting wife and almost as dutiful and self-effacing as the domesticated housewives she always resented.
- She hides her dependence on Jayant and the hypocrisy of her emotions and actions builds a stream of angst and guilt inside of her.

- At the age of 29, she returns to her family house as Akka is on her deathbed.
- The fact the two had not spoken for 10 years and never really saw eye to eye, Indu is surprised when she learns that Akka wants to bequeath all her property and wealth to her.

- She hides the information from the rest of the family up until her final rites when the probate lawyer, Shayamarao reads Akka's will to the entire family. They all are shocked to see that Indu, was given

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- Indu's cousin Padmini or Mini is supposed to get married and Akka promised to pay for it. So, Indu feels obligated to honour the said promise. As for the house, apart from Kaka and Atya, everyone wants it to be sold and receive their own share of the spoils.

- All this while, Indu is distressed about her relationship with Jayant as he restricts her attachment with her to some placid and dispassionate letters.
- In her desperation, she even commits adultery with one of her cousins and close friend Naren who is the only grandson of the Old Uncle (cousin of Akka).

- Naren is a self-indulgent and carefree vagabond who was never accepted by the family.
- He was orphaned in childhood and only has his grandfather to call his own. In the end, Naren succumbs to his 'private devils' and commits suicide.
- The family is distraught over the tragedy especially the Old Uncle (his grandfather) and Indu.

- She even learns about the tragic life story of Akka as a 12-year-old bride, abusive marriage, her husband's concubine and widowhood. She realizes her lack of knowledge and will to understand Akka and her rules bred their asperity toward each other.
- Shaken by Naren's death but unaffected by her own foibles, Indu decides to discharge the responsibility Akka had loaded on her shoulders.

- She decides to fund Mini's marriage and to sell the house (and give everyone their share). She also decides to return to Jayant, her husband, and confess her infidelity.
- She hopes that their relationship can withstand the trial of such 'scorching honesty' and even if it doesn't she would find peace in the confession of her sin.

- Key Thoughts
- The story is based on the themes of
 - Tradition
 - family life
 - marriage
 - Patriarchy
 - Modernism
 - Feminism

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- Domestic abuse
- self-delusion
- adultery
- Shame
- Dreams
- The interpersonal conflicts
- interpersonal contradictions affect all our lives.

- Indu considers her education and wit as her medals of superiority but fails to show her strength in her individual battles.
- All her life she pretends to be a rebel but her life ends up being a summation of responses to others, be it retaliation against Jayant and Akka or persuasion of Naren and self-indulgence