

# Exploring Marriage Dynamics and Gender-Based Violence: A Critical Analysis of Shashi Deshpande's 'Intrusion'

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## Abstract

In this research paper, the captivating narrative of Shashi Deshpande's story "Intrusion" serves as the foundation for an elaborate exploration of the intricate dynamics surrounding the institution of marriage and its impact on women. The author delves deep into the multifaceted interactions between men and women, particularly within the context of matrimony, shedding light on the harrowing experiences of sexual abuse endured by women within the confines of marriage. It is a comprehensive analysis of the transformation undergone by both men and women during and after marriage. It delves into the complexities of their identities, examining who they once were, who they have become, and the paths that lie ahead for them in the future. Additionally, the societal expectations placed upon married couples and the inherent duties associated with such unions are meticulously portrayed by Deshpande. This research delves into this metamorphosis, capturing the evolving nature of marital relationships and the ensuing implications. By illuminating these transformations, the author aims to draw attention to the inherent biases and traditional teachings that perpetuate the notion of women's submissiveness to their husbands.

Furthermore, Deshpande's writing brilliantly communicates the discontent and disappointment experienced by women as a result of their marital relationships. The paper thoroughly explores these themes, exposing the profound impact on women's lives and delving into the complex emotions and experiences that unfold within the institution of marriage. Through meticulous analysis, it unveils the harsh realities of marriage slavery and unveils the intricate nuances of man-woman interactions. It serves as a testament to the power of literature in highlighting societal issues and initiating discussions around gender dynamics and the complexities of marital relationships.

## INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpande, a highly esteemed author in India, has skillfully portrayed the multifaceted aspects of Indian life, capturing the country's diverse nuances. Her creativity is deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of India's traditional society. While she vehemently rejects the label of being a feminist

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writer, Deshpande's intention is not to be identified solely as a female author, but rather as a writer who delves into the universal human concerns that resonate with everyone. She aligns more with humanism, transcending gender-specific ideologies. Undoubtedly, Shashi Deshpande's writings have become a powerful medium for her literary expression. Shashi Deshpande's name resonates strongly in households across the nation. Within the pages of her works, Deshpande masterfully portrays characters who find themselves trapped within societal expectations, yet manage to forge their own identities and seek independence within the confines of marriage.

Marriage, as Deshpande expresses, holds a unique position within society. It serves as a public institution, symbolizing the union of two individuals, establishing the legality of their children and their inheritance rights, and outlining the societal rules that govern the conduct of men and women. Yet, simultaneously, marriage remains an intensely private affair, concealed within the closed and locked room of a couple's relationship. The author skillfully weaves these complex dimensions of marriage throughout her narratives, delving into the inherent dichotomy that exists between its public and private aspects. Deshpande exhibits a profound preoccupation with the theme of marriage throughout her body of work. Her writings reflect her unwavering dedication to the fate and future of contemporary women, particularly within a male-chauvinistic society. Rather than challenging the institution of marriage itself, she focuses on the devastating effects experienced by women within the bonds of matrimony. Through intricate character interactions,

Deshpande unveils the innermost psyches of her protagonists, exposing their struggles and inner turmoil to the reader's empathetic gaze.

In many of Deshpande's writings, female protagonists find themselves ensnared within a web of unfortunate circumstances, and the stories revolve around their battles and the consequences of their struggles, often serving as central themes. Disharmony within the household arises when understanding falters between husbands and wives, shining a light on the complexities of familial relationships. Deshpande's research places a

particular emphasis on family dynamics, exploring the intricate interactions between men and women within middle-class Indian households. The fundamental reason behind the disharmony lies in the incompatibility of personalities, exacerbated by feelings of loneliness, communication breakdowns, escapism, isolation, and the individual quest for self-identity. The tensions and conflicts that arise between spouses become the focal point of her works, offering a profound analysis of the strains that permeate marital relationships.

As one of India's most celebrated female writers, Deshpande has contributed extensively to various periodicals throughout her illustrious career. In her novels, including "The Dark Holds No Terrors" (1980), "Come Up and Be Dead" (1985), "That Long Silence" (1988), "The Binding Vine" (1994), "Small Remedies" (2000), "Moving On" (2004), "In the Country of Deceit" (2008), and "Shadow Play" (2009), Shashi Deshpande embarked on her creative career by publishing a series of short stories in various periodicals, which were later compiled into a book. She has authored four children's books and nine novels. Residing in Bangalore with her husband, who is a pathologist, Deshpande has established herself as a prominent literary figure both in the United States and internationally. Her essays and articles offer a realistic portrayal of contemporary middle-class women, focusing on issues that directly impact them. As a woman, Deshpande perceives the world through a female lens, bringing a unique perspective to her writing. The primary driving force behind her writing is the ability to create her own world, a safe haven where she can explore a wide range of situations, particularly those related to women's social status. Through her work, Shashi Deshpande has made significant contributions to understanding a crucial aspect of women's lives: their marriages. Considered one of the most gifted contemporary Indian women writers in English, she has published multiple works on this subject. Shashi Deshpande has received accolades as an award-winning Indian writer. Her remarkable craftsmanship and contributions to literature were acknowledged with the prestigious Padma Shri award in 2009, which she considers to be her most recent honor and distinction.



## **Objective of the study.**

This paper aims to study, identify, discuss and interpret marriage themes in the 'Intrusion' of Shashi Deshpande.

- To identify Violence in marriage, in the works of authors.
- To study various thematic aspects in the selected narratives.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To fulfill the research objectives, an exploratory and descriptive research strategy will be adopted in this study. The primary goals of this study, as the title suggests, are to identify, investigate, analyze and to interpret Marriage and Slavery via critical analysis of *Intrusion* by Shashi Deshpande have been represented. Hence, the data collection for this research would be done primarily and secondarily from the sources as described.

## **DISCUSSION**

Violence within a marriage can take various forms, encompassing a range of behaviors that aim to cause harm, exert control, or inflict damage upon one's partner. Generally, violence is understood as the use of physical force or power to achieve these objectives, leaving both physical and psychological impacts on the victim. Physical violence is a direct form of harm that involves aggressive actions such as hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, or any other bodily assault. It manifests as an overt display of force, causing immediate pain and injury to the victim. Sexual violence, on the other hand, encompasses non-consensual or forced sexual acts inflicted upon an individual. It encompasses a wide spectrum of actions, including rape, sexual assault, harassment, molestation, and any form of unwanted sexual advances or behaviors that violate the autonomy and dignity of the victim.

Within the context of marriage or cohabitation, domestic violence, also known as intimate partner violence, can occur. This type of violence encompasses physical, sexual, or emotional abuse inflicted by one partner upon the other. It can take the form of physical assaults, sexual coercion, or manipulation

and control that undermines the victim's emotional well-being. Emotional or psychological violence targets the victim's emotional and psychological state, aiming to undermine their well-being. This form of violence includes behaviors such as humiliation, degradation, threats, intimidation, constant criticism, and manipulation, all intended to exert control and power over the victim. Verbal violence involves the use of abusive or offensive language as a means to belittle, insult, or intimidate one's spouse. This can include yelling, name-calling, racial slurs, or any form of verbal harassment that inflicts emotional distress and erodes the victim's self-esteem. It is crucial to acknowledge and address the various types of violence that can occur within a marriage. No individual should endure such mistreatment, as everyone deserves to live in a safe and respectful environment. Recognizing and taking action against these forms of violence is essential for fostering healthy, loving relationships based on mutual respect and dignity. These types of violence can be easily seen in work of Shashi Deshpande.

Shashi Deshpande is a talented writer whose works passionately address the intricate dynamics of gender inequality and societal expectations. Deshpande skillfully portrays the plight of women ensnared in abusive marriages, compelled into union by men driven solely by parental approval, disregarding the women's own welfare. This callous behavior often leads to abandonment, leaving the women in dire straits. Through her writing, Deshpande aligns herself with a cohort of female authors who boldly shed light on the discriminatory treatment pervading society, affecting both men and women. The narrative emphasizes that a woman's compromise and sacrifice do not conclude with marriage but commence from the very moment she exchanges vows. Society expects her to relinquish her individuality, cater to her husband's desires, and bear children in accordance with his wishes. Refusal to comply incurs judgment and scorn, causing the woman to experience guilt and self-doubt. Regardless of their achievements, women bear the heavy burden of societal shame, which clings to them relentlessly. Breaking away from established traditions evokes guilt, while adhering to societal customs breeds a sense of shame for missed

opportunities. Deshpande challenges this status quo, refusing to accept marriage and motherhood as mandatory life experiences for all women. Her stories bravely confront the traumatic issue of rape and its profound impact on the victim and her family. Deshpande deftly portrays the contrasting responses of the girl's parents, with the mother displaying empathy and support while the father remains distant and disconnected. Additionally, she explores the vulnerability women face after marriage, as they are expected to submit to their husbands, dismantling the protective walls they have carefully constructed. The author also assumes the role of a mother, determined to shield her daughter from the humiliation and vulnerability she herself endured on her wedding day. She envisions a brighter, more liberated future for her daughter, unencumbered by stifling customs.

Deshpande's narratives delve into the psychological and emotional crossroads experienced by women caught between tradition and progress. Before embarking on the shared journey of marriage, women yearn for a deep connection with their partners, seeking understanding and genuine friendship. In her stories, Deshpande explores these challenges and offers guidance on how women can navigate them. She encourages introspection, emphasizing that the answers lie within oneself. The protagonists undergo profound transformations, accepting the unchangeable aspects of their surroundings and reshaping their perspectives and attitudes to forge sustainable lives. It becomes apparent that Deshpande's female characters often navigate their relationships through a delicate balance of give-and-take, understanding, and compromise. They undergo personal growth and adopt new perspectives to confront life's unyielding constants without altering the external circumstances themselves. This thematic thread weaves its way throughout the majority of her short works, providing readers with a profound and introspective exploration of the human experience. This can be seen in her story 'Intrusion'.

## **Intrusion**

The story portrays the journey of a newly married woman who embarks on her honeymoon with her

husband. Written from her perspective, the narrative conveys her observations, emotions, and internal struggles as she navigates unfamiliar surroundings and encounters unexpected experiences. Shashi Deshpande skillfully captures the contrast between the idyllic fishing village and the discomfort the protagonist feels within it. The vivid descriptions of the village create a visual backdrop, allowing readers to immerse themselves in the setting. The absence of the sea, despite being in a fishing village, symbolizes the disconnect and confusion the protagonist experiences.

Throughout the story, the protagonist's discomfort and unease are palpable. From the restrictive attire to the unsavory conditions of their accommodation, the author emphasizes her growing dissatisfaction. The use of sensory details, such as the smell of dried fish and the feel of the muddy beach, heightens the reader's immersion in her state of discomfort. The dynamics between the protagonist and her husband are fraught with tension and unease. The husband's impatience and controlling behavior elicit feelings of annoyance and resentment from the protagonist. She longs for independence and resents the lack of agency in her decision to marry him. This underlying tension between them adds depth to their relationship and highlights the power dynamics at play. The protagonist's internal monologue reveals her insecurities and fears. She questions her own desires, wondering if something is wrong with her for not wanting to be intimate with her husband. The juxtaposition of her thoughts with the expectations placed on her by society and her family creates a sense of inner conflict. The story also explores themes of consent, autonomy, and societal expectations. The protagonist's lack of agency and the violation of her boundaries by her husband highlight the importance of respect and communication in a relationship. The narrative serves as a critique of traditional gender roles and the pressures imposed on women within patriarchal societies.

The symbolism of the sea throughout the story represents both freedom and a source of fear. It embodies the protagonist's longing for liberation from societal expectations while also reflecting her apprehension about the unknown. The juxtaposition



of the vastness of the sea with the protagonist's feelings of entrapment emphasizes her internal struggle. This story is a poignant exploration of a woman's emotional journey during her honeymoon. The author's use of descriptive language, vivid imagery, and introspective narration delves into the complexities of relationships, societal expectations, and personal autonomy. Through the protagonist's experiences and thoughts, the story prompts readers to reflect on themes of identity, violence, consent, and the societal pressures faced by women.

## **Violence in marriage**

Story delves into the intricacies of the narrative, unveiling the protagonist's discomfort and underlying fear towards her husband right from the beginning of the story. It is evident that there is an unspoken tension, a subtle unease lingering in the air whenever they are together.

In a particular scene, a hint of physical violence reveals itself, painting a picture of a power dynamic that troubles the protagonist. Her husband grips her arm tightly, his grasp constricting her freedom and causing her a mixture of pain and anxiety. Deep within her, a voice urges her to ask him to release his grip, to let her arm breathe free once more. However, she finds herself paralyzed by a sense of fear, a lack of confidence preventing her from speaking her mind and expressing her desires to her husband. Instead, she resorts to a quiet act of evasion, a strategy to avoid the tightening grip of her husband. Her gaze shifts towards the shoreline, where scattered seashells beckon her attention. In an effort to create a physical barrier between herself and her husband, she bends down to collect the shells, her movements purposeful yet seemingly innocuous. The act of bending serves as a metaphorical shield, a subtle plea for her husband to release his grip, as the physical act requires him to loosen his hold on her arm.

This nuanced portrayal unveils a complex emotional landscape within the protagonist. It showcases her longing for autonomy, her desire to assert herself and be heard, while also revealing her vulnerability and the emotional barriers that hinder her from doing so. The act of collecting seashells becomes more than a mere distraction; it becomes a

quiet rebellion, a momentary respite from the control exerted upon her. In this nuanced exploration of the protagonist's emotions and actions, we witness the intricate dance of power dynamics and the internal struggles faced by individuals within a troubled marriage. It highlights the importance of empathy and understanding, emphasizing the significance of creating safe spaces where individuals can freely express themselves without fear of reprisal.

As the story unfolds, a shift in the setting takes place, transitioning from the serene shore of the sea to the rustic village nestled upon the hill. This change in surroundings serves as a backdrop for a parallel transformation in the nature of the protagonist's husband.

Initially, we witnessed his physical proximity, his tight grip on her arm, an unnecessary display of dominance. It hinted at an underlying power dynamic within their relationship. However, as they embark on the climb up the hill, seeking the support of her husband becomes an essential need for the protagonist. Yet, to her surprise, she finds herself walking alone, unsupported by her companion. With each step, she realizes the absence of her husband's presence beside her. The uphill journey demands her stamina, and the lack of his support weighs upon her. Hurriedly, she follows in his footsteps, compelled to keep pace with his determined stride. The ascent becomes an arduous and tiring ordeal, leaving her with little time for respite or moments of rest. She tries to catch her breath, but her husband remains steadfast, walking ahead without waiting for her.

The sense of difficulty and strain permeates her being as she struggles to keep up with him. Her legs ache, her breath becomes labored, and a sense of isolation begins to settle within her. The physical and emotional exhaustion intertwine, weaving a complex tapestry of emotions. Despite the challenges, the protagonist perseveres, driven by a mix of determination and the desire to reach the top of the hill. It is at the summit where their destination awaits—a place to rest for the night. And as she finally arrives, her weariness is momentarily overshadowed by the panoramic view that greets her tired eyes. The juxtaposition of the physical journey and the evolving dynamics between the couple unveils the changing landscape of their



relationship. The shift from the gripping hold to the absence of support reflects a transformation in her husband's behavior, highlighting a growing distance between them. It raises questions about their connection, the shifting power dynamics, and the emotional toll it takes on the protagonist. Through the vivid description of the uphill climb and the protagonist's endurance, we gain insight into the complexities of their journey together. It emphasizes the resilience and determination required to navigate the challenges of their relationship, while also alluding to the uncertainties that lie ahead as they settle in for the night in the village atop the hill.

Upon reaching the pinnacle of the hill, they entered a room that exuded the all-too-familiar atmosphere of transience. It possessed the mundane, lifeless ambiance commonly found in spaces where people merely pass through, leaving no lasting impression of their presence. A muddled amalgamation of stale odors hung in the air, hinting even at the unpleasant scent of bedbugs. I discreetly took a cautious sniff, confirming my suspicions. However, as if in a swift gust of change, the man flung open the windows, ushering in a refreshing breeze that swept away, in a single breath, the lingering scents that plagued the room. The atmosphere was instantly revitalized, as if the outside air had the power to dispel the staleness that clung to the space.

This room, in all its discomfort and disarray, added yet another layer to the protagonist's experiences. Having left the familiarity of her home behind, traversed the shores of the sea, and climbed the challenging hill, she now found herself confined within the confines of this lackluster hotel room. It stood as a stark contrast to the grandeur of nature and the journey she had undertaken. The room symbolized a sense of transience, a temporary abode devoid of personal touch or warmth. It evoked a feeling of detachment, as if countless others had passed through its doors without leaving a trace of their presence. The stale smells that pervaded the room further accentuated its lack of vitality; the absence of any imprint left by previous occupants. In this new environment, the protagonist grappled with a distinct discomfort, a reminder of the sacrifices and inconveniences that accompanied her journey. The room, with its shoddy condition and

uninviting ambiance, served as a stark contrast to the hopes and expectations she may have harbored when embarking on this adventure. Yet, despite the initial dismay, a breath of fresh air blew in through the opened windows, carrying with it a glimmer of hope and renewal. The protagonist found solace in this unexpected gust, as if it symbolized the potential for change and rejuvenation in the face of adversity.

Within the narrative, the host assumes the persona of society itself, casting a judgmental gaze upon the newlywed couple. With a wicked smile adorning his face, he exudes an air of knowingness, as if he possesses insight into their most intimate intentions during their honeymoon. This realization only intensifies the protagonist's discomfort, underscoring the pervasive influence of societal pressures. The host's wicked smile serves as a stark reminder that societal expectations place a heavy emphasis on sexual intimacy within the context of a honeymoon. This awareness weighs heavily upon the protagonist, as she grapples with the implications of societal pressure and the ensuing inner turmoil.

The pressure to engage in a sexual act becomes an additional source of disquietude for the protagonist. It represents a societal demand that looms over their honeymoon experience, prompting her to consider the consequences of defying or adhering to these expectations. The husband, particularly, may view it as an issue of self-respect and dominance, adding further complexity to the situation. For the protagonist, the weight of societal expectations leaves her feeling obliged to fulfill these anticipated sexual encounters. She finds herself caught between the desire to uphold societal norms and the apprehension that accompanies it. The prospect of refusing such encounters fills her with uncertainty, as she contemplates the repercussions it may have on her familial relationships and the judgments she may face from society.

This scene in the story powerfully portrays the insidious nature of societal pressure, particularly when it comes to intimate matters. It shines a light on the challenging dynamics of navigating personal desires in the face of external expectations. The protagonist's internal struggle serves as a poignant



reminder of the societal pressures individuals often face, illuminating the complexities and sacrifices required to conform or defy these expectations.

In the confines of their shared room, the newlywed husband and wife found themselves facing a unique challenge. Having only known each other for a brief month before their marriage, they were now thrust into the expectation of engaging in a sexual relationship. This sudden demand, enforced by both societal norms and the anticipation of the husband, presented a complex predicament. Given their limited familiarity, the wife sought to prolong the intimacy of their physical connection. She aimed to navigate this delicate situation with caution, recognizing the significance of taking time to establish a deeper understanding of one another. Consequently, she found herself attempting to avoid entering into sexual encounters prematurely.

However, despite her efforts to delay the inevitable, the husband directly approached her with the expectation of fulfilling their marital duties. In an act of honesty and self-awareness, she expressed her hesitation and chose to refuse his advances. This decision, though made from a place of genuine concern and the desire to nurture their emotional connection, elicited anger and disappointment from her husband. In the vulnerable state between wakefulness and sleep, the wife found herself subjected to a distressing incident. Her husband, driven by frustration and a lack of understanding, forcefully engaged in sexual activity against her will. Despite her attempts to resist and establish boundaries, he persisted, disregarding her pleas for him to stop. The violation she endured left her feeling invaded and exploited by the very person who should have respected and cherished her. In the aftermath of this traumatic experience, the wife grappled with a profound sense of loss. The sound

of the waves, which once symbolized her freedom and solace, seemed to fade away into silence. The intrusion upon her personal space and the violation of her body left her feeling numb and stripped of the autonomy she so desperately needed. This particular scene delves into the complexities surrounding intimacy, violence, consent, and the weight of societal expectations. It sheds light on the importance of fostering a foundation of trust and mutual understanding in any relationship, particularly one as delicate and intimate as marriage.

In conclusion, Shashi Deshpande's "Intrusion" eloquently unravels the intricate web of violence that engulfs the lives of newly married couples. With profound insight, the story explores the oppressive burden of societal expectations on marriage, particularly the pervasive notion that women are obligated to fulfill their husbands' sexual needs. Deshpande masterfully portrays the grim reality of women being coerced into marriage by their parents, often for the sake of family and siblings. Moreover, the narrative powerfully captures the overwhelming helplessness that women often endure in their married lives, offering a poignant portrayal of their plight.

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