

Shashi Deshpande (born 1938) is an Indian novelist. She is a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award. She published her first collection of short stories in 1978, and her first novel, 'The Dark Holds No Terror', in 1980. She won the Sahitya Akademi Award for the novel *That Long Silence* in 1990 and the Padma Shri award in 2009. Her novel *Shadow Play* was shortlisted for The Hindu Literary Prize in 2014.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the eminent novelists of contemporary Indian literature in English. Western readers align her with Anita Desai. Indeed, both writers' work centres around women's lives in modern Indian society. However, only Deshpande lives and writes in India, and she explicitly addresses Indian readers, not the international marketplace. Deshpande was born in 1936, in Dharwad. She is the younger daughter of the Sanskrit scholar, novelist, actor and dramatist R. V. Jagirdar (1904-1984) and his wife Sharda Arya. Under the name of Adya Rangacharya, and also under the pseudonym of Shriranga, he published a huge literary oeuvre that includes translations of Sanskrit plays. He enjoyed great success and fame, his work has become part of the national Indian heritage.

The Intrusion

The Intrusion, a title story deals with a newly married woman, whose self-respect is dishonored by the appalling treatment by her husband, whom she thinks as an intruder. The story is replete with no of instances where a newly married woman on the day of her honeymoon is made aware of her sexual role with which she is forced to identify herself. Gradually, she gets sickened with the fear of impending disaster in the form of 'sex' with a man, whom she hardly knows. Her husband's emphasizing 'complete privacy' deadens her almost with 'Fears, Tremors.' Consequently, she averts her face from the beds. Woman in the story is shown as a silent acquiescent, as she accepts the marriage proposal quite mutely. Friendship, which is the basis of husband-wife relationship, is found lacking here. In her narration, it is quite perceptible to sense her withdrawal feeling at the moment she admits her denial 'to hear the intimate sounds that were seeping through the thin walls and flimsy door.' (P-38) She finds it almost disgusting to see herself 'with a strange man in strange room.' (P-39) It becomes quite convincing when

she narrates, 'And at present we were not friends, not acquaintances even, but only a husband and wife.' (P-38)

The acceptance of her husband-wife relationship intensifies her denial for her autonomous being as friend, woman or an individual.

Woman protagonist in the story appears to be a victim of 'body-mind' conflict. Even 'the slightly glazed look' in her husband's eyes she finds revealing and demanding.

Nevertheless, she desperately tries to underline as Vidyut Bhagwat (2004:81) expresses in her analysis of Simon de Beauvoir that 'body and sexuality are concrete expressions of existence.' Woman in the story reads out her husband's eyes and narrates her understanding, '... how unaware he was of everything but of what was to happen between us, making us truly husband and wife.' (P-38) She finds it to be extremely startling and reproachful to see him, 'a nameless stranger' calling out her name with so familiarity. She is reluctant to acknowledge his attempt of maintaining the mundane affair of husband-wife relationship which is still under construction. Out of fear of rejection that crouches in her, she eats all her fears of 'exposing the mysteries of her body to him.' (P-40) However, her stammering attempt to convey their little acquaintance with each other receives a cold, little violent reaction by her husband, whereas for her it brings 'a light-hearted sense of escape.' (P-40) Her relieved state of existence evaporates only to throw her into a daylight humiliating fact of his merciless bodily assault on her. She cries out 'not for the physical pain' but she says, 'for the intrusion into my privacy, the violation of my right to myself.'

(P-41) Thus, the husband draws the boundaries of her sphere even within marriage, where the sexual act for man is legal but for woman it is rape. In order to support woman empowerment, it is necessary to consider a feminist thinker, Tiffany K. Wayne's (2008:50) discussion of Margaret Fuller's views on the need for the acknowledgement of woman's need and ability to pursue her own individual interest expressed in her writing, *Woman in the 19th*.

Questions:

1. The theme of the story.
2. Give a description of the protagonist's mental agony in the story
3. Role of women in Sashi Deshpande's stories based on the text.