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Beauvoir's Concept of Women as the "Other" in Marriage in "The Intrusion" by Shashi Deshpande

Riya Srivastva
Designation: Student, Bachelor's in English Honours
Email: riya.22sahs1030014@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in
Supervisor: Dr. Preeti
Designation: Associate Professor, Department of English, Galgotias University
Email: preeti@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in
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Abstract

Marriage, therefore, so inextricably linked with love, is a phase of alienation in Shashi Deshpande's The Intrusion. This essay explores how Simone de Beauvoir's concept of woman as the "Other" in The Second Sex is reflected in Deshpande's novel. The new bride, the nameless and voiceless heroine, spends her honeymoon not in ecstasy but in mounting loss: loss of self, security, and ownership of the body.

Beauvoir says, "He is the Subject… she is the Other," and Deshpande brings this alive. The bride in The Intrusion is only a presence, not a partner, presented to patriarchy's ceremonies. She resists passively; she moves stiffly, concealing her pain. This is a marriage of domination, not of mutual expansion. Her husband, unemotional and not violent, hurts her deeply. He uses her body as his right, fulfilling her dread: she is regarded only as a wife, not as an individual. The location is deliberate. The honeymoon suite and the distant sea are key elements in the emotional landscape of the novel. The suite is imbued with anticipation, and the distant sea is a fantasy of freedom for women who are to be submissive. The inner monologue of the heroine—her longing for the sea, her doubts, her silent screams—points to a larger truth: freedom of emotion and body is an unreachable dream for modern marriages.

This piece contends that The Intrusion looks backwards to marriage as an institution—its unspoken rights, intrusions, and silences. Deshpande reflects the roles of society, depicting women not as themselves but as moulded by them. Their silence is a protest unspoken, their passivity a survival.

This essay demonstrates how The Intrusion brings Beauvoir's critique to life through the protagonist's transition from discomfort to violation and visibility to invisibility. The bride's unromantic encounter brings out patriarchy's heritage, where closeness is a violation and the woman is still the Other.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Otherness, Marital Alienation, Female Agency, Existential Feminism

Introduction

Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1949) writes, "He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other" (26). This core idea that women are socially constructed as the inferior "Other" to male domination has a chilling literary echo in Shashi Deshpande's 'The Intrusion'. The protagonist in the story, who remains unnamed, exemplifies Beauvoir's contention that, as a patriarchal institution, marriage reduces women to the status of objects, existing for the male to consume, to use and discard, or to do housework. Shashi Deshpande, an established woman writer, has written several novels and short stories emphasising a real and profound discrimination between men and women. This story emphasises the real discrimination between the sexes as well. The protagonist's plight in the story highlights the ongoing male dominance in society, and a strong belief of Deshpande's is based on the idea that women receive their right of freedom of choice in marriage, which does not allow a female to be correct in challenging a husband's authority.

Marriage is generally thought of as a partnership of equals, yet men are allowed to exercise that right completely, while women are subjected to pain and mental and emotional punishment. Women are stripped of their humanity and are simply seen as objects and downgraded to be one of many subjects. The story makes clear there are some uneasy realities for a newly married woman whose husband disregards any expectation of respecting her feelings. He acts as if the institution of marriage has allowed him to disregard her role entirely. Nothing is worse than trying to exist with that person in your life. The story presents a very important truth, that all relationships deserve respect and consideration for the other person that you're living with.

The narrative of "The Intrusion" is about the life of a bride who is trapped in a life where her emotions, wants, and even bodily autonomy are not given any attention. The narrative refers to the time when she comes to realise that marriage, instead of being a state of happiness, is an institution where she is required to

surrender to her husband's demands without hesitation. Her feeling of unease, fear, and violation reflects Beauvoir's concept of women being constructed as the "Other" —the being whose sole purpose is to serve, please, and meet men's expectations.

'Let's go down to the sea,' I said suddenly. 'Now?' He seemed surprised. 'Let's go in the morning.'(Deshpande 38). The protagonist's husband's dismissal of her wish to delay intimacy ("before the morning, there's the night") shows his authority over time and her body. Similarly, he dictates an intimacy without consent when he says, "'Come here.' Unwillingly I turned and went to him… His embrace was too sudden, too rough, and I wanted to scream." (Deshpande 40). His commands ("Come here") and physical dominance show him as the active "Subject," while she is forced into passivity. Beauvoir's theory describes how women are socialised to be the "Other." Girls, as children, are socialised to be passive, submissive, and obedient, while boys are socialised to be forceful and dominant. This continues in marriage, where a woman's identity is absorbed into her husband's. She is no longer an individual with her own desires and horrors but "the wife," defined in relation to her husband. Like it is mentioned the *The Second Sex*, "The destiny that society traditionally offers women is marriage. Even today, most women are, were, or plan to be married, or they suffer from not being so. Marriage is the reference by which the single woman is defined, whether she is frustrated by, disgusted at, or even indifferent to this institution. Thus, we must continue this study by analysing marriage" (De Beauvoir and Thurman 502). In The Intrusion, the internal conflict of the protagonist illustrates how this imposed identity is experienced as an intrusion—a violent erasure of her self. The narrative opens with the bride and groom at a remote honeymoon resort. The woman is out of place, uncomfortable, and on display right from the beginning. The environment itself—a strange, nigh-spooky environment—is in sync with her mood. She sees the villagers staring at her, the filthy bedding on the bed, and the institutionalised atmosphere of the resort. These are signs of her increasing realisation that she is stepping into a world in which she is not in charge. Her husband is friendly and unaware of her discomfort, already treating her like a possession instead of like a partner.

The most significant point in the tale is perhaps when the husband makes a physical overture. The woman withdraws, not because she is lacking in innocence or in knowledge, but because she does not feel emotionally attached to him. Despite their status as strangers, there is an expectation based on their social roles that she is to present her body unconditionally. When she fails to do so, her husband

is confused and angry. He cannot understand her rejection—after all, is this not the point of marriage? His reaction is intended to illustrate Beauvoir's contention that men are inclined to think of women's bodies as something to which they are entitled, not as something that belongs to a woman herself. She mentioned - "But when a woman is delivered to the male as his property, he claims that her flesh be presented in its pure facticity. Her body is grasped not as the emanation of a subjectivity but as a thing weighted in its immanence; this body must not radiate to the rest of the world, it must not promise anything but itself: its desire has to be stopped." (De Beauvoir and Thurman 211).

The climax of the narrative is marked by its brutal realism. The female protagonist wakes up to find her husband forcing himself upon her. There is no dialogue or love—just a mechanical act that leaves her feeling violated. The title, The Intrusion, precisely captures this moment. It is not just a physical violation but a violation of her sovereignty, her right to say no. Beauvoir's theory of the "Other" is evident here—the woman is not an agent but a passive object, used and then forgotten as her husband falls asleep, snoring away.

The strength of The Intrusion is its raw realism. It does not gloss over marriage or suggest that all marriages are blissful ones. Rather, it pulls the curtain back on the cruel, agonising moments of a convention that too often mutes women's voices. The loneliness of the central character, her need to be connected, and her silent agony are the very heart of the experiences of countless women who are taught to endure, not resist. Beauvoir's philosophical insights make us better understand this phenomenon, founded on the social conditioning that teaches women to accept their role as the "Other," generating a belief that their desires are secondary to men's.

This research will examine the relevance of Beauvoir's theory of the "Other" to The Intrusion and how far the protagonist loses agency and is reduced to a subservient role in her own marriage. Through readings of critical moments in the novel, we will examine the extent to which Deshpande uses narrative strategies and symbolism to expose the repressive forms of traditional marriage. Finally, we will examine whether the protagonist's experience is representative of a larger pattern or unique to her cultural experience, and what the novel can teach us about the importance of fairness in human relationships. Marriage must be viewed as a union and not as a confining experience. However, as is evident in The Intrusion, it seems to be a punitive experience for females who are deprived of the power to control their bodies and emotions. Based on Beauvoir's critique, one can appreciate the embeddedness of such inequalities, thereby considering such narratives vital to

confront and deconstruct.

Literature Review

The emotional and existential condition of the newly married woman in Shashi Deshpande's "The Intrusion" reflects not only a lived experience of fear and silencing but also a long-standing philosophical tension in feminist thought about the institution of marriage. In particular, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* provides a foundational lens through which this narrative of physical and psychological intrusion can be understood.

De Beauvoir asserts that woman "is not regarded as an autonomous being" but is always defined in relation to man, especially within the social institution of marriage (de Beauvoir 15). In "The Intrusion," this theoretical framing plays out through the character of a newlywed bride, whose body and consent are overridden on her wedding night. Her internal resistance — the quiet unease, the desire to be at the beach instead of in a stranger's bed — is juxtaposed with her husband's assuredness, his demand, "Come here" (Deshpande 40). This moment echoes de Beauvoir's statement that "marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society" and that the role of wife is not mutually constructed but assigned (de Beauvoir 446).

Deshpande's narrative positions the bedroom not as a space of intimacy but of possession. The story reveals the unequal power embedded in even the most personal spaces of marriage — what feminist theorist Luce Irigaray might call the "exchange of women" in patriarchal economies of desire (Irigaray 171). The bride's silence, her physical stillness, and her internal monologue of discomfort, reflect what de Beauvoir described as a condition of "immanence": a state of being trapped, passive, and confined, where a woman is "shut up in the kitchen and the bedroom" and denied her subjectivity (De Beauvoir 60).

Critics of Deshpande's work, such as Usha Bande, have noted her subtle deconstruction of domestic roles, writing that "Deshpande's fiction tears through the fabric of ritualised relationships to reveal deep gender imbalances" (Bande 89). While Bande's reading emphasises the psychological tension within Indian marriage narratives, this chapter aligns such tensions with existential philosophy, reading the intrusion in the story not only as a physical violation but as a philosophical erasure of selfhood.

Scholars like Jasbir Jain have also pointed out that Deshpande's women "negotiate silence" rather than break it outright (Jain 142). This is especially true in "The Intrusion," where the protagonist never protests aloud, yet the entire narrative is a meditation on the trauma of being rendered voiceless. Her desire for

open space — "to walk on the sand, to pick up shells" — represents a yearning for agency, freedom, and bodily autonomy (Deshpande 49).

This literature review reveals that "The Intrusion" serves as a fictional exploration of de Beauvoir's philosophical argument that woman, especially in marriage, is often positioned as a body to be claimed rather than a subject to be known. By bringing feminist philosophy into conversation with South Asian literary realism, the chapter demonstrates how the theoretical construct of the "Other" is not only relevant in cross-cultural contexts but disturbingly familiar in the interior lives of women bound by socially sanctioned roles.

1. Beauvoir's Theory of the "Other" in *The Second Sex*

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) revolutionised feminist thought by introducing the idea that women are historically and socially constructed as the "Other" in a male-dominated world. She famously states, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other" (26). This makes women not independent beings but subsidiary beings who are defined in relation to men. Within marriage, this phenomenon is even more pronounced—women are meant to tailor themselves to fit their husbands' wishes, deny themselves agency, and submit to playing the role of passive partners. Beauvoir further argues that marriage as an institution reinforces this oppression: "Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society… it is still a contract not between two individuals but between two social groups" (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*). This viewpoint (contractual viewpoint of marriage degrades women to objects of exchange and completely strips them of individuality. This makes women not independent beings but subsidiary beings who are defined in relation to men. "Within marriage, this phenomenon is even more pronounced in women who meant to tailor themselves to fit their husband's wishes, deny themselves agency, and submit to playing the role of passive partners."

"We looked blatantly out of place there. Tiny houses, almost miniature ones, but spick and span… I walked stiffly, self-consciously, trying hard to seem unaware of the stares, the curious eyes that followed us." (Deshpande 34). This passage captures her feeling of being out of place—she feels like she doesn't fit in this environment, much like she hasn't fully integrated into her husband's world yet. She's an outsider, almost like a stranger in her own life. The ideas of transcendence and immanence have been very central to the argument of Beauvoir. Transcendence—the ability to project oneself into the world, to create, to take charge, and to mould one's own life—occurs to men who hold the dominant position in society. However, oftentimes women are forced into a state of

immanence. This leads to a life that feels like a loop where time gets stuck, and their focus becomes on biological roles like childbirth and caregiving, as well as household responsibilities. According to Beauvoir, this restriction isn't inherent; rather, it results from patriarchal structures that deny women the same chances for personal fulfilment as men. Another phrase that narrates deep into being a wife in a society so brutal to women, "At last, mercifully, it was over, my body having helped him by some strange instinct beyond and outside me. And the cry I gave was not for the physical pain, but for the intrusion into my privacy, the violation of my right to myself" (Deshpande, 41). The aforementioned sentences indicate a woman has the opportunity to deny her touch when she is in no mood or in her privacy. Care is not that means of society; most consider that it is buying clothing and ornaments, but it suggests that respecting the feelings of one another is a superior type of caring. Mind is being suffered is no care, especially suffering that is from a male partner. A gentleman's conduct is the highest type of caring. If someone's idea is causing hurt, intention is not feeling; it is a wholly denatured act that is making someone anxious, and as a result, the mind is suffering. Negligence is one of the greatest incidents of carelessness. Her husband believes, but she is his wife; he claims a singular right to her touch, but licit, married life is physically harmed even when upheld, because her husband neglects her. The narrator is undergoing the scenario he created in her as shown by the negligence is causing emotional hurt in the narrator and dashed her hopes. Happiness, if at all, is two similar feelings or states by each at the same time. If he believes he has the right to touch his wife after being married, at the same time narrator has the right to deny him, but she does not deny him, but lets him do anything he wants, even though her husband does not think or care for her emotions and feelings. She is shocked instead of enjoying her honeymoon, while her husband enjoys his. Here is a question: Who is happy and why? The answer is that the husband is happy because he got what he was looking for, but the wife could not get what she was looking for. This does not mean that the narrator does not want to enjoy her honeymoon, but the way that she is forced causes her mental and emotional harm. She feels as though her husband is a rapist to her body. Emotional pain is more damaging than physical pain. She puts up with her husband during the honeymoon, so she wishes for an emotional touch. It would be nice to have a friendly relationship during the difficult time, but her husband cannot comprehend her mindset. Shame, fear and guilt make her uncomfortable. The narrator is badly hurt by her husband's attitude. The author has described a feminist attitude because, as a woman, she can understand women's feelings better than men can. There is a belief that men and women should have equal respect in society, except that it's

only an abstract concept. Beauvoir states, "*The male is called upon for action, his vocation is to produce, fight, create, progress, to transcend himself toward the totality of the universe and the infinity of the future*" (Beauvoir, The Second Sex), while women are relegated to the cyclical temporality of immanence, their existence reduced to maintenance instead of creation. This division is prominently portrayed in The Intrusion; the protagonist's husband is able to roam the world (his honeymoon location, the symbol of his assured navigation in a confident manner) while she is trapped both physically and psychologically within the space of her being, where her only obligation is to submit to her husband's every wish. Beauvoir notes that the notion of the "Other" extends to the female body, which is objectified and alienated in a patriarchal context. The female body is thus treated in a patriarchal context as, on the one hand, an object of male desire and, on the other hand, as an instrument of reproduction. Women are not seen as humans in their own right, but as objects that carry out actions of no agency. And she notes that this is the burden of sexism, as women are not simply taught about objectification. Rather, women are taught to see their own bodies through the lenses of men, thus creating a context where women's bodies come to exist under self-surveillance or shame. Despite his alienation, her new existence becomes a new and arbitrarily assigned its own 'crisis femininity'; her husband's possession of and thus, domination over not just her as a woman; but her body, the moment of sexual violation itself, isn't couched merely as a corporeal invasion, it is a philosophical expression of her otherness—the woman's body, as an object, is no longer hers (i.e., the acute potentiallyions / specifications offer by her body). Beauvoirs helps us to extrapolate why perhaps this violation is so ultimately disempowering; this is not simply an individual, sexual act of aggression against women, but a germination of systemic consenting women's otherness (as an arbitrary determinant of virtue). Beauvoir's theory also critiques the myth of the 'eternal feminine,' the romantic notion that women are naturally caring, generous, self-sacrificing and emotionally intuitive. She argues that the eternal feminine myth is one of oppression, one that legitimates the oppression of women by justifying it as an expression of their biology. Men are afforded complexity, ambition, and individuality, while women are allotted one-dimensional representations (the virgin, the mother, the femme fatale). In The Intrusion, the heroine's resistance to the societal expectations of women (her protest folderol in performing the role of the eager, submissive bride) unearths the violence concealed in the myth. Her husband's bewilderment at her refusal ("Do you think I enjoy feeling that I'm forcing myself on you?") (Deshpande 51) exposes how deep the conventions are; he cannot imagine a woman who does not

self-accept her assigned role.

2. The Bride's Alienation in *The Intrusion*

Shashi Deshpande's novel, The Intrusion, brilliantly captures the psychological and emotional isolation of a newly wed bride suddenly cast into a marriage that feels more like an erasure of self than a joining of two. From the start of this tale, we see the setting around the protagonist framing her as an outsider, not just geographically, but from an ontological perspective. The opening lines—*"We looked blatantly out of place there. Tiny houses, almost miniature ones, but spick and span… I walked stiffly, self-consciously, trying hard to seem unaware of the stares, the curious eyes that followed us"*—immediately establishes her sense of dislocation. This alienation is both physical and ontological; she is a trespasser in her own life, a stranger in a narrative that she has not chosen or created. The fishing village may be visually new and smell unfamiliar, but it depicts her inner state as one of alienation—a world to which she does not belong, like the marriage she has been forced into. The stares of the villagers further add to her discomfort, but they also turn her into a spectacle to be watched, and not an actual person; thus, she is observed as an object of scrutiny. This aligns with Beauvoir when she articulates that in patriarchy, women become and remain "the Other," under the gaze of men, and are thus defined by men's depiction and not their self-identification. The bride's alienation is augmented by her acute lack of agency, which she has been all but mandated to enter into. The space they occupy on their honeymoon is an isolated, near-suffocating space, which provides a metaphor for the tension she feels. The "square, squat building" looked at us "blankly" reminds us of how much like her new routine (as a wife), the place is an impersonal, opaque jail. The space has a "smell of bedbugs" and the bed has "grubby sheets"; it represents the degradation of marriage for her, as though her body's form and identity are being pushed into a place already marked by other people's expectations. Even nature, which provides writing solace in literature, plays into the mocking: she can see the sea, but she cannot reach it, just as she cannot reach physical autonomy again. The longing for "scuff [her] bare toes in the sand" and "let the friendly waves climb up [her] bare legs" is a momentary body fantasy in stark contrast to the concrete confinement of her reality. When her husband asks her if they can go to the shore tomorrow
("let's go in the morning"), the implication becomes clearer: her wish is deferrable, her agency is negotiable.

The ultimate end of her alienation is the violent completion of the marriage,

a moment that exemplifies her obliteration of subjectivity. Deshpande's language itself is deliberately dehumanising: "`It wasn't the sea that was crashing into my body but he, my husband, who was crashing his body into mine.' (Deshpande 53)" The linkage of the ocean's natural violence and her husband's violence not only emphasizes the brutal nature of the act, in which that act is not even irony, but an "intrusion"—a word that implies invasion, trespass, a violation that has gone so far as to impact one's future. The dissociative realisation of my body and mind) In which the act included "(my mind was an absolute blank) speaks to the dislocation of one's sense of self, when one's subjectivity is irrelevant. As Beauvoir suggests, the body is not a thing; it is a situation, and it is horrifically rendered literarily here; her body is no longer hers, but the site of male dominion, a "situation" that she must endure, rather than inhabit. The final image of the story, when her husband continues to snores, meanwhile she lies beside him in silence, destroyed, represents the final alienation; she is alone in her suffering (invisible to the man who has made her not a person but a function).

Through highlighting the bride's estrangement, Deshpande provides a biting criticism of patriarchal systems that render women as non-persons through marriage. Her protagonist is not simply miserable; she is "the Other" within her own life, a stranger to herself and to the man who is claiming her. The story's effectiveness is found in its unflinching honesty; it will not indulge in romanticising marriage, instead opening it up as an institution that can perpetuate systematic oppression of women, or more plainly, its own systematic erasure of women. The captured experience within the story allows the reader to see the insidious horror of a world that demands her submission and gaslights her for rebelling. In this regard, The Intrusion becomes not just a story, but a mirror that reflects the lived and embodied experience of many women, who unlike Deshpande's protagonist experienced the protestant metaphor in actual marriage, and in forming their own mate, simply grappled with the fact that marriage for them was not a beginning, but a burial.

3.The Honeymoon Setting as a Prison and the Sea as a Symbol of Freedom and Unattainable Escape in *The Intrusion*

Shashi Deshpande's The Intrusion uses physical spaces as psychological spaces to reflect the protagonist's psychological confinement and constrained aspirations to act autonomously in her life. The honeymoon destination, rather than a romantic escape, becomes a graphic representation of the prison of her marriage, thereby reinforcing her confinement to patriarchal expectations of marriage. From the outset of their arrival at the fishing village, the couple's surroundings establish a

radical sense of distance and displacement wrong with theirs. The "tiny houses...almost like doll houses" and the same "little path" where "if we held out our arms we could touch a house on both sides" produce a claustrophobic confinement that foreshadows the protagonist's loss of agency and personal space. The physical constraints serve a symbolic purpose - it mirrors the social constriction that marriage imposes in a traditional sense on a woman; marriage in traditional societies entails that the transition from daughter to wife means the giving up of bodily and psychological space. The village lies in liminal spaces - between land and sea and between traditional fishing economy and intrusion by outsiders - and so, the bride lies between who she was as a bright young independent woman and the images in her head of what it means to be a wife.

As they make their way through the village towards their honeymoon accommodations, the physical journey echoes the protagonist's growing sense of alienation. The path becomes increasingly taxing, with the protagonist struggling to walk in her "high heels" and "heavy sari," clothing that symbolises the performative femininity expected of her new identity. The "squelchy, oozing, almost black" sand that makes walking so difficult signifies the institution of marriage, which masquerades as something stable, but provides rather unstable footing for women engaged in negotiating their identities within the institution's parameters. Once they finally reach their destination - " a square, squat building that stared at us blankly" (Deshpande 46) - the visual imagery of the building suggests an institution rather than a home - impersonal and institutional in its enforcement of norms regarding being married. The top of a hill clearly isolated from the village below, suggests the protagonist's social isolation and that there is also no option for retreat, while the "blank" stare suggests the indifferent face of patriarchal tradition.

The honeymoon room itself becomes a microcosm of the protagonist's psychological prison. In Deshpande's description of the room's "dullness and impersonality," and that people "come, stay for a short time and go away, without making any impression of themselves," the change is performance and expression of familial and societal expectations versus their individual and subjective desires, or lack thereof. The "smell of bedbugs" and "grubby sheets" symbolise the sullied expectations of marriage and intimacy. Note also that the "greasy pillow covers" and dinghy bed sheets are also signs that woman before her had a similar experience of becoming an "inalienable thing," or eating, sleeping, and having sex, and the pillows, sheets, and bed frame have absorbed these transactions as reminders to the husband's new bride of his capacity for domestic and conjugal expectations of her, which she must fulfill in this impersonal space. The servant's

"secret smile" and "smirk" with "awareness of what we had come here for" reiterate how her most intimate experience becomes their public property - and subject to communal expectation. Ultimately, even the breeze that rushed in when we opened the windows could not sweep away the memory or experience of that setting's psychological implications, still pregnant with expectations of consummation. But upon returning from the veranda, the honeymoon room transitioned, because someone had "taken away the tea things and made the beds," and it was illustrative of our domestic order being so rapidly possessed by domestic duties, before the machinery of tradition would facilitate the husband's desires while ignoring those of the bride.

As a contrasting presence to the stifling built environment, the sea emerges as a powerful symbol of the freedom and independence the protagonist desires but cannot achieve. The first sight of the sea is described with lyrical flights of fancy – "But, I thought, if this is a fishing village, where is the sea? And then we reached the end of the lane, turned right, and there, suddenly, enchantingly, was the sea in front of us, immense and fascinating. And again rows and rows of fish hung up to dry, looking at us and at the blue of the sky with sightless, accusing eyes." (Deshpande 45) – placing it immediately as an antithesis to the confined spaces of the village. The bigness of the sea suggests a world outside of the little boxes society constructed for them, and its almost rhythmic movement presents the fluidity of identity that the protagonist has been denied. However, the "rows and rows of fish hanging up to dry" that also accompany the first sight point in a slightly darker direction, foreshadowing how the protagonist herself will become just another victim of this world, simply existing, drained of life and agency. The "sightless, accusing eyes" of the dead fish appear to be echoing the protagonist's mute accusation against the system which has brought her to this point.

The surface relationship the protagonist has with the sea evolves throughout the novel, mirroring her emotional state. Although daunting at first, the sea represented an escape from the crush of the village and the threatened intimacy of the honeymoon. As her discomfort in the conjugal space escalated, her desire to "go down to the sea" increased, symbolically demonstrating that the natural world offered her an alternative to constraining social space. The sea's physical inaccessibility, being positioned at the bottom of numerous "zig-zagging crazily" paths down the cliff, parallels tacit social obstructions that keep women from feeling autonomous. When she describes her fantasy of engaging with the sea - "to scuff my bare toes in the sand.. to pick up shells and sit on the rocks, letting the

friendly waves climb up my bare legs" (Deshpande 49) - her description evokes visceral and sensual sensory experiences, in stark contrast to the obligatory intimacy that awaited her in her bedroom. The waves in her imaging were "friendly" - contrasting with the violent "pounding" of her husband's body farther along in the text. This imaginary encounter with nature was corporeal autonomy and pleasure, antithetical to the non-consensual nature of marital relations she endured.

The time element in the symbolism of the sea is one more level of meaning in its representation. The protagonist writes, "I could hear the dull asserting boom of the sea coming in" in the nighttime hours and that its rhythmic persistence was significant of the fact that nature does not care about the human social construct of marriage at all. The sea merges with the protagonist's half-asleep consciousness, blending with her dream of "lying there on the beach" until she wakes abruptly to the horror of realising that "it was not at all the sea that was pounding my body but he, my husband." Here, it is the ultimate perversion of the sea's symbolism; what should be a natural, freeing, natural force is conflated with violent penetration, pointing to just how wholly the protagonist's body has been violated. After the rape, when the protagonist can sleep again and makes her way to consciousness, she recalls hearing the sea but by this time is "drowned'" by husband's snoring, which symbolizes how patriarchal domination collapses female desire and the only concept in nature to embody it.

The dialectic of the constricted honeymoon space and the open sea provides compelling symbolic contrasts throughout the story. The built environment of the campsite, from the tight lanes of the village to the faceless honeymoon building, represents social constraint, tradition, and the defining constriction of patriarchal control. The natural environment of the sea represents freedom, fluidity, and self-determination. This contrast mimics Beauvoir's The Second Sex argument that women, under patriarchal control, are denoted prevalence and failure and are structurally denied transcendence to project themselves into the world as autonomous beings, which means they endure confinement to immanence - the cycle of performing the same acts over and over to maintain a domestic life. In the interim, the protagonist's possible visions of engagement with the sea signify the desire for self-determination, while her actual physically constricted experience in the honeymoon space denotes her immanent experience.

The Intrusion is a story by Shashi Deshpande that offers a chilling literary exploration of Simone de Beauvoir's concept of women as the "Other." It poignantly threatens to obliterate the female will from the marriage established within the patriarchy. Through the protagonist's deeply harrowing experiences of

psychological alienation, physical violation, and spatial confinement, it presents the ways by which women are seen as mere objects for gratification by male desire and by social expectations. This is reflected through the story's stark realism that breaks away from the romanticised notion of marriage, which often acts as an unconscious mask for gendered oppression through tradition.

Conclusion

In the stories of Shashi Deshpande, the world of women is one of internal silences, external expectations, and performances that erode the self. Whether she is a newly married bride, a tired mother, or the wife of a political figure, Deshpande's woman is never quite herself. This literary terrain directly parallels Simone de Beauvoir's foundational critique in *The Second Sex*, particularly her insight that "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other" (De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 26). Across the dissertation, three stories — "The Intrusion," "Why a Robin?", and "The First Lady" — trace the shaping of women as "inessential," each illustrating a different stage in this existential displacement.

The Self Unformed: Marriage and the Making of the Other

The young bride in "The Intrusion" is one of the clearest illustrations of Beauvoir's contention that "marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society" and that it is rarely a contract between equals (De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 446). In this story, intimacy is not affection but obligation. Her husband's words — "Come here" (Deshpande 40) — carry the weight of expectation, while her resistance, internal and voiceless, is erased. As the narrative unfolds, the physical intrusion becomes symbolic of a larger truth: that the woman's consent, her autonomy, and her subjectivity are not acknowledged.

Her feeling of displacement in a setting meant to be intimate and celebratory reflects Beauvoir's assertion that women are "doomed to immanence" — trapped in a repetitive loop of duties without transcendence (De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 60). This character does not get to shape her world; her world is shaped for her. The beach, which she sees as a symbol of escape, is denied to her. Her imagination of freedom, "to scuff my bare toes in the sand… to pick up shells" (Deshpande 49), is overwritten by her husband's forceful sexuality. Her dreams and her body are both colonised.

In this sense, the character is not simply oppressed — she is made Other. She is there for his pleasure, for his idea of marriage. As Beauvoir writes, "woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her" (De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 15). This imbalance becomes the central thesis of "The Intrusion" and marks the woman's tragic passage from bride to object.

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